



---

The Gaucho Poetry of Argentina

Author(s): George W. Umphrey

Source: *Hispania*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1918), pp. 144-156

Published by: American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/331597>

Accessed: 06-12-2019 04:12 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Hispania*

## THE GAUCHO POETRY OF ARGENTINA

The most picturesque figure in the social life of Argentina of about fifty years ago, and still the most interesting figure of her traditions, is that of the *gaucho*, the cowboy of the boundless pampas; and in the development of the country no one played a more important part. During the Colonial period it was the gauchos who opened up to civilization the vast plains of Argentina. During the War of Independence it was the gauchos, unsurpassed in horsemanship, self-reliant, brave to rashness, ready for attack at a moment's notice, who fought valiantly and effectively the Spanish armies in the cause of freedom. In the troubled times following national independence, in the long struggle between the centralists and federalists, they fought as valiantly in a less worthy cause in support of *caudillos*, the political leaders who were able to gain their respect by physical prowess, expert horsemanship and audacious courage. Later, as the government became more stable and as the industrial development of the cities and the agricultural development of the country put an end to revolutionary wars, the gaucho began to lose prestige as the dominant figure of the pampas. At first he stood out boldly and contemptuously against the ever-advancing forces of modern industry, against the *puebleros* who became financially interested in the agricultural possibilities of the fertile plains, against the incessant flow of immigration from the older countries; but such opposition to the new industrial and political forces was not of long duration. Because of his lawless and nomadic instincts, because of his unwillingness and inability to conform to the conventional life of present-day civilization, the gaucho, as a distinct type, could find no place in modern Argentina. Some few of them became landowners, the exception to the rule, as few of them were ever able to accumulate more money than was needed for a day's drinking and gambling in a *pulpería*. The sons of the gauchos of a generation ago are to be found in the army or among the rural mounted police or on the large *estancias*. It is only in the outlying districts not yet reached by railways and scientific farming that representatives of the gaucho type are still to be found, and it is only in the older

books of travel, such as Darwin's "Voyage of a Naturalist," that we are likely to find extensive descriptions of his character and mode of life, his peculiar dress and weapons, the *chiripá*, *lazo*, *facón*, *bolas* or *boleadoras*. It is in history and in literature that the gaucho has his definitive place.

Even more picturesque than the cowboys of our Western States were those gauchos of the Argentine pampas, more picturesque, and at the same time, more distinct as a class, because of their peculiar origin and history. The first Spaniards to land on the shores of the Rio de la Plata or to cross the Andes from Perú and Chile, Andalusians for the most part, did not meet with the fierce opposition offered by the Araucanians in southern Chile; in the beginning at least, they did not arouse the antagonism of the aboriginal inhabitants of the plains and apparently did not hold the belief of the English settlers of North America, that the only good Indian is a dead one. Although there is considerable diversity of opinion among historians as to the extent to which they took Indian wives, it is certain that there was some intermingling of races; the gauchos were, at least in part, the descendants of the Andalusian pioneers and Indian women. Since the Andalusian had in him a strain of Arab blood, the gauchos inherited from three races characteristics that were further modified by the pastoral life of the pampas. From the Indian ancestors came the love for the free life of the plains, their hatred of restraint, of law and order, their patient acceptance of hardship and physical pain; from the Arabs came their love of the noble companion of their nomadic life and their superb horsemanship, in which they rivaled, if they did not surpass, our own western cowboys. From the Andalusians they inherited their intensity of feeling, their religious superstition, and more particularly, the characteristic that brings us to the main purpose of this study, their fondness for poetry and music.

The Andalusians took with them to the new world the tradition of songs sung to the music of the guitar, and in the course of time there developed the profession of the *payador*, a rustic troubadour, whose business it was to entertain the gauchos in their hours of recreation. The classic description of this *payador* is to be found in Sarmiento's masterpiece, "*Facundo*," written about the middle of the last century, when the gaucho was still an important

factor in the social and political life of Argentina. Describing the *payador*, he wrote: "El gaucho cantor es el mismo bardo, el vate, el trovador de la Edad Media, que se mueve en la misma escena, entre las luchas de las ciudades 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. . . . El cantor no tiene residencia fija; su morada está donde la noche lo sorprende; su fortuna en sus versos y en su voz. Dondequiera que el *cielito* enreda sus parejas sin taza, dondequiera que se apure una copa de vino, el cantor tiene su lugar preferente, su parte escogida en el festín. El gaucho argentino no bebe, si la música y los versos no le excitan, y cada pulpería tiene su guitarra para poner en manos del cantor, a quien el grupo de caballos estacionados en la puerta anuncia a lo lejos donde se necesita el concurso de gaya ciencia. . . . La poesía original del cantor es pesada, monótona, irregular cuando se abandona a la inspiración del momento. Más narrativa que sentimental, llena de imágenes tomadas de la vida campestre, del caballo y las escenas del desierto, que la hacen metafórica y pomposa. Cuando refiere sus proezas o las de algún afamado malévolo, parece al improvisador napolitano desarreglado, prosaico de ordinario, elevándose a la altura poética por momentos, para caer de nuevo al recitado insípido y casi sin versificación." No festive gathering was complete without a *payador* and his new repertoire of songs; and if two *payadores* happened to be present, there then took place a poetic contest according to set rules, a *payada*, remarkably similar to the *tenso* and *jocs partitz* of the Provençal troubadours of long ago.

The *payador* lives no longer except in tradition, an interesting type that has passed away along with the social class to which he belonged. As in the case of our own cowboys who were forced ever westward until they have become non-existent as a social class, the gauchos were forced to retreat before the advancing forces of modern civilization, to give place to the more prosaic landowners and farmers. About twenty years ago Rubén Darío lamented in beautiful verses his disappearance from the pampa:—

De pronto se oye el eco del grito de la pampa,  
 brilla como una puesta del argentino sol,  
 y un espectral jinete, como una sombra, cruza,  
 sobre su espalda, un poncho; sobre su faz, dolor.  
 —¿Quién eres, solitario viajero de la noche?  
 —¡Yo soy el postrer gaucho que parte para siempre,  
 de nuestra vieja patria llevando el corazón! (Prosas profanas)

The only gauchos the traveler is likely to see today in Argentina are those of the theater or vaudeville stage, or those of a fancy-dress carnival. Sixteen years ago, Ernesto Quesada (*El Criollismo en la Literatura Argentina*) wrote of the gaucho: "Hoy los empresarios representan escenas de la vida gaucha en los circos populares, y hacen cantar en los teatros a payadores, más o menos de pega; mañana, dentro de un cuarto de siglo quizá, se irá a los museos etnográficos a contemplar gauchos de cera, revestidos con su chiripá, su bota de potro, su calzoncillo cribao y de largo fleco, su chambergo de barbijo, su poncho pampa, su tirador bien plateado y su facón tradicional."

The poetry of the gauchos, the productions of illiterate *payadores* and therefore entirely popular, would have disappeared with them, were it not for certain Argentine poets of high literary ability, who made for it a permanent place in literature. These poets, instead of collecting and publishing the original poems, the *vidalitas*, *cielitos*, *tristes*, *payadas*, etc., as literary men have sometimes done with the popular poetry of other countries, sought inspiration and material for their own poetic compositions in the life and poetry of the gauchos and produced a body of literature that holds an important place in the literary history of Spanish America. That these poems of *gaucho* inspiration are well worthy of our attention is proved by the high esteem in which they are held by eminent critics of Spain as well as Spanish-America. To mention only the most eminent, Menéndez y Pelayo (*Historia de la poesía hispano-americana*, Vol. II, p. 469) speaks of the early gaucho poetry as "el germen de esa peculiar poesía gauchesca que . . . ha producido las obras más originales de la literatura sudamericana." The great poet Núñez de Arce expressed the opinion to Ernesto Quesada (quoted by the latter in his "*Criollismo en la Literatura Argentina*") that "lo más interesante en toda la literatura americana eran las producciones gauchescas, por su originalidad, su sabor del terruño, el singular vigor de las ideas madres, y lo pintoresco de la forma, a

la vez que lo atrevido y hermoso de sus locuciones, giros y comparaciones.”

Of the gaucho literature extending over something more than a century, only one representative of each phase of its development will be mentioned:—Maziel (1727-1788), who first turned to literary uses the life and poetry of the gauchos and established the conventional beginning, “Aquí me pongo a cantar”; Hidalgo (1793-1864), who made popular the gaucho heroes of the War of Independence; Ascazubi (1807-1875), who dealt with the gauchos of the civil wars; Del Campo (1834-1884), who put into his poem “Fausto” the impressions made upon an illiterate cowboy of the pampas by a masterpiece of music and literature; Hernández (1834-1886), who produced in his masterpiece, “Martín Fierro,” the most genuinely popular gaucho poem, in which a vanishing type is given its definitive expression in literature; and finally, Obligado (born in 1851), the modern poet, who, turning away from the industrial and commercial life of today, finds inspiration in the gaucho traditions of the past. In the poetry of these representative writers the logical evolution of the “*poesía gauchesca*” can best be studied. Only the masterpieces of four of them, Hidalgo, Del Campo, Hernández and Obligado, will now receive detailed treatment.

Bartolomé Hidalgo, although born in Uruguay, belongs to Argentine literature for the reason that it was in Buenos Aires that he gained his literary reputation during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. His method was one that has appealed to many dialectal writers, namely to introduce two or more rustics and have them discuss in their own vernacular political or other events of the day. The best known of his versified dialogues bears a long title that explains clearly the nature of its contents: “*Relación que hace Ramón Contreras a Jacinto Chano, de todo lo que vió en las fiestas mayas en Buenos Aires en el año 1822.*” Returning from the festivities in the capital on the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the gaucho Contreras meets his friend Chano and expresses surprise that the latter was not there too. Chano explains regretfully that a knife-wound received in an argument with a horse-dealer had prevented his going; he then urges his friend to tell him all about the festivities. This Contreras does in assonantal octosyllabic verses, with many picturesque turns of

expression and humorous observations, that prove Hidalgo's familiarity with the gaucho and his way of thinking although he was not a gaucho himself. The above-mentioned dialogue and others of more marked moralizing tendencies gained a wide popularity among the illiterate as well as with the reading public. Ernesto Quesada tells us in his "Criollismo en la Literatura Argentina" that he once heard from the lips of an illiterate plainsman the versified moralizings that Hidalgo had put into the mouth of Chano seventy years before, verses that were evidently handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition.

In passing it may be noted that Hidalgo's dialogues and the greater part of other gaucho poetry were composed in the gaucho dialect, a fact that makes them rather difficult reading for one not acquainted with its linguistic peculiarities. The greatest difficulty is due to the large number of words of Indian origin or words created to meet the needs of new conditions of life; for these some such dictionary as *Ciro Bayo's "Vocabulario Criollo-español Sud-americano"* is indispensable. Other words will be recognized by the student of sixteenth century Spanish, words still current in Argentina although in Spain they have undergone great change in meaning or have become obsolete. With regard to many peculiarities of spelling and pronunciation we should keep in mind that the gauchos were the descendants of the Andalusians, many of whose peculiarities of speech were retained and accentuated during the three centuries of oral tradition. Such words as *'lao'* for *'lado'*, *'juyeron'* for *'huyeron'*, *'jué'* for *'fué'*, *'güelta'* for *'vuelta'*, *'güeno'* for *'bueno'*, *'pa'* for *'para'*, *'nades'* for *'nadie'*, should not cause much difficulty.

The masterpiece of Del Campo, "Fausto," a title one would hardly expect to find in cowboy literature, is a poem of about fifteen hundred lines, in which the author's purpose is to give the impressions produced upon an illiterate gaucho by the grand opera of the same name. A gaucho, Anastasio el Pollo, returning from Buenos Aires, meets a friend in a lonely part of the beloved pampa. They dismount for a chat, and refreshments, and in the course of conversation the friend happens to mention the devil; this recalls to el Pollo what had impressed him most deeply in his visit to Buenos Aires. He interrupts his friend, exclaiming

“—¡ Callesé,  
amigo! ¿ No sabe usted  
que la otra noche lo he visto  
al Demonio?

—¡ Jesucristo! . . .

—Hace bien, santigüesé.

—¡ Pues no me he de santiguar!  
Con esas cosas no juego;

pero no importa, le ruego  
que me dentre a relatar,  
el cómo llegó a topar  
con el malo. ¡ Virgen Santa!  
sólo el pensarlo me espanta . . .  
—Güeno, le voy a contar,  
pero antes voy a buscar  
con que mojar la garganta.”

Then in his own way and in his own gaucho language, frankly, ingenuously, with many digressions and interruptions, he gives his friend the story of the opera, with a running commentary expressed in terms of his gaucho experience. A résumé would be of little value, since the merit of the poem lies mainly in the picturesque details, the brief but effective descriptions of the natural phenomena of the pampas, the skilful touches of local color. The delicacy of feeling shown in the treatment of Marguerite would seem exaggerated in a gaucho. Speaking of her repentance at the church near the end of the opera, he says:

“Creo que estaban alzando  
en una misa cantada,  
cuando aquella desgraciada  
llegó a la puerta llorando.

Allí la pobre cayó  
de rodillas sobre el suelo,  
alzó los ojos al cielo,  
y cuatro credos rezó.

Nunca he sentido más pena  
que al mirar a esa mujer,  
amigo, aquello era ver  
a la misma Madalena.

De aquella rubia rosada,  
ni rastro había quedao  
era un clavel marchitao,  
una rosa deshojada.

Su frente, que antes brilló  
tranquila, como la luna,  
era un cristal, don Laguna,  
que la desgracia enturbió.

Ya de sus ojos hundidos  
las lágrimas se secaban,  
y entre-temblando rezaban  
sus labios deocoloridos.

Pero el Diablo la uña afila,  
cuando está desocupao,  
y allí estaba el condenao  
a una vara de la pila.

La rubia quiso entrar,  
pero el Diablo la atajó,  
y tales cosas le habló  
que la obligó a disparar.”

As an example of the effect of nature upon the poetic temperament of the gaucho, his description of the stage-setting for the repentance of Marguerite may be cited:

“El sol ya se iba poniendo,  
la claridá se auyentaba,  
y la noche se acercaba  
su negro poncho tendiendo.

Ya las estrellas brillantes  
una por una salían,  
y los montes parecían  
batallones de gigantes.



Ya las ovejas balaban  
en el corral prisioneras,  
y ya las aves caseras  
sobre el alero ganaban.

El toque de la oración  
triste los aire rompía,  
y entre sombras se movía  
el crespo sauce llorón.

Ya sobre el agua estancada  
de silenciosa laguna,  
al asomarse la luna,  
se miraba retratada.

Y haciendo un extraño ruido  
en las hojas tropezaban  
los pájaros que volaban  
a guarecerse en su nido.

Ya del sereno brillando  
la hoja de la higuera estaba,  
y la lechuza pasaba  
de trecho en trecho chillando.

La pobre rubia, sin duda,  
en llanto se deshacía,  
y rezando a Dios pedía  
que le emprestase su ayuda."

The reputation gained by Del Campo by his artistic treatment of the gaucho was surpassed only by that of José Hernández, the author of the undoubted masterpiece of gaucho literature, "Martín Fierro," published in 1872. The purpose of the poem is thus expressed by the author himself: "Me he esforzado, sin presumir haberlo conseguido, en presentar un tipo que personificara el carácter de nuestros gauchos, concentrando el modo de ser, de sentir, de pensar y de expresarse que les es peculiar; dotándolo con todos los juegos de su imaginación llena de imágenes y de colorido, con todos los arranques de su altivez, inmoderados hasta el crimen, y todos los impulsos y arrebatos, hijos de una naturaleza que la educación no ha pulido y suavizado . . . Y he deseado todo esto, empeñándome en imitar ese estilo abundante en metáforas, que el gaucho usa sin conocer y sin valorar, y su empleo constante de comparaciones tan extrañas como frecuentes; en copiar sus reflexiones con el sello de la originalidad que las distingue y el tinto sombrío de que jamás carecen, revelándose en ellas esa especie de filosofía propia, que sin estudiar, aprende en la misma Naturaleza; en respetar la superstición y sus preocupaciones, nacidas y fomentadas por su misma ignorancia; en dibujar el orden de sus impresiones, y de sus afectos, que él encubre y disimula estudiosamente; sus desencantos, producidos por su misma condición social, y esa indolencia que le es habitual, hasta llegar a constituir una de las condiciones de su espíritu; en relatar, en fin, lo más fielmente que me fuera posible, con todas sus especialidades propias, ese tipo original de nuestras Pampas, tan poco conocido por lo mismo que es difícil estudiarlo, tan erróneamente juzgado muchas veces, y que al paso que avanzan las conquistas de la civilización, va perdiéndose

casi por completo." Eminently successful in carrying out this purpose, Hernández gained for his poem a popularity that has endured, not only among the educated readers, but also among the rural population of the whole of Argentina; indeed, no other poem in Argentine literature can rival it in popularity with all kinds of people. Its popularity with the educated is proof that it has excellent literary qualities; its popularity with the illiterate plainmen is proof that, along with the vernacular of the gaucho, he put into his poem the very spirit of the gaucho type.

Martín Fierro, the hero of the poem, tells in person the story of the unjust treatment that has changed him from a peaceful gaucho into a "gaucho malo y matrero," an outlaw, defying the laws that have not protected him from oppression. Thus he begins:

<p>"Aquí me pongo a cantar Al compás de la vigüela, Que el hombre que lo desvela Una pena extraordinaria, Como la ave solitaria Con el cantar se consuela.</p>	<p>Pido a los santos del Cielo Que ayuden mi pensamiento, Les pido en este momento, Que voy a cantar mi historia, Me refresquen la memoria, Y aclaren mi entendimiento."</p>
--	--

For him the art of the *payador* is natural and spontaneous:

<p>"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.</p>	<p>Yo no soy cantor letrao, Mas si me pongo a cantar No tengo cuando acabar Y me envejezco cantando; Las coplas me van brotando Como agua de manantial."</p>
--	--

He prides himself on being a gaucho, and is determined to live completely the independent outlaw life to which injustice and love of freedom have brought him:

<p>"Soy gaucho, y entiendanlo Como mi lengua lo explica, Para mí la tierra es chica Y pudiera ser mayor, Ni la víbora me pica Ni quema mi frente el sol.  Nací como nace el peje En el fondo de la mar, Naiden me puede quitar Aquello que Dios me dió, Lo que al mundo truje yo Del mundo lo he de llevar.</p>	<p>Mi gloria es vivir tan libre Como el pájaro en el cielo, No hago nido en este suelo Ande hay tanto que sufrir; Y naiden me ha de seguir Cuando yo remonto el vuelo.  Yo no tengo en el amor Quien me venga con querelias, Como esas aves tan bellas Que saltan de rama en rama— Yo hago en el trébol mi cama, Y me cubren las estrellas.</p>
---	---

Y sepan cuantos escuchan	Y atiendan la relacion
De mis penas el relato,	Que hace un gaucha perseguido,
Que nunca peleo ni mato	Que fué buen padre y marido,
Sino por necesidad;	Empeñoso y diligente,
Y que a tanta alversidá	Y sin embargo la gente
Solo me arrojó el mal trato.	Lo tiene por un bandido."

With keen emotion he remembers the life of former days when he lived happily with wife and children, and describes with picturesque details a typical day on his ranch. Suddenly this idyllic life came to an end. The Indians were making trouble on the frontier; he and many others like him were impressed into military service, and although they were promised good treatment and permission to return home in six months, all that they received was harsh treatment and plenty of opportunity to fight Indians, not to speak of compulsory labor in the fields. After enduring this for three years, "sin que le larguen ni un rial," he deserted and made his way back to his ranch. But what a homecoming was his! He finds the ranch deserted, the house in ruins, the only sign of life being a mewing cat.

"No hallé ni rastro del rancho,	¡Quién no sentirá lo mesmo
¡Sólo estaba la tapera!	Quando así padece tanto!
Por Christo si aquello era	Puedo asegurar que el llanto
Para enlutar el corazón:	Como una mujer largué.
Yo juré en esa ocasión	¡Ay! mi Dios si me quedé
Ser más malo que una fiera.	Más triste que Jueves Santo!"

Unable to pay the rent and taxes, his wife and children have been driven out and forced to shift for themselves. The thought of their defenceless condition and the great injustice that has been done to him by the authorities makes him desperate; but instead of succumbing to oppression, he decides to meet force with force:

"Yo he sido manso primero,	Aunque muchos creen que el gaucha
Y seré gaucha matrero	Tiene un alma de reyuno,
En mi triste circunstancia,	No se encontrará ninguno
Aunque es mi mal tan profundo.	Que no lo dueblen las penas;
Nací y me he criado en estancia,	Más no debe aflojar uno
Pero ya conozco el mundo.	Mientras hay sangre en las venas."

Living the life of a *gaucha malo*, outwitting or killing those who attempt to capture him or arouse his anger, he glories in his cunning and physical prowess. At times, however, this continual struggle for existence produces in him a longing for a more peaceful life.

"Y en esa hora de la tarde  
 En que tuito se adormece,  
 Que el mundo dentrar parece  
 A vivir en pura calma,  
 Con las tristezas de su alma  
 Al pajonal enderiese.

Bala el tierno corderito  
 Al lado de la blanca oveja,  
 Y a la vaca que se aleja  
 Llama el ternero amarrao;  
 Pero el gaucho desgraciao  
 No tiene a quien dar su queja."

Finally, wearying of the incessant effort to escape capture, he and another *gaucho malo*, Cruz by name, decide to cross the frontier and live with the Indians. Reaching the end of his story, Martín Fierro breaks his guitar on the ground so that it may not fall into unworthy hands, and leaves to the author the completion of the poem. This is done in the following six stanzas:

"Y yo daré fin a mis coplas  
 Con aire de relación,  
 Nunca falta un preguntón  
 Más curioso que mujer,  
 Y tal vez quiera saber  
 Cómo jué la conclusión:

Y siguiendo el fiel del rumbo  
 Se entraron en el desierto,  
 No sé si los habrán muerto  
 En alguna correría,  
 Pero espero que algún día  
 Sabré de ellos algo cierto.

Cruz y Fierro de una estancia  
 Una tropilla se arrearon,  
 Por delante se la echaron  
 Como crioyos entendidos,  
 Y pronto sin ser sentidos  
 Por la frontera cruzaron.

Y ya con estas noticias  
 Mi relación acabé,  
 Por ser ciertas les conté  
 Todas las desgracias dichas;  
 Es un telar de desdichas  
 Cada gaucho que usté ve.

Y cuando la habian pasao,  
 Una madrugada clara,  
 Le dijo Cruz que mirara  
 Las últimas poblaciones;  
 Y a Fierro dos lagrimones  
 Le rodaron por la cara.

Pero ponga su esperanza,  
 En el Dios que lo formó,  
 Y aquí me despido yo  
 Que he relatao a mi modo  
 Males que conocen todos  
 Pero que naides cantó."

Just as in the case of Cervantes who put in the way of others the temptation to write a sequel to his story by not killing off his hero at the end of Book I, so Hernández, by taking leave of his hero at the frontier with the hope that some day he might return, encouraged the production of many would-be sequels and imitations, in which the criminal tendencies of the *gaucho malo* become more and more glorified. The result was the production of a great number of novels and plays in which the gaucho degenerated into a conventional criminal type, the hero of novels and plays of the most sanguinary and melodramatic kind. One author, the most popular of many, Eduardo Gutiérrez, glorified the gaucho

outlaw in a long series of novels, in comparison with which the "dime novel" and the "penny dreadful" become "goody-goody" stories. These novels and similar *gauchi-criollo* plays exerted a very bad influence from a sociological as well as literary point of view, and Hernández, considering himself responsible to some extent, attempted to counteract the bad influence of his sympathetic treatment of the *gaucho malo*, by producing the sequel, "La Vuelta de Martín Fierro," in which the outlaw, now peaceful and law-abiding, returns to take his place in the new life of the *campo*. The appeal of this sequel, superior in some ways to the first poem, is to a much more restricted class of readers, and is far from rivaling it in popularity. The limitations of space make impossible any further discussion of it in this article.

When Hernández published his *Martín Fierro* in 1872, the gaucho as a social type was already beginning to disappear; it came, therefore, at the right psychological moment, just at the close of one epoch in the life of the Argentine pampas and just before the new customs had driven out the old. It served therefore to crystallize, as it were, the gaucho type and to give it a final, permanent form in Argentine literature.

The final phase of the literary treatment of the gaucho has been given us by a living Argentine poet, Rafael Obligado, who makes the passing of the gaucho and particularly the *payador* symbolical of the changing conditions of life on the pampas. His poem, "Santos Vega," suggested by the popular song,

"Santos Vega el payador,	Murió cantando su amor
Aquél de la larga fama,	Como el pájaro en la rama"

gives in verse the tradition of the famous *payador*, who was challenged to a *payada* and badly worsted by a stranger, Juan Sin Ropa, in reality the devil in disguise.

"Juan Sin Ropa (se llamaba Juan Sin Ropa el forastero) Comenzó por un ligero Dulce acorde que encantaba, Y con voz que modulaba Blandamente los sonidos, Cantó 'tristes' nunca oídos, Cantó 'cielos' no escuchados, Que llevaban, derramados, La embriaguez a los sentidos.	Santos Vega oyó suspenso Al cantor; y toda inquieta, Sintió su alma de poeta Con un aleteo inmenso. Luego, en un preludeo intenso, Hirió las cuerdas sonoras, Y cantó de las auroras Y las tardes pampeanas, Endechas americanas Más dulces que aquellas horas."
--	---

The rival *payador*, "la ciencia en persona," then puts forth a still greater effort:

<p>"Era el grito poderoso Del progreso, dado al viento; El solemne llamamiento Al combate más glorioso. Era, en medio del reposo De la Pampa ayer dormida, La visión ennoblecida Del trabajo, antes no honrado; La promesa del arado Que abre cauces a la vida.</p>	<p>Como en mágico espejismo, Al compás de ese concierto, Mil ciudades el desierto Levantaba de sí mismo. Y a la par que en el abismo Una edad se desmorona, Al conjuro, en la ancha zona Derramábase la Europa, Que sin duda Juan Sin Ropa Era la ciencia en persona."</p>
---	--

Santos Vega admits defeat and gives way, broken-hearted, to his rival.

<p>—"Adiós, luz del alma mía, Adiós, flor de mis llanuras, Manantial de las dulzuras Que mi espíritu bebía; Adiós, mi única alegría, Dulce afán de mi existir; Santos Vega se va a hundir En lo inmenso de esos llanos . . . ¡Lo han vencido: ¡Llegó, herma- nos, El momento de morir!"</p>	<p>Ni aun cenizas en el suelo De Santos Vega quedaron, Y los años dispersaron Los testigos de aquel duelo; Pero un viejo y noble abuelo, Así el cuento terminó: —"Y si cantando murió Aquel que vivió cantando, Fué, decía suspirando, Porque el diablo lo venció."</p>
---	---

In this contest in which the traditional *payador* suffers defeat, is symbolized the victory of the new over the old, the triumph of modern industrialism over the simple country life of a former generation.

Obligado's poem, marked by fine literary taste and excellent workmanship, surpasses that of Hernández if judged from a purely artistic point of view, but it will find appreciation only with the educated; it lacks the broad, popular appeal of "Martín Fierro," the masterpiece of gaucho literature, in which the colors were laid on with sure, vigorous strokes, and in which the gaucho type received its permanent literary form.

GEORGE W. UMPHREY

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON