REPRESENTATIVE GAUCHO POETRY AND FICTION
OF ARGENTINA

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CHAPTER X

THE GAUCHO FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to pursue an intelligent study of the gaucho, as depicted in several literary contributions of Argentine literature, one should first view him from a historical perspective. Unfortunately, too many of the works concerning the gaucho reflect personal and biased opinions, rather than a true account of his life. Some have portrayed the gaucho as a legendary hero, whose romantic way of life they describe in an idealistic manner. Still others believe that he was nothing but a bandit, useless to society, deserving only to be civilized or exterminated. The historical gaucho would conform to neither of these two views, nor to the idyllic gaucho of literature. An interesting fact about all the gaucho literature is that none of it has portrayed the original type—the vagrant, generally restless, cow hunter.

A popularly advanced idea of the gaucho's physical appearance is that he was dirty, bearded, and barefooted. He would kill other people's cattle for food, and would work only to acquire the tobacco he smoked. This statement is a generalization rather than a true description of the gaucho. It would be very unjust to think of all the gauchos as brutal, rude, and barbaric. For the most part they were men with crude and dignity.
Emilio R. Coni, a recognized authority on the Argentine gaucho, emphasizes in his works that the Plata region was not totally populated by bandits or parasites, but mostly by individuals who worked on the estancias, large cattle ranches. These men had most of the gaucho commendable qualities, without his defects. They are the real and authentic gaucho paisano, the ones which history has not bothered to describe.  

Along with the pioneers of Spanish colonization of the Plata region came the cow and the horse. Their number grew rapidly, and soon life in the Plata region revolved around these two animals. Hides acquired commercial value, and contraband trade began to thrive due to the restrictions placed by the mother country. The illegal hunters, whose main concern it became to fill these orders, was the gaucho.  

The gaucho's dependence upon the horse and the cow was total and complete. They furnished transportation, clothing, food, shelter, and even furniture. Beds, for example, were made of cowhides stretched between four upright poles. The equipment with which he worked such as the saddle, reins, and lasso, were of hide. The long narrow cart, called cabreta, peculiar for its very high wheels to facilitate the crossing of small rivers, and pulled by several pairs of

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oxen was so bound with hide that not a single nail was used in its construction. For almost every type of work, no matter how small, the horse was used. Whether it was to fight Indians or make butter, the horse was indispensable. A man without a horse was considered to be without legs. When the gaucho went to sleep, it was one of the few times that he dismounted.

In tracing the development and the influence of the gaucho, it must be remembered that a great transformation has occurred during the last three centuries, and the gaucho had his share in making this transformation. Socially he has been the settler of the wilderness, the soldier defender, the conqueror of the Indians. He was responsible for populating the vast Plata region, and thus began the westward expansion. He made the region safe to live in by hunting wild animals, and also by driving the savage Indians to the Patagonia.

The word gaucho itself has experienced a linguistic change. At one time it was considered an insult; today it is a compliment. The gaucho of Argentina has attained a heroic national status. A vocabulary centered around the word gaucho is widely used among contemporary Argentinians.

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When they say, "haceme una gauchoada," that is, do me a favor, it would be almost unthinkable to refuse. It is assumed that no gaucho ever refused to do a favor. The word gaucho is also used frequently to describe a person of outstanding virtues or qualities. Several factors have been attributed to the transformation of the gaucho's image. Two of the most widely accepted reasons for this favorable change are the gaucho's success in war, and perhaps the most important, his popular appeal in literature. While the gaucho of literature has not been accurately portrayed, his portrayal such as it was, has caused the real gaucho to be forgotten.5

It is not known exactly where the word gaucho originated.6 The etymology of the word is very uncertain. It has been traced to Latin, English, and Arabic, among others. A widely accepted theory traces its origin to the Quechuan word huachcho, which means orphan, errant, or abandoned one. This word was pronounced in Spanish gaucho, and then through metathesis to gaucho.7

Gauchos did not emerge as a distinctive society until about 1775, although individual gauchos were already in

5Ibid, p. 4.

6Pedro Inchauspe, La tradición y el gaucho (Buenos Aires, 1956), p. 51.

7Carlos Alberto Louannin, La literatura gauchescia y la poesía gauchoa (Buenos Aires, 1955), pp. 151-153.
existence since the late 1600's. Their number grew along
with the increase of hide shipments. By 1790, when the word
gauch o was used for the first time in a document, they were
definitely regarded as an unwanted and parasitic group. The
gaucho's uncleanness, ignorance and mixed blood, his wasteful
slaughtering of other people's livestock, and the callousness
with which he abducted a girl or slit an enemy's throat com-
bined, in early days, to make him a despised figure. 6

The men that came to the Plata region, usually did not
bring their women with them. As a result, they looked to the
Indian women to satisfy their sexual drives. They felt no
love for them, nor for the offspring which they fathered. It
did not take long before a considerable number of such mestizo
offsprings roamed the pampas. Since they were not accepted
into the Indian community, nor into the white society, they
were forced to emerge as a distinctive group with their own
modes, culture, and even language. 7

The area in which the gaucho lived is the plains region
called the pampas, a Quechuan word used by the Spaniards in
reference to the vast lands west of Buenos Aires. This land,
which even today continues to be sparcely populated, is of
fertile black soil, and it was not used for agricultural

6 Stephen Faullada, Rawhide and Song (New York, 1963),

7 C. M. S. Beneto, Antología gaucha (Santa Fe, Argentina,
purposes until early in the 1900’s. The pampas is a flat
barren region with an occasional pablí, the gaucho’s favorite
tree, at the different estancias. The pablí served not only
as a shelter against the sun in the hot summer days, but also
as a gathering place to drink mate and play the guitar. Many
travellers who came to the Plata region and saw the pampas,
could not help but call it an ocean of land. The word pampa
was also used to designate the Indians of Arasucanian origin,
who lived in the area for which they were named.10

The rancho of a poor gaucho paisano was a house made
of adobe mixed with straw or horse manure, with a wooden
frame that was usually made with logs tied with rawhide.
The rancho consisted of two rooms. The front room served as
a kitchen and living room, while the adjoining room was the
family bedroom. Most ranchos had a sort of open porch which
ran the length of the house, and which served for protection
against the sun, and the rain. This porch was used in good
weather as an extra bedroom or living room, and there were a
few windows. The doorway to the house as well as the windows
could be covered, when the weather required, with a cowhide
that was hung over the opening. Although the gaucho’s rancho
has been described by some to be little more than an animal’s
cave, it actually proved to be very comfortable living.

10 Inchauspe, La tradición y el gauchito, p. 192.
quarters. Indeed, the rancho of the 1800's was superior to many of the slum huts found today in Villa Miseria or Villa Tachito in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, where walls are made of flattened tin cans, and doors are covered with burlap.

Among the gaucho's wearing apparel there are several items which are no longer in use; among them is the vincha or head band. It used to be a very essential part of his dress since it kept his long hair in place, serving the purpose of a hat which sometimes was very expensive and difficult to obtain. The early gaucho used botas de potro, a type of boots which he himself made out of the hide of a horse's leg. This hide was washed and left to soak in water. Afterwards, the gaucho wrapped this hide around his legs and when it dried it stayed, as if glued. Since the primitive stirrup consisted of small rings, the toes were not wrapped, thus allowing the gaucho to stick his toes through these rings. He wore his botas de potro until they fell off, usually after about two weeks of use. Presently gauchos wear regular boots although they are not so high as those used by the American cowboy. The poorer gaucho of today wears alpargatas, sandals made of soaps. The primitive botas de potro.

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12Paulilda, Rainhode and Song, p. 53.
usually ruined the gaucho's feet, making it extremely difficult to walk. 13

They wore shirts open at the throat with a handkerchief knotted around their necks. Strangely enough for such lusty cattlemen, they wore full, long, cotton drawers with lace at the bottoms on gala occasions. Over these, a large square of hand-loomed cloth, called chirina, was pulled around the waist, and tied over the stomach by its two upper corners. The rest of it that hung down behind was drawn forward between the legs and tucked under the belt in front. It looked like an oversized parti-colored diaper. It was originally brought to the Plata region by the conquistadores who used it to cover their nakedness when the seat of their pants wore through. The Quechua word chirina, means against the cold. 14 This type of pants was replaced later by the more practical bombachas which are still used. They are very comfortable for horse-back riding since they are very full and gathered at the ankles.

The belt has experienced few changes in the gaucho's wearing fashion. The poor ones use a wide piece of colorful cloth which they wrap around themselves several times. The richer gaucho can afford a wide leather belt which is almost


completely covered with different coins and decorations. The leather belt has three pockets in which the gaucho can carry his valuables.\textsuperscript{15} The poncho has been used for several centuries, both as a blanket at night, and as a garment during the day. It was also used as a shield wrapped around the arm during a knife duel.

Due to the surroundings in which the gaucho lived, he needed weapons. From the Indians he borrowed the use of the lance and the boleadoras, also called las tres Marías. The boleadoras were made of three lengths of plaited rawhide about two yards long, joined together, and to each free end a ball of stone or lead encased in rawhide was attached. Holding one ball in his hand and swinging the others around his head, the gaucho would gallop after a horse, cow, or ostrich, and aim the boleadoras at their legs, throwing the animal to the ground as the feet became entangled. He was so skillful that it is said he could bring down a duck on the wing.\textsuperscript{16}

The most useful of all the gaucho's weapons was the facón, which he carried behind in his leather belt. He used it as an eating utensil, a working tool, and as his defense weapon. Fencing with the facón required a very special skill.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Nichols, El gaúcho}, p. 229.

of its own. The weight of the body was placed on the right
leg, and the left one was kept slightly in front. The knife
was kept low, pointing to the opponent's stomach. One of the
arms was usually wrapped in his poncho, as has already been
described. Often the duelo was ended after one of the pai-
sanos had managed to inflict a slight wound on his opponent's
face. However, if one of them was killed, the killer referred
to it as a desgracia, his fatal accident.17

The day-by-day activities of the gaucho were so closely
related to some task where blood was observed, that he had
come to the point where he could see no difference between
the blood of a jaguar, a cow, or a human being. Therefore,
he did not abhor the spilling of human blood in duelos. Did
society look upon the chivalry of the members of the nobility
that defended their name and their honor as killers? On the
contrary, it looked upon their courage as a virtue to be
desired. Yet, the gaucho has been called a killer for vindic-
cating his honor, or for executing justice in a land that
knew no justice except that of a man's own hand.18

The pulpería was the social center of the pampa. It
was a combination of country-store, saloon, and social hall.
Here the paisanito came to buy the few necessities that he
did not raise or fashion on his rancho. It was also here

17Dollado, Imbolsos and Young, pp. 56-57.
18Inchauspe, La tradición en el gaucho, p. 93.
that he sold or bartered the pelts, feathers, grease, and
tallow that he obtained through hunting. Most of the divert-
sive activity took place at, or near a pulpería. Gambling
at cards and drinking went hand in hand. Too often the
gaucho has been labeled as a drunkard. It is true that he
tried to get drunk as often as he could, but this obviously
was not very often, either because of the distance separating
him from the nearest pulpería, or the lack of money. Even
when he did have some money he squandered it showing off his
generosity by buying drinks for everyone, and whatever he
had left, he soon lost playing cards. Few pulperías lacked
a guitar for the entertainment of the paisanos. Quite often
the singing turned into a competition between two gauchos
trying to out-do each other. Dancing was another very pop-
ular form of entertainment. At the middle of the nineteenth
century, there were over fifty different dances that were
well-known in the Plata region.

One of the roughest games that the gaucho played was
called Pato, the duck. The news travelled by grapevine that
a game was called for a certain day, and early in the morning,
a large group of gauchos, on their swiftest piongos, gathered
at the appointed pulpería and began to shout, Pato! Pato!

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20. Paulides, Ranching and Song, p. 54.
The proprietor would finally appear with a live duck sewn in a rawhide cover, to which four stout leather handles were firmly attached. Four mounted men each grasped one of the handles, and, at the word, drove spurs into their horses to begin a tug of war, until one managed to wrest the pato away from the others. They swept across the pampas like a desperate cavalry charge, as each individual strove to snatch the duck. Riders were killed when horses stumbled, and passions ran so high that facones were drawn and differences settled with cold steel. At last some man on the fleetest horse was able to reach the pulpería designated as goal, with the duck under his arm. Many participants were killed in this rough game, and it was banished by Juan Manuel de Rosas. Only recently has it been revived under more humane rules.21

Although the yerba, branding of animals, is a part of the gaucho’s work, it can also be considered as a celebration. Just as the Vendimia, grape festival, is an occasion for festivity in many countries, similarly, the yerba called for a large fiesta, lasting for several days. It was one of the many opportunities the gaucho had to show off his skill.22

The diet of the paisano consisted mostly of beef. One of the favorite gaucho dishes is the puchero, a beef stew of

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21 José Hernández, El gaúcho Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires, 1891), pp. 121-122.

22 Leumann, La literatura gauchesca, pp. 100-103.
vegetables and potatoes. The most popular of all the gaucho food is the asado criollo. Large pieces of meat, quite often a whole calf cut open in the middle, are pierced through with rods in the shape of crosses. This spit is stuck in the ground and a charcoal fire is built around it. The meat is cooked very slowly while it is sprinkled with a mixture of water, salt, garlic, and pepper. Many of the gauchos preferred asado con cuero, name given to the asado that was barbecued without cutting off the hide.\textsuperscript{23} The gaucho's diet is one of the strongest evidence of his influence upon Argentinians. Until recently, Argentina had the highest meat consumption, per capita, in the world. In an effort to curb this trend the government has decreed several meatless days.

Everything the gaucho ate was washed down with mate. Mate, like his horse, his poncho, and his fajín, accompanied the gaucho everywhere through life. Mate was usually drunk without sugar. Most of the social activities centered around the drinking of mate.\textsuperscript{24} Mate has become so widespread in Argentina that presently everyone drinks it without regard to class or social position. Although the gaucho preferred his mate chirón, without sugar, today the majority drink it sweet. Some prefer to add a little coffee or a lemon

\textsuperscript{23}José Hernández, Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires, 1958), pp. 221-223.

\textsuperscript{24}Lanzani, In literatura gaucho, p. 161.
A few who want to show off their masculinity drink it a la gaucho, without sugar.

The education of the early gaucho consisted in learning the skills he needed to survive on the pampas. Very few had ever gone to school. In the late 1600's when more schools were built and vast education programs were instituted, the gaucho still found it difficult to send his children to school, mainly because of the great distance separating him from the nearest one.25

His religion consisted of a mixture of Catholicism and superstition. He considered it an insult to be called indio, because the Indians were not Christians. Indeed, he was essentially a Christian, although his knowledge did not exceed the basic sincerity and primitiveness characteristic of the gaucho paisano. Most ranchos had a designated little corner, where a candle burned in front of the image of some saint. A considerable number of gauchos wore crucifixes around their necks. They very seldom attended church, and when they did, it was in order to be married or to baptize a child. Many were not financially able to have their children baptized in the Catholic Church, or to be married there. On one occasion the government set a designated period of time during which marriages were performed free of charge. By the end of that period a sharp increase of marriages had taken place.26

26Bauldosa, Rawhide and Song, pp. 39-40.
The gaucho has been accused of laziness and of exploiting the women to do all the work; in reality, this was not so. The society in which he lived demanded a certain type of activity such as the yerbas, rodeos, or cattle drives. These activities he liked and enjoyed performing. The women fulfilled the chores around the house in addition to cultivating whatever little garden they had, and made the clothes.27

Throughout his life he sought public attention and admiration. On the estancias he enjoyed working as a domador, breaking wild horses, while surrounded by the peones. His drive to prove his machismo, gaucho masculinity, led him to live dangerously. Even in his love affairs he sought competition, someone from whom he could win the object of his affections. He was not interested in a woman unless he could have a rival with whom she could be disputed.28 He enjoyed women but did not find them as useful as his horse. He esteemed his horse more than his own wife as is revealed by a very popular copla,

Mi mujer y mi caballo
Se me fueron para Salta
Como mi caballo vuelva
Mi mujer no me hace falta.29

27Ibid., p. 53.
29Pauliada, English and Sons, p. 35.
The extreme passion for freedom and independence is one of the essential characteristics of the gauchó's life. As a result, he wandered from place to place, never remaining in the same area for an extended period of time. It is erroneous, however, to think that he remained in this nomadic state his entire life. When they felt the desire to build a nest, as the gauchos called their homes, they did settle down.  

The lack of desire to live in a better and more comfortable place stemmed from the fact that he was continuously threatened either by the Indians, Indian attacks, or the power of the local judicial authorities. As late as 1876 war with the Indians required that the army be on constant alert and readiness. Consequently, the gauchó was often drafted without regard to the support or welfare of his family.  

His true worth as a fighting man was not recognized until the mid-nineteenth century. Even then, Domingo Faustino Sar努力 wrote to Bartolomé Mitre, "No trates de economizar siempre gauchés. Este es un atomo que es preciso hacer, útil al país. La sangre es lo único que tienen de seres humanos."  

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31 Inamora, *La tradición y el gauchó*, p. 100.  
On the other hand, the Spanish General García Camba who fought against Cáceres and his gauchos describes them by saying, "Eran hombres extraordinarios a caballo, diestros en todas las armas, individualmente valientes, hábiles para dispersar y volver de nuevo al ataque." The gaucho liked war and the easy spoils it offered. He considered it a sort of game. The gaucho was used in the wars of independence, in wars against the Indians, and against the leading caudillos such as Rosas or Quiroga. Throughout these wars he managed to win respect for himself. When the wars were over, so was his usefulness and his opportunity for recognition.

Much has already been said about the gaucho paisano. The gaucho matrero, or gaucho malo, has also occupied a prominent place in Argentine history, although he has been romanticized in literature. The gaucho malo saw an opportunity for pillage during the War of Independence, early in the 1800’s. A gang of gauchos malos became known as the montonera, whose chief was called the caudillo. The montonera of gauchos malos permeated the Argentinian scene from 1820 to 1852, and marked their trails with crimes and atrocities. They did not hesitate to attack villages, sack them, carry away the women, and kill most of the male population.

33 Ibid., p. 120.

If an Indian rail offered opportunity for plunder, they would join the Indians. 35

The gaucho found himself pursued by the law as early as colonial times due to the trade restrictions placed by Spain on her colonies. He set a pattern of lawlessness for which he was later characterized. Spain did not let her colonies trade with other countries besides herself. Since transportation of goods to Spain was costly and imposed many hardships, gauchos from the Plata region preferred to trade with other countries, thus becoming lawbreakers. Later, in the 1700's, when much of the land had been divided, and granted or sold, usually to Europeans with capital, permits were issued to individual owners for the hunting of cattle. Since many wild horses and cows roamed the pampas, the government allotted each land owner a set number of cows to be hunted. After the cattle had been herded, they were killed, and their hides taken off, leaving the meat to rot. However, when the gaucho killed cattle only for the hides, he was severely criticized and often, punished. 36 This law is only one example of the many throughout Argentina’s history that have favored land owners and aristocrats. As a result, little has been done to close the gap between the very rich and the very poor.

35Revillada, Rapéte and Song, pp. 122-123.
36Fuchampa, La tradicion e el gaucho, pp. 66-68.
The Indian chiefs were bribed with many kinds of records and provisions in order to keep them off the war path. On the other hand, the gaucho was continuously oppressed. Another law forbade the gaucho to work on an estancia as an agrazado, one who works occasionally to earn his keep. This law was used in an effort to obstruct his freedom of movement from one estancia to another. Little was done to encourage the gaucho to settle, and stay in his own rancho. In 1768 a law was introduced which stated that in order to obtain land one had to show to the cabildo evidence of a home on the land being requested, and that one had served in the military service. In addition, the individual requesting the land had to make this petition personally, in Buenos Aires, and go through a great deal of formalities. Although the land in itself was almost free, the process of obtaining it, such as paying the judge, land surveyor, and stamp paper, amounted to such high sums that only the well-to-do could afford to request land. When a rich individual decided to obtain land, he requested vast regions to make the trouble worthwhile.

In order to be classified as a gaucho malo, be scorned by society, and persecuted by the law, it did not require any great offenses of misconduct. Who was the gaucho malo? He was the man that was born and reared on an estancia, but

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37 Ibid., pp. 90-92.
who really had no place to rest his head. The land around him belonged to someone who had accumulated it with capital or service to some tirano. If the gaucho happened to have a rancho in such area, very often he was forcibly evicted from it by the owner. The classification of gaucho vale included individuals whose only offense was not being able to show a paper in which it was stated that they had a permanent job, or a fixed address. It included individuals who were travelling outside of their own district and had not secured a permit to do so. And there was occasionally one who fit in this category simply because he had neglected to vote in the last elections, or because his wife aroused the interest of the police sergeant.

It is extremely difficult to give an objective and unbiased view of the gaucho, mainly because works concerning him are either in favor, or against him. One of the most reliable and best descriptions of the gaucho and his way of life is found in the diaries of those who travelled through the pampas. Edmund Temple travelled from Buenos Aires to Bolivia in 1826 and in his travel diary he tells of the hospitality and cordiality with which he was received at the many ranchos he visited. Whenever a stranger visited the gaucho's home, he would refrain from asking his visitor who

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38 Leumann, La literatura gauchesca, pp. 166-169.
39 Inchauspe, La tradición y el gaucho, pp. 37-39.
he was, or where he was going, lest he humiliate or embarrass someone with his questions. The gaucho had no strong feelings of possession and therefore, did not hesitate to share whatever he had with someone else. 49

The gaucho viewed from a historical perspective projects an image that each individual must identify for himself. For some the gaucho was a hero, for others a savage. In truth he was neither and he was both. Unfortunately, today the gaucho is little more than a shadow of the traditional figure. The historical gaucho slowly began disappearing from the Argentine scene with the appearance of barbed wire fences, and long miles of railroad tracks.

49 ibid., pp. 77-78.
CHAPTER II

THE GAUCHO IN POETRY AND FICTION

The gaucho literature of Argentina is of particular importance for several reasons. It is the first truly indigenous one of the Río de la Plata region; it played a major role in shaping the ideas of the people; and, it demonstrates the similarity between the gaucho and the North American cowboy.

The gaucho theme can be found in every genre of Argentine literature. It originated in songs and ballads. The forms of the primitive verses treating the gaucho were many and varied, and the lyrics were sung to the accompaniment of a guitar by the payadores, gaucho minstrels. Their themes were in large part limited to love, merriment and death. After 1810 patriotism came to be a popular subject. As a general rule the ballads were modeled on the old Spanish romances, composed in quatrains with lines of eight syllables, the second rhyming with the fourth.

In 1777 the first gaucho poem was published by an anonymous balladeer. It was followed by a few others none

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1Aníbal Sánchez Reulet, "La poesía gauchesca," Revista Iberoamericana, XXVI (July, 1961), 251-299.

2Tinker, Life and Literature of the Pampas, pp. 9-10.
of which is considered of significant importance. It was not until Bartolomé Hidalgo (1788-1823) published his Diálogos Etnológicos in 1821 that gaucho talk and verse became a respectable branch of literature. Hidalgo's work was followed by that of a few minor poets, among them Juan Godoy (1793-1864). The next really important gaucho poet was Hilario Ascasubi (1807-1875) whose poem Santos Vega is treated in this thesis.

Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851) regarded the language used on the pampas as an illiterate jargon and founded a new school of writers who wrote gaucho poems in correct Castilian. His most important work La cautiva (1837) is notable because it is the initial gaucho poem written in such a manner. The school of writers founded by Echeverría counts among its members Rafael Obligado, author of another Santos Vera, and Bartolomé Mitre.

The greatest gaucho poem was published by José Hernández (1834-1886) and has still not been paralleled in popularity.

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5 Ricardo Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina (Buenos Aires, 1949), II, 313.

6 It first appeared in 1850, but it was not completed until 1872.

7 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 471.
and literary value. His poem *Martín Fierro*, (first part published in 1872) along with *Fausto* (1866) written by Estanislao del Campo (1834-1880) are treated in this investigation. Del Campo's poem is inferior to the work by Hernández in sincerity and inspiration. However, it cannot be denied that it served as a link from native verse in gaucho form to cultured poetry about native subjects.

The next genre in which the gaucho theme found great appeal was in the drama. However, because of the large scope and considerable variety, the study of gaucho stage productions will be omitted from this thesis.

When the gaucho legend became the subject of city-bred writers it began to lose its truth and vitality. That it was revived in the novel is partly due to Argentina's statesman and author Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), who aroused new interest by including in his famous *Facundo* (1845) a brilliant description of the gaucho types: singer, knife fighter, tracker, and pathfinder. Sarmiento insisted that the gaucho would soon disappear. However, he could not conceal a nationalistic pride in the courage and complete sense of independence of the gauchos. It was this that gave the gaucho new importance in the mind of the writers and convinced them that the gaucho could become a hero in the novel as he had been in poetry.8

Eduardo Gutiérrez' (1853-1890) dime novel, *Juan Moreira* (1879), while of questionable literary value, is worthy of consideration because of its theme. Just as Martín Fierro was the reformed gaucho, Juan Moreira was the outlaw who must perish. It is also important to note that Gutiérrez was the first Argentine writer to earn his living writing fiction. *Juan Moreira* became even more popular after it was adapted for a stage production. Argentine writers of gaucho fiction are numerous, but only a few have reached national distinction. Chapters VI through IX of this thesis will deal chronologically with the most outstanding and important gaucho novels of Argentine literature.

Although Roberto J. Payró (1867-1928) has not received any critical acclaim for his novel *El casamiento de Laucha* (1906), it has been included in this study because of the changed characteristics of the gaucho in this novel. Instead of being presented as a legendary hero, he appears as a *picaro*.

It remained for Ricardo Güiraldes (1886-1927) to present a perfected portrait of the gaucho in *Don Segundo Sombra* (1927) as José Hernández had done in *Martín Fierro*. Unlike other writers who wrote reminiscing about their days on the *estancia*, Güiraldes, in the character of Don Segundo, portrayed the gaucho as he had observed him at a time when

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the traditional figure was little more than a shadowy memory of the past.¹⁰

The last major gaucho novel discussed in this investigation is El romance de un gaúcho by Benito Lynch. There is a diversity of opinion with regard to the actual date of publication of this novel. Arturo Torres-Ríoseco states that it is 1930,¹¹ while Rafael Alberto Arrieta gives the date as 1933.¹² Lynch is considered as one of the most prolific writers of gaucho literature and his works have been included among the best and most interesting.¹³

In the twentieth century the preservation of the gaucho legend has fallen to the pen of men such as Güiraldes, Payró, Hugo West, Benito Lynch, Eleuterio F. Tiscornia, and Leopoldo Lugones, who never knew the traditional gaucho in his prime. Thus modern gaucho literature is continually being written, although today it is merely a portrayal of country life with descriptions of gaucho characters and customs. It may be observed that present writers are no longer escritores gauchos but rather escritores gauchados.


¹²Rafael Alberto Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina (Buenos Aires, 1959), IV, 144.

CHAPTER III

SANTOS VEGA BY HILARIO ASCASUBI

Coinciding with the famous May Revolution of Argentina, there came to prominence a unique and peculiar type of literary poetry, better known as poesía gauchesca. It is written in the idiom of the gaucho. Its meter is the popular octosyllabic and it is of epic length. The pattern of stanzas is irregular, apparently conforming to the whims of the poet.

Although it may be possible to trace the origin of gaucho poetry to some distant and unknown author, it did not achieve a high degree of recognition until the Uruguayan writer Bartolomé Hidalgo gave it literary form. It must be stressed, however, that Hidalgo was not the creator of gaucho poetry but rather its promoter. Since he is not of Argentine origin, his works will not be treated in this paper. The direct successor in Argentina of Hidalgo's gaucho poetry is Hilario Ascasubi.

Hilario Ascasubi was born on January 14, 1807, in the vicinity of Fraile Muerto, in the province of Córdoba, during a trip his mother was making to Buenos Aires. Much of his early childhood was spent on an estancia where he became

1 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 347-348.
acquainted with many of the gaucho skills. He was only about twelve when he embarked as an apprentice sailor on the ship La Rosa Argentina. During the trip to the United States, the ship was overpowered by Portuguese pirates who took him to Portugal, England, and France; and finally he returned to Argentina by way of Chile and Bolivia.²

He loved travel and adventure. In 1824 he went to the province of Salta, where he founded a newspaper. In 1825 he enlisted in the ranks of Colonel José María Paz and took an active part in the struggle between the Unitarios and Federales. Colonel José Paz was an Unitario fighting against the caudillos of the interior. Because of his military experiences and travels throughout Argentina, Ascasubi came to observe closely and appreciate the gaucho, and his way of life.³

Ascasubi used gaucho language in satiric poetry to attack the evils of the government. As a result, in 1830, by order of Juan Manuel de Rosas, he was imprisoned. He spent two years in jail under threats of execution, and finally managed to flee to Uruguay, where he remained for the next twenty years, until the fall of the tyranny.⁴

²Manuel Mujica Láinez, Vida de Aniceto el Gallo (Buenos Aires, 1943), pp. 14-16.


⁴Láinez, Vida de Aniceto el Gallo, pp. 48-49.
Uruguay he wrote extensively and published several gaucho periodicals, among them, El corriente argentino and El gaucho en campaña. Also in Uruguay, with the earnings of a small bakery which he established, he helped to buy arms for General Lavalle and his crew, which eventually defeated the Federales. In the campaign against Rossas, he was General Justo Urquiza's assistant, and in the battle of Caseros earned the rank of colonel. When Buenos Aires separated from the Confederation, he embraced the cause of Mitre against Urquiza. After national unity was achieved, he was sent to Europe on a government military mission. He lived in Paris the latter part of his life, where in 1872 he published his complete works. He spent the last few years of his life in Argentina's capital, where he died in 1875.5

Ascasubi began his literary career by imitating the Díalogos of Hidalgo. Among his most important works are Paulino Lucero and Santos Vega. The latter, also known as Los mellizos de la flor, was amplified and completed in Paris in 1872, and became the author's most widely read poem. He began writing Santos Vega in 1850, and it took him eight months, from September 1871 to April 1872, to complete this work, which exceeds 12,600 verses. Because of his eagerness to publish it, the characters are sometimes presented in confused fashion, and the action is unrelated. One of the

periodic Aniceto el Gallo (1852), is significant not just for its vivid contents, but also because he adopted it as a pen name.  

As original intention in writing Santos Vega is described by the second title, *Los mellizos de la flor* - an account of the life of a *raucero malo*, Luis Salvador, also known as *el Tigre*, and his brother Jacinto, although the latter occupies a minor role in the development of this poem. It is a description of the perils and existence on the estancias at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The entire story is told by the legendary minstrel, *payador* Santos Vega, and hence its title. Ascasubi chose Santos Vega as the narrator of his poem in order to add a certain air of verisimilitude to his fictitious characters; however, the poem has no other relation to the legendary minstrel besides its title.

Santos Vega is the *payador*, the story teller, and for eight consecutive days he tells Rufo Tolosa and his wife Juana Petrona, the story of *Los mellizos de la flor*. The action takes place around Chascomús, close to the Indian frontier, during a time when Indian attacks were a part of everyday life on the estancias. The two major characters are the previously mentioned Luis Salvador, and Genaro Berdún. There

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6 Ascasubi, Santos Vega, p. 10.

7 Julio A. Leguizamón, Historia de la literatura hispano-ameríccana (Buenos Aires, 1945), 1, 572-573.
are several other individuals who take part in the development of Santos Vega, and at the end of the poem, they all come together at Pergamino, to the funeral of a mysterious stranger, who is none other than Luis Salvador.

La flor is the name of the estancia owned by Faustino Bejarano and his wife Doña Estrella. After several years of married life, a son is born to them.

Angel le dieron por nombre
nombre en el que acertaron,
porque fue luego en la tierra
todo un angel humanado,
cautivándose el cariño
de toditos los paisanos,
que el nombre de patroncito
su seguida le agregaron.

The foreman of La flor is Bruno Salvador. He is a very hard worker, held in high esteem by Don Faustino. Bruno is married to a beautiful girl who dies after one year of their marriage while giving birth to twins. This great misfortune so saddens Bruno that he also dies soon after. Don Faustino and his wife Estrella, moved with compassion, take the twins, Jacinto and Luis, into their home and rear them as if they were brothers to their own Angelito.

Jacinto proves to be a gentle and obedient child. Luis on the other hand is extremely cruel, a fighter, and a troublemaker. By the time he is seven, he has engaged in such pranks as making a blind beggar sit on hot coals, or

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heating the bombilla, thus burning a victim's mouth. When he is eight he steals his brother's poncho and a small knife, and flees from La flor. After several years of wondering, Luis finds asylum on the estancia of a Portuguese fisherman. As usual, he takes advantage of other people's hospitality, and steals a few coins from the fisherman. As soon as the fisherman finds out, he has him arrested by the alcalde, who in turn hands him over to Genaro Berdú, to be sent back to La flor.

Genaro tells Don Faustino of Luis' conduct, and at the same time begins an enduring friendship with the Bejarano family. During one of Genaro's visits to La flor he meets Isabelita Azucena, a young girl reared by Doña Estrella and Don Faustino. Genaro asks for her hand in marriage, and within five weeks a large wedding feast takes place. During the wedding fiesta, Luis steals a few items and again flees the estancia to become the terror of that region.

*Ansí fue que la justicia hasta un premio prometió para aquel que lo agarrara vivo o muerto al saltador.*

Isabelita and Genaro receive a large piece of land and much cattle as a wedding gift from the Bejaranos. In spite of Genaro's desire to flourish as an estanciero, he was severely hampered in his efforts by repeated Indian attacks. One early morning an order arrives commanding Genaro to take

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*Ibid, p. 72.*
charge of fifteen men to take part in the defense against the expected Indian malón, as such raids were called. Before Genaro leaves he tells Isabelita of his sister Rosa, who was taken captive by the Indians, along with her son Manuel, after the Indians had killed her husband. Genaro had been told that Manuel is now an Indian chief, taking part in malones against the white population. Genaro expresses to his wife a desire of meeting his nephew, and tells her to flee to La flor.

After Luis' escape from La flor a rastreador and his group succeed in finding him. However, in a last effort to escape, Luis covers his horse's eyes with a poncho and jumps into the Parana River. The skill of the rastreador in pursuing his victim has become legendary.

Para pasar el arroyo
dejando como dejó,
esta rayita en la arena;
y esta rayita la formó
con la argollita que tiene
en la punta mi chinchón
porque desde aquí, el recao
en los brazos lo llevó;
pero luego a la cabeza
al pasar se lo cargó.
Y este arroyo, estoy seguro
lo conoce el saltador
como cualquiera de ustedes
o quizás mucho mejor.
Ahora muenten y pasemos
el arroyo, y luego yo
les diré como y adonde
se ha dirigido el ladrón.10

10Ibid, pp. 171-172.
While Genaro is out on his expedition against the Indians, he meets Anselmo, another rastreador hired by the alcalde to find Luis. Genaro and Anselmo join their efforts and manage to apprehend him. Luis is first taken to a prison in Chascomús and later, under heavy guard, he is taken to Buenos Aires. As Luis is led by the guards to the new prison in Buenos Aires, Angel who is in the capital studying to be a priest, sees him. The patroncito is so moved that he asks his parents, Don Faustino and Doña Estrella, to come and help Luis. The prison conditions are very harsh and inhumane. Luis is sentenced to death, but thanks to Don Faustino's efforts, the virrey changes the sentence to ten years in prison. During his time in prison, Luis is often visited by the Bejarianos and helped in every possible way. After two years in prison, due to his good behavior, Luis is allowed to limosnear, while escorted by two guards. Limosnear was the practice of allowing prisoners to go out in the streets to beg. During one of such outings, Luis invites his guard for a drink. After a few drinks at the pulperia, Luis kills his guard and the pulpero, and once again flees.

Ascasubi severely criticizes the entire prison system, not only because of its barbaric conditions, but because of practices such as limosnear. Most of the things given to the begging inmates, were confiscated by the guards or prison authorities. Not only was the prison system corrupt, but so were the judges who sentenced the criminals. Don Faustino's
generosity towards a certain judge proved to be sufficient reasons for shortening the ten-year sentence to less than three. Another of the institutions criticized by Ascasubi is the Catholic Church. He cites one example where a monk found some lamb ribs in a garbage can, and then tried to sell them as miraculous religious relics belonging to Saint Anthony.

At the same time that Luis is being imprisoned, Genaro prepares his soldiers for the Indian attack. During the battle, Genaro is about to kill an Indian chief when he realizes that it is his nephew Manuel. Berdún embraces his nephew and takes him to meet Isabelita. Manuel stays with them, and for the next few years they live in peaceful harmony, with the hope that someday they may rescue Manuel's mother. On one occasion when Berdún and his wife left Manuel in charge of the estancia for a few days, the Indians attacked and took Manuel back with them. At the same time the Indians attacked and destroyed the estancia La flor.

Berdún and his wife had to flee to another region to begin life anew. One evening after Berdún and Isabelita have a small quarrel, they sleep on separate beds. During the night a mysterious intruder comes into their rancho and stabs Berdún. Isabelita finds an iron rod still hot, which they use to remove the coals from the fire, and brands the assassin on his back. Then, she removes the knife from her husband's throat, and goes out into the fields crying for help. A military patrol finds her and since she still holds the knife
in her hand, she is accused of the murder. Ascasubi again condemns the judicial system and the manner in which justice is administered. The sergeant simply made out a declaration and signed it. His words are accepted as complete and unchallenged truth.

\[\text{Y después de ese chorizo, de mentiras, que ensarto con verdades y apariencias, su declaración firmó.}\]

Shortly after Isabelita is imprisoned she becomes insane and as a result she is released and allowed to rejoin the Bejaranos, who after two years manage to cure her. By some miraculous chance the Bejaranos and Isabelita meet Berdún, Rosa, and Manuel. Berdún explains that the night when he was stabbed, by the still unidentified assailant, and Isabelita went for help, his nephew Manuel, who was taking part in an Indian malón, saved his life.

In the meantime Jacinto Salvador is wounded in an accident. A stranger happens to come by and tries to help Jacinto, claiming that he is a doctor.

\[\text{Era médico el viajero o más bien un matasanos de mala canción y conciencia, de aquellos que farolían la echan aca en la campaña de doctores afanados siendo capaz de matar a Cristo crucificado.}\]

At the same time when the doctor arrives, another stranger comes to Jacinto's house trying to help. After the doctor

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p. 291.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 248.}\]
pronounces Jacinto dead, the other stranger requests permission to sit at Jacinto's bedside, and remains there all night.

The following morning Jacinto is placed on a carreta, and taken to be buried at Pergamino, where the rest of the family has just reunited. Eight blocks before arriving at their destination, Jacinto who apparently has not died, starts to get up. The stranger, who was sitting on the edge of the carreta, is so frightened that he falls off and is critically wounded. The whole family gathers around the wounded stranger and a priest is called to confess him, but the stranger refuses, saying that his sins are too many and that he would not have time to confess them all. Finally, he agrees to be confessed, and the priest absolves him of all sins. Shortly before he dies, he reveals that he had stabbed Genaro Berdún, and that he is Luis Salvador. After he dies, they turn him over and find the mark with which Isabelita had branded him the night he tried to kill Berdún.

Aní, pues, la Providencia
del cielo justificó
no hay deuda que no se pague.
A lo que añadió el patrón;
ni plazo que no se cumpla,
es verdad dijo el Oidor.13

The poem Santos Vera covers a wide field of interests and depicts individuals from different regions of the country. It describes life in the city and on the estancias, customs among the Indians and among the clergy. Ascasubi has tried
to include so many different elements that at times he sacrifices quality for quantity. Some of his character sketches seem unclear, the scenery hazy, and the perspective false.\textsuperscript{14} Several details give \textit{Santos Vega} an historical appearance, although at times the anachronisms are too evident, tending to destroy its historical frame.\textsuperscript{15}

The author's desire to moralize is evident in several sections of the poem. He tries to equate imprisonment with divine punishment. This is especially true when Luis is taken to jail.

Hasta que al fin lo alcanzó
la mano de Dios y, al cabo
diole un castigo terrible
del modo menos pensado.\textsuperscript{16}

Ascasubi presents the gaucho as he was before the city corrupted him. He evokes that golden age in the life of the \textit{gaucho paisano} before the Wars of Independence and civil strife.\textsuperscript{17}

The women in \textit{Santos Vega}, generally, are objects of esteem and respect although a feeling of romantic love towards them is almost nonexistent. Ascasubi does not glorify the life of a \textit{gaucho malo}, but repeatedly emphasizes the unhappy

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14}\textit{Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina}, II, 485-493.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}\textit{Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina}, IV, 65-89.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ascasubi, Santos Vega}, p. 162.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid}, p. xii.
\end{itemize}
consequences of a life of crime. He not only amuses with his wit and good sense of humor, but teaches a moral lesson. Ascasubi's true genius as a writer is clearly revealed in *Santos Vega*, earning him a place of distinction among the three most popular and beloved gaucho poets.
CHAPTER IV

FAUSTO BY ESTANISLAO DEL CAMPO

Of the three major gaucho poets, Estanislao del Campo is less popular than Hilario Ascasubi or José Hernández, but his poem Fausto is considered the most refined and ingenious, a jewel of its kind.

Estanislao del Campo was born in Buenos Aires on February 7, 1834. His father had served in the Army since the days of Independence, and returned to the military ranks under the leadership of Lavalle, under whom he became a colonel. His son Estanislao also occupied a prominent place among the revolutionary figures of that era. Estanislao del Campo was an ardent supporter of the porteños who favored the secession of Buenos Aires. Under Adolfo Alsina he took part in the action at Cepeda, and in Pavón earned the rank of captain. During the Mitre revolution in 1874, he became a colonel. 1

He occupied several public offices, serving as Secretary of the Chamber of Deputies of Buenos Aires, and National Deputy, and for twelve years held a provincial governmental post. Del Campo was at different times a merchant, a military man, an editor, and a politician. However, it was his works

1 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 494-495.
as a poet for which he is best remembered. He entered the ranks of gaucho poets in 1857, declaring himself a disciple of Ascasubi. Following the example of his master Ascasubi (Aniceto el Gallo), Del Campo chose the pseudonym Aniceto el Pollo.

His first poem which he published in the newspaper Los debates caused Hilario Ascasubi to write in El orden of 1857, in which he declared that he was not in any way connected to the poem published by Del Campo, under the already mentioned pseudonym. Among his works are found Acentos de mi guitarra and Composiciones festivas. In his brief book Poesías (1870), his poem Fausto has saved his name from being for ever forgotten.

Faust, lyrical drama in five acts by Charles Gounod, with an Italian text, is a simplified version of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's Faust. It was premiered in Argentina at the Teatro Colón on August 24, 1866. On the 21st of August, the newspaper La Nación Argentina, began publishing a Spanish translation of Faust so that anyone attending the opera could understand it. Five days after Faust's premiere, Del Campo

2Giusti, Lecciones de literatura argentina e hispano-americanas, pp. 182-183.

3Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 93.

4Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 196.

5Leguizamon, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, I, 574.
dedicated and submitted to Ricardo Gutierrez' judgement his own version titled Fausto. It was published in the newspaper La tribuna October 3 and 4, 1866. On November 8, 1866, it appeared in booklet form. The proceeds of the sale of Fausto went to military hospitals, since the country was at war with Paraguay. Estanislao del Campo died in Buenos Aires on November 6, 1880 at the early age of forty-six.

Del Campo begins his poem by describing a meeting between Laguna and El Pollo in the downtown area of Buenos Aires. El Pollo has come to the capital to receive money which someone owed him. During their conversation, Laguna mentions the devil. El Pollo in turn says that he has seen the devil, represented by Mephisto, in Faust, as it was staged at the Teatro Colon. El Pollo's interpretation of the stage action is typical of that of one who has never before attended a theatrical performance, and his conclusions although distorted, can be accepted as quite plausible to the ears of his unsophisticated gaucho listeners.

As El Pollo enters the theater, he is pushed from every side by a large crowd. His boots are often stepped upon, and to make matters worse, someone has stolen his facón. Finally he finds his seat, and suddenly the music begins as

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6 Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 95-98.

7 Ibid, p. 93.
the curtains rise. He is rather confused by all this activity, especially when a certain doctor Fausto appears on the stage and publicly complains that science has not been able to answer his problem. The aged doctor Fausto is in love with Margarita, a very beautiful blonde, but she does not love him. He announces that he can no longer live without her and wants to poison himself. In his agony he calls upon the devil who suddenly appears on the stage.

The devil seals a pact with doctor Fausto whereby he will grant whatever Fausto desires in return for his soul.

Mi dotor, no se me asuste,
Que yo le vengo a servir;
Pida lo que ha de pedir
Y ordeneme lo que guste.

Fausto tells him of his great desire to possess Margarita. The devil agrees to help Fausto seduce Margarita, and begins by transforming him into a handsome young man.

El Pollo takes another drink of aguardiente, and continues with his story. He tells Laguna of Margarita's garden and the beauty surrounding it. El Pollo feels sorry for Fausto because he realizes how difficult it is to recover from a one-sided love affair.

Siempre ese amor lo persigue
A donde quiera, que va;
Es una fatalida
Que a todas partes lo persigue.

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Y si el viento hace sonar
Su pobre techo de paja,
Crees usto que es ella que baja
Sus lágrimas a secar. 9

The devil and Fausto are hidden in Margarita's garden
when her fiance Don Silverio appears at her doorstep and
leaves a bouquet of flowers. When Silverio departs, the
devil comes out and adds to it a little jewelry box. Mar-
garita is very pleased by what she finds. Margarita's mother
becomes angry when she sees her wearing the jewelry. Mephisto
takes Margarita's mother aside and tries to seduce her. At
the same time Fausto is left alone with Margarita. He de-
clares his great passion, and also makes love to her.

The following morning Margarita sits at her spinning
wheel lamenting her shame. She goes to church to find con-
solation, but the devil is waiting for her, and forbids her
to go inside. El Pollo expresses his own feelings and pity
for Margarita when he tells Laguna,

Aura, confiesa cuño
Que el corazón más calludo,
Y el gaucito más extrañudo,
Allí habría lagrimaños. 10

Mephisto and Fausto return to Margarita's garden where
they find Valentín, Margarita's brother, who has come home
from the army. A fight breaks out and they kill Valentín.
Later Margarita gives birth to a child. Due to the misfortunes
and tragedy surrounding Margarita's life, she becomes insane
and kills her child. As a result, she is imprisoned, and awaits

9 Ibid, p. 28. 10 Ibid, p. 36.
her execution. The devil and Fausto come to the jail and try to rescue her, but she suddenly realizes that Mephisto is the devil and dies. Fausto, upon seeing such tragedy, falls on his knees and begs for forgiveness. El Pollo ends his story by comparing the destiny of a woman to that of a flower.

Sus tiernas hojas despliega
Sin la menor desconfianza,
Y el gusano ya la alcanza
Y el sol de las doce llega

Se va el sol abrasador,
Pasa a otra planta el gusano,
Y la tarde encuentra, hombro,
El cadáver de la flor.11

Whatever appears dubious at the beginning of Fausto is clarified by the casual meeting of Laguna and El Pollo. The same is true for El Pollo's presence at the Teatro Colón. It is explained by the easy mingling of gauchos among the urban people. Once a person can accept the likelihood of a gaucho's going into a theater, the rest does not present any problems of credibility.12

Fausto's immediate popular appeal rests on its humorous characteristics. El Pollo's interpretation of the action on the stage is quite different from its original meaning. The humor lies in the mistaken assumptions which El Pollo makes.

11Ibid, p. 41.
12Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina II, 501.
He naively believes that he is witnessing the occurrence of actual events. His reaction when the devil appears on stage is reflective of the limited concept he had of the Prince of Darkness, since for him, Mephisto was not the incarnation of evil, but the legendary unbeatable minstrel. Mephisto's guitar in Gounod's opera is his best credential as one who is connected to the pampas.\textsuperscript{13}

Fausto is a transitional poem between "la poesía nativa de forma gauchesca y la poesía culta de asunto nativo."\textsuperscript{14} It is new and unusual in its content, although weak in its dialectal style. It is not written in the original gaucho language because its author has been in contact more with the city than with the gaucho. His rhetoric simply imitates that of other gaucho writers rather than of gauchos in general.\textsuperscript{15} That he is not a man of the pampas is evident by his usage of the word mar, which was not known among the gauchos. In describing an extraordinary horse as animal overo rosao, he reveals his unfamiliarity with horses. This type of animal was considered unfit for riding and was used to draw water from a well.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13}Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, III, 106.
\textsuperscript{14}Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 498.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid, pp. 498-499.
\textsuperscript{16}Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, III, 118.
Del Campo goes into great pains to describe the meticulous details such as the description of the sea, Margarita's unfortunate condition, and the change of colors in the sky. Although these descriptions are not completely related to the outcome of the action of the story, they contribute to make Fausto a truly great poem. He does not merely tell a story, but delves into human conflicts and sentiments. Before Del Campo, gaucho poets have bothered to describe only the outer elements. Del Campo goes deeper, he penetrates the invisible; he explores the soul and its destiny.

Some critics insist that Fausto does not try to teach nor moralize, but rather to amuse. This debatable conclusion would depend on their interpretation of such passages as,

Ansi es el mundo, amigo;
Nada dura, Don Laguna,
Hoy nos rie la fortuna,
Mañana nos da un guascaso.

Most critics however, agree that Del Campo enriches Fausto with philosophical meditations, and thus underscores a prominent aspect of gaucho literature. One of the major

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17 Leguizamón, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, I, 575.
18 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 505.
19 Yunque, La literatura social en la Argentina, p. 126.
20 Del Campo, Fausto, p. 40.
characteristics of most gaucho writers is to moralize, and Del Campo is no exception.²¹

Fausto is the work of an ingenious author, but nonetheless, an author of transition. Del Campo paved the way for future cosmopolitan authors to write about the gaucho and his environment.

²¹Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 506-507.
José Hernández was born on November 10, 1834, on a farm in Fueyrredón, San Isidro, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. His parents, Don Rafael Hernández and Doña Isabel Fueyrredón were both porteños. He was baptized July 27, 1835, in the church of Iglesia. From an early age he was left in the care of his aunt Victoria, while his parents traveled back and forth from their estancia in Southern Buenos Aires. In 1838 José was left with his paternal grandfather, Don José Gregorio Hernández Plata. By the time he was six, he could read and write. He was sent to the school of Don Pedro Sánchez, where he spent two years. In 1853, after his mother’s death, José was taken south to an estancia due to a lung infection. There he quickly learned many of the gaucho skills and came to closely observe the gaucho way of life.¹

In the government power struggle which followed the fall of Juan Manuel de Rosas, Hernández took part in the battles of Rincon and El Tala. In 1857 his father died. After a duel with another government official, due to political differences, Hernández was moved to Parana, which in

1858 was the capital of the Confederation. There he began a career as a writer and reporter. He held several government posts and served at different times as Recorder for the Confederate Senate, private secretary of Governor Pedernera of Entre Rios, and Deputy to the Provincial legislature of Buenos Aires.²

In 1863 he married Carolina Gonzales del Solar and shortly after, upon the death of General Peñaloza, Hernández published his first work, *La vida del Chaco*. After 1867 he occupied positions of wide responsibility including a teaching assignment in Colegio de San Agustín. In 1869 he returned to Buenos Aires where he began publication of *El Río de la Plata*.³ In its pages he ardently defended gaucho culture and society.⁴ In April, 1872, the government of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento suspended its publication. Hernández took refuge in Uruguay. Some sources say that in 1873, under an amnesty declared by Sarmiento, he returned to Buenos Aires where he concluded the poem *El gaucho Martín Fierro*.⁵ Other sources claim that early in 1872, Hernández traveled secretly to Buenos Aires, and under the protection of friends took

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⁴*El Río de la Plata, September 21, 1869*, p. 2.

up residence at the Hotel argentino. In 1873, he once again had to flee the country but was able to return the following year to defend the candidacy of Adolfo Alsina.6

In the days of the presidency of Nicolás Avellaneda, Hernández was able to better his economic position. In 1879 he published the second part of Martín Fierro at his own book store La librería del Plata. In 1880 Hernández defended the federalization of the capital of Argentina and the establishment of La Plata as the capital of Buenos Aires. During the latter part of his life he had a substantial voice in the affairs of his country, and his influence was felt in many government projects. In 1885 his health began to fail, and he retired to an estancia. He died in Buenos Aires, October 21, 1886.7

His major works are: La vida del Chaco published in Parana, 1863; El muchacho Martín Fierro and La vuelta de Martín Fierro, both published in Buenos Aires in 1872 and 1879 respectively, and in 1881 he published Instrucción del estanciero. No other work in the history of Argentine literature has achieved the same fame and distinction as Hernández' Martín Fierro. One edition followed another, and by 1884 over 62,000 copies had been printed. His friends no longer called


7Fernán Chávez, José Hernández (Buenos Aires, 1959), pp. 9-12.
him Hernández, but rather Martín Fierro.² When he died, people told each other, "Martín Fierro murió." Of course, Martín Fierro did not die, but rather passed into immortality. Its author, José Hernández, lives in the hearts of the Argentine people, and his name is uttered today with respect and veneration.

Aquí me pongo a cantar
al compás de la vigüela,
que el hombre que lo desvela
una pena extraordinaria
como la ave solitaria
con el cantar se consuela.⁹

Singing in this fashion in simple versos criollos,
Martín Fierro begins to tell his grief and his sorrows.

Fierro, like all the other gauchos, above all, loves freedom.

Mi gloria es vivir tan libre
como el pájaro del cielo;
no hago nido en este suelo
ande hay tanto que sufrir,
y naides me ha de seguir
cuando yo remuesto el vuelo.¹⁰

The gaucho finds himself in difficult conditions mainly because of the circumstances surrounding him. He says he never fights or kills, except when forced by necessity. Formerly there were days when he lived happy and peaceful.

He got up early in the morning, drank his mater and went about

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²Giusti, Lecciones de literatura argentina e hispano-america, p. 200.

⁹Hernández, Martín Fierro, p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 4-5.
his work. When the day was over gauchos would gather together under an onbu to tell stories or sing to the rhythm of their guitars. However, "la conquista del desierto" has changed matters.

pero aura barbarida!
la cosa anda tan fruncida
que gasta el pobre la vida
en jur de la autorida. 11

Martín Fierro, along with many other gauchos, is captured and sent to the frontera to fight Indians. He is supposed to be gone for only six months. However, Fierro is compelled to stay much longer. The gauchos are not armed and the sergeant uses them on his own farm. The Indians come and go as they please because the captain has sold the ammunition to ostrich hunters.

The Indians burn and kill everything that stands in their way, and in the case of captured women they burn the soles of their feet so that they cannot escape. During an Indian attack Martin Fierro describes one of his encounters with an Indian as follows:

Dios le perdone al salvaje
las ganas que me tapia
Desata las tres marias
y lo engatuea a cabriolas.
Pucha, si no traigo bolas,
me achura el indio ese día. 12

The living conditions on the frontier are extremely rugged. Martín Fierro is given no clothing or money, and

very little food. The only thing he has left is a blanket, and even that the sergeant soon takes for himself. On a certain occasion a few gauchos receive a small payment. Since Fierro has been in the service for two years he expects that perhaps at last he will receive some money. Unfortunately, he finds that his name is not on the list. He asks the sergeant,

\[ \text{tal vez mañana} \\
\text{acabarán de pagar} \\
\text{Que mañana ni otro día} \]

al punto me contestó. 13

This incident increases Martin's desire to desert. One evening he tries to escape, but the guard who happens to be a gringo shouts, "¿Quién víbore? ¿Qué víboras?" replied Martín. "Hag'arto" shouts again the gringo, to which Martín Fierro answers, "Mas lagarto serás vos." 14 He is severely punished for his attempted escape. Fierro complains of gringos who are sent to the frontier because they do not understand the gaucho, and do not know how to survive the rugged life.

A new attack is being planned against the Indians. Martín Fierro again tries to escape, and this time he is successful. When he arrives home he finds everything gone. From a neighbor he finds out that all his possessions have been sold to pay taxes, his two small sons have had to go to work as peones, and his wife has left with someone else who can provide for her. His hatred against those who caused

13 Ibid., p. 36. 14 Ibid., p. 41.
this misfortune is revived. Since he is now a deserter, he finds himself persecuted everywhere he goes. At a dance he gets into a fight and kills his opponent. Although it was in self defense, he has to flee because otherwise he will be arrested for desertion. His life becomes an endless race against the authorities. As he flees he says.

Monté y me encomendé a Dios,
rumbiando para otro pago;
que el gaucho que llaman vago
no puede tener querencia,
y así de estrago en estrago
vive yorando su ausencia.

El anda siempre juyando,
siempre pobre y perseguido;
no tiene cueva ni nido,
como si fuera maldito;
porque el ser gaucho, barajo!
el ser gaucho es un delito.

When a gaucho dies no one bothers to bury him. The only thing he is good for is to vote. If he does not complain he is a brute, and if he resists he is a gaucho malo. On a certain occasion Martín Fierro finds himself surrounded by the milicia that is trying to arrest him. Although greatly outnumbered, he courageously defends himself. Gaucho Cruz comes to his rescue and the two defeat the police. A lasting friendship develops between Martín Fierro and Cruz. The latter also had a rancho and a wife, but just like Martín Fierro he was sent to the frontier where he became a deserter. Cruz tries to console Fierro and tells his own life story. He goes on to compare the city dweller with the tungo, a very common waterfowl of the country:

Ibid., p. 63.
De los males que sufrimos
hablan mucho los puebieros,
pero hacen como los teros
para esconder sus niditos:
en un lado pagan los gritos
y en otro tienen los güevos.16

Martín Fierro and Cruz decide that in order to end
their flight they should go and live with the Indians. Be-
fore ending Martín Fierro, Hernández closes with a group of
stanzas praising the gifts with which God has endowed man.
The conditions under which the gaucho survives are indeed
deplorable, but Hernández knows that his poem alone will not
change conditions; thus he says,

Pero ponga su esperanza
en el Dios que lo forró;
y aquí me despido yo,
que referí así a mi modo
males que conocen todos
pero que nadie contó.17

Because of the success achieved by the first part of
Martín Fierro, and the many things which were left unsaid,
Hernández decided to write a second part calling it La vuelta
de Martín Fierro. When Cruz and Martín Fierro arrive at the
tolderías, there is a great tumult because the Indians are
preparing for war and mistake them for spies. They are
placed under heavy guard and live separately for the next
two years.

A plague comes upon the Indians and kills a great
number. Cruz becomes sick and dies within a very short time.
The Indians try to cure themselves with many barbaric and
repulsive rituals and superstition. One common practice was to beat the evil spirits out of a person.

One day Martín Fierro hears the agonizing cries of a woman, an occurrence that does not seem unusual to him, since they are often beaten. On this occasion it is a captive who is being terribly punished by her husband. He has killed their two year old son and with the child’s intestines tied her hands before beginning to beat her. Martín Fierro tries to help her, and in the process kills the Indian. Once again he has to flee, accompanied by the woman, but when they arrive at a farm, they separate. A friend tells Martín Fierro that the judge is now dead and the milicia is no longer searching for him. Soon after, he finds his two sons, and the older one tells of his sufferings. While he was working on an estancia someone was killed. Since the judge could not find the guilty party, he sent three gauchos to prison assuming that one of them was the guilty one. Martín's son expresses his sentiments about his imprisonment in the following verses:

Hijas, esposas, hermanas,
cyantas quieran a un varón,
díganles que esa prisión
es un infierno temido,
donde no se oye más ruido
que el latir del corazón.18

The youngest son was reared by a very kind aunt. However, soon after she died, the judge took all her goods and assigned a guardian to him. His guardian was a brutal,
thieving, criminal who had killed his wife because she had served him a cold mate. Whenever he got drunk, he liked to give advice to the younger son of Martín Fierro.

Hacete amigo del juez
no le des de que quejarse;
y cuando quiera enojarse
vos te debes encojer,
pues siempre es gusto tener
palenque ande ir a rascarse. 19

During the reunion celebration a stranger arrives. His name is Picardía, and he wants to sing his own life story. He was reared by his two aunts who were very religious and were constantly praying. Since he could not learn the prayers, he fled. For many years he earned his livelihood as a gambler. During a certain election, he insisted upon his right to vote for the candidate of his choice:

En las carpetas de juego
y en la mesa eleboral
a todo hombre soy igual
respeto al que me respeta
pero el naipe y la boleta
naiudes me lo ha de tocar. 20

Before voting, the judge told him which candidate to choose. Because he disobeyed, he was taken to prison and later sent to the frontier. Picardía goes on to tell about his father who happens to be Captain Cruz. Everyone is surprised, but very happy to meet the son of Martín Fierro's best friend.

After Picardía tells his life story, a Negro comes in and challenges Martín Fierro to sing. Their subjects vary,
and Hernández uses this occasion to express some very philo-
osophical thoughts. The Negro finally admits defeat after
Martín Fierro sings,

MORENO, VOY A DECIR
SIGÚN MI SABER ALCANZA:
EL TIEMPO SOLAMENTE ES TARDANZA
DE LO QUE ESTÁ POR VENIR;

NO TUVO NUNCA PRINCIPIO
NI JAMÁS ACABARÁ,
PORQUE EL TIEMPO ES UNA RUEDA,
Y RUEDA ES ETERNIDAD;

Y SI EL HOMBRE LO DIVIDE
SOLO LO HACE, EN MI SENTIR,
POR SABER LO QUE HA VIVIDO
O LE RESTA POR VIVIR.21

Before they all separate into different directions,
Martín Fierro gives his sons some advice concerning shame,
unity among brothers, respect for elders, and everyone's
duty to work. Hernández ends this story by expressing his
own wish that Martín Fierro be profitable to its readers:

ANSÍ, PUES, ENTREÉNANSE
CON CODICIAS NO ME MANCHO:
NO SE HA DE LLORAR EL RANCHO
EN DONDE ESTE LIBRO ESTÁ.22

El gauchito Martín Fierro may be divided into three main
divisions: life on the frontier, life among the Indians,
and the return of the hero to his hometown. The second part,
La vuelta de Martín Fierro, is longer, involving more char-
acters, and is richer in action. At the same time, Hernández' tone is milder, and he seems to accept the growing disap-
pearance or transformation of gauchos.
In the course of preparing several editions to supply the demand, some editors made substantial emendations to the original text. Thus, some words that are found today in Martín Fierro belong to editors and not to Hernández. When it first appeared, the intellectual class accepted it indifferently. The common people, on the other hand, received it with enthusiasm. Many who could not even read had copies of the work. There was always the hope that someone would read it for them.

Hernández was inspired and at the same time motivated to write Martín Fierro because of the scorn and persecution to which gauchos were subjected, especially during Sarmiento's administration. Aníbal Sánchez Reulab implies that Martín Fierro's superiority lies in its theme of social protest, rather than its literary value. This is an over-simplified explanation of the popularity of Martín Fierro, since the historical and costumbrista elements contribute to its high acclaim as well as the purely entertaining aspects of the account of the gaucho's adventures.

The author of Martín Fierro did not write deliberately to amuse. Unlike Del Campo, his usage of versos criollos

23 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 519-520.
24 Enrique Bianchi, Martín Fierro un poema de protesta social (Buenos Aires, 1952), p. 53.
26 Roulot, "La poesía gauchoesa," p. 269.
was not to ridicule the gaucho and provoke laughter in the educated men. Rather it was, "...para reflejar en el idioma de éste su índole, sus pasiones, sus sufrimientos y sus esperanzas, tanto más intensas y sagradas cuanto más cerca están de la naturaleza." Nor did Hernández write primarily to describe the customs of the gaucho. He wrote because he had a social protest to make. He felt and understood the trials and conflicts which gauchos were experiencing. Hernández had a genuine concern and desire to improve conditions. As an editor of a paper he wrote, "No country is rich if it is not concerned about the face of its poor."

The historical background of Martín Fierro has been clearly established. Factual evidence supports Hernández' claim that gauchos who did not vote as told by their superiors were promptly dispatched to fight Indians. Laws, similar to the American "black code," aimed at making the gauchos subservient to the will of the city masters, were widely used. Furthermore, land was unequally distributed, natives were scorned, and gauchos became the object of ridicule.

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28 Yunque, La literatura social en la Argentina, p. 133.

29 Chávez, José Hernández, p. 16.

30 Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 243-245.
Hernández advocated the application to the gaucho of the guarantees of the law. The gaucho, he felt, must be a participant in the advantages which progress achieves daily. Martín Fierro is not the name of a man, but of a race. Hernández does not tell the experiences of one gaucho, but of an entire society.31

Martín Fierro is an effort to personify the character of the Argentine gaucho. It includes his behavior, his way of thinking, and his peculiar way of expressing himself. Hernández has endowed him with both admirable qualities and defects. He is especially successful in accurately projecting metaphors, the gaucho's favorite figure of speech.32 It is interesting to note that with very few exceptions all his metaphors are drawn from the pampas, animals, or things with which the gaucho is most familiar.

Hernández' technique of writing does not contain anything that had not been tried before. However, with regard to the authenticity of his gaucho accent, he is considered superior to all other poets who wrote in this idiom.33 Some critics reject Martín Fierro as a literary masterpiece because its author did not adhere to the established rules.34

31 Martínez Estrada, Muerte y transformación de Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires, 1950), p. 337.
32 Hernández, Martín Fierro, Ediciones Feuser, p. 327.
33 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 510.
34 Ibid., p. 337.
It may be observed that he displayed the kind of originality and independence for which the pattern had been supplied on a nobler scale by Shakespeare and Lope de Vega.

*Martín Fierro* achieved complete identification with the masses. It is the first book which in language and spirit manifests the authentic national literature.35 Today in Argentina, passages from *Martín Fierro* are memorized by every public school student. No other book in the history of Argentine literature has become so popular and widely read as *El gaucho Martín Fierro*.

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CHAPTER VI

JUAN NORISRA BY EDUARDO GUTIERREZ

Eduardo Gutierrez was born in Buenos Aires, July 15, 1851. His formal education was limited to six months at Colegio Nacional and one year at an English-speaking school. He seemed to have had a natural ability for foreign languages and could speak Italian, English, French, and German, in addition to Spanish. He was also an accomplished piano player. His five brothers assumed roles of prominence in their society, one of them became a doctor and another a well known editor and literary figure.

Eduardo had not been reared on the pampas, but just like Hidalgo, Ascasubi, Del Campo, and Hernández, he also spent considerable time in the army, where he became thoroughly acquainted with many gauchos. He came to admire and appreciate the gaucho, but not his manner of speaking. Thus in his writings he preferred to use Castilian, and only occasionally sprinkled his works with gaucho terms.

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1Eduardo Gutierrez, La muerte de buenos Aires (Buenos Aires, 1959), p. 10.
2Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 587-590.
3Lago Guzman, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, II, 146.
4Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 608.
Another characteristic of Gutierrez's writings is that he did not spend much time describing the scenery and the surroundings since he felt that the public was well acquainted with them. He did, however, emphasize action and intrigue in his narrative. His writings are not outstanding for their high artistic qualities, but rather because the protagonists have remained in the minds of the populace.5

He began his literary career in 1866 by writing in his brother's newspaper, *La Nación Argentina*, and he remained a newspaper writer for the rest of his life.6 Most of his novels were serialized in a newspaper and after a series was ended, it was published in a book. He wrote for the masses and his appeal lay in the suspense of "continuara en el próximo número," with which each chapter was closed.7 None of his characters is a purely fictional creature of his imagination. He either used legendary heroes or drew his characters from judicial and police records.8 All of his gaucho works have several things in common. They usually deal with a kind gaucho who is a victim of a landowner, a storekeeper, or the law enforcement agency, and almost each chapter includes bloody fights, murder, gambling, and drinking. At

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7 Gutierrez, *La muerte de Buenos Aires*, p. 23.
the same time he projects the gaucho as a noble figure who
in his attempt to survive is forced into treacherous deeds.9

Gutiérrez has written over thirty volumes, among them
Juan Cuello, Juan sin patria, Hormiga Negra, and Juan Mo-
reira.10 As a stimulant or perhaps inspiration in his prolific
literary labor, he used copious quantities of tobacco. He
would begin to write his stories in the evening surrounded
with several trays of Turkish cigarettes and by early morning,
when most of the cigarettes were consumed, he had completed
another chapter.11 Gutiérrez's works lack polish and he
uses a very elementary vocabulary. He never reread his works
before publishing them in book form, instead he wrote at the
beginning of each book, "sin corrección del autor."12

Juan Moreira is known to have lived in 1874 during a
time of political upheaval. Moreira was the chosen candidate
of a fraudulent election and the police from the capital were
sent to Navarro to cancel the elections. Moreira, supported
by the local police, defeated the vigilantes from Buenos
Aires, but later was killed in a similar encounter.13

9Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 592-
593.
10Arturo Canbours Caozpo, Interacciones sobre literatura
11Gutiérrez, La muerte de Buenos Aires, p. 9.
12Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 595.
13Yunque, La literatura social en la Argentina, p. 152.
The theme in Juan Morcira is very similar to that of Martín Fierro. Gutiérrez claims that the gaucho has two alternatives in his life; either to choose a criminal life, or go to the frontier to fight Indians. The gaucho cannot work on an estancia because the estanciero would rather hire a foreigner, who is not subject to military service, than a gaucho who might have to leave at any time. He repeats Hernández's statement, "El gaucho...no sirve para otra cosa que para votar en las elecciones." ^1

Juan Morcira has lived the first thirty years of his life in the vicinity of Katanzas. He is a hard working man, highly respected by his neighbors. He attends the pulpería only on holidays and never drinks in excess. His voice is clear and melodious and he can usually be heard singing at gaucho gatherings. Morcira has many admirable qualities and his physical appearance is envied by other gauchos.

On a certain occasion while attending a dance, Morcira meets a beautiful paisanita, Vicenta, whom he eventually marries. At the same dance there is a teniente alcalde, Don Francisco, who loves Vicenta but his intentions are not honorable. Don Francisco shows his disapproval of the wedding by not attending it, and later begins a series of reprisals against Morcira. The alcalde's abuses culminate when Morcira complains to him that Sarietti, the storekeeper, refuses to

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repay him a loan he made some time ago. Moreira is in desperate need of the money because of the birth of a son, but when Don Francisco asks Sardetti about the loan, the latter claims that he has never received the money. Thus, Don Francisco jails Moreira on a charge of falsely claiming to have lent the money to Sardetti. Moreira does not utter one complaint while in jail, and upon his release Gutiérrez describes the gaucho's feelings: "El gaucho salió del juzgado con la primera semilla de venganza en el corazón, y convencido de que para él no había más derecho que el que le proporcionara el filo de su puñal ni más justicia que la que él mismo se hiciera." 15

After Moreira leaves the jail, he resolves either to get his ten thousand pesos or to give Sardetti a stab with his knife for every thousand pesos. He confronts Sardetti, who acknowledges his debt but insists that he has no money with which to repay it. A fight begins and Moreira fulfills his promise by killing Sardetti with ten puñaladas. After this incident he has to flee and become a fugitive. Before leaving the district he talks to his compadre Jiménez, whom he asks to look after his wife and son. In the morning Moreira's house is invaded by the authorities and all his family is taken to jail.

Moreira wanders from rancho to rancho, where hospitality is a part of the gaucho's religion, and is well received.

everywhere he goes. Julian, another gaucho friend decides to help Moreira and wants to stay by his side. Since Moreira wants to know the fate suffered by his loved ones, he sends Julian to find out. When Julian comes back he tells Moreira that his father-in-law was put in jail in an attempt to make him reveal Moreira's whereabouts but since he would not talk, they let him go and then killed him claiming that he tried to escape. His wife and son, however, are still in jail.

Moreira returns home to avenge the death of his father-in-law, and finds Francisco and two of his assistants. He first kills the assistants and then a terrible and bloody fight begins in which Moreira kills the one responsible for all his misfortunes. He flees again to a nearby town where for the first time in three days he is able to rest. Moreira is awakened by his dog, Cacique, when some soldiers try to apprehend him, but he kills several of them and the rest flee. Moreira discovers that one of the abandoned victims is only wounded, therefore, he washes the wound and uses his own handkerchief to make a bandage.

Julian often accompanies Moreira, but he never has to intervene in the defense of his friend, whose reputation as a great fighter has spread far and wide to the point where he can no longer walk into a _pulpería_ and not be challenged by at least one gaucho. "Maldita sea mi suerte....Que no puedo pisar un sitio sin tener que matar a un hombre."16

16Ibid, p. 94.
While visiting one of the pulperías, Moreira sings several songs about his troubles and sorrows. Juan Córdoba, one of the gauchos present, ridicules and challenges Moreira, but not before giving his own reply to Moreira's song, "Ansí es el mundo...el hombre es como la mariposa que da vueltas alrededor del candil. Tanto hace y tanto porfía que al fin viene a caer entre el sebo y queda frita." Finally the insults become unbearable and Moreira kills Córdoba.

Moreira goes to Julio's house and upon meeting they embrace, "Y se besaron en la boca como dos amantes, sellando con aquel beso apasionado la amistad leal y sincera que se habían profesado desde pequeños." He stays with Julio for several days until the former is able to obtain some news concerning Moreira's family. His wife and child were finally released from jail, but when they came home they found only the bare walls. Everything had been sold to pay the expenses of apprehending Moreira. Vicenta finds herself alone and abandoned without anyone to help her. The compadre Jiménez convinces Vicenta that Moreira had been arrested and killed, and persuades her to live with him as his wife. Upon hearing these news, Moreira decides to kill Jiménez but all his efforts to locate him are in vain. Jiménez, fearing Moreira's anger, has moved with Vicenta and the child to another district.

During his wanderings Moreira kills many individuals and defeats several partidas, groups of soldiers, seeking to arrest him. Gutiérrez describes the fights as cruel and bloody. "El hueso frontal estaba roto en una extensión de ocho centímetros, y el cuero que los cubría completamente deshecho y hundido mezclándose el cabello y las partículas de hueso." When Moreira realizes that he is greatly outnumbered by a new partida trying to apprehend him, he says, in words similar to those of Hernández, "No me hago a un lado de la huella, ni aunque vengan degollando." There are several other fights, but the pattern is almost always the same, with Moreira winning an overwhelming victory.

The last incident of major importance is Moreira's affiliation with a political party. Gutiérrez tries to add verisimilitude to his story by saying, "La oposición estaba presidida por una persona muy conocida en la sociedad de Buenos Aires y que no nombramos por el papel que desempeñó en el incidente." Moreira becomes a candidate and is popularly elected. The opposition begins spreading terrible rumors about Moreira's cruelty until they succeed in convincing the authorities in the capital that Moreira should be arrested. A large detachment of vigilantes is sent, and after investigating Moreira's habits, they set a trap, "...poniéndole por

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19 Ibid., p. 130.  
20 Ibid., p. 144.  
21 Ibid., p. 175.
cebo a una mujer de quien el gustaba enormemente." After making arrangements to meet the woman at the pulpería La Estrella, in Navarro, Moreira travels there on April 30, 1874. He requests accommodation at the pulpería, and while taking his siesta, is awakened by Cacique. Moreira arms himself immediately, but soon finds that his opponents greatly outnumber him. There were twenty-five vigilantes from the capital who had been brought to Navarro specifically to apprehend Moreira. After a long and bloody fight, during which Moreira manages to wound and kill many, he tries to jump a wall, when one of the vigilantes who had been hiding by a water well stabs Moreira in the back with his bayonet. Moreira succeeds in killing his assailant but his own wound is mortal. "...amagó una última puñalada; pero aquel brazo que sólo la muerte podía haber debilitado, cayó por primera vez sin herir, pero no volverse a levantar más." After Moreira's death everyone wants to see his chest, since many claim that he wears a protective net, but when they unbutton his shirt all they could find was a net of scars.

Gutierrez tried to make his work seem factual and historical by saying, "Hemos hecho un viaje ex profeso a recoger datos en los partidos que este gaacho habitó primero y antes después, sin encontrar en su vida una acción cobarda que arroje una sola sombra sobre lo atrayente de la relación que

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22 Ibid, p. 188.  
emprendeos."24 However, there is little resemblance between his character and the Juan Moreira found in police records. The latter is described as a typical gauchito malo, who well deserves to be punished.

Gutiérrez' main purpose in writing Juan Moreira was not only to entertain, but it was also a protest against the abuses of the law enforcement agencies. Thus, Moreira came to be a symbol representing the virtuous gaucho unjustly persecuted. Gutiérrez maintained that the gaucho was inherently good, but he was frequently compelled by unfortunate circumstances to defy the authorities and become an outlaw.25

There are several fictional works in Argentine literature prior to 1879 which in some way deal with the gaucho. However, Juan Moreira was the first novel by an Argentine writer to treat the gaucho as the protagonist around whom all the action revolved. "Juan Moreira may be considered a representative work, one which brings to the fore the gaucho's sad trajectory from respectability to lawlessness."26

Gutiérrez seems to have received his inspiration from Martín Fierro, this is especially true of his concluding paragraph which repeats the theme of Hernández' masterpiece:


25 *Miocene,* *El Gauchito,* p. 103.

De un hombre nacido para el bien y para ser útil a sus semejantes, hace una especie de fiero, que para salvar la cabeza del cabo de las partidas, tienen que echarse al camino y defendese con la daga y el trabuco. Es tiempo ya de que cesen estos hechos salvajes y el gaucho empiece a gozar de los derechos que le otorga la Constitución y que conquistaron con su sangre en todos los campos de batalla. 27

It is a very difficult task to classify Gutierrez's works into a special category. Some have labeled Juan Moreira as a "thriller." 28 Others claim that it does not have any literary value. 29 Still others have this to say about Eduardo Gutierrez:

Deformó, adulteró, idealizó o robó hombres y hechos? Es verdad. Pero en una literatura donde se ha tomado en serio la poesía de este militer - por ser militar - o el drama de aquel diputado - por ser diputado - bien puede hablarse del folletinero Eduardo Gutierrez, y estudiarlo. 30

The fact remains that until 1879 no other work of fiction dealing with the gaucho achieved the popularity of Juan Moreira, and it was not until the publication of Roberto J. Fayro's El casamiento de Laucha in 1906 that the gaucho reappeared to form the background in a work of Argentine

27 Gutierrez, Juan Moreira, p. 213.


29 German García, La novela argentina (Buenos Aires, 1952), pp. 73-74.

fictions.\textsuperscript{31} The widespread appeal of \textit{Juan Moreira} is evident by the fact that publishing houses, contrary to national law and editor's ethics, went as far as to hire professional poets to transpose it into a poem.\textsuperscript{32}

Eduardo Gutiérrez died in Buenos Aires, at the early age of thirty-eight, on August 2, 1889.\textsuperscript{33} His work \textit{Juan Moreira} may be considered as a significant contribution to literature not only for its literary value, but because of its later adaptation into a drama. Many leading literary critics consider the staging of \textit{Juan Moreira} by the brothers Podesta on July 2, 1884, as the birth of the Argentine National Theater.\textsuperscript{34}

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\textsuperscript{32}Rojas, \textit{Historia de la literatura argentina}, II, 598.

\textsuperscript{33}Gutiérrez, \textit{La muerte de Buenos Aires}, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{34}Carlos M. Cabrera, \textit{Historia de la literatura americana y argentina} (Buenos Aires, 1940), pp. 395-399.
CHAPTER VII

EL CASAMIENTO DE LAUCHA BY ROBERTO J. PAYRO

Roberto J. Payró was a distinguished editor, and as a writer he ranks among the first novelists and dramatists who depicted Argentine country life at the end of the nineteenth century. Payró was born in Herodés, a town in the province of Buenos Aires, in 1867. Roberto's father wanted him to be a lawyer, but his aspirations lay in the literary world. He spent some time at Colegio San José in Buenos Aires, and in 1887 published his first work, *Novelas y fantasías*.

In 1889, upon the death of his father, he received an inheritance which he used to found the newspaper *La Tribuna*. However, he was financially unsuccessful and was forced to end the publication of this paper by 1892.

He was affiliated with the Unión Cívica Radical and participated in the revolution of 1890. A few years later he became a militant in the Socialist Party and was one of its founders in Argentina. Some socialist ideas are

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reflected in several of his works which would prove to be a most interesting subject for a separate study.

For several years Payró worked for the newspaper La Nación, writing literary criticisms under the pseudonym Magister Prunus. He was also a foreign correspondent for the same paper. In 1896 he was sent to Chile where he wrote Cartas chilenas, and in 1898 while staying in southern Argentina, he wrote La Australia argentina. Although he has also written several dramas, among them Sobre las ruinas and El triunfo de los otros, it was in the novel that he distinguished himself. Among his outstanding novels are Pago Chico (1898), El casamiento de Leucha (1906), and Divertidas aventuras del nieto de Juan Moreira (1910).

One of Payró's outstanding features is the intensity of his belief in the things about which he wrote. In 1914, while in Belgium as a war correspondent, he came to be such an ardent supporter of the Allied cause that he refused to leave Brussels, and tried to help that country in its defense against the invading enemy.

His fame as a novelist rests on the new type of gaucho fiction which he wrote, namely "...la novela picaresca del

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4Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 243.
5Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, II, 636.
6Yunque, La literatura social en la Argentina, p. 129.
tipo de Lazarillo de Torres."? After the first World War he returned to Buenos Aires where he remained for the rest of his life. He died on April 5, 1926, at the age of sixty-one, during an unsuccessful surgical operation.8

The action in El casamiento de Laucha takes place in the vicinity of Buenos Aires during the 1890's. The novel is written in autobiographical style but it no longer conforms to the established ideas and myths concerning the gaucho. Among the important deviations from previous gaucho literature which occur in El casamiento de Laucha, one of the most striking is the physical appearance of Laucha. The gaucho of literature has been usually described with very admirable qualities; Laucha on the other hand possesses none. Even more unusual is the degeneration of the gaucho to the extent that he no longer owns a horse.9 Thus Laucha is portrayed as an apparent paradox, a horseless gaucho. Originally, a gaucho without a horse was considered to be a man without legs. However, progress and time have changed this conception, and Payro's protagonist travels by train or in someone's carreta.

7Giusti, Lecciones de literatura argentina e hispano- americana, p. 417.


Laucha has lived for several years in northern Argentina earning his living in many and varied occupations. He has worked as a bolicherio, a farmpeon, and even as a teacher. Seeking an easier and better life he decides to move to Buenos Aires, and after saving enough money for the trip gets as far as Campana. Since he does not have sufficient money to buy the ticket from Campana to Buenos Aires, he sells his poncho. While selling the poncho he misses the train and has to wait until the following day for the next one. Finally, he continues his trip to Buenos Aires and, when the train stops at a station, he goes to the pulpería for a few drinks. By the time he gets through drinking the train has departed and Laucha is left at the station without any money.

He finds a job at an estancia near Pilar, but after two days of hard labor decides to look for easier work. He spends several days wandering from farm to farm, getting farther away from his desired destination, Buenos Aires.

Laucha stops at a pulpería where he is told of an available job in the nearby town of Pago Chico. He waits for the man who delivers the supplies to the different pulperías in the area and when he arrives, asks for a ride to Pago Chico. During the journey the driver tells him that the owner of the pulpería in Pago Chico is an Italian widow who is looking for someone to help her in the business. Laucha meets Doña Carolina, who is thirty-four, fairly attractive, and has been a widow for about a year. She is living alone except for an old man, Cipriano, living in an adjacent rancho,
who looks after the pigs. Laucha offers his services and although she cannot pay him much, he decides to stay and work at her pulpería.

Laucha impresses the widow as a hard worker and soon proposes to marry her. The Italian priest, who was saving as much as he could in order to return to his beloved Italy, offers to marry Laucha and Carolina without recording the marriage. For this service he demands a higher fee than was customary. Although Laucha's original intentions were honorable, he takes advantage of this opportunity to marry Carolina in a manner that will leave him free to consider the marriage invalid later if circumstances make it advantageous for him to do so. Laucha and Carolina are happily married in an illegal ceremony, but of course, Carolina is not aware of any irregularities.

Soon after they are married, Laucha squanders many of his wife's possessions. He gambles freely and treats everyone visiting the pulpería to free drinks. On a certain occasion he tries to cheat at a horse race by disguising a certain winner as a worthless nag, but he is discovered. Subsequently a big fight begins and Laucha has to defend himself with a facón. "A mí no me gustan mucho esas cosas. Soy bajito, bastante delgado, no tengo fuerza, y a más, no entiendo mucho de cuchillo. Pero el hombre me apuraba, los paisanos habían corrido a ver, y había que hacer pata ancha."

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His wife comes to his rescue and with the aid of the comisario stops the fight. Laucha has to pay what he has lost on the race and leaves his wife almost bankrupt.

Carolina persuades her husband to give up gambling and to begin a new life. Laucha recognizes that she saved his life and promises that he will never again squander her money. However, his good intentions do not last, and soon after he is again treating everyone despite the protests and complaints of his wife. At last he manages to waste all of Carolina's goods, including the small amount of money she had saved in the bank, and even a piece of land. Carolina is now completely bankrupt and is forced to close her pulpería. A bitter dispute ensues, and Carolina strikes Laucha several times with a stick. In return Laucha announces that their wedding is not legal, takes whatever money is left in the house, and leaves.

Laucha abandons Carolina without any remorse or sense of guilt and ends the story by saying, "¿Qué si tengo noticias? Sí. Ayer supe que estaba perfectamente de enfermera en el hospital del pago."

Payró depicts Laucha in a new environment. The rancho in which he lives is no longer of straw and adobe but, "Era un galpón grande con techo de fierro." Another very unusual item in a gaucho's life were sheets, which Laucha

11 Ibid, p. 79.  
12 Ibid, p. 23.
takes great pleasure in using. Thus the new gaucho portrayed by Payró is but a shadow of the original man of the pampas. He is a shadow which by the time Payró wrote El casamiento de Laucha had almost completely disappeared.

The vocabulary of El casamiento de Laucha makes frequent use of gaucho terms but in addition Payró includes several examples of Spanish as pronounced by gringos, Italian immigrants. One such example is the priest’s felicitation to Laucha and Carolina upon their wedding. "Eh! ¡Que siano feliche!"13

There are several metaphors in keeping with traditional gaucho literature. They are usually uttered by the old man Cipriano who has been a real gaucho during his youth. Cipriano gives Laucha advice concerning the latter’s proposal to marry Carolina. "La mujer no ha di andar sola, dispues de haber tirao en yunta. Solita, se hace manera, y no sirve ni p’a noria."14 Laucha on the other hand reveals his own identity more clearly, as one who does not belong to the gaucho ranks, when he ponders upon Cipriano’s counsel. "Al principio no entendi bien."15 Anyone who has lived among gauchos would have immediately understood Cipriano’s metaphor.

Laucha is neither a thief nor a gaicho palo. He is merely a victim of society, homeless and uneducated, who

13Ibid, p. 56.  
14Ibid, p. 29.  
15Ibid.
simply takes advantage of unexpected situations. The entire novel is characteristic of the new twentieth-century gaucho who is being assimilated into the urban population as he acquires many of the traits and characteristics of city people. He is no longer interested in preserving the high ideals of honor and integrity, but becomes an opportunist. El casamiento de Laucha is a humorous story with a cruel ending.

Until the twentieth century the gaucho was a victim of cruelty and unconcern on the part of Argentina's colonizers and immigrants. In the present century the situation was reversed. The incidents in which immigrants became victims and laughing stock of the paisano are numerous and frequent. It is for this reason that after both the first and second World War the large number of immigrants who came to Argentina tended to segregate themselves in small towns called colonias.

Today it would be difficult to describe the new gaucho, for the term itself is anachronistic. The gauchos of yesterday have become los negros, or los cabecitas negras, who have clustered in the capital city and other major cities of Argentina. Their ignorance still provides innumerable occasions for numerous anecdotes, as they have ceased to be gauchos without becoming seminal portenos. An example of their ignorance is seen in their living habits. The national government in an effort to ease the housing shortage has
built many barrios, small communities in the outskirts of the capital. These barrios are quite comfortable and convenient. However, soon after they were opened they became slum areas because these paisanos when in need of firewood to make asado chopped the doors and windows, using them for wood, hanging burlap in their place. The same was true of the wooden furniture with which these houses were furnished. As late as 1959 the Banco Minotecario Nacional was responsible for the construction of several more barrios, one of them only about twenty miles from La casa rosada, Argentina's equivalent of the White House. However, this barrio built by the Sociedad Industrial de Hormigon Liviano, S.A., a German firm with a new type of prefabricated houses, built the entire house, including the furniture, either of concrete or steel, thus avoiding the fate suffered by the previous barrios.
CHAPTER VIII

DON SEGUNDO SOMBRA BY RICARDO GUIRALDES

Ricardo Guiraldes was born in Buenos Aires on February 13, 1886. His father, Don Manuel, and his mother Doña Dolores Goñi, came of the large ranch-owning class that ruled the country until a short time ago. When he was a year and a half old, his parents took him and his older brother, Manolo, to live in France. In 1890 a sudden improvement in the tide of Argentine prosperity brought the Guiraldes back to Buenos Aires. Soon after arriving in Buenos Aires they moved to the estancia La porteña.

Ricardo's first schooling was provided by a young governess who read to him tales in German by Hans Christian Andersen. Soon, Ricardo was able to speak three languages, French, Spanish, and German. Under the guidance of another tutor, Don Lorenzo Ceballos, Ricardo was introduced to literature of the end of the nineteenth century. However, his heart was not there, but in the outdoor life of the pampas.

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1Israel P. Colmillo, Ricardo Guiraldes el poeta de la Pampa (San Antonio de Areco, 1952), p. 13.


3Guillermo Are, Ricardo Guiraldes (Buenos Aires, 1961), p. 16
When Ricardo was about thirteen, Segundo Ramírez made his appearance at La porteña. The colorful figure of Don Segundo attired in traditional garb, seemed to Ricardo the personification of the legendary gaucho. The friendship between the boy and the old man was to last through the years and, contrary to some critics' beliefs, motivated Güiraldes to write, toward the end of his life, Don Segundo Sombra.

In the same year in which he had met Don Segundo, Ricardo left his beloved pampa to go to school in Buenos Aires. When the time came to consider the choice of a profession, he seemed to feel an inclination toward architecture. He entered the University of Buenos Aires in 1903, but his love of country life and his passion for reading outside of his chosen discipline distracted his attention from his studies, obliging him to withdraw from the university. On October 20, 1913, in the Church of Nuestra Señora del Socorro in Buenos Aires, Güiraldes married

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Adelina del Carril. Eighteen years later he died at four o'clock in the afternoon, on Saturday, October 8, 1927.

In September, 1915, he assembled twenty-six narratives which he published under the title of Cuentos de muerte y sangre. Among his other works are a book of forty-six selections in verse and prose titled El conoerro. He also wrote the novels Rosaura, Bicho, and Xaréuca. In Paris, in 1920, Güiraldes began writing Don Segundo Sombra, which he completed seven years later. He was struck down by Hodgkin's disease and while lying on his back to ease the pain, he wrote the last pages of Don Segundo Sombra. A month after its publication it was ranked with the monuments of national literature, Facundo and Martín Fierro. Recognized as the best Argentine literary production in 1927, Don Segundo Sombra received the Primer Premio Nacional.

The events narrated in Don Segundo Sombra take place in the Province of Buenos Aires during the span of years between 1900 and 1906. The principal characters are Don

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11. Previtelli, Ricardo Güiraldes and Don Segundo Sombra, pp. 81-83.

Segundo Sombra and Fabio Cáceres. Don Segundo is a cattle herdsman by profession and a traditional gaucho in character. Fabio, at the beginning of the novel, is a motherless boy, ignorant of the identity of his father, whose unhappy life in a country village motivates him to run away and join the older gaucho in his travels throughout the pampas. His experiences during his wanderings with Don Segundo center upon three long cattle drives and constitute the subject matter of the narration. The story is told in the first person by Fabio in the form of memoirs.

The portrayal of Don Segundo is the primary concern of the novel. Don Segundo's mysterious personality is established upon his entry at the beginning of the book. It is retained throughout by presenting as little description as possible. His character, indeed, is stoic. He accepts fate. Having no fear of destiny, he is calm and self-possessed. When confronted with a physical hardship, his attitude is one of absolute indifference.

The narration is also concerned with the gradual evolution of Fabio from boyhood to manhood. Consequently, Fabio emerges as the other principal figure and assumes importance as a character in his own right. He is overconfident and impertinent, and he is impelled by his admiration for Don Segundo to become a gaucho. He soon

13 Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 134.
loses his inflated opinion of himself when he discovers that he has a long way to go before he can be like the physically skilled and morally strong men of the pampas.

Fabio's experiences during the first period illustrate the development of the boy in a battle against physical hardships. They consist of his struggles to master the skills and feats of endurance of the cattlemen. His rough life begins mildly enough when he starts to work as a stable boy and sleeps that night on a hard wooden cot. After a good day's work he falls asleep from exhaustion. The next morning he faces bravely the rigors of a long day's work. Several days later he joins a cattle drive, and during the first day of the journey, he undertakes to ride his unbroken colt, but is thrown to the ground and loses consciousness. Toward the end of the second day, he nearly faints from fatigue. Finally, with the help of Don Segundo, he successfully rides his colt. Fabio is very happy with his job: "Había empezado mi trabajo y con él un gran orgullo: orgullo de dar cumplimiento al más macho de los oficios."\(^\text{14}\) By the time he is eighteen he has learned not only the practical things which make him skillful in his job, but also the fatalism characteristic of gauchos.

Fabio's respect and affection toward Don Segundo increase with the passing of time. Don Segundo is not portrayed

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\(^\text{14}\)Ricardo Güiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra (Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 43).
as a payador, and he differs from such characters as Santos Vega. In story telling, however, Don Segundo is a master. "Era un admirable contador de cuentos, y su fama de narrador daba nuevos prestigios a su ya admirada figura." Don Segundo is represented as a criollo storyteller and not as a legendary gaucho narrator.

Two tales told by Don Segundo are introduced into the novel as separate narrative units. The first is the story of Dolores, a young paisana who fell in love with a beautiful girl, Consuelo, while spying on her as she bathed in the Parana River. Although it is a fairy tale type of story, Guiraldes' treatment of the tale banishes the impression of any origin other than that of the native environment. He has achieved this authenticity by casting the elements of the narration into local terms. Specifically, he has regionalized the setting, the personalities, and the language.

The second story is a moral tale with a humorous turn. One day when Our Lord was journeying through the Holy Land with Saint Peter, the mule on which he was riding lost a shoe. At the next village, the travelers stopped at the shop of a blacksmith. The smith's name was Misery because he was so poor. He had no iron, but gladly fashioned the shoe from a piece of silver. When he refused to accept

15Ibid. p. 63.

16Previtali, Ricardo Guiraldes and Don Segundo Sombra, p. 149.
payment, Our Lord granted him one wish. Misery, instead of asking for admission to Heaven, foolishly requested that whosoever should enter his shop might not leave without his permission. After Our Lord left, the smith reproached himself for not having asked for unlimited money and time to enjoy it. Thereupon, the Devil appeared and gave him his wish in exchange of his soul. In time, Misery cleverly tricked all the devils of Hell into his shop, thus freeing the world of evil. But, the doctors, lawyers, and rulers, who thrived on the misfortunes of the earth, were deprived of their livelihood and complained to the governor. The governor ordered Misery to release the devils, whereupon the world was set aright. When Misery died he was refused admittance to Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell. As a result his spirit was compelled to wander the earth forever. And that is why there will always be misery and poverty in the world. The treatment of the two stories is similar. The action of the narration is located in familiar environment. Our Lord also speaks the vernacular and this, without suggesting irreverence, produces a humorous effect, "Güenas tardes — dijo Nuestro Señor." 17

Most picturesque of all is the description in Chapter XI of the country dances. It is an artistic cuadro de costumbres. Later Fabio and Don Segundo arrive at Navarro

17Guiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 143.
where they are invited to witness a cockfight. The battle between the feathered combatants is made vivid with convincing reality because Fabio describes it not as a mere spectator, but as an interested party. He wins almost two hundred pesos.

Fabio and Don Segundo join a new cattle drive during a period of drought. The cattle become very thirsty but they can not find water. Finally rain comes in the form of showers and the cattle drain every muddy puddle they encounter. The following day, it is still hot and dry, and as they approach an estancia that has a water mill, the cattle become uncontrollable and charge through the fences toward the water. Much damage is done but the owner is sympathetic to the problem.

Fabio is confronted with physical hardships which contribute to strengthening his character. Misfortunes begin in Chapter XVI when his horse Comadreja is gored by a bull. Following this incident, he is enticed by Paula, a flirtatious country girl, who at the same time has encouraged the attentions of Numa, a slow-witted farmhand. Fabio disgraces himself by provoking Numa into a fight and knifing him. His misfortunes mount when he bets on the races and loses all his money and his best horses. He complains of his

fate, "Un gauchito de a pie es buena cosa para ser tirada al zanjón de las basuras." 19

Throughout Fabio's struggles, Don Segundo is ever present as an example of physical skill and moral conduct. He is the ideal gauchito in the mind of Fabio, who molds his character in the image of the herdsmen. 20 Sombra expresses Fabio's degree of maturity when he says, "Ya has corrido mucho y te has hecho hombre, mejor que hombre, gauchito." 21

Fabio reaches the summit of his victory over physical hardships when he succeeds in riding a particular black horse. "Ni digo que tuviera un amor propio desmedido, ni que fuera por demás accesible al elogio. ¿Quién no lo es más o menos? Pero el hecho de vencer, grande y continua tarea gaucha, me llenaba de un vigor desacabado e fuerza de confianza." 22

While Fabio and Don Segundo are working on a new estancia, a man brings a letter from Don Leandro addressed to Fabio. From it he learns that he is the natural son of a ranch owner who has died and left him his fortune. Even more than feeling the shame of his illegitimacy, he is distressed when he realizes that he is to become an estanciero.

19 Guiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 151.


21 Guiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 116.

and thereby will lose his identity as a gaucho. Don Leandro becomes the guardian of Fabio. Rauchó, Don Leandro's son, is a very educated young man, fluent in several languages. He shares his knowledge with Fabio, and lends him many books. Thus, Rauchó is influential in transforming Fabio into an *hombre culto.*

Fabio is especially concerned and afraid that because of his new status he will no longer be a gaucho. At the conclusion of the novel it is evident that it was not Güiraldes' intention to change Fabio's personality, but merely to give the reader an explanation of how an uneducated herdsman had acquired the ability to write memoirs. Furthermore, Güiraldes stresses the point that clothes do not make the man. Don Leandro clearly expresses this idea when he says, "Si sos gaucho en de veras, no has de mudar, porque andéquiera que vayas, irás con tu alma por delante como madrina'e tropilla." It follows, therefore, that Fabio's transformation is only an external change, and that his character remains the same.

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23 Arrieta, *Historia de la literatura argentina,* IV, 143.


When the moment comes for Don Segundo to leave him, Fabio's separation from his adopted father represents his culminating misfortune. As the old herdsman departs, Fabio succeeds in dissembling his grief. He bids Don Segundo farewell in silence with a handshake and a smile. He realizes that, "...en Don Segundo huella y vida era una sola cosa." By accepting fate with gaucho stoicism he has triumphed over the challenge to his sense of morality, and has achieved the maturity of manhood.

Don Segundo Sombra has a dual character. It is a portrait of the gaucho herdsman and of the pampa in which he lives. It is also a novel based upon the story of the evolution of a boy to manhood. There has been some speculation about how Güiraldes was able to revive an image of the traditional gaucho. The explanation is in part that Güiraldes has represented Don Segundo in the eyes of a small boy and of a youth. It is evident that Fabio worships the legendary gauchos. So it is that, in the light of Fabio's imagination, the reader sees the old man as a gaucho of the past.

Güiraldes' popularity and fame rests on his masterful blending of the legendary and romanticized gaucho tales with

27 Güiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 182.

modernistic technique. He has represented Don Segundo as a spirit. He has done this not by description, but by the power of suggestion of a single word. It is sombra. By ascribing it as a surname to Don Segundo, Güiraldes has stressed the horseman's quality of a shade from the past.

The figurative speech in Don Segundo Sombra continues the trend established by earlier writers. Many metaphors are drawn from the pampas or things associated with it. An example is the foreman's advice to the impertinent Fabio, "Es güeno no querer volar antes de criar bien las alas. Sos muy cachorro pa miar como los perros grandes."

Aristóbulo Echegaray points out several inconsistencies in Don Segundo Sombra. Most of them serve to indicate that Güiraldes was not a man of the pampas as one is led to believe, but rather un hombre culto, who did not have to work for a living. Güiraldes spent much of his time in Paris, where he led an active social life. Most of his works

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29 Rojas, Historia de la literatura argentina, VIII, 640.
31 Ara, Ricardo Güiraldes, p. 309.
32 Güiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 27.
33 Echegaray, Don Segundo Sombra, pp. 79-83.
34 Xunque, La literatura social en la Argentina, p. 155.
are not the product of rigorous application, but rather of his pleasurable use of leisure time.35

A great deal of symbolism has been ascribed to Don Segundo Sombra. Perhaps the most striking and convincing are the three epochs represented by the different characters. Don Segundo represents the past, Fabio the present, and Raúl the future into which the present is disappearing.36

The vernacular in the novel is comparable to that in Martín Fierro, and other gauchesque poems. By giving Don Segundo the features of Martín Fierro, Güiraldes has cast his image in an aura of legend that has no equal in contemporary Spanish American fiction. As Don Segundo's personality unfolds during the narration, he discloses the positive attributes of the men of the campos. When finally at the end of the novel he is again abstracted into a shadow, he clearly symbolizes the commendable qualities in the character of the gauchos of all time. Güiraldes' intentions were to represent the noble character of the gaacho as he conceived it. His idea of the moral fibre of this Argentine type has not been fully represented in gauchesque literature. Accordingly, Don Segundo does not have the cruelty, the violence, nor the defeatism of Martín Fierro. Instead of

35Chagarros, Don Segundo Sombra, pp. 66-67.

the negative traits of the gauchos of history and legend, Güiraldes attributes affirmative values to Don Segundo.

The success of Don Segundo Sombra places Güiraldes not only among the leading writers of Argentina, but also of Latin America. It has been translated into twelve other languages, among them English, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. Of all the translations the most successful has been the French, which by 1962, entered its twelfth edition. This extensive translation into foreign languages testifies to the universal appeal of Don Segundo Sombra.


38 Previtali, Ricardo Güiraldes and Don Segundo Sombra, pp. 201-202.
CHAPTER IX

EL ROMANCE DE UN GAUCHO BY BENITO LYNCH

The last work discussed in this thesis is El romance de un gaucho by Benito Lynch. Lynch was born in Buenos Aires, July 25, 1881. 1 His parents were of Irish and Uruguayan origin. 2 Benito spent the first nine years of his life living in the city, and in 1890 moved with his parents to La Plata, where he lived for several years on an estancia. 3 His childhood memories are closely linked with the pampas, and according to Torres-Ríoseco, "Es el único que logra darnos un retrato fiel de la vida del gaucho." 4

Benito Lynch had a limited formal education and therefore the honorary doctorate conferred on him by the National University of La Plata was not in recognition of his advanced studies but an award for his works as a novelist. He spent several years as a newspaper writer and won literary acclaim in 1916, when he published Los personajes de la

1Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 144.

2Arturo Torres-Ríoseco, Grandes novelistas de la América Española (California, 1943), p. 113.

3Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 144.

4Torres-Ríoseco, Grandes novelistas de la América Española, p. 116.
Florida. Among his other published novels are, El Inglés de los cruzos (1924), Las mal llamadas (1923), and Raquela.  

Literary critics consider Lynch a realist. "Lynch estima, sobre todo, el realismo intenso de sus caracteres; sus gauchos son hombres, hombres que viven, gozan y sufren como tales."  

In El romance de un gaucho Lynch is not concerned with the pictorial description of the surroundings or the scenery, but rather delves into the feelings and emotions of his characters. Although some critics have attempted to compare Lynch with Henry William Hudson, who at twenty-five left Argentina and wrote some gaucho works from his native England, the majority agree that this is a superficial comparison.  

Benito Lynch was a writer for the masses, and therefore he never won admiration from the sophisticated minority. Unlike his father, he never held a public position.  

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6Torres-Rioseco, Grandes novelistas de la America Española, p. 114.  
7Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 154.  
8Leguizamón, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, II, 562.  
Throughout his life he remained a secluded bachelor, and
died on December 23, 1951, in the city of Eva Perón, the
name applied to the city of La Plata between 1950 and 1955.

El romance de un gaucho deals with the sad and unfor-
tunate outcome of a gaucho's love for a married raisanita.
The protagonist, the twenty-year-old Pantalón Reyes, has
fallen desperately in love with the twenty-three-year-old
Doña Julia, wife of Don Pedro Jusantes. The latter is more
than ten years older than his wife, and is a heavy drinker.

Pantalón, unlike the romanticized gaucho, is a shy,
polite, and almost withdrawn individual. He has always
lived at the side of his widowed mother, Doña Cruz. Life
on their estancia, La blanquieida, is peaceful and uneventful
until a couple moves in the area. The man, Don Pedro, fre-
quently beats and abuses his wife, who is quite charming and
attractive. Since Don Pedro leaves his wife for several
days at a time, Doña Julia becomes well acquainted with
Doña Cruz, and visits her on numerous occasions.

At first Pantalón simply watches and observes Doña
Julia, but after a short time, he falls deeply in love with
her. Doña Cruz is at first completely unaware of her son's
feelings for Doña Julia, but when she finds out, she em-
phatically orders her son never to see Doña Julia again,
and threatens to punish him if he disobeys.

11Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 144.
In an effort to help her son forget the married paísanita, Doña Cruz enlists the services of one of her hired peones, gaucho Ferraya. She sends Pantalión and Ferraya to other districts to buy cattle, or simply on errands. The two become inseparable companions, and apparently devoted friends. "Y resultó, que al cabo de un mes, Pantalión y Ferraya ya eran de los más amigos." However, their friendship is superficial and completely different from the true gaucho friendships, as is subsequently revealed. Pantalión becomes a fighter and a drunkard. In addition to these vices he also begins gambling at cards. Lynch describes very meticulously the long card game at which Pantalión loses over two thousand pesos. At first Pantalión wins large sums of money, but as the game continues and his drunken stupor increases, he loses it all, in addition to going in debt. That same evening Ferraya wins several thousand pesos. When Pantalión asks his friend to lend him some money, he refuses. A fight ensues, and since Pantalión is quite drunk, Ferraya gives him a terrible beating.

Don Pedro, who witnesses the incident, lends Pantalión some money and upon the latter's request takes him to his own home instead of La blanquía, because Pantalión was afraid of his mother. Pantalión's head is bandaged by Doña Julia who takes excellent care of him, and he stays for

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12 Benito Lynch, El romance de un gaucho (Buenos Aires, 1933), pp. 72.
several days at La Julia, the estancia of Don Pedro and Doña Julia. While Don Pedro is gone on one of his usual escapades, Pantalión confesses to Doña Julia his great love for her, but she scorns the whole idea and continues to treat him as a platonic friend.

Like all other gaúcho writers discussed in this thesis, Lynch makes frequent use of comparisons and metaphors drawing them from the pampas. This is especially true when he describes the physical characteristics of Doña Julia. "Sus manos tan delicadas parecían al m verse dos de esas mariposas blancas que por primavera juegan revoliviendo sobre los pastos." 13

When Pantalión's mother finds out about her son's debts, she sells all her cattle and repays the loan. Her philosophy of debts is, "Nada debe nada a nadie, si no quiere pasar vergüenza." 14

Pantalión, still afraid of his mother, goes to work at the estancia Los rosales, where he continues his association with gauchos of ill repute. While Pantalión is away, Doña Cruz becomes very ill, and since no other aid is available, one of the workers asks Doña Julia to come and take care of his patrona. Upon hearing of his mother's illness, Pantalión returns home and it seems that he and Doña Julia begin to understand each other better. Doña Julia asks

14 Ibid, p. 137.
Pantalión to stay at La Julia while she is looking after his mother. Doña Cruz is at first unaware that Doña Julia is at her house, but when she becomes well and realizes that Doña Julia has been staying with her, she becomes very angry and orders her out of the house. After Doña Julia convinces her that she was simply trying to help, Doña Cruz regains her composure and listens, but still refuses to renew the friendship which previously existed between them.

When Pantalión finds out the way his mother treated Doña Julia he again refuses to go and live at La blanquíada. Upon the death of his godfather, Pantalión returns home and begs his mother to become friends with Doña Julia. Although mother and son are pleased to be together, their relationship is rather cold. Doña Cruz, just as emphatically as before, orders her son not to visit Doña Julia. However, Pantalión disobeys her command and goes to see his beloved. Doña Cruz finds out that her son did not obey her and is extremely provoked. She waits for Pantalión to go to sleep and then ties him securely to the bed, and gives him a terrible and humiliating spanking. The following day Pantalión leaves, and for the first time, without his mother's blessings.

Among the reasons why Doña Cruz is so set against her son's attentions for Doña Julia are her religious convictions.

"...cuando uno sabe que algún día va a tener que dar cuenta a Dios de sus atos."15 Religion is a guiding force in the

life of Doña Cruz and the fear of God plays an important role in her daily activities. Not so with her son, who on a certain occasion tells his mother that he was not aware that it was a sin to be in love with a married woman.

While Pantalion is gone, Don Pedro dies following a short illness brought about by his excessive drinking. Doña Cruz sends word to her son to come back, and when he hears the news, he immediately prepares for the journey home. In his eagerness to be with Doña Julia he cruelly spurs his horse and rides the poor animal to the point of exhaustion through the heat of the day. Finally, the horse can only walk and Pantalion in his desperation and madness stabs his horse and continues the rest of the trip on foot shouting, "Yo de llegar, no más. Yo de llegar." After running several blocks he seems to hear the gallop of a horse but in the darkness of the night he cannot see anything. He runs a few more yards and this time the galloping is very distinct. He turns around and is convinced that he sees his own horse, with blood dripping at the sides, coming towards him. The following morning Pantalion is found dead at the side of the road, presumably having died from fright and exhaustion, although the author leaves it to the reader's imagination to decide whether he had indeed been attacked by a vengeful horse.

16Ibid. p. 499.
El romance de un gaucho is Lynch's most ambitious novel, and is considered by many his most outstanding. The force of the dialogue is such that at times it seems that the novel is writing itself. The gaucho language used throughout the novel creates an atmosphere which, to the average Argentine accustomed to hearing gaucho terminology, seems to picture the development of the action. Lynch's greatest fault, most critics seem to agree, is his carelessness in the choice of words.

No gaucho work is complete without some paragraphs of advice or philosophy, and El romance de un gaucho is no exception. "Nada es bueno ni malo, lo que hay es, que todo cristiano, tiene más o menos su parte o desperdicio, como el animal que se carnea, como el zapallo que se elige para echar en el puchero." One of the most unusual features of this novel is the character of the protagonist, who unlike the gaucho of legends and romance, does not possess the usual high qualities with which the gaucho of literature has been associated. Pantallón is dull, unintelligent, and lazy.

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18Ibid, p. 31.
20Lynch, El romance de un gaucho, p. 110.
21Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 145.
de Lynch están como prestigiosos de pequeña y de humildad. No tienen esa aristocracia rural de Don Segundo, ni la exuberancia lírica de Martín Fierro. 22

If El romance de un gaúcho is an attempt to give a realistic picture of the gaucho, Lynch has far from succeeded. The plot is implausible, and the actions of Pantalón certainly do not characterize the gauches, either of the present or the past. While Lynch treats of love and emotions he continues the trend set by previous outstanding gaucho poets and novelists, in that he abstains from delving into the erotic aspect. El romance de un gaúcho is the only major gaucho work where love and death, joined hand in hand, play a predominant role. "Sin explorar lo sexual ni lo truculent, ha sabido hermanar el amor con la muerte, motivos alrededor de los cuales gira la vida sobre la tierra." 23

One of the chief strengths of El romance de un gaúcho lies in its entertaining aspect, whence stems its popularity. However, it failed to achieve the literary stature of Don Segundo Sombra. Manuel Pedro Gonzales in his book, Trayectoria del gaúcho y su cultura, gives an excellent explanation as to why no gaucho poem or novel has surpassed Martín Fierro, and Don Segundo Sombra, respectively:

22 Torres-Ríoseco, Grandes novelistas de la América Española, p. 123.

"Al perfeccionar el poema gauchesco, Hernández lo agotó, destruyendo así toda posibilidad de superación. Lo mismo pasó con Güiraldes." 24

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The two leading literary critics of Argentina, Rafael Alberto Arrieta and Ricardo Rojas, both of whom have written a multi-volume history of Argentine literature, consider Santos Vega, Fausto, Martín Fierro, Juan Moreira, El casamiento de Laucha, Don Segundo Sombra, and El romance de un gaucho as the most representative non-dramatic literature written by Argentine writers. That these works are the most outstanding literary contributions of gaucho poetry and fiction is further attested by the National University of La Plata in Argentina, which lists among its literature subjects one named Literatura ranchesca del Río de la Plata. The course includes the seven books before mentioned which the University considers the most important and worthy of study.  

Although the total production of gaucho poetry and fiction includes scores of other works, they are not considered to be of significant merit, and therefore have not been included in this thesis.

1 Letter from Elfrieda Sirens, student at Universidad Nacional de la Plata, November 6, 1967.

In an investigation of gaucho literature it is desirable to consider the similarities and the differences which are found in the works with which the investigation is concerned. Among the many similar characteristics are those dealing with the literary style. All of the works, except Juan Moreira, are written in language which reflects the gaucho manner of speaking. The author of Juan Moreira chose not to follow this practice but even he could not abstain from occasionally using gaucho terminology.

Since the authors were not gauchos, they wrote merely what they had observed during their association with them. As a result there are some inconsistencies in the descriptions of daily gaucho activities; there is a lack of uniformity in the various phonetic renditions of gaucho pronunciation; and the jargon which they popularized in their works is quite often artificial. All of them, except Eduardo Gutierrez, are guilty of distorting in their phonetic representation the pronunciation of many words. In many instances they expressly deformed them in order to give them flavor suggestive of the Indian dialects. Another error common to all of them, with varying degrees of frequency, is the use of learned words which would be unfamiliar to the gauchos. There also are occasional attempts at making their writings seem historical by assigning real names to people and places.

3 boullain, Rainide and Song, pp. 149-150.
All of the works have a significant amount of costumbre elements, and are of particular value for their descriptions of the herdsman and his way of life on the vast Argentine pampa. The daily and special chores, food, living quarters, amusements, quarrels, tools, and other aspects of daily life on the pampa are presented as essential parts of the narration.

A very striking similarity among the representative gaucho works is the tendency of their authors to moralize or philosophize. Even Fausto, which won its acclaim for its entertaining nature, has several paragraphs through which Bel Campo attempts to teach a lesson. Although each author's motive for writing may be different, it is apparent that they all seek to inform their readers while diverting them.

Another characteristic which all the works discussed in this thesis have in common is the frequent use of figures of speech. The two most common are metaphors and similes. As might be presumed, most of them are taken from the gaucho, the pampas, the animals, or the things with which the gaucho comes in contact in his daily life and thus is best acquainted with.

Faithful to the romanticized and idealized conception of gaucho life, none of the authors describes the gaucho as a domestic or sedentary being. Although historically it has been shown that many gauchos settled down and lived normal
family lives, the gaucho of literature has always been described as nomadic.

Religion plays an insignificant role in the life of both the gaucho of history, and the gaucho of literature. The gauchos unquestioningly accept the traditional idea of the existence of God, but at no time is He a guiding force in their actions. They are nominally Catholic as a result of their environment and tradition, but they apparently have neither specific nor profound religious convictions.

Every work included in this investigation treats of the theme of friendship. "El gaucho llamaba hermano al compañero o al amigo y no era una simple palabra. Otras veces le decía "cuñado." Esa amistad solía anudarse en parejas, como lo denuncia la literatura gauchesca." In Santas Vera there is the friendship between Rufo Tolosa and the story teller. In Martín Fierro, Cruz and Fierro search for a common destiny, and in Fausto, Pollo addresses Laguna as cuñado. Moreira and Julián share both dangers and misfortunes on several occasions in Juan Moreira, and in El casamiento de Laucha there is a short friendship between Laucha and Cipriano. Fabio and Don Segundo share an enduring friendship in Don Segundo Sombra. Fabio expresses very clearly the gaucho philosophy of friendship. "Dos hombres suelen salir de un peligro tuteándose, como una

4 Arrieta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV,
pareja después del abrazo."5 Although the friendship between Pantalión and Jarreya in El romance de un gaúcho lacks depth and meaning, the fact that the two are for a time almost inseparable conforms to the established pattern.

Love plays a very minor role in all of the works except El romance de un gaúcho. All of the authors before Lynch pay little attention to women in their works, and there is no mention of love. Only Pantalión in the before mentioned novel feels the need to discuss love. "Y de ahí, que pa mi modo e ver, el amor es una cosa muy distinta. Debe ser algo tan grande que por fuerza ha de estar pu encima de todas esos mezquindades."6 The gaúcho of literature was no lover, except of freedom. Although he was neither brutal nor callous in his treatment of women, he was not romantic or sentimental in his attitude toward them, preferring to believe that they existed merely for his occasional enjoyment or for the performance of domestic chores, traditionally left to the weaker sex. There is no appreciable element of eroticism in all of the works in question. "El erotismo apenas asoma en la literatura gauchesca. Para el paisano errante y de vida a la intemperie, virilmente ruda, la mujer era tabú, o un accidente y nada más. "7

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5 Güiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra, p. 116.
6 Lynch, El romance de un gaúcho, p. 209.
7 Arriesta, Historia de la literatura argentina, IV, 137.
None of the works attempt to glorify the gaucho malo. On the contrary, they stress the undesirable results and the evil consequences which arise out of leading a violent or treacherous life. The early gaucho works romanticized the ordinary gauchos, the protagonists of their stories, portraying them with far better qualities than they actually possessed.

A transition may be observed in the works published between the appearance of *Santos Vega* (1850) and that of *El romance de un gauchito* (1930). In this eighty year span the gaucho image experienced a gradual degradation. In *Santos Vega*, Ascarubi simply tries to show the consequences suffered by a *gauchito malo*, without exploring the feelings of the characters in his poem. Del Campo goes a step further by being the first gaucho poet to explore the psychological effects upon the individuals involved in *Gaúcho*. Hernández achieves an artistic blending of many literary elements in *Martín Fierro* and thereby elevates the gaucho to heights until then unknown in gaucho literature. Juan Moreira received relatively less fame because it was published too soon after *Martín Fierro*, and to a large extent repeated in prose much of what Hernández had said in his poem. By the time the next gaucho novel was written, *El casamiento de Laucha* by Roberto J. Payró, the gaucho image had sunk to the lowest point. From the legendary romantic hero he became a *picaro* who did not even own a horse.
With the appearance of *Don Segundo Sombra* in 1927 the gaucho image was restored to a position of eminence. Although Güiraldes continues the idealization of the Argentine cowboy, he clearly shows, as the title of his novel implies, that Don Segundo was the gaucho that was about to vanish from the scene forever, becoming a shadow of the past.

*El romance de un gaucho* vividly portrays the gaucho in his decadent stage. He no longer has any of the admirable qualities for which his predecessors were known and is completely dominated by women, a condition which emphasizes his loss of masculinity, and of his status as a true gaucho.

Only in *Santos Vega*, *Martín Fierro*, and *Juan Moreira*, is there an appreciable theme of social protest. These works specifically censure the legal, political, and social discrimination against the gaucho, and point out the abuses of the law enforcement agencies. By 1906 when the next major gaucho novel was published, the conditions just mentioned had been generally remedied. The gaucho was being assimilated into the urban society, losing his identity as a gaucho and gaining the full benefits of Argentine citizenship which he and his forefathers had been denied for several generations.

Even though the gaucho is disappearing from the scene forever, he persists in literature as a spiritual force. His legend has become a national symbol that inspires courage, self-reliance, and patriotism in every school.
child, and that gives the European immigrant and his offspring a sense of nationality that makes them true citizens of the new world. The gaucho still exists—as a way of life, a personality, a state of mind, a thing of the people—and his influence extends into many facets of Argentine life.
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