ELEMENTS OF FOLKLORE IN THREE PERIODS OF GAUCHESQUE LITERATURE

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to analyze selected works of Gauchesque poetry and prose in order to determine what elements of plastic, prose and lyric folklore appear and how these are used by the authors of three periods of the Gaucho genre.

In general, plastic folklore encompasses such items as homemade arts and crafts or anything which occupies space. It is distinct from the folk prose, such as the tale and the riddle, and lyric folklore, that area which includes the folksong and poetry.

The three periods to be studied are:

I. The Zenith Years
II. The Decline
III. The Passing of the Gaucho.

The works chosen for this study were selected on the basis of their being representative of the particular period in which they appear, and an attempt was made to include poetry, drama, and the novel.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Gaucho of Argentina has for many years been the subject of poetry, drama, and the novel, not to mention other literary forms, it is only natural that the Gauchesque genre be the subject of many studies, especially those which deal mainly with the idiom of the Gaucho, that rich mixture of Spanish with dialects of the River Plate, or with the Gaucho as the symbol of a freedom and untamed spirit that has few parallels, if any, in the annals of Latin American history and literature.

Although the Gauchesque idiom has its place in this study, as does the symbolic figure of the Gaucho, it is not the purpose to re-evaluate these themes, but to seek another route to the soul, the inner being, of the Gaucho, which is the folklore that abounds in Gauchesque poetry and prose: the plastic, prose, and lyric elements of the Gaucho's expression.

Since there are many definitions of "folklore," the term as applied in this study should be defined before the analysis of the folk elements found in different periods of Gaucho literature is begun. For the purposes of this essay, "folklore" is considered to be everything that belongs to the oral tradition in the culture of the Gaucho, such as customs, tales, songs, and crafts.

This being the definition of folklore, a paradox is obvious
between "Gaucho folklore" and "Gauchesque literature," at least when one refers to the poetry and prose of the Gaucho, since literature is written expression, but folklore is not, which means that, to a certain degree, Gauchesque literature is an artificial form, because it expresses in writing that which, according to its own definition, is not written. This paradox is an obvious fact, but it does not eclipse the literary and esthetic value of Gauchesque works—on the contrary. Thanks to such works as Facundo, Juan Moreira, Martín Fierro, Don Segundo Sombra, and others, one can read and enjoy the spirit of the Gaucho's world, be the particular works read romantic or less emotional.

The Gaucho himself, then, belongs to world folklore, because he stands as the romantic symbol of the ideal macho, the Latin man's man, and for the aura of fact mingled with fantasy that surrounds him in the imaginations of all who come into contact with him, either through such works as will be discussed in the course of this study or through the celluloid picture conjured in Hollywood and elsewhere. The paradox between folklore and literature being discussed as one, therefore, does not present too great an obstacle to an analysis of the various interesting facets of which Gauchesque literature is composed.

The folklore found in the works studied is of the Gaucho, who is, himself, folklore in the flesh. The major part of the material to be studied has to do with the oral tradition, and some observations about the Gaucho's speech should be made, even though the study is not basically linguistic in nature.
It has already been stated that the real Gaucho no longer exists as he did in the XIX Century, so in order to learn how he spoke and the vocabulary he employed, one must turn to literature.

In general, the Gaucho was prone to aspirate the final "s" in many words, as seen in Don Segundo Sombra in such examples as "Yamoh' ermanito, que aurita dentro el finac"\(^1\) and "Sabeñ' ermano?"\(^2\) to show briefly the aspiration used, without involving the reader in too great a detailed linguistic analysis. There are many other linguistic points which deserve attention, however brief, such as the softening of initial "b" or "v" sounds. Again from Don Segundo Sombra: "Güeno--dijo Don Segundo..."\(^3\) And from Décimas Gauchas:

---Conque está güelita ya,
don Braulio...\(^4\)

Or Estanislao del Campo's Fausto:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{verbatim}
Güeno, le voy a cantar,

Pero antes voy a buscar...
\end{verbatim}
\end{footnotesize}

Also worthy of mention is the fact that the "f" is pronounced as if it were a "j," as shown in Don Segundo Sombra: "--Si yo fuera descador..."\(^6\) and in Fausto:


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 37.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 19.


\(^6\)Güiraldes, op. cit., p. 19.
Si ella tuviese un hermano
Y en su rancho miserable
Hubiera colgado un sable
Juera otra cosa, paisano.7

In the third line of the above quotation from Fausto is found still another characteristic of Gaucho speech, the omission of the "d" in the pronunciation of words ending in the suffix "ado," a peculiarity of speech not limited to the Gaucho alone, but common to various parts of the Hispanic world, as are the use of mismo for mismo and of pior for peor.

Pronunciation is not the only feature of Gauchesque idiom which should be mentioned, even in such a brief examination as is being given here, since the use of the voseo (the antique vos used for the standard second person singular subject pronoun, tú) and certain dated verb conjugations are also very much a part of the vernacular of the Gaucho. Among the latter is the substitution of "ue" for "o" in the stressed syllable of verbs which are normally regular in the present tense of the indicative and subjective moods. An example of such conjugations is found in Martín Fierro when the hero says, "Ojalá les ruempa el saco,"8 and changes such as this are found in many of the works that utilize the spoken idiom of the Gauchos.

Also prevalent in the Gauchesque vernacular, as shown in the literature, is the conjugation in the imperfect indicative of

7 E. del Campo, op. cit., p. 86.
8 José Hernández, Martín Fierro (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cia., S.A., 1945), p. 190.
many second- or third-conjugation verbs with the ending "iba," whereas "ía" is the grammatically correct usage. Thus, verbs such as creer are conjugated creíba, instead of the correct creía.  

There are other irregularities of Gaucho idiom, and the person interested in further pursuit of speech practices among these singular people should consult some of the many works on Gauchesque linguistics, several of which are listed in the bibliography of this study.

The vocabulary of the Gaucho merits a study by itself, and again there are excellent works that one might consult, so only those terms that deal directly with the elements under consideration in this study, such as types of horses, weapons, articles of clothing, will be defined in the text.

Folklore. Folk literature. Gaucho speech. Having introduced and defined these basic properties of this study, the elements of folklore to be analyzed in the major works under consideration should likewise be presented, showing what they are and how they are found in Gauchesque works in general, the first of these folk elements being plastic, or folklore that deals with that which is not strictly oral in nature, such as implements and crafts.

The study of such implements and crafts of the Gaucho does not evolve exactly as do most studies of ethnic arts, because it is not so much a question of how the costume or pottery of one village or region varies from that of another as that of the attitude of the

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Gaucho toward his weapons, tools, and even the women that are a part of his way of life. That is, the problem is centered not so much around the method of manufacture as the use.

A good example of this is the facón, the great knife—almost a sword—which the Gaucho carries with him until the tool becomes a symbol of its owner, as is the case with the bolas and the bombilla, which will be discussed later. Since the facón has earned a reputation as a fighting weapon, as well as an all-purpose tool, it takes its place in world folklore with such famous blades as the Bowie knife of the United States of America and Colada and Tizada, the famous swords of Roderigo Díaz de Bivar, the Cid of Spain, although Domingo F. Sarmiento discounts most of the stories of sanguinary slaughter as being exaggerated in intensity, since:

Es preciso que esté muy borracho, es preciso que tenga instintos verdaderamente malos, o rencores muy profundos para que atente contra la vida de su adversario. Su objeto es sólo "marcarlo," darla una tajada en la cara, dejarle una señal indelible.  

Although much blood flows in the process of "marking" one's adversary, according to Sarmiento's account:

Ancho círculo se forma en torno de los combatientes, y los ojos siguen con pasión y avidez el centelleo de los puñales, que no cesan de agitarse un momento. Cuando la sangre corre a torrentes, los espectadores se creen obligados en conciencia a separarlos. Si sucede una "desgracia," las simpatías están por el que desgració...  

The facón is used as a weapon of self defense, of cruel duelling, but this formidable knife is more in the skilled hands of

11 Ibid.
its owner than an instrument of death; it is:

...un instrumento que le sirve para todas sus ocupaciones; no puede vivir sin él; es como la trompa del elefante, su brazo, su mano, su dedo, su todo.12

"No es arma, sino estrumento," one of the décimas of Cupertino del Campo, expresses this varied idea of the uses of the facón in the following manner:

Use, el gaucho trabajador,
el cuchillo p'al trabajo.
Nunca de en la carne un tajo,
sino en la del asador.
Tenga, pa' cortar mejor,
la hoja afilada y limpita.
Si a blandirla alguien lo invita
pa' probar quien es más ducho,
propóngale, sobre el pucho,
jugar a la clavadita.13

This estrumento is very important to the Gaucho, but it is not the only aspect of plastic folklore which he considers a necessity. The Gaucho has to have a horse.

One of the very first lines of Santos Vega, o Los Mellizos de la Flor, by Hilario Ascasubi, refers to a "flete lindo como un dao, 14 flete being one of the Gaucho terms for the strong, fleet horses preferred by the great horsemen of the pampas. The horse is so important that it is one of the very first things mentioned in the poem—subordinate only to the famous Gaucho about whom the work is written.

12 Ibid.
13 C. del Campo, op. cit., p. 122.
14 Hilario Ascasubi, Santos Vega, o Mellizos de la Flor (Buenos Aires: Vaccaro, 1919), p. 50.
Sarmiento says of the relation of the Gaucho to his horse that the Gaucho:

Vive a caballo; trata, compra y vende a caballo; bebe, come, duerme y sueña a caballo.\(^{15}\)

An example of how lost the Gaucho is without a horse is the anecdote Sarmiento cites about the caudillo Chaco of the Llanos who went to Chile:

==¿Cómo le va, amigo?== le preguntaba uno. ¿Como me ha de ir ---contestó con el acento de dolor y de la melancolía== En Chile y a pie!==\(^{16}\)

The author explains that only the Argentine Gaucho can fully appreciate all the shame and anxieties that the words of the Gaucho Chacho express.\(^{17}\)

For the Gaucho, then, the horse is of great importance, and in Gauchesque literature there is an unending stream of references to this singular beast which deserves a special name, such as flete or pince, just as does the wondrous knife, the facón.

Ascasubi defines the flete as a "caballo ligero e infatigable para galopear,"\(^{18}\) and the Gaucho's mount must be just that: capable of crossing deep waters and arid wastelands, working long hours among the cattle and even facing death with the same valor shown by his rider.

Bartolomé Mitre expresses these qualities well when he

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\(^{15}\) Sarmiento, op. cit., p. 59.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ascasubi, op. cit., p. 30.
writes:

Mi caballo era ligero
Como la luz del lucero
Que corre al amanecer;
Cuando al galope partia
Al instante se veía
En los espacios perder.

Sus ojos eran estrellas,
Sus patas unas centellas
Que daban chispas y luz:
Cuanto lejos divisaba
En su carrera alcanzaba,
Fuese tigre o avestruz.¹⁹

Not only is the flete quick transportation, but he serves his master when there is hard work to be done with unruly live-

stock:

Cuando tendía mi brazo
Para revolear el lazo
Sobre algun toro feroz,
Si el toro nos embestía,
Al fiero animal tendía
De una pechada veloz.²⁰

He is a help in the face of deadly combat:

En medio de la pelea,
Donde el coraje campea,
Se lanzaba con ardor;
Y su estridente bufido
Cual del clarín el sonido
Daba al jinete el valor.²¹

There can be little surprise, therefore, that the Gaucho admires horses the way many men admire women, exclaiming:

²⁰ Ibid., p. 146.
²¹ Ibid.
For the Gaucho, his pingo is:

...mi sombra en verano...
Mi amigo en la soledad.

However, the realm of plastic folklore has still another living aspect: the china. According to Francisco I. Castro:

...se llama china a la mujer morena nacida y criada en el campo que llegaba a las ciudades para ocupar...el lugar de sirvienta y, más frecuentemente, chinita en forma afectiva. No se llama china en sentido despectivo sino considerándola como criolla del campo. Era la compañera del gaullo, su concubina, porque el matrimonio legalizado...no existía entre los gauchos.

If it seems strange that the china, a person, should follow the horse in a summary of the plastic elements in Gaucho folklore, it should suffice to say that no matter how much a Gaucho might love his chinita, his pingo is his freedom, without which he is reduced to the ranks of common men, and this fact he cannot forget.

The Gaucho and the china love each other, after their fashion, but it must be remembered that the life of the china is not all dancing and guitarras de media noche, because she works like any beast of burden, although the Gaucho is capable of showing affection for her, or at least valuing her merits as something a little more

---Vea los pingos...
---A hijitos!
Son dos fletes soberanos.
Como si fueran hermanos
Bebiendo la agua juntitos!

22 E. del Campo, op. cit., p. 41.
23 Mitre, op. cit., p. 146.
special than the other beasts:

Forque me brindó, aparceró,
en cierta dificultá
en que anduve, la mitá
de su rancho y su puchero,
y dormí sobre su apero,
y monté su redomón,
pongo a su disposición
mi hacienda y mi vida indina,
todo ...menos a mi china.
Eso ya es otra cuestión.25

The Gaucho even knows the pain which love for the china can bring:

Yo no quiero bailar;
Aun no la conozco pero ya le soy fiel.
Yo no puedo bailar;
Y fumo hasta rodearme de colillas
Como de una guardia.
Tengo ganas de irme y de quedarme;
Yo no sé; estoy atado como a dos argollas
A los ojos de esa mujer.26

Generally, the Gaucho is as expert at handling his women as
he is his horse. Eduardo Gutiérrez says of the famous payador,
Santos Vega, that in addition to his skill as a singer of exempla-
neous songs, the golden-throated Gaucho was "...un don Juan de
nuestra compañía."27

The chinita is special to the Gaucho, and most of the books
written about the hero of the pampas deal with his woman, as would
seem only natural.

Another source of solace to the Gaucho from the loneliness

25 C. del Campo, op. cit., p. 137.

26 Fernán Silva Valdés, Agua del Tiempo (Montevideo: Palacio
del Libro, 1950), p. 79.

27 Eduardo Gutiérrez, Una amistad hasta la muerte (Buenos
of life in the barren vastness of his domain is his guitar.

Amada guitarra mía,
los dos debemos cantar:
Tú con la suave harmonía
Yo con mi voz desigual. 28

Esteban Echeverría adds his praise of the instrument:

Mi guitarra es mi querida
Y mi dulce compañera
Sus acentos son mi vida
Mi sentimiento es su alma. 29

Many authors show this feeling of the Gaucho for his guitar, for the undeniable consolation it is to him. It is as much a part of him as the facón, the pingó and the china. Juan María Gutiérrez addresses his guitar:

Tú que has sido siempre
Mi fiel compañera
Justo es que te cante
Sonora vihuela...

Tú que has sido siempre
Mi fiel compañera
Seras hoy mi numen;
Mi lira suprema. 30

Silva Valdés, somewhat more earthily, says:

Guitarra,
No te queda un amante;
Debe hacer mucho tiempo
Que no te vas a solas con un hombre!

Alégrate, guitarra;


29 Ibid., p. 28.

En tu boca se hastían los cantos viejos,
Pero ha llegado alguien a estar contigo a solas
Y a hacerte madre de un canto nuevo. 31

The author also ascribes the very powers of life to the instrument:

La guitarra... era como una madre
Cuya leche, escurrida por calientes arterias,
Ha llegado hasta mi. 32

Life, then, flows through the wood and strings of the guitar, life
in a land where existence, but little living, marks the pattern
that the Gaucho follows.

A knife for work and fighting, a horse for freedom, a woman
for love, and a guitar for relief from the land. It is not too
great an exaggeration to say that these elements play a major role
in the plastic folklore of the Gaucho.

There are other elements which make the Gaucho what he is,
three of which are the bolas, the chiripa and the poncho; the first
as a weapon for hunting and defense and implement for cattle con-
trol, and the others as articles of clothing.

The bolas, or boleadoras, used by such as the Araucanians,
Pampas, and Guaranis, from whom the Gaucho first learned their use,
are made with two or three stone balls fixed to rawhide thongs,
each ball being about the size of a billiard ball, although larger
ones for stopping horses are often made. Usually used for catching
cattle and ostriches, the bolas have been used for warfare by both
Gauchos and their Indian teachers. An example of lesser-known uses
for this singular weapon is cited by John W. White:

31 Silva Valdés, op. cit., p. 12.
32 Ibid., p. 12.
Some time later, 20,000 Indians attacked the settlement and burned the fort. They tied hay soaked in fish oil to their boleadores, lit it, and threw the boleadores into the fort.33

This incident brings to mind the use of arrows for similar purposes by the Indians of the western United States of America during the Nineteenth Century, when the White settlement was at its peak in their lands.

In Gauchesque literature there are many references to the bolas, both as an instrument of combat and for use with livestock and game. Among those that deal with the everyday use of this creation of the River Plate region is this scene described by Hilario Ascasubi:

...y le soltó  
las bolas con tal certeza  
que al tiro se las ató  
en las manos al recinto  
de suerte que allí rodó,  
y al gaúcho haciendo cabriolas,  
por las orejas lo echó.34

Like the boleadoras, the chiripá is an integral part of the Gaucho's equipment, although its use declined among the last of the true Gauchos early in this century. Ascasubi describes it as:

...pieza de paño o bayeta, tejido del país, con que los gauchos se envuelven desde la cintura hasta las rodillas, en forma de calzones bombachos.35

This unusual swaddling is included in various scenes of Santos Vega,

34Ascasubi, op. cit., p. 122.
35Ibid., p. 89.
O Los Mellizos de la Flor, among them the following:

...y maldiciendo a berdún,
como víbora salió
al patio, y los calzoncillos
y el chiripa se bajó,
al punto que el capataz
refalárselos mandó.36

The poncho, that cape of coarsely woven wool or vicuna,
also figures in the plastic folklore of the Gaucho as an article
of clothing, which, although not used exclusively by the Gaucho,
is an important part of the proper Gauchesque garb. Silva Valdés
writes:

Pobre, mi poncho viejo, ¡ya lo estaba olvidando!
Para que se crea lo he dejado
Extendido en el cerco;
Y luego de una noche a la intemperie
Amaneció cubierto de rocío,
Húmedo de alborada;
Húmedo y estirado
Como si el viento se lo hubiera puesto.37

The poet sees in the poncho more than a common item of clothing; it
is the symbol of the Gaucho himself, cramped and confined in the
civilized cage of the city:

Poncho: cuando te extiendes no cabes en el cuarto;
Te pasa lo mismo que a mí me pasaba;
Cuando vine del campo no cabía en el pueblo.38

Bartolomé Mitre, too, refers to the poncho in verse:

Y bajo pieles curtidas
Y de ponchos de bayeta
Aquél rústico gauchaje...

37 *Silva Valdés, op. cit.,* p. 25.
The Gaucho has great need of his poncho, as well as the other elements of plastic folklore mentioned thus far in this study. These items, with the exception of the guitar, deal generally with the work and struggle of the Gaucho in his hard life. There is another important facet to the plastic element in Gaucho folklore: the articles used for recreation. After long hours in the saddle, working with the herd or travelling across the endless pampas, the tired horseman likes to dismount and sit next to a fire in order to relax and partake of the verba mate through a slender metal tube, generally of silver, called the bombilla, which he sticks into the hollow gourd in which the mate brew is steaming. If taken with sugar, mate is commonly called dulce, and if unsweetened it is called cimarrón by the Gauchos, who seem to prefer the latter, if only for reasons of economy. Like coffee and tea in other parts of the world, mate is more than a beverage, being the center of the Gaucho social gatherings, much as coffee is in the United States of America and tea in Japan.

Silva Valdés writes a paean to cimarrón:

El sirve para todo;  
Para lo bueno, para lo malo;  
El lava los dolores del pecho...  
Es el córulo todo en casa del gaucho;  
Alegra la alegría y destine la pena,  
El mate amargo. 40


40 Silva Valdés, op. cit., p. 43.
The author goes to the extent of saying that:

\[\text{En el campo}
\text{No hay boca masculina que rehuse besarlo...}^{41}\]

**Mate.** The fountain of rest, of quiet forgetfulness of weighty troubles, the revitalizing liquid ambrosia of the gods that inhabit the Olympus of the pampas. **Mate** is rest for the Gaucho, but he finds recreation in more than his **bombilla** and the conversation campfire; he plays. **Sarmiento** tells of one of the equestrian games of the Gauchos:

Un gaucho pasa a todo escape por enfrente de sus compañeros. Uno le arroja un tiro de bolas, que en medio de la carrera maniata el caballo. Del torbellino de polvo que levanta este al caer vése salir al jinete corriendo seguido del caballo, a quien el impulso de la carrera interrumpida hace avanzar obedeciendo a las leyes de la física. En este pasatiempo se juega la vida y a veces se pierde.\(^{42}\)

The most famous of the Gaucho equestrian games, however, is **el pato**, which is played with a strong skin, with leather handles, a duck (**pato**) placed inside. Riding at full gallop, the riders pass the duck from player to player, until one of the Gauchos manages to keep it long enough to take it to his **chinita**. It is not a sport for the meek, being exceedingly dangerous, and it was declared illegal by the dictator Rosas.

One of the writers who succeeds in capturing the action and color of this most famous Gaucho game is **Bartolomé Mitre**, who says in a note corresponding to his poem "El Pato" that there is a variation of the game in which:

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\(^{41}\) *Ibid.*, p. 44.

\(^{42}\) *Sarmiento*, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
... dos jinetes, asidos de las manos o ligados por medio de un lazo atado a la cintura, procuran derribarse de sus respectivos caballos.\textsuperscript{43}

This variation is included in the text of Mitre's poem, which gives the work even more worth from the point of view of the student of folklore. The opening stanza praises the game:

\begin{quote}
El Pato! juego fuerte  
Del hombre de la pampa,  
Tradicional costumbre  
De un pueblo varonil.  
Para templar los nervios,  
Para extender los músculos  
Como en veloz carrera  
En la era juvenil.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

He continues showing the speed and dangerous action of the game, changing to lines of three and four syllables in order to capture the rhythm of the horses' hooves:

\begin{quote}
Ya lo alcanzan  
O despuntan,  
Y se juntan  
En redor,  
Cual las hojas  
De una planta  
Que levanta  
El ventarrón.  

Cual relámpago  
Flaminguero  
El alijero  
Alazón,  
Los zanjones  
Que encontraba  
Los salvaba  
Sin parar.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

The pace hastens, quickening the pulse, until:

\textsuperscript{43}Mitre, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 363.
\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 141.
...por último,
Rendidos,
Alaridos
Dan la paz,
Y las gorras
Que se quitan
Les agitan
En señal.46

The signal spells the end of the traditional game, after which begins the hand-to-hand variation, in this case between two young hardies named Zamora and Obando, because the latter challenges the victory of the former:

Cual hosco toro que en lazada envuelto
Se niega altivo a obedecer la fuerza,
Y rebramando con furor se esfuerza,
Y aspa y pezuña quiere allí clavar,
Tal Pedro Obando con poder resiste
Al férreo brazo de que está pendiente,
Mientras el lazo entre los dos crujierte,
Se ve como una víbora oscilar.47

The game ends without a victor:

Silencio pavoroso en torno reina;
Emudece el frenético alarido,
Y sólo se oye el fúnebre crujiendo
Del lazo palpitante entre los dos;
Mas de repente resonó un gemido
Dos espirales al formar el lazo,
Y cada cual llevando su pedazo,
Invuelto en él, al polvo descendió.48

This example of the plastic folklore of the Gaucho, along with the other examples seen in Gauchesque literature, shows that the Gaucho is no ordinary man.

The other elements of his folklore must be examined to show

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46 Ibid., pp. 141-42.
47 Ibid., p. 143.
48 Ibid., pp. 143-44.
how the different types of folklore are related to one another, as well as to the literary works in which they are found. Equally as important as the plastic is the prose of the Gaucho and the Gaucho of prose, the non-plastic, non-lyrical realm of folklore which distinguishes the Gaucho from the Basque, for example, or the Texan.

As is the case with most folkloric elements, this prose, the element which deals with the folktale and legends, despite its meriting separate classification as an element, cannot isolate itself totally from the others, as if protected by some sort of wondrous wall; on the contrary.

When an auto sacramental, for example, is written in Mexico during the XVII Century and passes from the written to the oral form, it belongs to the theatrical folklore of the country, but it contains within its structure certain plastic elements, such as costumes and other props, and quite possibly certain forms of music or poetry. The various elements cannot be separated in this case, and the same is true in Gauchesque folklore, as well.

One can see, therefore, that the theatre—that blend of language with plastic—extends its rules and characteristics to the primitive Gauchesque stage in works such as El amor en la Estancia (1780-1795) which has, according to Juan Carlos Ghiano, "deformaciones fonéticas y sintácticas, y cierto vocabulario regional," as well as some poetic elements which have attracted scholars of Gauchesque verse, but it is El detalle de la acción de Maipú, a

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work dating from the XIX Century, that shows the Gaucho element of theatre. This is apparent from the description of the first scene:

Rancho. En un lado aparece Pancho, acostado sobre un rec- cado, tapado con un poncho; Marica, sentada junto al fuego, en el cual habrá caldera y al lado un mate, hace la que hila; y Petrona, como acomodando tres o cuatro botijas en un rincon. En las paredes habrá algunas guascas, lazo y un par de bolas, colgadas...50

The plastic folklore elements are obvious in this gaucho- esque theatrical prose. The theater, in reality, is not the prose form that most closely represents the Gaucho, although such playwrights as Florencio Sanchez have written classics in the Gaucho genre. The tale is the prose form closest to the Gaucho's soul, a part of the proper education of the Gaucho being to learn to relate well the adventures experienced in life on the pampas.

Such skill at tale-telling is seen in Santos Vega, o Los mellizos de la Flor, when Tolosa tells the humorous events surrounding a half-drunk Indian who carries a woman away under cover of darkness, thinking her a beautiful young damsel, and who keeps kissing her, until:

...allá al ser de día
se dio guésta...y ¡Virgen mía!
con una vieja se halló,
tan fiera, que se espantó,
pues, sin volverla a mirar,
el indio por disparar
hasta la chuza largó.51

And the Gaucho sense of humor is shown in this story, although the basic story, that of the twins of La Flor, takes Santos Vega days

50 Ibid., p. 51.
51 Ascasubi, op. cit., p. 65.
in the telling, as is befitting a Gaucho story, because it is no ordinary undertaking.

There is a great wealth of stories in the folkloric tradition of the Gaucho, and that which is true of a mixture of folk elements in the drama can be found in the tales as well. Just as the theatrical works have costumes and props that form part of plastic folklore, the tale also has plastics that are an important part of it, as are the campfires around which the marvels are made by the storyteller and the ubiquitous mate. Slowly sipping the hot verba mate, seated near the undulating glow of the coals, the Gaucho, warm both within and without, can sit without counting the hours in order to hear the humor and adventure made by the amigo narrador.

The art of narration, of storytelling, is much admired in a Gaucho. Among the many tales of the campfire gatherings are seen portrayed the very Gauchos who embody the spirit of freedom, the wisdom of ways necessary to survival on the pampas, and of feats incredible to the uninitiated. From such tales come Santos Vega, Juan Moreira, and all the other famous Gauchos of literary renown. Some are distorted in the name of art, but all bear at least a small part of the folklore that has kept alive the vanished breed long after its physical passing.

In Ascasubi’s Santos Vega is also found the story of a jaguar hunter named Monsalbo, whose claim to fame was his having killed jaguars since the age of fifteen. When at last this tigrero dies, his mastiffs are so loyal to their old master that they remain around his grave:
Such a story seems somewhat exaggerated to the reader unaccustomed to the ways of the Gauchos, but it is nonetheless credible to the people of the pampas, because they know the value of loyalty in one's animals, as well as his friends, and they listen with great attentiveness to tales of loyalty in both with understanding and admiration.

The prose of the Gaucho reflects those qualities that he most respects, since courage, strength, skill with animals and equipment, truth, and loyalty are high among the recurrent themes found in Gaucho tales.

To understand more fully the folklore upon which Gauchesque literature is based, a picture of the real Gaucho should be evaluated, and one of the best sources for such a study is *Facundo*, by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento.

Sarmiento gives an excellent key to the type of being the Gaucho was, commenting on his early education:

> Los niños ejercitan sus fuerzas y se adiestran por placer en el manejo del lazo y de las boleadoras, con que molestan y persiguen sin descanso a las ternuras y cabras; cuando son jinetes, y esto sucede de aprender a caminar, sirven a caballo en algunos quehaceres; más tarde, y cuando ya son fuertes, recorren los campos cayendo y levantando, rodando a designio en las vizcacheras, salvando precipicios y adi- estrándose en el manejo del caballo; cuando la pubertad asoma, se consagrán a domar potros salvajes y la muerte es el castigo meno que les aguarda, si un momento les faltan las

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It is this intensive equestrian training, this constant education in the saddle, that Sarmiento describes, which gives credence to the figure of the Gaucho on horseback as seen in Gauchesque literary works and in the eyes of outsiders:

Although he (the Gaucho) looked and acted like a centaur when mounted, his living on horseback and galloping over those immeasurable distances prevented him from being a noble figure on foot. But when he was on a horse, galloping like the wind in pursuit of a fleeing ostrich, his poncho flying straight out behind him and his right arm swinging the boleadors high above his head, he was an inspiring and exciting spectacle. No wonder the women adored him!54

Is such training wholly necessary? The answer can be found in the picture of the various types of Gaucho described in Facundo, a series of portraits that make most fiction portrayals of so-called "he-men" so much empty clap-trap.

The first type which Sarmiento describes is the rastreador; he tells us that "todos los gauchos del interior son rastreadores,"55 and that:

As an example of the seemingly incredible skill of these Gauchos to

53Sarmiento, op. cit., p. 41.
54White, op. cit., p. 67.
55Sarmiento, op. cit., p. 49.
56Ibid.
track down animals and other men, the author relates the account of a rastreador named Calíbar, who was one of the most famous among the Gauchos in this skill. According to Sarmiento:

Se cuenta de él que durante un viaje a Buenos Aires le robaron una vez su montura de gala. Su mujer tapó el rastro con una artesa. Dos meses después Calíbar regresó, vió el rastro ya borrado e imperceptible para otros ojos, y no se habló más del caso. Año y medio después Calíbar marchaba cabizbajo por una calle de los suburbios, entra en una casa, y encuentra su montura ennegrecida ya, y casi inutilizada por el uso. Había encontrado el rastro de su raptor después de dos años!57

Unbelievable in a fiction character, this story is more amazing even, because Sarmiento is speaking of a real person, not a creature of a highly stimulated imagination. The same is true of the baqueano who is, as Sarmiento writes:

...un gacho grave y reservado, que conoce a palmo veinte mil leguas cuadradas de llanuras, bosques y montañas. Es el topógrafo más completo; es el único mapa que lleva un general para dirigir los movimientos de su campaña. El baqueano va siempre a su lado. Modesto y reservado como una tapia; está en todos los secretos de la campaña; la suerte del ejército, el éxito de una batalla, la conquista de una provincia, todo depende de él.58

Continuing his portrait of this singular type, he adds:

Si el baqueano lo es de la pampa donde no hay caminos para atravesarla, y un pasajero le pide que lo lleve directamente a un paraje distante cincuenta leguas, el baqueano se para un momento, reconoce el horizonte, examina el suelo, clava la vista en un punto y se echa a galopar con la rectitud de una flecha, hasta que cambia de rumbo por motivos que sólo él sabe, y galopando día y noche, llega al lugar designado.59

57 Ibid., p. 50.
58 Ibid., p. 51.
59 Ibid., p. 52.
A good feat in itself, but the *baqueano* is not only a breathing topographic map and flawless guide; he also can tell the number and proximity of an approaching enemy force: "Cuando se aproxima, observa los polvos; y por su espesor cuenta la fuerza: 'Son dos mil hombres'—dice—'quinientos,' 'doscientos,' y el jefe obra bajo este dato, que casi siempre es infalible."\(^60\)

The third type which Sarmiento discusses is the *Gauchó malo*, who is:

...un tipo de ciertas localidades, un 'outlaw,' un 'squat-ter,' un misantropo particular. Es el 'Ojo de Halcón'... de Cooper, con toda su ciencia del desierto, con toda su aversión a las poblaciones de los blancos; para sin su moral natural y sin sus conexiones con los salvajes.\(^61\)

Explaining just why the "bad Gauchó" is as he is, the author continues:

La justicia lo persigue desde muchos años; su nombre es temido, pronunciado en voz baja, pero sin odio y casi con respeto. Es un personaje misterioso...(que) vive de perdices y 'mulitas'; si alguna vez quiere regalarse con una lengua, enlanza una vaca, la voltea sólo, la mata, saca su bozado predilecto y abandona la más a las aves montecinas.\(^62\)

But the *Gauchó malo* is not a mere vagabond who wastes good beef on the hoof, and Sarmiento shows that this type has his remarkable features, just as have the *rastreador* and the *baqueano*:

Una vez viene al real de una tropa del interior; el patrón propone comprarle un caballo de tal pelo extraordinario, de tal figura, de tales prendas, con una estrella blanca en la paleta. El gauchó se recoge, medita un momento, y después de un rato de silencio, contesta: 'No hay actualmente caballo así.' ¿Qué ha estado pensando el gauchó? En aquel momento

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\(^60\) *Ibid.*


\(^62\) *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55
ha recorrido en su mente mil estancias de la pampa, ha visto y
examinado todos los caballos que hay en la provincia, con sus
marcas, color, señas particulares y convencido de que no hay
ninguno que tenga una estrella en una paleta; unas la tienen
en la frente, otros una mancha blanca en el anca.\textsuperscript{63}

No less amazing is the \textit{gaucho cantor}, or \textit{payador}, the last
of the four types which Sarmiento presents in \textit{Facundo}. This musi-
cal Gaucho is by no means the "singing cowboy" made popular in the
1940's by such Hollywood western warblers as Gene Autry and Roy
Rogers; he is, according to Sarmiento:

\textit{...el mismo bardo, el vate, el trovador de la Edad Media,
que se mueve en la misma escena, entre las luchas de las ciu-
dades y del feudalismo de los campos, entre la vida que se va
y la vida que se acerca. El cantor anda de pago en pago, 'de
tapera en galpón,' cantando sus héroes de la pampa perseguidos
por la justicia, los llantos de la viuda a quien los indios
robaron sus hijos en un malón reciente, la derrota y la muerte
del valiente Rauch, la catástrofe de Facundo Quiroga y la
suerte que cupo a Santos Pérez.}\textsuperscript{64}

Like the other Gaucho types cited by Sarmiento, the cantor has an
anecdote supplied by the author to show how truly singular this
Gaucho balladeer is. The following incident also serves to show,
as have those concerning the previous Gaucho types, exactly how
much more incredible the truth about Gauchos is than the fiction.
Sarmiento begins:

\begin{quote}
En 1840, entre un grupo de gauchos y a orillas del majestuo-
so Paraná, estaba sentado en suelo y con las piernas cruzadas
un cantor que tenía azorado y divertido a su auditorio con la
larga y animada historia de sus trabajos y aventuras. Había
ya contado lo del rapto de la querida, con los trabajos que
sufrió; lo de la 'desgracia' y la disputa que la motivo; esta-
ba referiendo su encuentro con la partida y las puñaladas que
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 55.
So it is that, however fantastic the exploits of the literary Gaucho, the authors must go to great extremes to eclipse the deeds of the flesh-and-blood Gaucho, that strange mixture of cultures; strange because:

It should be noted that not all the conquistadors in the River Plate country were Spaniards. There were many Bavarians, Italians, Portuguese, and even some Arabs; and many others who were not required to state their nationality or reveal their pasts when joining the expeditions. The continual crossing of the blood of these white explorers with that of the half breed girls of the earlier generations eventually produced a white race *sui generis* which contained much of the Spaniard, much of the Indian, and much of something else which was not to be found, or at least was not visible, in either of the parent races.

This racial mixture explains why "The gaucho was Spanish in his strong individualism, Moorish in his fatalism, and Indian in his close identification with the soil." The Gaucho shows these traits, as the dramas, stories, and verse about him testify, but

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the important feature of his ethnic background lies in the term, *sui generis*. The Gaucho is, in the final analysis, none of the groups which go into his creation; he is the Gaucho.

The last type discussed in *Facundo* is the *gaücho cantor* which is auspicious in its order, because the last element of Gaucho folklore which remains to be introduced is lyric folklore, the music and verse, of which the *payador* is a very important part.

The *payador* is introduced last by Sarmiento, and the music and poetry of the Gaucho constitute the last folk element of this introduction, but this order is not accidental, because the lyric element in Gaucho folklore comes last in the way a priest is the last person in a religious procession. The Thurifers and acolytes have passed, and the most important element of the three approaches.

The music and the poetry of the Gaucho deserve such acclaim because, although they are not totally separated from the other elements, they contain an almost indefinable something which distinguishes them from the other types of folklore.

The key is seen in the words of Sarmiento when he speaks of the poetry (to which the music is closely united) and the influence it has on the people of Argentina:

> Ahora, yo pregunto: ¿Qué impresiones ha de dejar en el habitante de la República Argentina el simple acto de clavar los ojos en el horizonte y ver..., no ver nada? La soledad, el peligro, el salvaje, la muerte. He aquí resulta que el pueblo argentino es poeta por carácter, por naturaleza.⁶⁸

This same idea is expressed by Arturo Torres-Ríoseco:

⁶⁸Sarmiento, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.
Gaucho poetry began quite naturally and simply. The man of the pampas was impressed by the incredible natural environment all around him; at the same time, he was moved to express in song the lonesomeness of his own life, his melancholy, the tender side of his nature, his dreams of love.  

It is this naturalness, this closeness to every Gaucho, that makes the lyric merit special consideration over the other folk elements, because it is the element which most closely approaches revealing the soul of these people. Torres-Ríoseco adds that "Every good gaucho...became a singer, and it was a disgrace in the pampas not to play the guitar," which is yet another indication of the importance of this element of Gaucho folklore and especially that form most closely identified with the Gaucho, the contrapunto. The payada de contrapunto is a competition between two cantores in which, Francisco Castro writes: "...unas veces improvisando sus propios versos y otras repitiendo oportunamente algunos aprendidos, tratan de superarse con mejores argumentos sobre temas que durante la payada se proponen mutuamente."  

This payada is the favorite form of self-expression among the Gauchos and is another example of the interweaving of the types of folklore, because of the importance placed on the guitar, a plastic element introduced earlier in this study.

A typical payada de contrapunto is described by Torres-Ríoseco:

70 Ibid.
71 Castro, op. cit., p. 115.
Two gauchos would sit on the skulls of oxen, tuning their guitars, while bystanders stood around them in a circle and urged them with yells and applause into a singing match. Then one singer would challenge the other to explain, for instance, the origin of time and space; the second singer would improvise half a dozen stanzas and end by asking a question in his turn. In this way they often passed hours, sometimes days, in a sport that was a real tournament of wit, to the great delight of the spectators.72

There are many references to such payadas in Gauchesque literature, such as this one from Décimas Gauchas which is another example of Gaucho good humor:

---Diga: ¿En Dolores no jué
donde un día hemos payao
de contrapunto?
---Va errao,
pues nunca puse allá en pie,
---Aura que lo escucho a usté
decir eso, amigo Flores,
y al recordar que a Dolores
yo, esa vez, tampoco he ido,
colijo que han de haber sido
otros dos los payadores.73

The payador himself should be introduced and discussed, and the most famous gaucho cantor is Santos Vega, about whom many poems, novels and stories have been written, because he is the payador par excellence, almost the patron saint of the troubadors of the pampas.

Among the works written about him is the already-mentioned Santos Vega, o Los mellizos de la Flor, by Hilario Ascasubi, which shows many aspects of the gifts of this folk hero, such as his beautiful singing voice, his skill with the guitar, and his ability to tell stories and compete in the contrapunto, but there are other

---Torres-Ríoseco, op. cit., pp. 142-143.
---C. del Campo, op. cit., p. 57.
works which should be included in the introduction of the payador, represented by Santos Vega as the archetype. One such work is a tribute by Barolome Mitre:

Santos Vega, tus cantares
No te han dado excelsa gloria,
Mas viven en la memoria
De la turba popular;
Y sin tinta ni papel
Que los salve del olvido
De padre a hijo han venido
Por la tradición oral.\(^74\)

According to tradition, Santos Vega died only after being defeated in a contrapunto for the first time, an incident which shows, somewhat hyperbolically, how very important the skill of the contrapunto is to the payador. Among the works telling this story of the passing of the gran cantor is "Santos Vega," a poem by Rafael Obligado:

Pero un viejo y noble abuelo,
así el cuento terminó;
"==Y si cantando murió
aquel que vivió cantando,
fue==decía suspirando==
porque el diablo lo venció."\(^75\)

According to Una amistad hasta la muerte, the hero, grown old, leaves the encampment of the Indians with whom he has been living, in order to die beside the tomb of his good friend Carmona, to be buried with him, showing the intense loyalty respected so greatly by the Gauchos. He is extremely thin, and the trip to Carmona's grave is difficult, but upon arriving finally at the

\(^74\) Mitre, op. cit., p. 127.

tomb, Santos Vega sings all night long in a voice so sweet and clear that it belies his advanced age. After several months of sitting on his friend's grave, "sin que...tuviera otro techo que las desnudas ramas de aquel ombú gigantesco,"76 Santos Vega, having passed the time defeating scores of singers at contrapunto, begins to sing against a stranger, and the two sing for three days and nights, but "A la cuarta noche, los paisanos sintieron algo raro. Como a un tercio de la payada hubo un momento de silencio, en seguida se sintió un gran grito de payador, seguido de estas palabras: ---Me ha vencido!,--- y no se volvió a escuchar ni su voz ni su guitarra."77 The following morning, the villagers from nearby find the dead hero "sobre la tumba de su amigo, abrazado de su guitarra, pero frío y endurecido por la muerte."78

It is worth mentioning that Gutiérrez looks upon the satanic nature of the unknown payador who defeated Santos Vega with a degree of cynicism, because the hero himself says that it is the devil with whom he is going to sing, before the contest begins, and the author comments on the "...superstición de aquella gente, que aseguraban al otro día...que...habían sentido un fuerte olor a azufre."79

In the payador and the payada lies the spirit of the poetry and song of Argentina in its most folkloric and Gauchesque form.

76 Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 238.
77 Ibid., p. 239.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
although there are other beautiful songs in the folk tradition of Gaucho music. One such type of song is the *triste* from the northern parts of Argentina, which is a "canto frigio, planidero; natural al hombre en el estado primitivo de barbarie," according to Sarmiento, who quotes Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

There is also the *vidalitá*, which has Quechua strains in its past, as does the *yaraví*, but in the final analysis there is no other musical form so closely related to the Gaucho as the *contrapunto*, from the standpoint of folklore.

The *contrapunto* is not, of course, the only musical form which is of value in a study of Gaucho folk music, nor is this field limited to the folksong alone. The Gaucho also took pride in dancing, and various references to the steps popular during the different Gaucho periods are found in the folk-based literature.

There are frequent references to the *gato*, a dance in which the dancers exchange *coplas*, examples of which are found in *Lírica popular rioplatense*, among them:

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Para bailar el gato
se necesitan cuatro:
dos muchachas bonitas,
dos mozos guapos.
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and

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Esa niña que baila,
muchas la quiero,
pero no para hermana,
que hermana tengo. 31
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30 Sarmiento, op. cit., p. 48.
31 Morales, op. cit., p. 62.
Another dance popular in Gaucho circles is the *malambo*.

Santos Vega exclaims:

¡Ah, pieses! ¡para un malambo
conmigo que todavía
no estoy del todo olvidó!*82

Cupertino del Campo "quotes" another Gaucho:

Seánse que si lo viera
donde otro mundo, bailar
un malambo pa' olvidar,
ni anima en pena tendría
un güen rato de alegría
y ganas de zapatear.*83

It is Silva Valdés who captures the sensuous rhythm of that most famous Gaucho dance, the tango:

*Tango milongón*

*Coeazón de arrabal*

Eres como una viruta musical
Como una viruta de bandoleon.

Como una queja que se estira
Producendo escozor y placer;
Eres una música que se respira,
Que tiene forma curva y que huele a mujer.

*Música primitiva pero civilizada;*
Que calienta la sangre y emborracha a las gentes;
Una musica rara
Que se acompaña con el cuerpo.
Y con los labios, y con los dientes
Como si se mascara...

*Tango milongón*

*Tango compadron,*
Que a pesar de bailarse con todas las ganas
Se baila *como sin ganas,*
Como en carriles de lentitud;
Eres un estado de alma de la multitud.84

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82 Ascasubi, *op. cit.* p. 73.
84 Silva Valdés, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
"Un estado de alma de la multitud." That is the tango for Fernán Silva Valdés, but the same can be said to hold true for the other types found in all the elements of Gaucho folklore, because each form in each element is a reflection of that which is most deeply a part of the being of the Gaucho. Without Gauchesque literature much of this heritage would be lost.

Having defined necessary terms and introduced the elements of folklore and the various forms contained in each, the selected works representing the periods of Gauchesque literature can be analyzed in accordance with these definitions and folklore elements. The first period will be the Zenith Years.
From his formative period, during which time the racial mixtures which blended into that singular being were assimilating, the Gaucho emerged into the way of life that was to typify him as a folk figure. His was the free life on the open pampas of subservience to no man, of dependence only on his horse and tools and his skill with them. An estimate of 42,000,000 wild horses and cattle roamed the pampas towards the end of the XVIII Century, belonging to nobody, and the "Gaucho felt as free to kill a steer or to take a wild horse as he did to fish a stream."86

During this period of the free life, the baqueano, the ras-treador, the gaúcho malo and the payador evolved and made their mark, especially the payador, whose songs and competitions of the contra-punto carried the folklore of the Gauchos throughout the vastness of the pampas and eventually onto the pages of literary works penned in Argentina and Uruguay. The most notable of these is the epic poem of the Gaucho, Martín Fierro, by José Hernández (1834-1886).

Written in varying octasyllables, the poem relates the story, sung in the first person, of the hero Martín Fierro, who is changed

86 Ibid.
from a happy payador to a gaucho malo by the pressure of unjust
civilization that forces him into the most degrading form of menial
labor, causing him to escape beyond the frontier with a loyal
friend, Cruz. The two live among the Indians, where they suffer
many privations, and Cruz finally dies of smallpox. In the first
part of the poem, Martín Fierro vows to return to the scenes of his
once-happy life, and he does so in the second part, La vuelta. In
this part he has a sanguinary encounter with an Indian who has a
white woman prisoner. Martín also meets his sons and another young
Gaucho, who turns out to be the son of Cruz. Their conversation is
replete with attacks against the injustices suffered at the hands
of cruel officials from the city who hound the Gauchos and try to
fetter and rob these proud horsemen. Finally, a Negro challenges
Martín Fierro to a payada de contrapunto, and it is revealed that he
is the embittered son of a man Martín had killed several years earli-
er in a pulpería. Their payada is a high point in the second part
of the work, and after some clever exchanges between the two, neither
a tyro in the art of the contrapunto, Martín at last defeats the
Negro. This encounter over, the hero then gives his sons some advice,
after which they separate in the directions of the winds. Their
parting ends the poem.

This poem is the most notable of the Gaucho literary works,
because it is from beginning to end the embodiment of that most Gauch-
esque folk element, the payada.

Tinker expresses this closeness with the payada that Martín
Fierro realizes when he writes, "Hernandez' masterpiece was the
apogee of poetry in the tradition of the payador—a genre that was vital and alive as long as it was written by men who had lived the life of the pampas.\(^87\)

This achievement of a oneness with the vital folk genre is also noted by Carlos Alarto Leumann, who says of José Hernández:

Desde luego tuvo mucho de común con los paisanos, vivió entre ellos su infancia y primera juventud, y en la chacra de su nacimiento había dos pulperías. Remontaba a sus primeros recuerdos el canto de los payadores, y supo como éstos, y por las mismas causas geográficas profundas, crear idioma.\(^88\)

Lehmann-Nitsche, cited by H. A. Holmes, best indicates this ethno-folkloric closeness that Hernández has breathed into his poem, when he states that Santos Vega and Martín Fierro are brothers of the same race.\(^89\)

**Martín Fierro** is the product of the tradition of the gauchito payador and should be studied to see what its musical elements have in common with folk ballads and to analyze its further connections with music, before examining the other folkloric features of the poem.

From the very beginning, the poem follows the folk ballad form of the Gauchito, in which the singer announces his intention to begin his payada, at the same time praising the virtues of song as a comfort to the singer:

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Aquí me pongo a cantar
Al compás de la vigüela;
Que el hombre que lo desvela
Una pena extrordinaria,
Como la ave solitaria
Con el cantar se consuela. 90

This beginning of the first part, "Hacia," is not atypical of folk ballads of many countries that invoke the listener's attention to the fact that a song is about to be sung. "La vuelta" begins similarly:

Atención pido al silencio
Y silencio a la atención,
Que voy en esta ocasión,
Si me ayuda la memoria,
A mostráries que a mi historia
Le faltaba lo mejor. 91

Both beginnings are reminiscent of such cowboy ballads from the United States of America as "The Old Chisholm Trail," that similarly announces its beginning with a petition for the ear of the singer's audience:

Come along and listen
As I tell you of the tale
Of the things that happened to me
On the old Chisholm Trail.

The structure of the Gaucho folk ballad is not the only evidence of the musical element in the poem. There are many references within the poem that help portray the importance of music to the Gaucho and the part it played in his daily life.

This importance is stressed throughout, and from the begin-

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91 Ibid., p. 36.
ning Martín expresses the idea that song is a very necessary, very natural, part of his being:

Cantando me he de morir,
Cantando me han de enterrar,
Y cantando he de llegar
Al pie del Eterno Padre.
Dende el vientre de mi madre
Vine a este mundo a cantar. 92

Song is so natural to the Gaucho that:

...si me pongo a cantar,
No tengo cuando acabar
Y me envejezco cantando:
Las coplas me van brotando
Como agua del manantial. 93

An enforcement of the above comes several stanzas later, when Martín confesses that this natural gift is indeed a joy when a Gaucho can go to a pulpería and, while in his cups, enjoy the experience related by the beleaguered hero, who recalls:

Mi gala en las pulperías
Era, cuando había más gente,
Ponerme medio caliente,
Pues cuando puntiao me encuentro,
Me salen coplas de adentro
Como agua de la virtiente. 94

Such pleasures can lead to trouble, as Martín learns after addressing such alcohol-inspired coplas to a Negress in a pulpería. Overhearing Fierro's glib rhyme, a Negro Gaucho challenges Martín to a fight, resulting in his being killed by Fierro's knife. The coplas that started the trouble, but which become for the reader a delight-

92 Ibid., p. 7.
93 Ibid., p. 8.
94 Ibid., p. 10.
ful example of this form of Gaucho verse, are:

A los blancos hizo Dios,
A los mulatos San Pedro,
A los negros hizo el diablo
Para tizón del infierno. 95

Also included in the poem are references to the dances of the Gauchos, such as the following mention which Cruz makes, saying of a dance he had attended that:

Con gato y con fandanguillo
Había empezao el changango;
Y para ver el fandango,
Me colé haciéndome bola;
Mas metio el diablo la gola,
Y todo se volvió pango. 96

Other references to the various dances appear in the poem, but more significant is the attitude shown the guitar by the Gaucho, as reflected in Martín's statement:

Con la guitarra en la mano
Mi las moscas se me arriman;
Naides me pone el pie encima,
Y cuando el pecho se entona,
Hago gemir a la prima
Y llorar a la bordona. 97

More impressive still is the symbolic use of the guitar, when Martín Fierro breaks the instrument at the conclusion of "La ida." His doing this signifies that, by crossing the frontier with Cruz, he has broken forever with the life he had once known, prior to his being dogged by the officials of civilization:

Rueumo, dijo, la guitarra

95 Ibid., p. 21.
96 Ibid., p. 30.
97 Ibid., p. 8.
Pa no volverme a tentar.
Ninguno ha de tocar,
Por seguro tengálo;
Pues naides ha de cantar
Cuando este gaucho cantó.98

The former way of life cannot long survive the attacks of civilized
progress, and as the two Gauchos see the last scattered towns of
the land they had belonged to for so long, the emotion is too great.
Hernández relates:

Y a Fierro dos lagrimones
Le rodearon por la cara.99

The dance and the guitar, both related to the musical ele-
ment of folklore, play their parts in the formation and the attitude
of the poem, but it is the puyador, the gaucho cantor, who remains
the musical figure of prime importance. His moment of greatest
glory is the supreme test of his art: the payada de contrapunto.

Perhaps the most memorable scene in the entire poem is just
such a contrapunto, that serious exchange between Fierro and the
moreno, the son of the Negro whom Martín had killed in the fight
over the coplas cited earlier in this study.

The challenge for the contrapunto is given, and it is very
obvious that the young Negro is not issuing it for mere entertain-
ment. As Martín Fierro says:

A un cantor le llaman guénno
Cuando es mejor que los piores;
Y sin ser de los mejores,
Encontrándose dos juntos;

98 Ibid., p. 34.
99 Ibid.
Es deber de los cantores
El cantar de contrapunto. 100

Such is the duty of the Gaucho singers. This contrapunto is no mere songfest, and Martín's remarks show the seriousness with which such contests were regarded by the Gaucho of the golden years.

The entire contrapunto consists of some ninety-one stanzas of six lines each and is a lively example of that supreme test of the true gaucho payador, beginning with the typical challenge of a question to be resolved in the fixed meter and rhyme scheme of the moment. Martín Fierro sings:

Ah! negro, si sos tan sabio,
No tengas ningún recelo;
Pero has tragao el anzuelo,
Y, al compás del estrumento,
Has de decirme al momento
Cual es el canto del cielo. 101

The lyrical duel is on. The Negro parries:

Los cielos lloran y cantan
Hasta el mejor silencio;
Lloran al caer el rocío,
Cantan al silbar los vientos;
Lloran cuando cain las aguas,
Cantan cuando brama el trueno. 102

The exchange is fast, ruthless and unforgettable exciting, until at last Martín Fierro makes the deciding parry and riposte. The contrapunto is ended.

The cantor and his art are the underlying image and the outward and visible structure of this poem. The plastic elements also

100 Ibid., p. 86.
101 Ibid., pp. 84-86.
102 Ibid., p. 86.
serve to portray the Gaucho in his finest years, and these must be examined in order to view more completely Martín Fierro as a representative work of the last great days of the hero of the pampas.

The plastic elements provide a picture of the Gaucho as he was during his prime years, and the china figures into the mosaic formed by the tesserae of folk elements, as when Martín Fierro sings of the days before his persecution. In those times, one could awaken before dawn and sit by the fire, awaiting the pending sunrise:

Mientras su china dormía
Tapadita con su poncho.103

Such an awakening is a pleasure denied the Gaucho with the advent of the law enforcement agencies, as was the case with Martín Fierro, who was forced to flee his pursuers:

Y cargué sin dar más güeltas
Con las prendas que tenía;
Jergas, poncho, cuanto había
En casa, tuito lo alcé.
A mi china la dejé
Media desnuda ese día.104

His china must be left behind, but his other possessions follow the Gaucho on his flight from the city-imposed justice. Taking the clothes on his back, his necessary weapons, and riding gear, the Gaucho turned matrero, or gaacho malo, cannot be burdened by the girl who has become his concubine, however much he loves her. To effect his escape, he must travel with the barest of necessities.

Among his necessary items of clothing is the chirina, which

103 Ibid., p. 9
104 Ibid., p. 10.
gradually falls into disuse with the degeneration of the Gaucho, but which was standard equipment when he was in his prime. The works written after the passing of the Gaucho sometimes tend to idealize such sartorial items, but Martín Fierro shows how commonplace the chiripá is to the true Gaucho when, during a very heated fight for his life:

Me sucedió una desgracia
En aquel percance amargo:
En momentos que lo cargo
Y que el reculando va,
Me enredé en el chiripá
Y cai tirao largo a largo.105

Fierro's narrative is hardly an anthem of praise for something revered which the author considers a symbol of the ubi sunt.

The Gaucho is forced to travel light to evade capture, and his primary concern when his freedom is at stake, of course, is his horse. This animal is the very source of his liberty and pride:

Ah, tiempos!... si era un orgullo
Ver jinetiar un paisano.
Cuando era gaucho baquiano,
Aunque el potro se boliasse,
No había uno que no parase
Con el cabresto en la mano.106

The gringo is a source of pride to the Gaucho: pride in his animal and in his own abilities with the strong, fleet animal. With this admiration for horse and rider comes deep-seated contempt for the government which is represented by gringos, immigrants not skilled in the life of the equestrian natives. Martín Fierro puzzles:

105 Ibid., p. 49.
106 Ibid., p. 9.
That a man cannot handle the wild ponies of the pampas is indeed a source of contempt for the Gaucho. The most important attitude concerning horses, however, is the dependence placed upon their mounts by these horsemen. The \textit{gringo} is freedom. This idea is expressed by one of Martín Fierro's sons, who says that while wasting away in the \textit{gringo} prison the Gaucho longs to feel the horse beneath him. He recalls his own misery in such a hellish confinement:

\begin{quote}
En esa estrecha prisión
Sin poderme conformar,
No cesaba de excluir:
¡Que diera yo por tener
Un caballo en que montar
Y una pampa en que correr!\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

This is but one of the many passages throughout the poem which show the attitude of Hernández toward the cruelty and injustice meted out to the Gauchos by his enemies from the city.

Henry Alfred Holmes says of Hernández that he:

\begin{quote}
...was full of resentment against practices oppressive to the gaucho. He might have arraigned such oppression in the columns of the press. But according to unwritten law, the gauchos had been outraged in their most sacred, primitive rights; their natural recourse was the appeal to arms. It was the lust of battle, not the complacent smirk of the pamphleteer or the mere rhymer that shone in the eyes of our poet.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid., p. 58.
Such resentment is not shown only in passages dealing with the horse, since even the Gaucho drink, yerba mate becomes another tessera in this mosaic portrait of the Gaucho in his prime: a mosaic of folklore grouted by grim resentment. The son of Martín Fierro further complains that while in prison:

El mate no se permite...
Para aliviar su dolor. 110

Not all in Martín Fierro is aimed as an attack against the unfair practices of civilization toward the Gauchos, as shown in various passages concerned with those formidable Gaucho weapons, the boleadoras and the facón.

The former was introduced to the Gaucho by the Indians native to the pampas, and Martín Fierro is very well aware of the skill with the bolas which the Indian has achieved:

Sabe manejar las bolas
Como naídes las maneja,
Cuanto el contrario se aleja,
Manda una bola perdida,
Y si lo alcanza, sin vida
Es seguro que lo deja. 111

There is no denying the skill of Fierro himself, who relates his killing an Indian with his boleadoras, as follows:

Dios le perdone al salvaje
Las ganas que me tenía...
Desató las tres marías
Y lo engatusé a cabriolas...
Pucha... si no traigo bolas,
Me achura el indio ese día.

110 Hernández, op. cit., p. 58.
111 Ibid., p. 12.
Era el hijo de un cacique,
Sigún yo lo averigué;
La verdad del caso jue
Que me tuvo apuradazo,
Hasta que al fin de un bolazo
Del caballo lo bajé.112

The boleadoras serve for much more than catching ostriches or livestock, as this passage has shown. Leopoldo Lugones says of the bolas as a duelling weapon that:

Aquella esgrima de las bolas era desconcertante y terrible. Las tres piedras y las tres sogas servían a la vez, cubriendo ventajosamente la guardia. La bola más pequeña, o manija, asiala el guerrero con los dedos de su pie izquierdo desnudo. Una de las dos mayores, tensa en su cordel, manteniala con la mano izquierda a la altura de la cabeza. La tercera quedaba floja y colgando en la mano derecha, con lo que venía a ser el elemento activo del combate. Obligando a retreparses para aumentar la tensión de aquella cuerda, el indio acertuaba en su fiero talento la impresión del peligro. Ambas las manos combinaban sus movimientos para disparar el doble proyectil; y todavía, si se descuidaba el adversario, bastábale aflojar de golpe la manija, que, con la tensión, iba a dar en la pierna de aquel, descomponiendo su firmeza.113

Lugones gives one an idea of how well the Indians could employ this weapon in combat. Martín finds out how well in his encounter, related in "La vuelta," in which he comes across an Indian about to kill a white woman whom he has captive. When Fierro approaches, he finds the miserable woman:

Toda cubierta de sangre... Tenía dende abajo arriba
La marca de los lazazos;
Sus trapos hechos pedazos
Mostraban la carne viva.114

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112Ibid., pp. 13-14.
When the Gaucho gets even closer, the Indian unties his boleadoras.

The payador continues:

En la dentrada no más
Me largó un par de bolazos,  
Uno me tocó en un brazo.  
Si me da bien, me lo quiebra,  
Pues las bolas son de piedra  
Y vienen como balazo.¹¹⁵

The fight leaps across the pages of Hernández¹ poem, the Gaucho hero confessing that this is no ordinary fight. It is a struggle for life against a potent enemy, an enemy well armed and wise in the use of his weapon:

La bola en manos del indio  
Es terrible y muy ligera;  
Hace de ella lo que quiera  
Saltando como una cabra.  
Mudos, sin decir palabra,  
Peliábamos como fieras.¹¹⁶

The blows of the bolas continue to due the Gaucho harm:

Me hizo sonar las costillas  
De un bolazo aquel maldito...¹¹⁷

The tide of battle finally turns in favor of the Gaucho:

En cuanto trastabillo,  
Mas de firme lo cargué,  
Y aunque de nuevo hizo pie,  
Lo perdió aquella pisada,  
Pues en esa atropellada  
En dos partes lo corté.¹¹⁸

The Indian's chances of winning now are few, so at last Martín Fierro

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 49.  
¹¹⁶Ibid.  
¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 50.  
¹¹⁸Ibid.
sees his opportunity and:

Al fin de tanto lidiar
En el cuchillo lo alcé;
En peso lo levanté
A aquel hijo del desierto;
Ensartado lo llevé.
Y alla recién lo largué
Cuando yo lo sentí muerto.

The facón is victor over the bolas.

Martín Fierro has shown prior to this savage battle that
he is no stranger with the facón. The real Gaucho can work won-
ders with his knife, and Martín Fierro is just that: a genuine
Gaucho.

His artistry with a facón is shown in "La ida." Martín
gets embroiled with a Negro over the uncomplimentary lyrics of
some coplas directed to a young Negress at a pulpería. The fight
begins:

El negro, después del golpe,
Se había el poncho refalao,
Y dijo: --'Vas a saber
Si es solo o acompaña.'

Martín, seeing the meaning of the Negro's actions, comments:

No hay cosa como el peligro
Pa refrescar un mamaco;
Hasta la vista se aclara
Por mucho que haiga chupao.

When the moreno jumps him, Martín makes two deft passes with his
knife:

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119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., p. 21.
121 Ibid.
The fight is not over. Fierro continues:

Y en el medio de las aspas
Un planazo le asenté,
Que lo largué celebriando
Lo mismo que buscapie.

Le coloriaron las motas
Con la sangre de la herida,
Y volvió a venir juríos
Como una tigra parida.

Y ya me hizo relumbrar
Por los ojos el cuchillo,
Alcanzando con la punta
A cortarme en un carrillo.123

Fierro's blood boils, and he says:

...en una topada,
En el cuchillo lo alcé,
Y como un saco de güesos,
Contra un cerce lo largué.

Tiró unas cuantas patadas,
Y ya cantó pa el carnero;
Nunca me puedo olvidar
La agonía de aquel negro.124

The reader cannot forget the action of this passage and the skill with the facón that Martín demonstrates in the fight.

The folk elements in Martín Fierro are used by the author to show the Gaucho at his best, despite the advent of those forces which would eventually mean his disappearance from the pampas, the progress of civilization.

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122 Ibid., p. 22.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
Another author who shows this aspect of the Gaucho is Eduardo Gutiérrez, whose Juan Moreira tells, in novel form, a story not unlike that of Martín Fierro, although without the fresh, unaffected quality of Hernández's poem. As Torres-Ríoseco says:

Like Martín Fierro, Juan was a gaucho turned outlaw because of persecution, but in the elaboration of wild and impossible incidents, the novel was journalese.... Gutiérrez cared more for gruesome plot and melodramatic effect than for authentic psychology; even the language of his gauchos was the corrupt slang of the city suburbs instead of the lusty talk of the real gaucho or the conventional speech of the epic poem.125

Published in the wake of the success of Martín Fierro, Juan Moreira stands for the beginning of the end. The decline of the Gaucho has begun, even though the author says of his tremendously popular hero:

Moreira era como la generalidad de nuestros gauchos; dotado de un alma fuerte y de un corazón generoso, pero que lanzado en las sendas nobles, por ejemplo, al frente de un regimiento de caballería, hubiera sido una gloria patria, y que empujado a la pendiente del crimen, no reconoció límites a sus instintos salvajes despertados por el odio y la sana con que se le persiguió.126

Whatever its failings in comparison with Martín Fierro, Gutiérrez's novel realized a tremendous success, being accepted with great acclaim by the vast reading public of the River Plate region, who thrilled to its purple accounts of violent bloodshed and derring-do.

Actually based on accounts given in police blotters to which Gutiérrez, a newspaperman, had easy access, Juan Moreira tells the

125 Torres-Ríoseco, op. cit., p. 152.

story of a true-hearted Gaucho who means no harm to anyone but those who wrong him. He is forced into the life of a gaucho malo after killing an Italian in an argument over money owed the Gaucho. Pursued by the agents of civilized law, Moreira endures myriad knife-fights, evades capture from superior numbers, and suffers the shame of his wife's living with another man, until he is killed at last by the forces that have hounded him for so long, shaping his sad destiny.

Obviously, this story has traces of that told in Martín Fierro, but where the musical elements of folklore mark Henández's poem, the primary element in Juan Moreira is plastic—the facón. Juan endures the injustice of the gringos and their laws to the breaking point, after which he replaces his working knife with "...una daga lujosamente engastada,"¹²⁷ and proceeds to the pulpería of Sardetti, the gringo who has dishonestly withheld payment of his debt to Moreira. After proclaiming the justice of his cause, Juan proceeds to engage the Italian in a knife duel which results in Moreira's finding an opening and:

...bajando la cabeza y subiendo hasta la altura de sus ojos
el antebrazo izquierdo del que colgaba su poncho, entró a Sar-
detti por el costado izquierdo con tal impetu, que le sepultó
allí la daga por completo. Sardetti lanzó una especie de que-
jido sordo, dejó caer la daga de su mano, y vaciló sobre sus
pies.¹²⁸

Juan Moreira is bent on total vengeance for the wrongs committed

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 34.
against him by the greedy Sardetti and, "Entonces como un relámpago, como una máquina de muerte, Moreira le dió nueve puñaladas más: tres en el pecho, cuatro en el vientre y dos en el costado, arriba de la primera."129

Moreira’s flight begins, taking him far away from his family and friends but closer to danger, with which he must always contend, using his terrible knife. Such is the case when he fights his way through a group of soldiers, shortly after the incident at Sardetti’s pulperia:

Como una fiera acosada, ágil y avisor, Moreira levantó el brazo derecho presentando la daga de punta y esperó el ataque. Los dos soldados lo acometieron de frente y enarbolaron el sable amagando un hachazo a la cabeza. Moreira calculó el tiempo con esa habilidad especial de gaucho de averia, y cuando vio caer los dos hachazos, dió un poderoso salto de lado para evitar los golpes y cayó sobre el flanco del soldado que estaba a su derecha, a quien le sepultó hasta la empuñadura su daga en el vacío.130

More blood must fall before Moreira can gain his escape from the danger presented by the troops of his chief antagonist, Don Francisco:

En seguida, rápido y ejecutivo, cayó sobre el otro soldado, que había quedado sorprendido por la maniobra del gaucho. Moreira cayó sobre él, le barajó en el poncho el hachazo con que fué recibido y tiró una terrible puñalada. La filosa daga penetró entre la cuarta y quinta costilla del soldado, que vaciló, dió algunos traspies y fue a caer pesadamente a los pies del amigo Francisco...131

The soldiers eliminated, Moreira and Don Francisco are free to

129Ibid.
130Ibid., pp. 50-51.
131Ibid., p. 51.
engage in the "...duelo a muerte, el verdadero duelo a muerte, sangriento, sin cuartel, dirigido por el odio en que rebosaban aquellos dos corazones."\(^{132}\) Moreira is, of course, the victor when he "...tranquilo siempre, siempre sereno, esperó el golpe cuya llegada apreció matemáticamente; volcó con su poncho hacia la izquierda el sable del teniente alcalde, descubriendole el pecho anhelante, donde sepultó su daga hasta la S."\(^{133}\) The only setback is that Francisco does not drop dead instantly, requiring that the harassed Gaucho, "...para terminar de una vez, busco con una mirada llena de avidez, el sitio donde estaba el corazón de aquel hombre, y sin el menor escrúpulo le dió la puñalada de gracia."\(^{134}\)

With the death of Francisco, the teniente alcalde, the flight begun with the death of Sardetti now becomes even more frantic. The Gaucho is set upon by band after band of law enforcement troops, meaning that Moreira must seek other means than his facón in order to survive the myriad struggles ahead of him, so he asks his good friend Julian, "...Regáleme su par de pistolas de dos cañones, porque ya yo conozco que voy a vivir peleando y no tengo armas de fuego."\(^{135}\) This is a radical departure from the Gaucho concept of the honorable way to fight, due to the pressures put upon him by the law. In the first stages of Juan Moreira's fight with Francisco, after the latter

\(^{132}\) Ibid.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 53.

\(^{134}\) Ibid.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., pp. 55-56.
takes a shot at him, the Gaucho yells, "—Así matan ustedes... de lejos y sin riesgo..." 136

The pistol is distasteful to the Gaucho, who prefers to face death in a mano-a-mano with knives, but Moreira must resort to this weapon in order to survive and does so several times during his flight. He uses the weapon with great skill and knowledge of its tactical uses, but when the bullets have eliminated a few soldiers, evening the odds more to his favor, Moreira turns to the blade with a savage fury and uncanny mastery of the weapon, leaving dead soldiers and terrified survivors everywhere he is attacked. It is the facón that makes Moreira feared by all who stand against him. The facón, this "...daga que tan terriblemente esgrimía," 137 makes him legend.

The facón is the primary folklore element in Juan Moreira, not just for its use in so many fights but the symbol it creates of the Gaucho and his struggle for survival. Juan Moreira does not meet death at the hands of another Gaucho, slashed by a facón, but dies from a bayonet wound administered from hidden ambush: "...y cuando el paisano levantaba ya la pierna derecha para montar la pared, terció su rifle (el soldado) y le sepultó la bayoneta (a Moreira) en el pulmón izquierdo." 138 Moreira's killer is so anxious to kill the renegade Gaucho that "...la bayoneta bandeó por completo

136 Ibid., p. 50.
137 Ibid., p. 86.
138 Ibid., p. 219.
el pulmón en la pared en una profundidad de más de cuatro dedos."\textsuperscript{139}

"Civilization wins. The bayonet, uniform weapon of the regimented forces from Buenos Aires, kills Moreira, just as the society it symbolizes realizes the extinction of the once-free Gauchos. Not even the facón can stop the onslaught of progress."

Juan Moreira took the knife to his enemies in an effort to save himself, and necessary to his defense was another plastic element found in Gaucho folklore, the poncho. Whenever the facón was employed, the poncho, folded or rolled over the Gaucho's free hand and arm, served as a shield to ward off the death lunges of enemy blades. In fight after fight, Juan Moreira, "...la manta de vicuña volcada sobre el brazo izquierdo..."\textsuperscript{140} thus defended himself, as in the fight with don Francisco, in which he "...siguió avanzando lentamente, protegiendo su cuerpo con los pliegues del poncho."\textsuperscript{141} The incident with the joven, the young man who lusted for Juan's death, also shows this method of defense: "El paisano (Moreira) desmontó entonces, enrolló la manta de vicuña en el poderoso brazo y sacó aquella terrible daga que tanto estrago había hecho ya."\textsuperscript{142}

In the fight to the death against the potent guapo (he-man) Legui-zamón:

Era aquél un espectáculo magnífico e imponente. Aquellos

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p. 118.
As has already been shown in *Martín Fierro*, the Gaucho also relies greatly on his horse, and Juan Moreira is no exception. His horse, his *overo*, a gift from his friend Dr. Alsina, was "...el famoso overo bayo que llegó a ser el crédito y el orgullo del paisano..."144 This horse indeed was a mount worthy of such a man as Gutiérrez portrays in his novel. Fast, muscular, and handsome, the beast was Juan Moreira's salvation in several scrapes in which death might have been the price for sluggishness or shortness of breath. Aware of the importance of his horse's being prepared, Moreira always sees to his steed, should trouble arise and a fast departure becomes necessary, as when "...se dirigió al overo bayo al que echó una doble ración de pasto seco, como para conservarlo en buen estado para el momento de la pelea inevitable."145 He feeds the animal with more than the care one gives a mere tool or machine: "...se acercó al overo bayo, pidiendo para él un poco de alfalfa que le trajo Santiago y que Moreira echó a su caballo con el mismo cariñoso cuidado con que hubiera dado de comer a un amigo querido."146

143 Ibid., p. 77.
144 Ibid., p. 86.
145 Ibid., p. 114.
146 Ibid., p. 132.
The *obero baya*, readied in case of emergency, saves his master's life in many cases, and when at last Moreira is dealt the mortal bayonet wound, the Gacho is stopped in the act of scaling a wall to get to his *redomón* and freedom. Again, that which is the Gacho's pride serves to show the beginning of the end in Juan Moreira, because after the death of the long hunted Gacho, "...el celebre *obero baya*, compañero inseparable de aquella especie de judío errante en su propia tierra, pasaría apoder de algún alcalde o sargento de partida..."147 This is an ironic and saddening end for the *pingo* of Juan Moreira.

Those plastic elements which deal with the more adventurous aspects of Gacho life, the *facón*, the *poncho* shield, and the *redomón*, are vital to Gutiérrez' book, because his is a novel geared to the popular taste of his day, a time in which blood-and-thunder tales of wild Gachos engaging in bloody fights with relentless law enforcement agents sold thousands of copies. Juan Moreira knew tremendous success on the popular press, but the elements of excitement and death in Gacho folklore are not the only ones in the book. Gacho verse also is present, as is the dance.

After the excessive brutality of the knife fights and shooting, the reader is allowed a brief glimpse at the poetic spirit of the Gacho, made important because of its few appearances once Juan is a hunted criminal. Prior to his flight, "En aquellas hermosas noches de luna, en que se ve el campo plateado por la luz suavísima

del astro de la noche, Moreira ensillaba su caballo...y colgando la guitarra a los tientos del recado, se iba a algún rancho amigo, donde era siempre bien recibido, porque con él iban la alegría y la perspectiva de una noche de baile."148

The times before his flight are happy for Juan Moreira, and the Gaucho would frequent many such dances, playing and singing in the Gaucho style, of which the author says:

El gacho trovador de nuestra pampa, el verdadero trovador, el Santos Vega, en fin, cantando una décima amorosa, es algo sublime, algo de otro mundo, que arrastra en su canto, completamente dominado a nuestro espíritu. ¿Es una gran raza de nuestros gauchos? Todos ellos están dotados de un poderoso sentimiento artístico. Tocan la guitarra por intuición, sin tener la más remota idea de lo que es la música, y cantan con la misma ternura que improvisan sus huellas llegando, como Santos Vega, a construir esta sublimidad:

De terciopelo negro
tengo cortinas,
para enlutar mi cama
si tú me olvidas

Y el sentimiento artístico estaba poderosamente desarrollado en Moreira.149

The lyric quality of Juan Moreira’s songs does not impress the reader as does that of Martín Fierro, but as examples of lyric folklore in this Gaucho novel they merit inclusion in this study. Gutiérrez explains that Moreira is singing to give himself "...relieve artístico con el sentimiento que rebosaba en su voz."150 The first décima asks that death come to end the Gaucho’s suffering:

Presa el alma del dolor,

148 Ibid., p. 22.
149 Ibid., p. 17.
150 Ibid., p. 101.
con el corazón marchito,
soy como el árbol maldito
que no da fruta ni flor.
Muerte, ven a mi clamor,
que en ti mi esperanza anida;
ven, acaba con mi vida,
ven, en silencio profundo;
como mi dolor al mundo,
ven, muerte, tan escondida. 151

The second proclaims his realization that people will not understand his wish to die:

Quizá el mundo en su embriaguez,
sin conocer mi martirio,
tenga mi afán por delirio
hijo de la insensatez.
Y al ver mi ardiente avidez
por acabar de existir,
los que estiman el vivir
come suprema ventura
dirán que es en mi locura.
¿Por qué el placer de morir? 152

After this décima, the author relates:

Los paisanos estaban dominados por el cantor de Moreira hasta el estremecimiento; algunos de ellos habían vuelto el rostro para secar a escondidas, con el revés de la mano, el llanto que no podían contener, y el mismo Córdoba, arrastrado por un poder extraño, había bajado de la pipa y se había acercado al grupo. 153

Moreira, unaware of the tremendous impact of his singing, continues, composing the third and final décima:

¡Ahí si vieran la inclemencia
con que en mi el dolor goza,
que hoja por hoja destroza
las flores de mi existencia,
comprendieran la vehemencia
con que anhelo tu venida.
Ven, muerte, tan escondida,

151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
que no te siento venir,
y el gusto de verte herir
no me vuelve a dar la vida.154

The verse is a small part of the novel as a whole, but to have omitted this aspect of the folklore of the Gaucho would have made the book too one-sided, since it is more sensational than sociological in its portrayal of the Gaucho. Had the elements of music and the dance not been included, the popular approval it enjoyed might have been lessened.

Very popular as a novel, Juan Moreira was transformed into theatrical pantomime by Gutiérrez in 1884, at which time: "Allí salió, convertido en actor, un payaso famoso, José Podesta popularmente llamado Pepino el 88. Salió caracterizando a Moreira, vestido lujosamente, de chiripá, calzoncillos cribados, poncho, largo facón a la cintura, y montando un caballo moro."155

The pantomime was, in turn, so popular that not long after its production words and even music were added, and Juan Moreira was a full-fledged play, also very well accepted by the public, in which "...había muy poco de los gauchos filosóficos y serenos."156

So filled with action and glorification of Juan Moreira is the play which Gutiérrez and Podesta wrote, that one is reminded of the rather bad theatrics of Robert Ford, the assassin of Jesse James, who took to the stages of barrooms to tell and reinact the slaying

154 Ibid., pp. 101-102.
155 Alarto Leumann, op. cit., p. 50.
156 Ibid.
of the popular bank robber. There is one major difference between
the two plays, however, because Juan Moreira was a success on the
stage; whereas Ford met cold resentment to his onstage boasts and,
after two years with P. T. Barnum's freak show, bought a saloon
with Dick Liddell in Las Vegas, New Mexico, but "...the customers
didn't pour in as the ex-outlaws had expected. Even the rough
frontier town objected to a Judas drawing its beer or pouring its
shots of whiskey." Ford's The Outlaws of Missouri, as he called
his show, does have one very important element in common with Juan
Moreira: the glorification of criminal violence, a motif common
in the latter years of the XIX Century, both on the stage and in
print. Guillermo Ara says, "Gutiérrez...ha atendido más a la tra-
dición que hace un dios de cada bandido en cualquier lugar de la
tierra."  

The glorification of outlaws is not new in either folklore
or literature, and the play about Moreira follows this tradition
religiously, thrilling audiences with wild knife play and similar
violence, and allowing an occasional pause for music. A very short
work, the play deals largely with the events related in the first
half of Gutiérrez's novel: the killing of Sardetti, the long mano-
 mano with Francisco, and the fight with Sergeant Navarro and
eight other soldiers which ends in his sparing the sergeant's life.

157 James D. Horan and Paul Sann, Pictorial History of the

158 Guillermo Ara, "Lo mítico y lo místico en Güiralde" (México: Cuadernos Americanos, año XXI, vol. CXXII, No. 3, mayo-
An additional scene ends the play with a light, musical finish.

Ara comments on the tradition of outlaw glorification: "Si es necesario hasta las virtudes cambiarán de signo: la justicia será persecución y la seguridad de los hombres, precaución imperdonable; el crimen, acto noble y plausible si él que cae acuchillado es un juez o un policía." 159

Just such an "acto noble y plausible" is the death of don Francisco at the hands of Juan Moreira, and the facón is the element brought to the fore. Scorning the use of the revolver in almost the same words used in the novel for this scene, Juan Moreira proceeds to kill two sabre-bearing soldiers, forcing the teniente alcalde, Francisco, to draw his sword. After a few minutes of swordplay, Moreira disarms his enemy and, true to Ara's comment on such works, delivers a long sermon on the injustice of his being persecuted and hunted by the law. The speech over, the Gaucho throws back Francisco's sabre and warns the cruel antagonist. "Ahora defiéndase porque va deberas (sic)." 160 The fight that follows shows the facón superior to the military sabre, and Moreira delivers a brief commentary to the spectators on and off stage, reminding all that the fight was honorable and above board. This scene ends the first act of the play.

Although filled with action, this scene is not the only one in which the facón is the central element, as seen in the second

159 Ibid.
cuadro, the scene preceding the Moreira-Francisco struggle. In this encounter, Moreira comes to Sardetti's pulpería and demands his money, roaring at the Italian, "O pagas en el acto, o te abro como á un peludo." 161

When the gringo fails to pay his debt, the Gaucho tosses him a knife with which to defend himself, and the fight that follows ends, of course, in the death of Sardetti. This scene is another that reads almost verbatim with the novel by Gutiérrez.

Other scenes employing the facón are a five-against-one fight between Moreira and some bandits, in which one villain is killed and the others routed, and the last fight of the play, between the Gaucho and eight soldiers under Sergeant Navarro.

In this last bit of violence, the hero kills one soldier and badly wounds the sergeant, after which Moreira sees to his fallen enemy's wounds, praising his bravery in the fight. The wounded sergeant, seeing the care he is receiving at the hands of Juan Moreira, proclaims, "El que diga que ese hombre es un bandido, es un puerco, á quien le voy a sacar los ojos á azotes." 162

The facón provides the bulk of the action of the play, being employed in five of the nine scenes in the two acts of the work. The action centers around the knife fights, and even in the rare moments when no knives are used there are strong references to the weapon, as when Moreira threatens to take payment of Sardetti's debt

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161 Ibd., p. 10.
162 Ibd., p. 36.
in "...una puñalada por cada mil pesos,"\textsuperscript{163} and, in a later scene, when the Gaucho vows, "Ahora ni el mismo diablo es capaz (sic) de salvarlo (Francisco) de la punta de mi daga,"\textsuperscript{164}

Violent action in nearly every scene kept the contemporary audiences thrilled with Juan Moreira, but Gutiérrez and Podesta, the latter a veteran showman, knew that more was needed to keep the customers happy than rough-and-tumble knife fights and shouted threats. The needed element was music. Gaucho music to counterpoint the violence was needed, and the collaborators turned to this folk element to meet the need.

In the second cuadro of Act I, the stage directions call for cantores who "...cantan unos versos alusivos a Moreira..."\textsuperscript{165} to set the scene and entertain at the same time. The directions opening the fifth scene of Act II call for guitarists and national dances in the background.\textsuperscript{166}

After the bloody scene between Moreira and the soldiers under Navarro in Act II, the sixth scene requires "Una casa de baile—Se ven varios gauchos bailando..."\textsuperscript{167}

The décimas to be used in the play are found at the end of the manuscript and are as follows:

\textsuperscript{163}ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{164}ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{165}ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{166}ibid., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{167}ibid., p. 36.
Vamos al grano mi Amigo
Las pajitas las lleva el viento
pues cantemos un momento
déjense de barajar,
y formando la milonga
como buenos compañeros
y el que dispare primero
las copas á de pagar.

Y si hay en los presentes
quien se quiera aventurar
no se deje de largar
y aproveche la ocación (sic)
y ahora que hay mucha gente
que no pierda la volada
y que cope la parada
si quiera (sic) por diversión.168

A note written in pencil and in a hand different from the authors' is mentioned by the editor of these décimas as stating,
"Esto se cantaba en el 2° cuadro."169

The other décimas have no such notes:

2°
Yo mi amigo se la cope
y dispense si así hablo (sic)
no le tengo miedo al diablo
cuanto más a un buen cantor
por que Vd. á de saber
de que yo nací cantando
ya que Vd. esta (sic) desafiando
aquí tiene aun payador.

1°
Eso mismo yo quería (sic)
pa poderme así floriar
pues que quería (sic) encontrar
un hombre que juera gueno
en contrapunto y milonga
que sepa filosofía
que cantando noche y día
retumbara como un trueno.170

168Ibid., p. 37.
169Ibid.,
170Ibid., pp. 37-38.
The *payada de contrapunto* is in many ways the most Gaucho element in the play, providing folklore in the midst of furor. The *payadores* continue:

2º

No me diga que soy trueno
porque no se (*sic*) tronar
si es que quiere chacotiar
ya le debo de advertir
que no sirvo pa la risa
conque así cante parejo
llévese de mi consejo
que el que es zonzo hace sufrir

1º

Ya me dijo que soy zonzo
lo había (*sic*) dicho sin querer
por eso yo lo perdono
pero cuidese otra vez
no le vaya a suceder
lo que le paso (*sic*) a Mateo
que por querer dar consejo
la llaman el bicho feo.

2º

Ya me dijo que soy feo
pero creo mas (*sic*) feo Vd.
se paresce (*sic*) á un atorrante
recostao á la paré
y si quiere otro mas (*sic*) feo
le presento por primero
fijensen (*sic*) todos paisanos
en la cara del pulpero.171

Another response by the second *payador* is cited:

2º[?]

El pulpero anda muy triste
pues le va la cosa mal
si lo agarra Juan Moreira
la cola le va á pelar
y perdone no Sardetti
por lo que he dicho recién
pues segun (*sic*) tengo entendido
Vd. no se porto (*sic*) bien.172
Action and music combine to make Juan Moreira a success on the popular stage, but despite the adroit use of the facón and that most Gaucho folk element, la payada de contrapunto, the decline of the Gaucho indicated in the novel is documented on the stage. Juan Moreira starts the trend, and the telling of the struggle between the Gaucho and the forces of civilization is found in more concrete form in the plays of Florencio Sánchez. After Martín Fierro and Juan Moreira there is but the decline.
THE DECLINE

The Gaucho, like many other sources of folklore and legend, no longer exists. He is the victim of progress. His decline was not an easy one, being a struggle between the lawless horseman of the pampas and the smothering progress of civilization.

John Crow says of this struggle:

Further confusion was added to the picture because of the tremendous difference that existed between the Gaucho level of life and the level of life in the cities. The urban centers fought for political democracy. Even those royalists of Buenos Aires, who favored a monarchy, wanted a constitutional monarchy which they believed would best insure this political democracy. On the other hand, the Gauchos had no conception of political democracy, at least they had no conception of such a thing on a national scale. It was simply beyond their knowledge. They did know and practice a far greater degree of social democracy among themselves than the city intellectuals. Not until these two distrustful and discordant conceptions were forced together could there emerge a national state.

The formation of a national state in the Argentine did depend upon the forcing together of the Gaucho and the City, but this meeting resulted in the extinction of the former by the forces and confining statutes of the latter.

In this period of decline come the theatrical works of the Uruguayan, Florencio Sánchez, to portray the struggle that results in the inevitable end of the Gaucho. Tinker comments: "Sánchez thus indicated, with the prescience of the true artist, the path

173 Crow, op. cit., p. 579.
Argentina must take to gain success...."174

Tinker adds: "The sociological changes that were transforming the wild and wandering horsemen of the plains into a farmhand with a fixed abode were a challenge and an inspiration to...Florencio Sánchez."175 This challenge was met especially well in three plays: M'hijo el dotor (1903), La Gringa (1904), and Barranca abajo (1905).

M'hijo el dotor tells the story of Julio, a young city-educated doctor who returns to his home on the plains with a different set of morals from his strict parents. His sense of honor is nil, since he makes love to a country girl, Jesusa, while courting a wealthy city girl, Sara. The affair with Jesusa proves too frutious, and he refuses to marry the young paisana, despite her carrying his child. He is constantly fighting with his father, refusing to ask forgiveness for his having stolen money simply for the sake of performing the theft. When he sees his father dying, Julio repents and promises to marry Jesusa for the old man's sake, but the girl wants him to be happy with Sara and remains unwed, also refusing to marry Eloy, her former suitor, because she is too proud to marry someone who pities her.

Almost from the beginning, this play, as well as those written after it, is markedly different from the works showing the peak years of the Gaucho, because the folklore elements are very

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174 Tinker, op. cit., p. 56.

175 Ibid., p. 30.
scarce. These elements seem to appear only as occasional reminders of a way of life that has little time remaining.

In Act I verba mate is ordered heated up, but the change in the people is shown clearly in Act III when the young doctor's mother offers a matecito to Adelaida who has moved from the country to the city:

Adelaida.— No, gracias! ...Hemos dejado de tomar mate. Nos hacía daño.177

The drink that once was the basic beverage of the pampas now is upsetting to the systems of the civilized country people.

Another indication of the changes occurring appears in Act I, when Julio's father comments on the boy's changing his name from the criollo Robustiano to the more citified name he bears at the opening of the play:

Olegario.— Ah!... No me acordaba! Un mozo que se ha mudado hasta el nombre para que no le tomen olor a campesino, hace bien en tomar chocolate!178

The father's reference to chocolate is an allusion to the boy's asking for that drink, instead of verba mate.

Ruth Richardson quotes Carlos Roxlo, who says of Sánchez that he makes: "a theatre of modern thesis and of native customs. With his words? You known it is not that. With action? Yes, only with action. An idiom is sufficient for him. A gesture,

an occasion. A whistle at times. In certain cases, a man dressed in chiripá, or a woman wrapped up in her shawl, crossing the stage. That is Florencio Sánchez.¹⁷⁹

Just such artistic simplicity characterizes the use of Gaucho folk elements in Sánchez' plays. Rather than overwhelming the audience with crass excesses, the author prefers to employ a elements to state his point. An example of his use of plastic folk elements to set the stage is found in the scenic directions for the first scene of Act II: "Salita de hotel. Bastante en desorden la colocación de los muebles. Sobre las sillas: un poncho, vestidos y paquetas. Un baul abierto a la izquierda dejando asomar ropas. Cerca de él, una mesita con útiles de escribir; un calentador para mate y tarritos de yerba y azúcar."¹⁸⁰

The resistance to the ways of civilization is futile, and the realization of this seems to weigh upon Julio's father, who laments his problems with his son whom the city has alienated from the beliefs and customs of the pampas. He can only sigh, "Pobre gaucho viejo!"¹⁸¹

Their son has changed quickly with the advent of civilization, but Julio's parents fight with every possible resource the end of their old way of life, even when the progress is good. The old man refuses to see the doctor or take drugs from the city. Mari-

¹⁸¹ Sánchez, op. cit., p. 75.
¹⁸² Ibid., p. 77.
quita, Julio's mother, discusses this refusal with her son:

Mariquita.--- No quiso (Olegario) probar un solo remedio de botica...! 'Cosa de la ciudad no quiero... me matará más pronto... llamen a la médica si quieren que viva un tiempo más.' Y nosotros mandamos traer a mama Rita... 182

Hearing that his dying father prefers the charms and potions of a folk doctor to medication ministered by a city physician, Julio is appalled: "Qué barbaridad!" 183

The attempt to cure Olegario shocks his educated son, but provides an interesting glimpse into the folk medicine practiced on the pampas. Mariquita and Jesusa tell about the medication:

Mariquita.--- A tomar, no le da más que agua de lino... Se ha colgado una reliquia en el pescuezo...

Jesusa.--- Y todas las mañanas se pone detrás de las casas, y al salir el sol, hace cruces y otras rayas en la primera línea de sombra que proyecta... 184

The folk elements in Hijo el doctor are not numerous, but they are used to show that the Gaucho has lost. His fight for survival cannot be won; the old way of life must cede to the new. There are no longer Gauchos, but through such works as the plays of Sánchez this way of life is documented, as long as it clings to existence. Arturo Vásquez Cey expresses this function of national artists to record such a dying way of life:

La virgen alma argentina, abocetada por el mantillo de la historia, aguarda todavía el toque de cincel del espíritu, la

182 Ibid., p. 95.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
pátina huyente que se amortigua en los escorzos de las culturas seculares. El ruralismo y el tipismo predominantes en nuestro arte, índices de la inquietud de algo que ingenuamente a sí se busca, constituyen cimientos de lo que a su día llegará para nosotros.

Vásquez Cey continúa: "Poetas, novelistas, cuentistas, pintores, escultores y músicos también!—van levantando, cada cual conforme su módulo, el registro estético de pampas, selvas y cuchillos. Crean documentándose. Verdad, color, folklore con sus ritos."  

Sánchez recoge the death struggle of the Gaucho in *Mi hijo el doctor* with such artistic success, that Torres-Ríoseco proclama:

"The most important event in the history of the gaucho drama was the first performance—in Buenos Aires, in 1903—of a gaucho play called *My Kid the Doctor.*"  

Commenting further on Florencio Sánchez, Torres-Ríoseco makes the statement, "Indeed the spirit of the pampas pervades all his works, whether they deal with rural themes or with urban ones...."  

The spirit of the pampas indeed pervades Sánchez' plays, and such a work is *La gringa.* Ruth Richardson says of this play that it is: "...the epic of the invasion of the foreigner of the land of the gaucho, just as *Martín Fierro* is the poem of the invasion by the gaucho of the lands of the Indian."  

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185 Arturo Vásquez Cey, *Florencio Sánchez y el teatro argentino* (Buenos Aires: Juan Toia (Hijo) Editor, 1929), p. 126.  
186 Ibid., p. 127.  
188 Ibid., p. 155.  
189 Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
Cuneo quotes Ricardo Rojas on this concept of *La gringa*.

Says Rojas: "No es solamente bello y humano el poema de sus protagonistas, la actual tragedia de nuestra raza, al punto que cada habitante del suelo argentino...se reconocería en algunos frases de su diálogo." 190

*La gringa* tells the story of the family dispute between a poor Gaucho and a wealthy gringo. When the Gaucho loses his land, he goes away, ashamed. Próspero, the Gaucho's son, is caught wooing the gringo's daughter, in his father's absence, and is sent away. The old Gaucho returns and sees the awful turn of events. He starts to leave again, but is mangled by an agricultural combine and is forced to stay with the Italians while his wounds heal. The two lovers are united, and the play ends on a happy note, showing the author's belief that their good future depends on the joint efforts of the *criollos* and the *gringos*.

There are plastic folk elements scattered throughout this play, much in the manner of those found in *Hijo el doctor*, and one is predominant: the *omblí*. John W. White says of this tree:

With the exception of the Japanese cherry tree, no plant has such an important place in the traditions of a people as the ombú has in the songs and stories of the Argentines. The ombú has an enormous trunk, and its great spreading branches shade an immense space of ground; its knotted roots protrude from the ground in strange shapes, forming convenient resting places for tired horsemen. Argentine poets have called the ombú the lighthouse of the pampas because in the days of the gaucho it frequently was the only object to be seen for miles and miles on the sea-like plains. 191

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190 Sánchez, op. cit., p. 122.

191 White, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
In *La aringa*, the Italian landowner wants to have a great, gnarled old *ombú* cut down, thinking it a nuisance. His workers, showing that the *criollo* spirit is not entirely dead, have mixed feelings about the tree:

Peon 1°. De veras que me da pena cortarlo...

Peon 2°. ¿Por al *ombú*... por el trabajo?...

Peon 1°. ¿Eh?... Por las dos cosas...

Peon 2°. Sí, es muy fuerte este árbol.... Se cree que así no más se voltea un *ombú*!

Cantalicio, the old Gaucho, has faith in the power of the tree to resist the gringo's efforts to cut it down. He looks at the old tree, commenting: "Todo han pedido echar abajo porque eran dueños... pero el *ombú* no es de ellos. Es del campo... Canjeo!"

Ruth Richardson sees in the *ombú* an important symbol for *La aringa* and writes:

This tree which resists all ordinary efforts to cut it down, typifies the useless, impractical, albeit romantic and idealistic factors in life, which are the priceless contribution of the *gaucho*, and it is just these qualities which the Argentine cannot afford to sacrifice to the materialistic, prosperous, and progressive civilization which the immigrant is fostering. To appreciate the intense sentiment the *gaucho* feels toward the *ombú* one must recall that in the vast,tractless pampa it is the one object that breaks the monotonous prairies, guiding the traveler, providing shade, and almost a sense of companionship.

The *ombú* is a guide and quasi-companion to the *gaucho* in the vastness of the pampas, and old Cantalicio wants to return to the

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192*Sanchez*, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-151.


194Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
tree, the last element of his former life to resist the efforts of the gringos to destroy it, in order to die. When he is struck by the farm machine, the old criollo settles between the ombú roots and sighs: "Déjame aquí no más, m'hijita!... Entre estas raíces que parecen brazos. Era destino de Dios que había de morir en mi misma tapera...."195

The ombú symbolizes that which the Gaucho has left that can never be erased from the land or the people of the Argentine, but Florencio Sánchez sees the eventual good to come of the clash that brings Gaucho and gringo together. When the young criollo marries his gringa, Horacio echos Sánchez' faith in the future: "Hija de gringos puros...hijo de criollos puros... De ahí va a salir la raza fuerte del porvenir...."196

Less promising of a hopeful future is Barranca abajo, that Martiniano Leguizamón sees as "...teatro nacional que cuenta, con hondas, de aguda y exacta observación...."197

Leguizamón says that Barranca abajo is a play in which: "... se admira el tipo auténtico con su pretérita nobleza y desinterés, y la ignorancia a que lo encadenó la vida de penurias y desamparo desolador en que nació y se extinguía."198

195 Sánchez, op. cit., p. 158.
196 Ibid., p. 166.
198 Ibid.
Barranca abajo tells the story of an old Gaucho, Zoilo, who loses everything except his honor and his long facón, until the former is also lost to him, when his wife refuses to stand by him, and one of his daughters, Prudencia, loses her innocence. His one hope is his sickly daughter, Robustiana, who favors the old way of life and who might have made a good wife for Aniceto, a young criollo, but this, too, is denied the old man on Robustiana's death. The loss of his favorite daughter, coupled with his poverty and loss of honor prove too much for the old man. Completely broken, Zoilo hangs himself.

Torres-Ríoseco says of the author: "...Sanchez is a penetrating interpreter of modern psychology, though his tragedies are perhaps more direct and brutal than those of Ibsen." In Barranca abajo, this mastery of psychological interpretation is shown in the gradual lapse into pitiful insanity that Zoilo undergoes. To create this portrayal of a man faced with the loss of everything for which he has lived and stood, the author relies on several elements of Gaucho folklore. Early in the play, there occurs a scene that is very commonplace in the world of the Gaucho, the greeting of the true people of the pampas. Hear from off stage is the familiar exchange: "(Desde adentro izquierda) Ave María Purísima! (Con otro tono) Sin pecado concebida!"  

199 Torres-Ríoseco, op. cit., p. 199.  
200 Sánchez, op. cit., p. 194.
This greeting, almost universal among the Gauchos, is recorded by Charles Darwin in *The Voyage of the Beagle*:

On approaching the house of a stranger, it is usual to follow several little points of etiquette: riding up slowly to the door, the salutation of Ave Maria is given, and until somebody comes out and asks you to alight, it is not customary even to get off your horse. The formal answer of the owner is "sin pecado concebida"—that is, conceived without sin.201

The familiar Gaucho greeting, heard off stage, strikes a contrast with the despair and decadence seen on stage. Robustiana, the last hope of her miserable father, begins to sing a lively Gaucho song:

¡Jua, Jua! (Cantando!)

Mañana por la mañana
Se mueren todas las viejas...
Y las llevan a enterrar
Al...202

The clever end to the coplas dies on her lips, because her unsympathetic sister, Prudencia, stops the song.

The author seeks every opportunity to show the suppression of the old ways by the elements of the new. The sister whose lack of honor helps to drive her criollo father mad is called Prudencia, and the sickly gaucha ironically is Robust. Logic demands that progress must see the end of the Gaucho, the alive element in the country, because his romantic strength, freedom, and honor are not in conformity with civilization. Such traits are not prudent.

The cold logic of modern ways is too much for the Gaucho.

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Zoilo, having lost everything, breaks under the strain. Says his comadre: "Parece medio maniático;... dicen por ahí que está medio ido de la cabeza...." 203

Zoilo has indeed lost his senses, and the once-proud Gaucho implements spell his insanity and despair with the use to which the old criollo now puts them.

The facón, symbol of the completeness of the Gaucho, of his willingness to defend his word and his way of life against all those who would question either, is no longer the weapon of a strong man. When Zoilo learns of the stain on his personal honor, he thunders that he should have taken his facón in order to "...coserles las tripas a puñaladas, pa escarmiento de bandoleros y saltadores." 204 He swears that this is what he should have done, but he does nothing else. In his prime, he would have let his actions speak for him. His threats are empty. Instead of using the great knife for slaughtering and skinning cattle or for defending his honor, Zoilo merely whittles and scrawls odd marks in the sand. A stage direction tells the emptiness of the man's life, the uselessness of his facón:

"(Zoilo)...) saca el cuchillo de la cintura y se pone a dibujar marcas en el suelo." 205

The old man, his mental faculties leaving him, makes hollow threats, almost subjunctive expressions of a desire for that which cannot be: the return of the past days of freedom and pride in him-

203 Ibid., p. 172.
204 Ibid., p. 185.
205 Ibid., p. 170.
self. He is reduced to a shell of himself, but Zoilo does not lose all his former vitality at once. Martiniana claims that the old men encountered her alone, screaming at her. According to the comadre: "-- ¿A dónde te vas a ir, avestruz loco!, me gritó y empezó a revolcar las boliadoras." The old instincts come to the surface with the bolas, but again the poor, broken man fails to follow through. Another weapon is called upon in vain.

The weapons no longer have their power, because without a strong-willed and educated hand to use them they are useless. The hand that gives life to the facón, that guides the pinto across the void of the pampas, no longer has strength.

In *La gringa*, Sánchez shows the replacement of the Gauchó's most important possession, the pinto, by the farm machinery of civilized progress. The old criollo, Cantalicio, is injured and very nearly killed when his horse is panic-stricken by a tractor and causes his rider to be mauled by the machine. Barranca abajo, rather than showing the irony of the decline of the Gauchó, presents a study in his despair over the loss of his way of life. Zoilo, broken by the realization of his state, gives his facón to Aniceto, the criollo who might have carried on the old ways, had Robustiana lived to marry him. Handing the knife to the young man, Zoilo says: "Tome el cuchillo... Vaya repuntar la majadita..." 207

Alone, Zoilo has nothing of his former life, not even his

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206. Ibid., p. 194.
207. Ibid., p. 213.
façon. He has ceased to exist as the man he once was. There remains no other recourse for the demented criollo. Taking an old lasso, once used for catching cattle in the zenith days, Zoilo slowly prepared to hang himself.

Roberto F. Giustí says of such plays as M'Hiño el dotor, La gringa, and Barranca abajo: "Si el teatro criollo tiene algo censurable por el tosco lenguaje que emplea, ofrece en compensación grandes cualidades: nos muestra al hombre del campo con sus pasiones, sus impulsos generosos y ese gran fondo de nobleza que caracteriza al ser libre que pasa su vida frente a frente con la naturaleza."

These plays show something beyond the "nobility of free beings face-to-face with Nature." The tragedy of their inability to cope with the progress they neither wanted nor understood makes the criollos of Florencio Sánchez give these plays a meaning greater than that found in most other creole dramas. These plays show the beginning of the end. After the decline remains only the passing of the Gaucho.

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THE PASSING OF THE GAUCHO

The decline of the Gaucho, dramatized by Florencio Sánchez, foretells the inevitable. The forces of civilization have their way, and the Gaucho will not be able to withstand the onslaught. The passing of the Gaucho cannot be avoided.

Martiniano Leguizamón expresses the passing of the Gaucho, saying: "El gaucho ha muerto, y sólo nos queda su recuerdo legendario conservado por los relatos tradicionales y algunas páginas del libro literario..." 209

There are no more Gauchos on the pampas, but there exist a few works of literature that keep the memory of this singular horseman alive. Such a book is Don Segundo Sombra by Ricardo Güiraldes. Written after the Gaucho had ceased to exist as he once had done, before the advent of the civilization of the gringo, this novel stands as a masterpiece in the Gauchesque genre.

Critics generally acknowledge the stature of Don Segundo Sombra as the Gaucho work that idealizes, as few other works have, the jinete pampeño after his passing. Vásquez Cey views the novel as a work of: "...victoriosa objetividad y descriptiva riqueza," 210 and Arturo Torres-Ríoseco says of Güiraldes' work: "This unique

209 Leguizamón, op. cit., p. 38.
210 Vásquez Cey, op. cit., p. 127.

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book has won a permanent place as an Argentine classic, both for its merits as a work of art and for its perfect interpretation of the Gaucho. Don Segundo, as Güiraldes has created him, is not so much a human being... as a myth—the ideal Gaucho, the symbol of the pampas." 211

Pedro Henríquez-Ureña views Don Segundo Sombra as a panorama: "... painted by Güiraldes, in spite of all its roughness, with the delicate brush of a poetical imagination that never fails him." 212

Not only is this novel a picture of Gaucho life in its last days, but a work of universal meaning. G. H. Weiss states that:

Don Segundo Sombra reflects the cosmic duality in its title, in which the concreteness implied by a proper name mingles with the mystery of the supra-historical emanating from the word Sombra; but it also, more clearly perhaps than any of the other works, encompasses in its very style and structure the unity and multiplicity of life. 213

Güiraldes has succeeded in creating a work that holds various values for whoever should read the book, and his use of Gaucho folklore is evidence not only of his knowledge of the subject, but of his conscious desire to record, artistically, the Gaucho and the world from which he passed. Found in this work, therefore, are clear representations of folk prose, Gaucho music, and the plastic

211 Torres-Ríoseco, op. cit., pp. 164-65.


elements of Gauchesque folklore.

One of the skills mastered by the Gaucho is that of being able to tell a tale that can hold an audience in fascination. Don Segundo has this skill, as attested by the young narrator:

Don Segundo era un admirable contador de cuentos, y su fama de narrador daba nuevos prestigios a su ya admirada figura. Sus relatos introdujeron un cambio radical en mi vida. Seguía yo de día siendo un paisanito corajudo y levantisco, sin temores ante los riesgos del trabajo; pero la noche se prolababa ya para mí de figuras extrañas y una luz mala, una sombra o un grito me traían a la imaginación escenas de embrujados por magias negras o magias blancas.\(^{214}\)

Twice in the book his skill as a teller of tales is shown. The first time it is brought to the fore, Segundo tells a tale about a Gaucho who falls in love with a young maiden, whose love he cannot have until he breaks the spell cast on a wicked bastard of Satan who has been defiling young girls. The dwarf villain was born without skin and was given the magic gift of luring women onto an enchanted isle in the guise of a scarlet flamingo. Once on the island, the victims were shrunk to the dwarf's minute size and subjected to his carnal lust for seven days. Aided by an old crone, the Gaucho manages to find the ugly son of the Devil, castrate him, and change the girl he loves to her former size. They free the other girls and live a rich life as cattle ranchers.

The narrator says of Segundo's skill in preparing his listeners: "Y yo admiraba más que nadie la habilidad de mi padrino que, siempre, antes de empezar un relato, sabía maniobrar de modo que la atención se concentrara en su persona. ---Cuento no sé ninguno--

\(^{214}\) Güiraldes, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
The story is an interesting mixture of pure Gauchesque folklore and the type of magic that is found in folk tales the world over. The instructions given the Gaacho by the old woman could very well be those found in tales of spells and charms in nearly any other country. In order to save his beloved, the boy must follow her directions carefully:

...esta misma noche, te vas pa'l río de suerte que naides te veas. Allí vah'a encontrar un bote; te meteh'en el y remas pa'l medio del agua. Cuando sintas que hah'entrao en un rmanse, leventa los remos. El remolino te va a hacer dar unas guéltas, para largarte en una corriente que tira en dirección de las islas del encanto. Y ya me queda poco por decirte. En esa isla tenés que matar un caburé, que pa eso te he dao el arco y las flechas. Y al caburé le sacah'el corazón y lo echah'adentro del frasco de agua, que es bendita, y también le arrancah'al bicho tres plumas de la cola pa hacer un manao que te colgah'en el pescuezo. En seguida vah'a saber más cosas que las que te puedo decir, porque el corazón del caburé, con ser tan chiquito, está lleno de brujerías y de cencia.216

The young Gaacho is given instructions that are well fixed in the tradition of folklore. The heart of the caburé bird is to give him knowledge necessary to his rescuing his beloved. Sir James George Fraser says that the use of animal parts by humans who wish a certain trait is very common, and that: "...he acquires not only the physical, but the moral and intellectual qualities which were characteristic of that animal or man; so when the crea-

215 Ibid., p. 73.
216 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
ture is deemed divine, our simple savage naturally expects to absorb a portion of its divinity along with its material substance."217

Sir James cites many instances in which the hearts of beasts or fowl give powers to humans, among them these Norse legendary examples:

In Norse legend, Ingiald, son of King Annund, was timid in his youth, but after eating the heart of a wolf he became very bold; Hialto gained courage by earing the heart of a bear and drinking its blood; and when Sigurd killed the dragon Fafnir and tasted his heart's blood he thereby acquired a knowledge of the language of birds.218

Further testimony to the universality of the use of such animal organs as the heart for magic receipt of powers comes from H. E. Wedeck, who quotes Secrets of Albertus Magnus, a medieval magic manual: "Turtur . . . is a birde very well knowne. . . . If the heart of this foule be bourne in a Wolves Skin, he that weareth it shall never have an appetite to commit lechery from henceforth."219

The witchcraft in Segundo's tale is universal, but the Gaucho has the hero resolve his problem in a strictly Gauchesque manner: "Dolores, que no aguardaba otra cosa, echó mano a la cintura, sacó el cuchillo, lo despatarró de un empujón al monstruo, lo pisó en el cogote como ternero, y por fin hizo con él lo que debía hacer pa que aquel bicho indino no anduviera más codiciando mujeres."220

218 Ibid., p. 264.
220 Güiraldes, op. cit., pp. 79—80.
Having thus resolved the problem of the dwarf, Dolores, the hero, restores his love and the other victims of the Devil's son to normal size through magic. All that remains is a final bit of witchcraft. Catching the little villain, Dolores then assures the permanent disability of the dwarf. Segundo ends the story: "Y al enano, hijo del Diablo, lo tiene encadenado al frasco del encanto y nunca este bicho malhechor podrá escapar de ese palenque, porque el corazón del caburé tiene el peso de todas las maldades del mundo."  

The witchcraft of the tale about Dolores and the dwarf shows the ability of the Gaucho to spin a story that holds the audience in a manner universal to the folk tale. Another story that the Gaucho tells has the elements of magic and a flavor that belongs to the New World, where the Indian concepts of religion have been mingled with Christian teachings. The story deals with the powers granted Misery by Christ and Saint Peter, in return for a favor granted the two by the former.

According to Don Segundo Sombra, the Lord would go from town to town and from ranch to ranch in the Holy Land preaching the Gospel and curing the sick. Saint Peter accompanied Christ.

One day Christ's mule slips a shoe, and the evangelists are forced to seek a blacksmith shop: "San Pedro, que iba mirando con atención, diviso un rancho viejo... que tenía encima de una puerta

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221 Ibid., p. 80.
unletrero que decía: 'Erreria'. The Gaacho "Ave María" greeting is exchanged, and the smithy presents himself. At the forge is none other than Misery.

After much searching for a proper shoe, the old smith at last finds a large piece of silver. He shoes Christ's mule with the silver, without charge, saying: "Por lo que veo, ustedes son tan pobres como yo. ¿Qué diantres les va' a cobrar? Vayan en paz por el mundo, que algún día tal vez Dios me lo tenga en cuenta." The two remount and go on their way. After they travel a little way down the trail, Saint Peter asks if possibly they should not go back and pay Misery for his kindness, and Christ agrees. When they return, Christ offers the old smith three wishes.

Despite Peter's urging that he wish for Paradise, Misery asks first that whosoever would sit in his chair be stuck there until his command would free the person. The second wish is that anybody climbing his cottonwood trees be stuck there until he ordered them to descend. Still refuting Peter's urgings that he ask for Paradise, Misery asks that anything or anybody placed inside his pouch be likewise subject to his will. Christ agrees, and again He and St. Peter depart.

Later, the old smith enters into a bargain with an agent of the devil, whereby, for twenty years of great wealth, he sells his soul to Satan. The good life begins immediately, but the years

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222 Ibid., p. 143.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid., pp. 143-144.
speed by too quickly for the smith. When the devil comes to take
Misery to Satan, the smith offers him the enchanted chair, and the
demon is trapped. Signing for another twenty years of easy living,
Misery releases the little devil.

Again, the time is too short, and the smith finds two devils
to claim his soul. He tricks them into climbing the enchanted trees
and thus gets another twenty years in exchange for their freedom.
When the period expires the third time, Lucifer himself goes to
claim the soul, lest another assistant be duped by the wily smith.
With the Prince of Darkness are all his legions, but the smith dupes
the entire force into his tobacco pouch, where he keeps them for
years, beating the devils soundly every day.

At last, the judges, bailiffs, and other officers of the law
make the smith release Satan and his hosts, because without their
evil in the world there is no use for such law officials. Before
releasing the infernal crew, the smith gives Satan and his band a
last sound thrashing, that sends the lot screaming from the black-
smith shop.

When death comes to Misery, Saint Peter refuses him entry
into heaven, because the smith had chosen the magic over Paradise
when granted the three wishes. Satan likewise turns the smith away,
remembering the fury of Misery's hammer on his back.

Segundo ends the tale: "Ahí quedó Miseria sin dentrada a
ningún lao, porque ni en el Cielo, ni en el Purgatorio, ni en el
Infierno lo querían como socio; y dicen que es por eso que, dende
entonces, Miseria y Pobreza son cosas de este mundo y nunca se irán
a otra parte, porque en ninguna quieren admitir su existencia."²²⁵

Such allegorical fables are not unique to the Gaucho, and the presence of Christ and Saint Peter is a theme found elsewhere in Latin America. The Yaqui Indians of Sonora, Mexico, have similar stories about Jesucristo and San Pedro, to whom they ascribe many magic powers and even such base human traits as deceit and cheating. Such tales, be they of Mexican or Argentine origin, show the way in which Christian teachings become re-interpreted by the formerly pagan natives and assimilated into the oral tradition of prose folklore.

Don Segundo Sombra is a master at story telling, a trait much admired in a Gaucho by his fellow horsemen. As evidenced in the works from the other periods of Gauchesque literature, the skill with singing and dancing is also much admired. During a dance to which Segundo and his young friend go, a gaucho cantor lends his talents to the celebration:

'Sólo una escalera de amor me falta,
Sólo una escalera de amor me falta,
Para llegar al cielo, mi vida, de tu garganta.'²²⁶

As the couples begin to dance, the payador continues:

'Vuela la infeliz vuelo, ay que me embarco
En un barco pequeño, mi vida, pequeño barco.'²²⁷

The song of the payador ends, and a typical dance begins: the gato de relación. More than a folk dance, this gato requires

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 150.
²²⁶ Ibid., p. 70.
²²⁷ Ibid.
that the dancers exchange couplets, generally for purposes of flirtation. Fabio, the young narrator, describes the *gato*, as danced by Segundo and himself:

Cuando quedamos aislados en el silencio, deletrié claramente mis versos:

'Para venir a este baile puse un lucero de guía,
Porque supe que aquí estaba la prenda que yo quería.'

Por la derecha dimos una vuelta y zapateamos una mudanza. Quieto esperé la respuesta, que vino sin tardar:

'De amores me estás hablando, yo de amores nada sé
Pero sí en amor sos sabio, se me hace que aprenderé.'

A su vez tocó al turno a Don Segundo, que avanzó hacia su compañera retándola con firme voz de amenaza:

'Una, dos, tres, cuatro,
Si no me queres me mato.'

Concluida la vuelta, contestó con gran indiferencia y encogiéndose de hombros la voluminosa Doña Encarnación:

'Una, dos, tres
Mataste si querés.'

Entre burlas y galanteos siguió el juego de los versos.

The dance ends with Segundo’s accepting a challenge in verse:

Un hombre tenía que contestar con una relación, porque era de uso. ¿Pero quién se atreve a declamar una versada jocosa, paseando de una punta del salón a la otra ante el silencio de los demás? Don Segundo quedó de pronto en el centro de la rueda. La curiosidad volvía mudos a los mirones. Mi padrino se quitó el chañarito y pasó el antebrazo por la frente, en señal de trabajoso pensamiento. Por fin, pareciendo haber encontrado inspiración, echó una irada circular y prorrumpió con voz fuerte:

'Yo soy un carnero viejo de la majada de San Blas.'

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Dió una vuelta como prestándose a la observación:

'Ya me han visto por delante...'

Y tomando dirección lentamente hacia la puerta de salida concluyó con desgano:

'...ahora mírenme de atrás.'

Gaucho prose and the elements of Gauchesque music and dance play a significant part in *Don Segundo Sombra*, and the plastic elements serve to complete the idealized picture of the Gaucho after his passing.

One of the plastic elements that is primary in importance to the novel is the *fácón*, and Güiraldes shows the many uses of this singular weapon. There is a *fácón* fight that shows this weapon in the hands of a skilled *gaúcho de leva*:

El forastero se quitó, al lado de la puerta, las espuelas, se arrolló el poncho en la zurda y sacó con lentitud el *fácón*. Como si hubiera olvidado su reciente extravío, compadre ri-sueño: --Aura verán como a un mocoso deslenguado se le corta la jeta.229

The two slash away at each other, until the fight goes in favor of Antenor, the friend of Segundo and young Fabio:

Antenor dejó de buscar la carreta, donde se había dado el lujo de pelear a pie firme. Listo sobre las piernas, parecía dispuesto a concluir con furia la pelea que comenzó por fuerza. No tardó mucho. Un encon-trón y vimos al forastero levantado hasta la misma altura de Antenor, para ser tirado de espalda como un trapo. Se acabó. Lo levantamos para sentarlo en el suelo, con las espaldas apoyadas contra la pared de la pulpería. Se desangraba por el pecho a borbollones.231

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The attending physician, upon seeing the fatal wound, is stunned: "Después de revisarlo, el de ciencia dijo palabras que guardé en mi memoria y cuyo significado cabal sólo supe años después: —¿Qué puñalada? Cuando yo era practicante, y no fui débil, sudaba media hora para abrir así un tórax." 232

The Gaucho is skilled with the facón in a fight, and the knife is an equally amazing instrument in the hands of the working Gaucho. Fabio relates with great admiration the skill of a baguesano named Goyo in skinning a sheep:

No bien había yo rasgado el cuero de una patía, cuando ya su cuchillo, viéndome por la panza, me amenazaba con la punta. Con tajos largos y certeros separaba el cuero de la carne y, una vez abierta la brecha, metía en ella el puño con el que rápidamente procedía al despojo de la bestia. Haciendo primero un círculo con la hoz en derredor de las coyunturas, quebró las cuatro patas en la última articulación. Entre el tendon y el hueso del garrón, abrió un ojal en el que pasó la presilla del cabresto y, arrimándose a un árbol, tiró por sobre una rama la punta opuesta, de la cual me colgué con él hasta que quedara suspendida la res. 233

The facón serves as weapon and as tool. This singular knife is a source of pride to the man who masters its use, a pride that becomes an irony when age disables the Gaucho:

¿No te acordás? —insistió (Pastor Tolosa), mostrando la cicatriz de un tajo que le cruzaba la frente. Yo era diablo pa'1 cuchillo. Aura soy viejo y cualquier sonso me grita— señalaba con la barba a nuestro compañero de mesa. En esos tiempos, sólo un toro como vos (Don Segundo Sombra) era capaz de cortarme. 234

The facón is an object of pride to the Gaucho, and the china.

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232 Ibid., p. 162.
233 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
234 Ibid., p. 91.
is likewise a source of favorable self-evaluation: "Sobre la tierra, de pronto oscurecido, asomó un sol enorme y sentí que era yo un hombre gozoso de vida. Un hombre que tenía en sí una voluntad, los haberes necesarios de buen gaucho y hasta una chinita querendona que llorara su partida."  

Chinaas and knives form a great part of the plastic elements in Gaucho folklore, as does the horse. Be it called flete, overo, pingo, or redomón, the horse remains the primary concern of the real Gaucho.

That the Gaucho takes pride in his horse and the skill he has in training it is shown when Fabio speaks about the first horse he has ever broken:

El bayo se arrimó al agua, que tocó con cauteloso hocico, y apurado por la sed bebió a sorbos interrumpidos, sin apartar de mi su ojo vivaz. Era un buen pingo arisco aun y lleno de desconfiadas cosquillas. Lo mire con orgullo de dueño y de domador, pues estaba seguro de que pronto sería un chucho envidiable.

The pride of the domador, the trainer of horses, is justified. The young narrator describes Segundo's skill with horses:

Don Segundo, hombre práctico y paciente, sabía todos los recursos del oficio. Pasaba las mañanas en el corral manoseando sus animales, golpeándolos con los cojinillos para hacerles perder las cosquillas, palmeándoles las ancas, el cogote y las verijas, para que no temieran sus manos, tusándolos con mil precauciones para que se habituaran al ruido de las tijeras, abrazándolos por las paletas para que no se sentaran cuando se les arrimaba. Gradualmente y sin brusquedad había cumplido los difíciles compromisos del domador y lo veíamos abrir las tranqueras y arrear novillos con sus

235 Ibid., p. 45.
236 Ibid., p. 61.
redomonas. 237

The Gauchó takes pride in his handling of horses, and the young Fabio gets an indirect compliment to his skill through the sale of two pingos: "Lo que menos sentía era esto último, pues si bien es cierto que perdía con el Orejuela y el Comadreja un par de pingos seguros, ganaba una jineta de sargento para mi orgullo.

Hay mejor prueba de buen domador que el que le salgan a uno compradores para sus caballos, después de un rodeo?" 238

The pingo is a Gauchó's pride, and when several horsemen get together, their mounts are the key topic of conversation:

---Son dos: pingos que hay que velos, amigo, que hay que velos. ¡El colorao tiene ganadas más carreras aquí... En tuavía no ha perdido menguna más que una que le ganaron como por siete cuerpos... ¡Qué animal ese escuro que trajeron de los campos de un tal Dugues! De entrada no más lo sacó el colorao como cortando clavos con el upite... y ya se acabó. ¿Creerá, cuñao?... Ya se acabó...? sí, señor... Pero el colorao, hay que velo, amigo...; si parece como que se ve tragando la tierra...; pero ahí tiene, a mi más me gusta el ruano que traín de pajero. Ahí tiene...; la manito del lao de montar es media mora...; no vaya a creer...; a mí me gusta el ruano; ahí tiene... 239

The pingo is always a ready topic for approval and debate, and the Gauchó who loses his mount is a sad spectacle. Fabio's horse is severely wounded, and the young Gauchó recalls: "Estaba furioso de que ese bicho mañero me hubiera agarrado en un descuido. ¡Quedar de a pie cuando el alboroto y la diversión en lo mejor!" 240

237 Ibid., p. 35.
238 Ibid., p. 133.
239 Ibid., pp. 134-135.
240 Ibid., p. 111.
The final word on such a happening is also given by Cáceres: "Un gaucho de a pie es buena cosa para ser tirada al zanjón de las basuras." 241

The Gaucho as a breaker and handler of horses knows few superiors, and the sight of a group of these horsemen is truly impressive. Cáceres expresses the scene of Gauchos riding in perfect unity with the herd in this chiasmus: "No sabía ya si nuestra tropa era un animal que quería ser muchos, o muchos animales que querían ser uno." 242

Don Segundo Sombra is a work that leaves the reader impressed with the skill the Gaucho horseman has with his mount and the respect he gives the animal. Also found in this work is the symbolic use of the redomón.

The first glimpse of Don Segundo Sombra that the reader shares with the young Fabio is of the Gaucho mounted on his pingo:

El jinete, que me pareció enorme bajo su poncho claro, reboleó la lonja del rebenque contra el ojo izquierdo de su redomón; pero como intentara yo dar un paso, el animal asustado bufó como una mula, abriendose en larga 'tendida.' Un charco bajo sus patas se despedazó chillando como un vidrio roto. Oí una voz aguda decir con calma: —Vamos pingo... Vamos, vamos pingo... Luego el trote y el galope chapelearon en el barro chirle. Inmóvil, miré alejarse, extrañamente agrandada contra el horizonte luminoso, aquella silueta de caballo y jinete. Me pareció haber visto un fantasma, una sombra, algo que pasa y es más una idea que un ser; algo que me atraía con la fuerza de un remanso, cuya hondura sorbe la corriente del río. 243

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241 Ibid., p. 151.
242 Ibid., p. 55.
243 Ibid., p. 17.
Likewise, Don Segundo is last seen on horseback:

El caballo de Don Segundo dió el anca al mío y realicé, en aquella divergencia de dirección, todo lo que iba a separar nuestros destinos. Lo vi alejarse al tranco. Mis ojos se dormieron en lo familiar de sus actitudes. Un rato ignoré qué veía o evocaba. Sabía como levantaría el rebenque, abriendo un poco la mano, y como echaría el cuerpo, iniciando el envión del galope. Así fue. El trote de transición le sacudió el cuerpo como una alegría. Y fue el compás conocido de los cascos trillando distancia: galopar es reducir lejanía. Llegar no es, para un resero, más que un pretexto de partir. 244

His friend and mentor gone, Fabio turns his horse back in the direction of the ranch that has changed his destiny: "... di vuelta a mi caballo y, lentamente, me fui para las casas. Me fui, como quien se desangra." 245

Fabio Cáceres grows from an urchin to a Gaucho and finally, to a man of property, and his very being is largely the result of his training in the Gaucho skills that Segundo Sombra gives him:

El me enseñó los saberes del resero, las artimanias del domador, el manejo del lazo y las boleadoras, la difícil ciencia de formar un buen caballo para el aparte y las pechadas, el entablar una tropilla y hacerla parar a mano en el campo, hasta poder agarrar los animales donde y como quisiera. Viéndolo me hice listo, para la preparación de lonjas y tientos con los que luego hacía mis bozales, riendas, cinchones, encimeras, así como para ingerir lazos y colocar argollas y presillas. 246

The plastic elements of folklore are found in the teachings on the arts of the Gaucho, and Segundo also imparts folk medicine to his young pupil:

Me volví médico de mi tropilla, bajo su vigilancia, y fuí

244 Ibid., p. 182.
245 Ibid., p. 183.
246 Ibid., p. 62.
bequiano para curar el mal del vaso dando vuelta la pisada, el moquillo con la medida del perro o labrando un fiador con trozos de un mismo maslo, el mal de orina poniendo sobre los riñones una cataplasma de barro podrido, la renguera de arriba atando una cerda de la cola en la pata sana, los hormigueros con una chaíra caliente, los macedos, cerda brava y otros males, de diferentes modos.²⁴⁷

Nor are medicine and horsemanship the only skills that Segundo teaches the young man:

Y hasta para divertirme tuve en él a un maestro, pues no de otra parte me vinieron mis floreos en la guitarra y mis mudanzas en el zapateo. De su memoria saqué estilos, versadas y bailes de does, e imitándolo llegué a poder escobillar un gato o un triunfo y a bailar una huella o un prado. Coplas y relaciones sobraran en su haber para hacer de gusto o de pudor en un centenar de chinas.²⁴⁸

The skills of the Gaucho span the various items of the plastic and musical elements of his folklore, and with the instruction Segundo gives Fabio there is considerable advice about the proper attitude and beliefs of a Gaucho. Fabio says that his mentor also taught him: "...de la vida la resistencia y la entereza en la lucha, el fatalismo en aceptar sin rezongos lo sucedido, la fuerza moral ante las aventuras sentimentales, la desconfianza para con las mujeres y la bebida, la prudencia entre los forasteros, la fe en los amigos."²⁴⁹

Throughout Don Segundo Sombra there are Gaucho folk elements and descriptions of the life of these horsemen in generous passages, almost as if Güiralde were trying to record for posterity the very

²⁴⁷ Ibid.
²⁴⁸ Ibid.
²⁴⁹ Ibid.
heartbeat of the race that he sees vanishing in the wake of civilization. The novel does serve the function of leaving for coming generations a document of the life of the Gaucho, and the folk elements, however, they might be idealized by the author, give the reader the most direct route to an understanding of this singular race.
CONCLUSION

The Gaucho evolved from myriad racial and ethnic cultures, lived his zenith years, and passed into history. He is no more.

The works discussed in this study are not basically sociological in nature, being poems, plays, or novels, but the picture given of the Gaucho has the seriousness of a social study. The verisimilitude reached in Martín Fierro is directly related to that found in Don Segundo Sombra, because the authors of both, regardless of the period in which they write, or their aims in writing, have drawn from a common source for their works about the Gaucho: the folklore of this singular race.

Richard Dorson says of folklore that it: "...may refer... to orally inherited tales, songs, sayings, and beliefs; or to village festivals, household customs, and peasant rituals. The common element is tradition."\textsuperscript{250}

The crafts, songs, and tales that were the living Gaucho survived through oral tradition, and today one can turn to the Gauchesque literary works to get an insight into the Gaucho and the way of life he led.

The Gaucho folklore began as oral tradition. Dorson claims

that despite the "...accelerated pace of modern living, which seems to strike at our roots and very identity, the folklorist marvels at the tenacity of tradition."  

Folklore is slow in dying and often finds new media by which to re-enter the oral tradition. Dorson expresses this when he says: "The idea that folklore is dying out is itself a kind of folklore."  

As tenacious as oral tradition is, an interesting study might be made by a folklorist to determine, through the collecting of tales, songs, and folk crafts, to what extent the folklore "frozen" by Gauchesque literature has re-entered the live tradition of orally communicated folk elements.

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