

EL GAUCHO NEGRO: ARGENTINA'S LITERARY WAR AGAINST BLACKS,  
COWBOYS, AND AMERINDIANS

A Report of a Senior Study

by

Gabriel Rashid Bambaata Turner

Major: Spanish

Maryville College

Fall, 2008

Date Approved 11/10/2008, by

Faculty Supervisor

Date Approved 11/10/08, by

Editor



## ABSTRACT

“El Gaucho Negro: Argentina’s Literary War with Blacks, Cowboys, and Amerindians” is a thesis that primarily seeks to utilize the Argentine national epic poem, Martín Fierro, to find out why Argentina has transformed from a nineteenth century ethnic mixture of blacks, Europeans, and Amerindians to a modern nation composed primarily of people of European descent. The thesis begins by giving background information regarding the various ethnic groups in Argentina and their position within society. This first chapter also discusses the ideological battle between federalists and republicans that was gripping the country. The author of the primary text, José Hernández was a proponent of the cowboy culture embodied by the federalist spirit and led by the dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas. It is he that caused Domingo Sarmiento to write Facundo: Civilización y barbarie, the secondary text analyzed in this thesis. This work supports republicanism as a “civilized” alternative to the federalist regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas. The second chapter of this thesis begins to delve into the given and actual identities of the black and the *gaucho* of nineteenth century Argentina. The writings of Sarmiento reflect the identities attributed to the *gaucho* and the black man of Argentina while José Hernández, by speaking through Martín Fierro, gives his defense of the *gaucho* lifestyle. The final section analyzes the *payada* battle between the black man and Martín Fierro, especially focusing on the portrayal of the black man and his description of his own role in society.

The thesis concludes by stating that the black and the *gaucho* are ultimately the same due to their equal marginalization in Argentine literature.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Introduction	
	American Diversity	
Chapter		
I		
	Early Peoples of Argentina	4
	The Victims: Criollos, Blacks, and Amerindians	10
	Cowboy vs. Culture	13
	Cowboys and Amerindians	18
	The Savage Collective	19
	Violence by Facundo and Fierro	20
Chapter		
II		
	Aqui me pongo a cantar	24
	El Gaucho Solo	26
	The Payada	27
Chapter		
III		
	Identity in Latin America	37
	The Us, the Them, and the We	38
	Literature and Identity	41
	Identities Attributed by Sarmiento y Hernández	44
	¿Quién es el Negro y para donde va?	47
Chapter		
IV		
	El Gaucho Negro	51
References		56

## INTRODUCTION

### AMERICAN DIVERSITY

The western world is accustomed to the various challenges and benefits of living in an ethnically diverse region of the world. The so-called discovery of the long and wide landmass referred to as America by Christopher Columbus created a veritable cultural mix in its half of the world that is only recently being rivaled by larger European cities and to a much larger extent than that of Asian and African nations. It is this diversity of North America that has led to the United States to refer to itself as a melting pot and Brazil to take enough pride in its diverse makeup to outlaw any type of racism. In many instances, such as that of the United States and Brazil, it has been the promise of economic gain that has enticed people to emigrate toward the Americas, but a major cause of the diffuse diversity of the Americas is early colonialism, indigenous peoples, and the transatlantic slave trade. These three forces can be seen to varying degrees from the Inuit homes of northern Canada to the condominiums dotting the Santiago, Chile skyline. However, what if there were one nation, a modern nation of a sizable population, that had created a country more similar to the Europe of old? Argentina, a country of forty million, is a rare case of a state that is predominately European in ethnic makeup in spite of the fact that it is surrounded by Brazil, (a nation with a larger black population than almost all African nations) Bolivia, Chile, and Paraguay, all nations in which the

general population has apparent indigenous physical features. What is to be made of this enigmatic nation?

The purpose of this thesis is to formulate a theory on this ethnic phenomenon through the study of Argentina's national epic poem El Gaucho Martín Fierro by Amerindians Hernández. This is the primary text being analyzed considering it is arguably the most famous Argentine text of that century along with the secondary text of this thesis: Facundo: civilización y barbarie by Domingo Sarmiento. These two texts are great literary insights into the formation of the Argentine state. These questions are interesting when looking at nation-building and the effect literature can have on such a process. This paper relies heavily on the research done by George Reid Andrews regarding the populations of black people in Argentina throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The following thesis also utilizes various analyses of black and indigenous people identity given by John F. Matheus in "African Footprints in Hispanic Literature," Josephat Kubayanda's "Minority Discourse and the African Collective: Some Examples from Latin America and the Caribbean Literature" and Amaryll Chanady's "Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference." This thesis attempts to couple the historical facts and figures of early Argentina regarding its minority and general populations relating to early governmental systems with the intentions and effects of two of its most influential texts in order to come to a conclusion on how Argentina became a more ethnically homogenized house in a heterogeneous neighborhood, One can expect to receive an understanding of the historical ethnic foundation of Argentina and continuing analysis of the ethnic break down of Argentina all the way to the end of the nineteenth century. This thesis will include an analysis of the oppositional sides in the

civil war for Argentina and how that factors into its particular situation regarding ethnic minorities. And, of course, the essay will then explore the depths of the literary texts and their effect on Argentina's racial landscape.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY PEOPLES OF ARGENTINA

On October 12 of each year, Argentines take the day off to commemorate the European discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Throughout Latin America and Spain the day is given much more emphasis than its North American counterpart, Columbus Day. When taking into perspective the ramifications of America's "discovery", it may appear almost strange that a national holiday is celebrated for a date that marked the end of many ethnic groups and the physical and social marginalization of many others. This date did not mark the first European contact with Amerindians, but it would mark the last of a purely indigenous America, which, of course, is not to say that the indigenous people were culturally homogeneous. The indigenous peoples of the Americas were and are like the rest of the world in terms of vast expanses of land controlled and populated by different ethnic groups and tribes. It is perhaps a fault of the western mind to categorically unify these distinct peoples, as this was definitely the view of European powers during the colonial period.

Just as Europe was expanding its empires by colonizing the Incan Empire had effectively taken control of the northwestern parts of Argentina and the descendants of this group are contemporarily known as the Quechua people. However, the Incan Empire was composed of many different tribes and the limits of this empire only reached at most a fourth of present-day Argentina. The main groups of focus for the purpose of this thesis

will be the Guarani, the Mapuche, and the Toba. These three distinct groups will serve to accentuate the thoroughness of the eradication of the native peoples in Argentina since they were all subject to the same oppression under the colonial powers, but portray different modern realities. This thesis will also often refer to the whole of these early ethnic tribes as the general indigenous population because it was invariably viewed as such by early colonizers of Argentina. Similar to the majority of Latin American nations, Argentina was primarily and originally colonized by the Spanish. It is ironic that the name of Argentina comes from the hospitality of the indigenous people of the Rio de Plata giving gifts of silver or in Latin “argentinum” to shipwrecked Spanish explorers led by Juan Díaz de Solis. This first encounter between indigenous peoples, probably the Guarani, was in 1516. By 1580, the Spanish had erected a permanent colony in Buenos Aires. This settlement originally was an outpost of the Spanish vice-royalty centralized in Peru. Eventually, Buenos Aires itself began to become less of an outpost and demonstrated that it was an important center of Spanish colonization.

This transformation of Buenos Aires marks the first three hundred years of Spanish expansion in Argentina and can be viewed as continuous Spanish population augmentation with an almost inverse proportion of Native American reduction. Spanish colonists ran into Diaguita tribes in the center of Argentina, Guarani and Charrua in the east, Tehuelches in Patagonia, and the fiercely resistant Mapuche in the south. (Columbia Encyclopedia) Regardless, the Spanish populations continued to grow from expansive colonization and the descendants of the initial colonists. The Spanish spent the majority of this time exploring, searching for precious metals, and shipping goods back to Spain. (Williams, 401) Argentina was strictly Spanish for a long period of time and in 1776

when the United States was declaring its independence Spain was declaring Buenos Aires a vice-royalty and seeking to exert further influence from this port city. Argentina remained under the Spanish kingdom until Napoleon overthrew the Spanish monarchy in 1807. As Argentina was essentially cut off from Spain, the British attempts, as part of the Napoleonic Wars, to take Argentina were rebuffed by an entirely “Argentine” militia. These first of these battles occurred in 1806 and were definitely concluded by the Argentine ousting of the British occupants of Buenos Aires in 1807. These initial Argentine victories and the ideals of the American Revolutionary and French Revolutionary began to plant the seeds of independence in the minds of the Argentines.. On May 25<sup>th</sup> of 1810, Buenos Aires, which had been independent technically due to Napoleon’s conquest of Spain, formally created its own junta (government council) however, it was not able to entice the other provinces to join it in its governance. The nationally revered hero, General Amerindians de San Martín, began to clear Chile, Argentina, and Peru of its Spanish influence and on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1816 Argentina finally declared itself independent of Spain since there was no longer any provinces under the rule of Spanish loyalists.

The pervasive victory of General Amerindians de San Martín was essentially the birth of a nation. Like all colonizing powers of Western Europe, the Spanish bought West Africans for the purpose of slavery from the Portuguese. The Portuguese brought these slaves from Brazil to Buenos Aires and from this port the majority was sent to other provinces such as Córdoba and Tucumán. Even though the majority of these slaves were sent to other parts of Argentina, there was a very large minority of Africans in Buenos Aires. In 1838, according to George Reid Andrews, the number attributed to people of

African descent was 15,000 or almost a quarter of its population of 63,000. The phrase “of African descent” is used because this census accounted blacks as those of mixed blood and people of a more fully African background as “negros” (Andrews 2). This would be the largest percentage of Africans in Argentine history. The free blacks of this period were mainly employed manual laborers. In addition, the black community was active in the publication of newspapers and was commonly seen as musical and visual artists and produced literary works such as newspapers and magazines. This cultural contribution to Buenos Aires in the form of music and literature was matched by black contributions to Argentine armies (Edwards 3).

There are several accounts of Argentine blacks making up entire regiments of the Argentine army (Andrews 94). For many blacks, fighting was the only means of manumission so they fought the successive wars against Brazil and the varying indigenous peoples of Argentina. However, it would only be after Argentina’s civil war that the slave trade would be effectively abolished and gradual emancipation would be implemented two years after the first junta declared by Buenos Aires in 1813. However, as evident in the censuses of the period the majority continued to perform manual and domestic labor. It must be noted, however, that during the 1830s, due to a shortage of labor many members of the middle and upper class lobbied to reinstate slavery due to a shortage of manual labor. Ironically, this may have been the only way to replenish the black population.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the majority of Amerindians in the Americas had been decimated by war and disease. The remaining Amerindians by the time of Argentina’s independence were those who were able to remain on the very limits

of Spanish colonial lands. As blacks were attempting to integrate and assimilate into Argentine culture and to a certain degree were accepted as necessary elements of early Argentine economy. But, Amerindians, on the other hand, were simply barriers to Argentine expansion. This underlines one of the fundamental differences in the African and Native American experience. The independence and autonomy of Amerindians was seen as an active threat to European-ness.

As stated previously, the African populations were dwindling after the abolition of the slave trade and by 1868 the African population had dropped to only 2% of the population of Buenos Aires with 8,000 blacks (Andrews 21). As Buenos Aires was growing in population, it should have led to an increasingly prosperous and cosmopolitan city, but Buenos Aires did not trend towards the diversity of most cosmopolitan urban areas. The lack of Afro-Argentines was not a pressing and important issue of the time; however, considering the ideological dissension between federalists advocating a loosely aligned set of states within Argentina and centralists who supported a strong, central European type government. This was the theme of Argentine civil wars and created the most quoted piece of Argentine literature, Martín Fierro. Martín Fierro, an epic poem describing the life of a gaucho, a dying breed, and his interactions with blacks and Amerindians, the dwindling populations. The populations represented a decentralized, a non-European, a heterogeneous Argentina. A staunch defender of this Argentina was the literary figure and journalist, Amerindians Hernández.

Amerindians Hernández was born in San Martín, near Buenos Aires on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1834. Hernández was a son to a foreman of several cattle ranches. Hernández grew up in a very real sense in a gaucho setting. He was born in an era of Argentine turmoil. It

was a period of time in which Argentina was a young nation and deciding its future as a nation. In some aspects early Argentine politics mirror early American politics. In early American politics one can witness the great debates of Alexander Hamilton, the federalist, versus the republican, Thomas Jefferson. At this point, Argentina had a central government in Buenos Aires, but the outside power was based in provincial landowners. Under Spanish rule the Argentine provinces had lived under one government and this was a fact attested to by liberal unifier, Juan B. Alberdi in this statement regarding the creation of a single state “[the provinces] lived together in a single political body for more than two centuries. Union under one government is as old as their very existence. The innovation of only yesterday is their separation or division.” This reference to European rule is the very essence of the Argentina against which Hernández fought. The powerful confederation of provinces ruled by “caudillos” or provincial dictators proved threatening and inhibiting to the liberal ideas of a national government.

Martín Fierro begins with the gaucho romanticizing the tough, but free life out in Argentina’s open lands. In the fourteenth stanza he states:

Soy gaucho, y entiendaló  
como mi lengua lo esplica:  
para mi la tierra es chica  
y pudiera ser mayor;  
ni la vibora me pica  
ni quema mi frente el sol. (lines 79-84)

Martín Fierro is a poem depicting a particular gaucho, but he also depicts the transformation of the gaucho during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The free gaucho begins to look more like the negative aspects of the American cowboy. Peter Winn in “From Martin Fierro to Peronismo” states “a free gaucho at mid-century converted into a rural peon or rebel outlaw during the succeeding decades...”(89).

As was common during the period of Jose Hernández's writing of Martín Fierro the protagonist is conscripted for military service by the national government to protect the frontier from Amerindians. This is the first allusion in the poem to the indigenous populations. Fierro never actually sees any action against these Amerindians and feels that instead the government is using him for manual labor. The irony in Fierro's subservience to this new national government is that it was the Argentine gaucho fighting along General Amerindians San Martín that helped bring about Argentina's liberation from Spanish rule. Martín Fierro eventually deserts his post to return to his idyllic life and finds his family, home, and livelihood has all disappeared. Subsequently, Martín Fierro starts a knife fight with a black man by verbally assaulting his black female companion. Fierro, ultimately, kills his black opponent in this knife battle. After this battle, Martín Fierro becomes an outlaw and immediately becomes an outlaw pursued by the police militia. It is in this battle that he makes his only friend, Sergeant Cruz, with whom he goes to live with the Amerindians at the end of the first half of the poem, El Gaucho Martín Fierro. There is poignant reference to criollismo, the concept of being a native creole to America, prior to this final battle where a man providing refreshment addresses Fierro: "'¡Ah gaucho,' me respondió, '¿de qué pago será criollo? (226. 1-2).'" The question asked in a dialect corresponding to the countryside fashion cements Martín Fierro as a criollo and as the antithesis to the more European urban landscapes.

#### The Victims: Criollos, Blacks, and Amerindians

Martin Fierro's racism in his dealing with the black and Amerindian populations of Argentina throughout the epic poem becomes a secondary theme in the course of this essay. The preemptive explanation to this argument is to show that these three

populations who do represent the central government's vision of Argentina. Throughout the history of Argentina, the Indian populations had been in direct, violent conflict with the colonists, but on the frontier of Argentina many Amerindians did as they wished with impunity and co-existed with the gauchos. This becomes apparent in the La Vuelta de Martín Fierro, the second half of the epic poem and his much more personal experiences with the Amerindians. If Martín Fierro mistreats the Amerindians and blacks it is apparent that it was all caused by his initial conscription in the military. Therefore, the problems of the Amerindians and blacks within Martín Fierro are all the by-products of the ever-present, but never actually material central government. Martin Fierro is the literary documentation of the various victims of a modernist Argentina, the criollo, the Amerindian, and the black from the Argentine "civilization" envisioned by Buenos Aires political figures.

As previously stated, Hernández's lifetime was of great importance to Argentine history due to the political tensions between Buenos Aires and all the other provinces. In the 1850's the stronger "caudillos" and provincial governors were more powerful than the government of Buenos Aires. These stronger regional governments were able to create a Confederación de Argentina, or Argentine Conferderation. In his article 'State-Building and Political Systems in Nineteenth-Century Argentina and Uruguay,' David Rock gives a clear description of the back and forth between the provinces and Buenos Aires:

The agreement between the confederation and the government of Buenos Aires of late 1859 collapsed when the latter began to support the efforts of pro-Buenos Aires liberals in other provinces to seize power from the incumbent federalists. In

mid-1861 the province of Buenos Aires suspended the subsidy to the confederation and the two sides prepared for a second bout of civil war (179). Rock outlines that prior to this event, General Urquiza had invaded Buenos Aires with the support of other provincial autonomies. Upon defeating Buenos Aires, Urquiza solely demanded that they join his confederation and provide his governments with subsidies. However, after the quoted event took place General Urquiza fought one small battle and came to the conclusion that the confederation was eventually going to lose out and allowed Buenos Aires to assume control, which eventually led to the Republic of Argentina (181).

Amerindians Hernández fought bitterly against a centralized Argentine government and it was in his exile in Brazil that he wrote “Martin Fierro.” Hernández was a criollo attested to by accounts of his Spanish, French, and Irish descent. Argentina was incredibly wealthy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vastly richer than Spain, and close to matching the wealth of the United States. (Rock 167) Hernández believed that the nation should remain with its current system and simply become a federation based on its pastoralist, or farming economy. However, it is important to understand the opposite view, which ultimately predominant in Argentina. The opposing view of the time was to become like northern Europe, in terms of seeking immigration, modernizing, and centralizing its government. To Hernández, this centralization signified the end of a barbaric type of culture. This link between culture and government is exemplified in Alberdi’s statement “A civilized people cannot live without government because a national government in itself is the primary element of civilization.” This juxtaposition of culture or civilization and government not only denotes the attitude that cosmopolitan Buenos Aires had for its

regional counterparts, but it also signifies that the freedom of the gaucho lifestyle and culture would be oppressed by the creation of a state.

### Cowboy vs. Culture

Domingo Sarmiento and Amerindians Hernández can be considered as two of the fathers of Argentine literature even though they were ideologically opposed. The novel Facundo: Civilización y barbarie by Sarmiento represents the ultimate clash of urban Buenos Aires against the barbarity of the Argentine interior. Martín Fierro, on the other hand, glorifies the gauchesque nature of rural Argentina. Both Juan Facundo Quiroga and Martín Fierro, the principal characters of the prolific authors, are products and inhabitants of the Argentine wilderness, but present very different perspectives on whether it is a functional or dysfunctional political and social state. It is important to understand the world in which Martín Fierro lives from his viewpoint, in order to effectively contrast it with the same world criticized in Sarmiento's Facundo. In the beginning, an idyllic description of Martín Fierro's simple, poor life on the pampas is presented. This is the best presentation of the pampan, or Argentine grasslands, gaucho happiness that marks the basis for which Martín Fierro strives for in the rest of the poem. This life is characterized in stanzas fifteen and sixteen where Hernández expresses Martín's love of his status:

Nací como nace el peje  
En el fondo de la mar;  
Naidas me puede quitar  
Aquéllo que Dios me dio:  
Lo que al mundo truje yo  
Mi Gloria es vivir tan libre  
Como el pájaro del cielo;  
No hago nido en este suelo  
Ande hay tanto que sufrir,  
Y naidas me ha de seguir

Cuando yo remuento el vuelo. (Hernández, 96-108)

The lines in this section stress the aspects of gaucho culture that Hernández felt were a part of Argentine culture. Martín Fierro describes how he was born into this world like a fish is born deep in the sea and that no one can remove him from his surroundings. The references to his existence as a gaucho and nature continue in the following stanza where he uses the common simile of living free as a bird. These references to nature are not simply aesthetic in nature, but rather underlie a strong theme of Amerindians Hernández's argument. This argument is that man's natural place lies in man placing himself in nature. Man's natural state of being is that of living and coexisting with the wilderness into which he was originally born. It appears that this existence is actually more peaceful with the gauchos existing with the Amerindians and providing for themselves. Martín Fierro is depicted an individual who is independent and only must worry about the welfare of his family and has no real authority imposing any political might over his affairs. Noticeably absent is any mention of the caudillos, which can be translated from the Argentine version of the Larousse Dictionary as a military dictator. The existence of these caudillos in Argentina's interior was bitterly opposed by both Hernández and Sarmiento; however, they avoid mention in the epic poem while in the Sarmiento novel, the principal character, Facundo, is a caudillo. It should be mentioned that the Juan Facundo Quiroga is based upon Juan Manuel de Rosas a ruling Argentine caudillo. A caudillo disliked by both authors, but only alluded to by Sarmiento and possibly the catalyst for his novel.

Domingo Sarmiento is one of the major figures in Argentine history for his presidency, literature, intellect, and involvement in the creation of the modern state of

Argentina (Demarchi, 8-9). Sarmiento was born in San Juan, Argentina in 1811.

Sarmiento went into exile in neighboring Chile during the reign of caudillo of Juan Manuel de Rosas. It was during this period, specifically in 1845, that Sarmiento wrote Facundo. His most prominent novel, Facundo is subtitled as “Civilization and Barbarism.” This describes the basic conflict of the essay as Facundo rises and falls as a dictator. Facundo is portrayed as a person devoid of culture and replete with ignorance. It is this ignorance combined with ruthlessness that makes Facundo a name synonymous with civil discord. Sarmiento does not hide his sentiments of revulsion for the former Argentine leader. Sarmiento’s indictment begins in the very first three sentences of the introduction of the novel: “¡Sombra terrible de Facundo, voy a evocarte, para que, sacudiendo el ensangrentado polvo que cubre tus cenizas, te levantes a explicarnos la vida secreta y las convulsiones internas que desgarran las entrañas de un noble pueblo!”

Terrible shadow of Facundo, I’m going to evoke you, so that shaking the bloody dust that covers your ashes, you rise to explain to us the secret life and the internal convulsions that ripped apart the entrails of a noble people (my translation 45). The long sentence questions the now dead Facundo what harm he has committed to such a noble people.

Facundo was a proponent of Argentine federalism and he himself was born outside of the metropolitan Buenos Aires. Sarmiento gives his perspective of the land outside of Buenos Aires: “La villa nacional es el reverso indigno de esta medalla: niños sucios y cubiertos de harapos viven en una jauría de perros; hombres tendidos por el suelo, en la más completa inacción; el desaseo y la pobreza por todas partes; una mesita y petacas por todo amueblado; ranchos miserables por habitación, y un aspecto general de barbarie y de incuria los hacen notables.” The national village is the reverse indignity of this medal:

dirty children covered with rags live in a dog pen: men lying on the ground, in a state of complete inaction, desire and poverty everywhere, a few chairs and a little stool to serve for all furniture, miserable one room homes and a general quality of barbarity, and carelessness is notable (my translation Sarmiento 62). Hernández's adored isolation of the Argentine interior is seen in less favorable terms by Sarmiento. Sarmiento accuses "la villa nacional" of lacking basic decency and severe incivility with dirty children and lazy men living in poorly furnished, miserable homes. This is a stark contrast to the picture painted of the poor, yet fulfilling life of the gaucho in Martín Fierro. The natural state of man in the wilderness for Sarmiento tends to be more associated with man's lower nature because it does not separate man from animal. Man's lower nature emphasizes a tendency for violence, the violence associated with the caudillo regimes. Sarmiento immediately aggregates the gaucho culture with this dysfunctional rural society by citing the following quote by the English author Walter Scott, "Las vastas llanuras de Buenos Aires no están pobladas sino por cristianos salvajes, conocidos bajo el nombre de guachos (por decir gauchos), cuyo principal amueblado consiste en cráneos de caballos, cuyo alimento es carne y agua y cuyo pasatiempo favorito es reventar caballos en carreras forzadas ( 62-63)." This negative view of the gaucho expresses more than simply Sarmiento's displeasure with the gaucho because it is a quote from a northern European whose culture Sarmiento felt superior to that of his native country. His idolizing attitude towards his European counterparts would become clear during his presidency from 1868-1874. Although, economically he would oppose Britain, Sarmiento was a huge proponent of European immigration, preferably of English or other northern European descent (Demarchi 35). Sarmiento did not only feel that the civilization of Europe was of better

cultural composition than Argentina, but he also felt that the darker peoples of the Southern Continent were affecting its capabilities to rise beyond barbarism.

Sarmiento's descriptions of the blacks and indigenous peoples come before his disdain for the gauchesque life. Sarmiento first describes the current state of the blacks in Argentina, "La raza negra, casi extinta ya, excepto en Buenos Aires, ha dejado sus zambos y mulatos, habitantes de las ciudades, eslabón que liga al hombre civilizado con el palurdo; raza inclinada a la civilización, dotada de talento y de los más bellos instintos del progreso." "The black race, almost extinct now except in Buenos Aires has left its sambos and mulattos, inhabitants of the city, bereft of talent and that of the most beautiful instincts of progress" (My translation Sarmiento 68). In this sentence, Sarmiento states that the majority of blacks of Argentina live in Buenos and that the majority have begun to mix with the Indian and white populations. He continues by aggregating the three types of black: Indian/black, white/black, and all-black in the first sentence of the following paragraph where he states "Por lo demás, de la fusion de estas tres familias ha resultado un todo homogéneo, que se distingue por su amor a la ociosidad e incapacidad industrial, cuando la educación y las exigencias de una posición social no vienen a ponerle espuela y sacarla de su paso habitual." "For the rest, it is the fusion of these three families that has resulted in a all homogenous that distinguishes itself for its love of idleness and industrial incapability, when the education and the exigencies of a social position do not come to spur and take them out of their habitual path" (my translation Sarmiento 69). Sarmiento exhibits a common 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that blacks were naturally lazy and incapable of anything of above the manual labor they were originally enslaved to complete. In addition to the blacks and actually in combination with the

blacks Sarmiento speaks about the detriment of Argentine society due to Amerindian populations. Sarmiento proceeds to blame the existence of Africans in the Americas due to the indigence of the Amerindian populations. This is evident in the following sentence, “[Las] razas indigenas viven en la ociosidad, y se muestran las incapaces, aún por medio de la compulsión, para dedicarse a un trabajo duro y seguido.” “The indigenous races live in idleness, they portray their limitations, even by the means of compulsión to dedicate themselves to a hard and continued work” (my translation Sarmiento 62). These very strong views expressed by Sarmiento in Facundo regarding the minority populations of Argentina differ greatly from their depiction in Amerindians Hernández’s Martín Fierro.

#### Cowboys and Amerindians

As previously stated, Martín Fierro begins with Fierro being drafted to the Argentine interior to defend it from Amerindians. Fierro never fights any of the Amerindians and feels that he has been drafted to serve as a simple laborer for the government. It is important to mention that it is the national government that has given evidence of hostilities with the Amerindians, not Fierro. Fierro’s disgust with his military experience leads to his desertion and desire to return to his family. When Martín Fierro returns home, he finds that his farm, wife, and home are all gone. However, the present focus lies on his knife fight with the “negro” and leads to the death of the black man. This brings Martín Fierro in conflict with the soldiers/police that wish to punish him for his crime. This is another point that will be expounded upon in the following chapter. The result of all of this violence and trouble is the desire of Martín Fierro and his companion Santa Cruz, a former soldier, to go live a peaceful life with the Amerindians. This

presents a positive view of the life of the Amerindians, diametrically opposite of the views expressed by Domingo Sarmiento. Fierro asks forgiveness and states his intentions in the following verses:

Ya veo que somos los dos  
Astilla del mismo palo  
Yo paso por gaucho malo  
Y uste anda del mismo modo  
Y yo, pa' acabarlo todo,  
A los indios me refalo. (Hernández, XIII. 367)

Fierro confesses to his crimes that he had previously rationalized and acknowledges that he and Santa Cruz must leave the society that beckoned and then rejected them. In this manner Hernández once again ties the gaucho life on the outside with that of the Amerindians. These populations physically live on the outside of society and represent the undesirable aspects of non-metropolitan life. This outside life is deemed as “barbaridad” or barbarity by those followers of the European model of civility, which collectively opposed all aspects of the savage life led by the gauchos, Amerindians, and blacks.

### The Savage Collective

Sarmiento has already proven his penchant to assume that the indios, gauchos, and blacks are unfit for Argentine society. Sarmiento goes as far to link all of the barbarians of the world with that of the “gaucho malo,” or bad cowboy, referring specifically to Facundo, indio, and black. Additionally, he contrasts the colors of the flag of the Argentine Republic, rows of light blue and white stripes centered by a brilliant sun, with the dark flag of Juan Manuel de Rosas. On page 151 of Facundo, Sarmiento begins by comparing the Rosas’ flag with those of other barbaric nations.

Sólo hay una europea culta en que el colorado predomine, no obstante el origen bárbaro de sus pabellones. Pero hay otras coloradas: leo: Argel, pabellón colorado, con calavera y huesos; Túnez, pabellón colorado; Mogol, idem; Turquía, pabellón colorado, con cruciente; Marruecos, Japón, colorado, con la cuchilla exterminadora; Siam, Surat, etc., lo mismo. “There is only one European groupe where red is predominant, there is no dight to the barbarity of its national colors. There are other colored [flags] I read, Algeria, red national colors with skull and crossbones, Tunisia, red flags, Mongolia, red flag, Turkey, red national colors with a crescent, Morocco, red national colors, Japan, red national colors with sword, Siam, and Surat are the same.” (my translation)

This section is helpful as it gives further evidence of Sarmiento’s less than kind views on blacks and Amerindians by including them in his colorado and savagery argument. It also once again groups the three groups together in their inhumanity. The entire next page is an indictment of the not-so-coincidental usage of a colored flag by all of the previously mentioned nations and groups. The colored flag for Sarmiento is simply an explicit representation of the blood resulting from the violence, savagery, and brutality emerging from these groups. The terms that Sarmiento specifically uses to describe the color of the Argentine Federation are as follows: terror, barbarity, and everyday bloodshed (152). A major key to Sarmiento’s arguments against the lifestyle exemplified by Martín Fierro is the violence that it espouses. This underlies a fundamental difference in the manner in which violence is portrayed in Martín Fierro and Facundo.

## Violence by Facundo and Fierro

The violence of Martín Fierro is a driving element and probably a factor in its immediate popularity. The threat of violence in Martín Fierro is first presented in his being drafted to the frontier to protect it from the indios. This underlies a basic truth that the violence of the epic poem where it is the authorities that spawn the violence that follows Martín Fierro. It is the authoritative demands of the government that drive Martín Fierro to leave his post on the frontier. Martín Fierro directly addresses the domineering, arrogant attitudes of the cosmopolitan citizens in stanzas 43 and 44 and they represent a direct rebuke to Sarmiento.

Estaba el gaucho en su pago  
Con toda seguridad  
Pero áura... ¡Barbaridá!  
La cosa anda tan fruncida  
Que gasta el pobre la vida  
En juir de la autoridá

In this sextet, Fierro rails against the aura of barbarity that haughtily follows the gaucho. He continues by expressing the poor treatment of the gaucho at the hands of authoritative members of society in this case using the example of the mayor in the following verses,

Pues si usted pisa en su rancho  
Y si el alcalde lo sabe  
Lo caza lo mesmo que ave.  
So if you step on his ranch  
and the sheriff learns of it  
he will shoot the same as a bird (my translation)

These verses explain the gaucho's undermined status in Argentine society in which he is as expendable as a bird. The gaucho, Martín Fierro, is placing the blame and the emphasis on the role of the government in the violence of the Argentine interior. The next stanza, however, makes it clear that Hernández is aware of the dangerous, violent stereotype placed upon the gaucho:

Y al punto dése por muerto  
Si el alcade lo bolea,

Pues áhi no más se le apea  
Con una felpa de palos.  
Y después dicen que es malo  
El gaucho, si los pelea. (271-276)

Hernández uses his character to assert that the violence of the gaucho is always in defense against the people in opposition to his way of life and that it is construed to be the malevolence of the gaucho. Domingo Sarmiento makes his view that the gaucho is inherently violent and not simply uncultured or unrefined. The whole section regarding the “savage’s” obsession with dark colored cloth and the relationship to a genetic susceptibility to violent behavior is only one example of Sarmiento’s perspective. In fact, Sarmiento describes the development of the caudillo Argentina in a manner similar to that of animals hunting, “Así es como en la vida argentina empieza a establecerse por estas peculiaridades el predominio de la fuerza brutal, la preponderancia del más fuerte, la autoridad sin límites y sin responsabilidad de los que mandan,...[Si] los bárbaros la asaltan, forma un círculo, atando unas carretas con otras, y casi siempre resisten victoriosamente a las codicias de los salvajes, ávidos de sangre y de pillaje (Facundo 61).” This quotation describes how societies are created in the absence of legitimate authority and the violence that a lawless society precipitates. This view of the lawless society is directly linked with that of the gaucho on page 187 of Facundo where Sarmiento uses the verb “gauchear” to describe the actions of the caudillos in the open plains of the frontier. Later in the same page, Sarmiento calls a younger, pre-caudillo Quiroga as simply a “gaucho malo.” Almost preemptively, Sarmiento includes in his accounts about Quiroga’s violence stories about the dictator’s violence against his own men. In this manner, Sarmiento presents the case that it is not simply the clash of political ideologies that causes the violence, but rather that the autocratic, decentralized, political

model is inherently prone to brutality and injustice. The injustice of the Quirogan system is noted when Sarmiento tells the story of a man caught stealing by Quiroga who after discovering where the stolen goods are located briefly and dryly calls for “cuatro tiradores,” four shooters to presumably execute the thief by firing squad. This event only contributes to the image of terror that Quiroga has created and cemented in one of his last battles in which a similar event occurs depicted by Quiroga in chapter 12 page 203, “Facundo llama al su jefe victorioso: “Facundo calls to his victorious commander”

‘¿Por qué se ha vuelto usted?’ “Why have you returned?”

‘Porque he arrollado al enemigo hasta la ceja de monte.’ “Because I have pushed the enemy back past the mountain”

‘¿Por qué no se penetró en el monte acuchillado?’ “Why didn’t you penetrate the mountain stronghold?”

‘Porque había fuerzas superiores.’ “Because they had superior forces”

‘¡A ver cuatro tiradores!’ “Ok, four shooters” (my translation)

This propensity to kill and ability to strike fear into his own men is the main quality of Quiroga that Sarmiento is using to build his case against the gaucho. The propensity to kill is a quality that is also evident in Martín Fierro’s knife duels. Neither José Hernández nor Domingo Sarmiento denies the violence of the gaucho, but it is the role of this violence in Argentine culture that determines whether or not the gaucho should be canonized or ostracized.

## CHAPTER II

### “AQUÍ ME PONGO A CANTAR”

The previous chapter focused on the original views presented by Facundo of the gaucho, indio, and black and their place in the new Argentine republic by one of its founders, Domingo Sarmiento, and the resulting opposing view put forth by Jose Hernández in Martín Fierro. The first perspective promoted by Sarmiento of the people of Argentine interior is detailed in his interview of don Manuel Ignacio Castro Barros, canon of the Cathedral of Córdoba. In this interview, Sarmiento asks about the conditions of the people living in La Rioja, a province under the control of Juan Facundo Quiroga in the northwest of the nation above Córdoba. The striking aspects of this interview are those questions that Sarmiento poses regarding the existence of educated citizens or even doctors. These questions found on pages 99 and 100 of Facundo follow the format of Sarmiento asking a question and Barros responding with a simple “none” in regard to people with the stated capability. These are a few lines transcribed from the original text:

¿Cuántos abogados tienen estudio abierto?

----- Ninguno.

¿Cuántos médicos asisten los enfermos?

----- Ninguno...

¿Cuántas escuelas hay, y cuántos niños asisten?

----- Ninguna.

The inexistence of lawyers, doctors, or schools in the town of La Rioja is case in point of the dysfunctional nature of the Argentine interior. However, the ignorant and socially negligent aspects of the Argentine frontier culture are somewhat addressed by Hernández, but more importantly he paints an idyllic portrait of the harsh, yet happy gaucho life. The first lines of the poem make clear one of the distinctions between gaucho and porteño life: language. The rustic language of the gaucho, immortalized by Martín Fierro, is very distinctive and represents the “pueblo del campo” of Argentina. The language of Martín Fierro is representative of rural populations and is considered by Sarmiento to be uneducated and an example of the ignorance of the savages and gauchos. He alludes to this when he refers to the pronunciation of the “gaucho” by the gauchos themselves as “guacho.” Hernández uses the voice of Martín Fierro to narrate the story and his punctuation and pronunciation denotes either an unwillingness to use proper grammar or an inability to do so. In verse 264, Fierro says “Pues, si usted pisa en su rancho.” The letter d that created the formal “usted” is missing and marks his tendency to not enunciate the letter on certain words. The interview comes to mind of Sarmiento and Barros when confronted with these “errors” in grammar, specifically his question regarding the province’s literacy level. Fierro’s simple existence and dialect may underlie a certain degree of illiteracy, but Sarmiento’s charge of irreligiousness is repelled. Fierro’s faith in God is clearly presented in the first verse of the second stanza, “Pido a los santos del cielo / que ayuden mi pensamiento/Les pido,…” The third stanza continues to affirm this belief by actually speaking of possible divine intervention:

Vengan santos milagrosos,  
Vengan todos en mi ayuda,

Que la lengua se me añuda  
Y se me turba la vista.  
Pido a mi Dios que me asista  
En una ocasion tan ruda. (1)

The spiritual side of Martín Fierro is present throughout the poem. The beginning of the poem actually marks the end of his early adventures due to his first remark stating his desire to tell his story “Aquí me pongo a cantar.” Even after Martín Fierro has killed many people and he is an outlaw he resigns himself to his wickedness and confesses his guilt that he had originally rationalized. In response to his desire to retire from a life of crime he wishes to further distance himself from society by leaving with his sole companion, Santa Cruz, to live with the Amerindians.

#### El Gaucho Solo

The most striking feature of Martín Fierro is its very strong focus on the principal character. Hernández never uses any other voices other than first-person and the same character from beginning to end narrates the poem. This focus on the individual not only helps us to focus on the troubles of Martín Fierro, but also serves to illustrate a point regarding the nature of the gaucho. The gaucho is a solitary being and his aloneness is one quality that distinguishes him from civilization. This signifies that a main attribute of gaucho culture is the gaucho’s social alienation and, hence, lack of culture. Martín Fierro was happy living his impoverished life estranged from society with his wife, horse, and farm. It is only once society is thrust upon Martín Fierro that he becomes malevolent. After Fierro, a return to his land to find that all he once had is gone and in his forced interaction with society that he kills the man in the honor-duel. A result of this individualism is the sense of freedom that it advocates. The fourth verse of the very first stanza gives the first metaphor for the gaucho life “como la ave solitaria / con el cantar se

consuela (4-5).” The freedom of animals is a often used expression of the attitude towards life of Fierro as stated in Chapter I, pages 10 and 11 referring to being born like the fish and free like the bird. Earlier in the poem, Martín Fierro uses another animal metaphor; however, this metaphor expresses more the freedom of Fierro to choose his own fate in relation to simply the freedom to be able to do what one wants. In the 11<sup>th</sup> stanza, Fierro asserts his independence and also challenges stating:

Yo soy toro en mi rodeo  
y torazo en rodeo ajeno...  
y, si me quieren probar,  
Salgan otros a cantar  
y veremos quien es menos.

Fierro takes a man against the world approach in this stanza asserting that he is the bull, the most important figure in the rodeo, and that only he can prove his worth further demonstrated by his challenge to any other possible singers who feel themselves better. Ironically, it is this man-against-the-world mentality that impresses Santa Cruz enough that he deserts in mid-battle and becomes Fierro’s only companion. However, as the two friends attempt to separate themselves from civilization Cruz dies and his death leads to Fierro’s eventual *payada* battle with the younger brother of the black he originally killed. It is the *payada* that represents a unifying factor between the black and gaucho culture.

### The Payada

The *payada* was once a characteristic of Argentine and Uruguayan culture as renowned as the drinking of mate or the tango. In fact, the place in which a tango and a *payada* occur are both referred to as the “milonga.” The *payada* is a verbal duel between two “payadores” or singers who ask questions to attempt to outwit the other while maintaining the rhythm of the accompanying guitarist. In Facundo: Civilizacion y

Barbarie Domingo Sarmiento writes, “ 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 (145).” This paper earlier presented Sarmiento’s dislike for the concept of the campo and the gaucho, but his description of the payador almost seems to hint at a certain fondness for the lyrical duelist. The payada is also found in the final pages of the primary text of this paper, *Martín Fierro*. The eight syllable lines utilized by Hernández in *Martín Fierro* are actually written in the octosyllable style of the original *payada*. The *gaucho* cantor, *Martín Fierro*, embroils himself in a lyrical duel with a black at the very end of the epic poem. The climactic placement of the *payada* in the text of *Martín Fierro* is significant considering its participants and importance in gaucho culture.

The *payada* in *Martín Fierro* takes place after a series of encounters with characters that appear earlier in the text and between *Martín Fierro* and the lone black in the crowd of whites. Early on in the poem, as mentioned in Chapter 1, *Martín Fierro* provokes a black man into a knife duel by insulting his black female companion. In a reversal of this occurrence it appears that the black of the *payada* challenges Fierro. This challenge is important because it seems to be another assault on Fierro’s past. In the past, Cruz joined Fierro, he knew his sons, and he challenged the negro, but the challenge of the black man is made clear by Hernández. Also, for the first time the concept of identity and the fact that the black is a minority amongst the whites of the Argentine social landscape.

Llevó también á un moreno,  
Presumido de cantor  
Y que se tenía por bueno.  
Y como quien no hace nada,

O se descuida de intento,  
Pues siempre es muy conocido  
Todo aquel que busca pleito-  
Se sentó con toda calma  
Echó mano al estrumento  
Y ya le pegó un rajido-  
Era fantástico el negro,  
Y para no dejar dudas  
Medio se compuso el pecho.  
Todo el mundo conoció  
La intencion de aquel moreno-  
Era claro el desafio  
Dirigido á Martín Fierro,  
Hecho con toda arrogancia,  
De un modo muy altanero.

The preceding stanzas appear to place the black in Argentine society as much as it states the manner in which Fierro was challenged to the *payada*. The *payada* that takes place upon Fierro's acceptance of the challenge is the first and last empowerment of the black within the poem by actually allowing the black of the *payada* to address his being black in a society of whites. This final wordplay, final interaction between two characters is an explicit black response to the prejudice views of Argentina which will be further developed in the next few pages. However, the following paragraphs will put in perspective the *payada* of Martín Fierro to the *payada* in Argentine culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

To know the *payada* one must first know the gaucho. The gaucho, the "cowboy" of the Argentine plains is a product of many cultures. The primary text of this essay, El Gaucho Martín Fierro reflects all of the characteristics of the gaucho including horsemanship, love of independence/freedom, religious nature, and familiarity with violence. These themes addressed so often in Martín Fierro are actually presented in the manner that George W. Umphrey argues is a result of Andalusian heritage. Speaking of

the gauchos, Umphrey states “ From the Andalusians they inherited their feeling...and more particularly, the characteristic that that brings us to the main purpose of this study, their fondness for poetry and music.” It is in the opening sentence of the following paragraph in which Umphrey states “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.” These lines make it clear that the payada was a common past time of the gaucho. Many of the poems and poets mentioned by Umphrey in his look at the “The Gaucho Poetry of Argentina” refers to events and people from Buenos Aires inferring that the art of the payada was not relegated to simply the provincial areas. It is in Buenos Aires that Gabino Ezeiza, a dominant black payador, was born and lived.

The payada, a remnant of Andalusian culture, was a visible force in Argentine culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but an increasingly invisible Argentine population especially practiced it: blacks. George Reid Andrews comments in his essay "Race versus Class Association: Afro-Argentines 1850-1900 that the economic growth of Argentina should have led to a population growth of all ethnic groups. The following paragraph from page 21 suggests otherwise. " During this period the black population of the capital formed an ever smaller fragment of the city's population. In 1838, the 15000 Afro-Argentines accounted for almost a third of the city's 63,000 inhabitants. By 1887 the next year in which a municipal census recorded information on race, the community had declined to 8,000 a mere 2 per cent of the rapidly growing city of 433,000." Andrews continues to say that this number even takes into account all variations of black including mulattoes ,

negroes, and pardos. (people of color) The numbers of blacks in Argentina in this period is not the focus of this chapter, but the information that can be gleaned from this section must be put into a context when looking at the popularity of the payada in this period. Gabino Ezeiza was born in 1858 in Buenos Aires and died there in 1916 and was maybe the most famous payador of his era (Cottrol 149).

The unnamed black payador who is the final challenger of Martín Fierro makes some interesting points regarding his place within an increasingly white society which is discerned from the census data provided above. Before tackling the issues touched upon by Martín Fierro and the black it may be prudent to observe some of the statements made by Fierro in his first interaction with a black in the dancehall.

A los blancos hizo Dios  
A los mulatos San Pedro  
A los negros hizo el Diablo  
Para tizon del infierno (1167-1171)  
“God made the whites  
Saint Peter made the mulattoes  
The devil made the blacks  
To feed hell fire

This translation by John F. Matheus portrays Martín Fierro’s racist attitude towards black people and later in this same canto Fierro kills the negro and is never brought to justice for his crime. Matheus points out in his analysis that later in the story upon recounting this occurrence of murder Fierro accuses the black of striking first and inciting a fight (271). This may be a foreshadowing of his future duel with the challenging black who is

eventually found to be a brother of the slain black. The challenge of the black begins with a hint of false modesty.

Yo no soy, señores míos,  
Sinó un pobre guitarrero  
Pero doy gracias al cielo  
Porque puedo, en la ocasión,  
Toparme con un cantor  
Que experimente con este negro  
I am, gentleman, only  
A very poor player of the guitar  
Because I am able so opportunely  
To run across a singer  
Who may try out this Negro

This marks the beginning of the black consciousness in *Martín Fierro*, a consciousness that will be further developed in the third chapter. The consciousness of the black in the era of the gaucho is important; however, the consciousness of Amerindians Hernández may serve to understand Argentina in the year of 1872.

Amerindians Hernández gave an account of why he wrote *Martín Fierro* in a period in which the payador, the gaucho was losing prominence in Argentine society. In the following explanation for the writing of *Martín Fierro* he expresses how he tried to capture the gaucho, but also how he wanted to get beyond the "erroneous" ideas held by his audience.

Me he esforzado, sin presumir haber conseguirlo, en presentar un tipo de que personificara el carácter de nuestros gauchos, concentrando el modo de ser, de sentir, de pensar...en relatar, en fin, lo mas fielmente que me fuera posible, con todas sus especialidades propias, eso tipo original de nuestras Pampas, tan poco conocido por lo mismo porque es difícil estudiarlo, tan erróneamente juzgado muchas veces, y que al paso que avanzan las conquistas de la civilización, va perdiéndose casi por completo.

It is this last statement that really begins to address the case of the gaucho in Argentina in the latter half of the 19th century. Hernández states “and at the step that advances the conquests of civilization he [the gaucho] goes along almost losing himself completely. (my translation) The final duel, the payada with the black happens shortly prior to Fierro’s disappearance into the Amerindian wild. The departure of Martín Fierro after his final payada reflects the disappearance of the art.

It seems interesting that the black of the final duel is never named and he leaves the story much more quietly than his noticeable, almost haughty entrance in which he challenges the gaucho. One could argue that this mirrors the data from the census referenced in Andrews’ article that showed the change from an almost 25% black population in 1838 to a representation of 2% in 1887. This represents not simply a drop in percentage of blacks within Buenos Aires, but also a significant drop in the absolute number of blacks in Buenos Aires from an approximate number of 15,000 to a mere 8,000. The question is regarding what happened to the black population of Buenos Aires to have such a sharp decrease in absolute numbers. There have been many explanations regarding the dwindling of this community such as decline in slave trade, intermarriage, low birth rates, and death in war, which was a means of manumission. A very immediate cause for the change in Census data from 1838 to 1872 may be linked to the outbreak of yellow fever of 1871 that took a particular heavy toll on the black population (Andrews 10). Another cause for the change in numbers may deal with the reclassification of race in the new census which could lead to the classification of white for some who previously would have been classified as black. A point brought up in Chapter 1 of this essay was that of the increased competition between European immigrants and blacks. It may have

been more pertinent to state that massive European immigration was taking place while the slave trade was dying down and this was coinciding with the application of racist pseudo-scientific theories regarding the hierarchy of man (Healy 114). The blacks of Argentina were unfortunate in that they seemed to not only be the victim of a culmination of events and conditions leading to their decline, but, also found themselves in a society that was attempting to project a new image that was European in genetic makeup. It is this “new” Argentina in which neither the black nor the gaucho fit in.

The new Argentina was that of civilization in contrast to the “barbarity” of the caudillo system under dictators such as Juan Manuel de Rosas and Juan Facundo Quiroga, the actual subject of the secondary text in this essay, *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie*. The ideological differences between the federalists dictators Rosas and Quiroga and centralists such as Alberdí and Sarmiento have been outlined in Chapter 1. When looking at the disappearance of the gaucho it is important to look at the date when the federalist system which espoused the principles of autonomous provinces and independent men was ended. Juan Manuel de Rosas was removed from power by Justo Jose de Urquiza in 1852 and marked the beginning of the shift towards central government that would later be led by Domingo Sarmiento. The rural gauchos, like the blacks, seemed to support the despotic regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas more than the rest of the Argentine population (possibly due to his egalitarian practices) and it is this support that later came to further ostracize the gaucho and the black from the Argentina being projected by the intellectual community (Healy 112). George Umphrey argues that it was also immigration of Europeans and the economic growth of the nation in both industry and agriculture that led to the marginalization of gauchos in Argentine society.

Umphrey states "At first he stood 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 Argentina." Ultimately, it may be Fierro that gives some validity to this belief considering his final decision to leave "civilization" by crossing over the frontier to live among the "barbaridad" of the Amerindians. Hernández's El Gaucho Martín Fierro could be considered an ode to the gaucho that also documents and delineates the incompatibility of the gaucho and the government. El Gaucho Martín Fierro does not tell the story of a gaucho's transformation from obedient citizen to malevolent adventurer as much as it reminds the audience of what killed the gaucho and his place in Argentine history. It is Hernández's counterpoint regarding a counterculture to the Argentine society being created by the then current president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. It is the Argentina that contained both Amerindians Hernández and Domingo Sarmiento that shapes the subject of identity to be discussed in Chapter 3, but this "new" Argentina needs to be touched upon once again before delving into the last chapter.

Martín Fierro was published in 1872, the fourth year of Sarmiento's presidency, and it seems to allude to the centralist government that Sarmiento was so instrumental in creating. The beginning of the epic poem begins discussing how Fierro is conscripted to go fight the Amerindians on the frontier, but feels that he is simply being used for manual

labor as he never sees battle with the Amerindians. The novel, Facundo, written by Sarmiento while in his political exile very clearly outlines that he desires an Argentina based upon education, European immigration, and strong culture. Sarmiento believed there was a battle going on between the different classes of society. The title of chapter nine of Facundo was "Guerra Social" or "Social War" and he quotes the French historian and philosopher Jean Louis Lerminier preceding the chapter who states:

*Il y a un quatrième élément qui arrive: ce sont les barbares, ce sont les barbares, ce sont des hordes nouvelles, qui viennent se meter dans la société antique avec une complete fraîcheur de moeurs, d'âme et d'esprit, qui n'ont rien fait, qui sont prêts à tout recevoir avec toute l'aptitude de l'ignorance la plus docile et la plus naïve.*

It is a fourth element that arrives: the barbarians, the barbarians, the new hordes, that come to violently launch forth an antiquated society with a complete refreshment of customs, of soul and spirit, that have not done anything, that are all ready to receive everything with the total aptitude and ignorance of the most docile and naïveté (my translation). This is a direct indictment of the gaucho characterized by George Umphrey or the explanation Hernández gives of the most famous gaucho, Martín Fierro. The centralist and federalist argument is rivaled by the tension between modernist and traditional forces. This duality of centralists and federalists, modernists and traditionalists, gaucho and intellectual is the Argentina of both Hernández and Sarmiento and this crossroads will create the identity of modern Argentina that will be expounded upon in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### IDENTITY IN LATIN AMERICA

The major argument of this thesis is based upon the presumed inferiority of the Amerindian and black races in Latin American or more specifically Argentine culture. This very concept acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of colonial Argentina in great contrast to the projected image of modern Argentina. In the introduction of Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference, Amaryll Chanady discusses the opposing sides of the debate regarding the homogeneity or heterogeneity of Latin culture. He quotes Julio Ortega in Crítica de la identidad who says “ la nuestra es una identidad conflictiva y jerarquizada (ours is a conflicted and hierarchized identity, Chanady’s translation, xii).” Chanady opens the book talking about the original concept of Latin American identity that is important when attempting to understand the position of the marginalized populations, Amerindians and blacks within a greater Latin America. Josaphat Kubayanda, another author discussed by Chanady, goes more in-depth regarding the marginalization of “Black Latin America” in “Minority Discourse and the African Collective: Some Examples from Latin America and the Caribbean Literature.” In this essay Kubayanda gives an argument against the aforementioned Argentine intention to create a homogeneous European-based society. Kubayanda states:

Desire and the quest for a genuinely plural reality are at the heart of minority discourse. The African presence in the New World, according to Césaire, not only undermines

mainstream monolithism but makes possible, theoretically at least, a unique multifacetedness which admits to collective or multiple existence in America (120).

This “multiple existence” is the Argentina that Domingo Sarmiento did not want to see.

Some of the points outlined by Kubayanda will be further developed later in the chapter.

Before focusing on the marginalization and suppression of black and Amerindian

identities it would be beneficial to look at how Latin America was created. The

relationships created between the colonizers, the colonized, and all those in between

makes for an interesting sociological enigma related to how each group views the other

and how that view is internalized within the new nation created in the New World.

#### The Us, the Them, the We

There are fundamental challenges in this essay and that is to relate the trends and

social movements of Latin America to those of Argentina and to then link the efforts of

the colonizer with those of liberal Argentina in the nineteenth century. The following

paragraphs attempt to organize the community created by the continuous colonization

and emigration of Europeans to the land of silver. The New World or Americas both

North and South were colonized primarily by the Portuguese, Spanish, and English who

all had distinct concepts of colonization and the relationships to be created amongst the

colonizer, native populations, and slaves brought from western Africa. A little history

may be in order to ensure the comprehension of the image the Spanish had of the people

they encountered. Chanady references an essay in which Ernest Renan talks about the

“Germanic invaders’ adoption of the culture of the colonized” and contrasts this idea with

that of the Europeans oppression of native culture (Renan xviii). In this reference he

remarks that it was the Germanic “barbarian” that was uncivilized and happened to

colonize the “civilized” culture. The very opposite happened to the Spanish and,

ultimately, this would in turn be passed on to the Amerindians of the Americas. The Muslim Moors of Northern Africa invaded a largely uncivilized Iberian Peninsula reigned over by various gothic tribes. During the course of the 700 years of Muslim rule over the Iberian Peninsula, there were various aspects of Arab culture that the gothic tribes appropriated and coincidentally enough it is the year 1492 in which the Moors were expelled from Spain that Columbus set sail for India and arrived in the Americas. The following is Chanady's description of the now "civilized" Spanish arrived upon the ancient cultures of the Americas:

[...] whereas the Spanish discoverers came upon indigenous inhabitants in the New World who seemed to live in a state of almost absolute primitivism, lacking (according to Columbus, for example) religion and social institutions. Throughout the five hundred years since the "discovery," the Amerindian has remained the "Other" for a large number of Latin Americans, in spite of widespread miscegenation and the recurring efforts to "appropriate" the indigenous Other in the construction of a cultural identity contrasting with that of the European metropolis or North America. In a situation where the cultural values of the colonizer were clearly dominant and considered superior .... (Chanady xxvi)

It is this concept of the European culture in Latin culture that makes it so contradictory in that it is the Europeans who faced numerous revolutions from the peoples of the Americas, but simultaneously it is the European culture that is valued above that of the native lands. This especially comes to the forefront when looking at Argentina a nation that under Sarmiento really strives to create a European identity in South America. If one takes a modern view of Latin America and the mixed heritage that is visible in the features of the populace it becomes interesting to witness the obvious remnants and partiality to European culture. This quotation from Chanady points out that throughout the centuries the Amerindian has remained the Other or the group conceived of as foreign, regardless of the fact that they are the indigenous population can be genetically

linked to most Latin American in varying degrees. Argentina is a nation in which it would be difficult at times to provide evidence of an Amerindian or black population due to the light complexions of many porteños (people from Buenos Aires) and the urbanites of the various cities. A country in which not only the culture of the colonizer has remained its status of superiority, but it also remains in the physical features of its citizens. As mentioned in the first chapter, the Other (Amerindian communities) of Argentina has been confined to the extremes of the country not entirely unlike the fate of North America's Amerindians residing in reservations and coldest parts of Canada out of the paradigmatic realm of the vast majority of the population. This was the goal of Sarmiento who championed the idea of Europeanizing Argentina with immigration and developmental policies. Sarmiento is a great figure in understanding Argentina not only because he was president and able to implement his ideas, but also because his literary works reflect the textual basis for minority roles in the greater population by portraying accurately the roles of black Argentines and his perception of their contribution to Argentine society. Martín Fierro is the primary text for this thesis and maybe the most famous piece of Argentine literature, but Hernández was not the only author of Latin America to confront the issues of black and white relations. The literature of Latin America to many cannot be looked at holistically considering the diversity within Latin culture and the distinct views the colonizers had about mixed race relationships.

#### Literature and Identity

The literature of a nation and its internalized image are inextricably linked. An influential author or novel can represent a country or shape the manner in which the citizens view their country. This is important as this thesis discusses the role of literature

in shaping public perception of the minority groups considering that being a minority ensures that they have the least opportunity to repudiate the claims made about them or project a separate image. Zilá Bernd in Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference discusses this link between literature and identity in an essay entitled “The Construction and Deconstruction of Identity in Brazilian Literature.” The article begins by quoting Paul Ricoeur’s Temps et Récits (in which he states “Identity cannot have a different form from that of the narrative, because to define oneself is, in the last analysis, to narrate (Chanady’s translation 317). Bernd follows this by stating:

Although the question of identity is always intimately associated with the act of narrating as Ricoeur claims, it becomes central to emergent and peripheral literatures (as in the Americas), whose main preoccupation frequently is to provide an explicit or implicit definition of its communities in its narrative. (86)

This thesis has abstained from using the term narrative and instead has utilized the broader term literature, but narrative may be more apt especially when considering the narrative nature of Martín Fierro. In no uncertain terms the first paragraph of Bernd’s essay states that in emerging nations the narrative literature seeks to define the community. This idea is expanded upon in the following paragraph when Bernd’s states:

A literature that attributes to itself the mission of articulating a national project, and recuperating the foundational myths of a community as well as other aspects of its collective memory, only has a sacralizing and unifying function that tends to perpetuate sameness, monologism, or the construction of an ethnocentric identity, and thus circumscribes reality to a single frame of reference. (87)

This quotation deals with the ability of literature to homogenize a culture and a community and the following explicitly states that it can also create an image or a role for the members of the “national project.” The preceding quotation also serves to accentuate the ability of literature to generate collective thought.

Sarmiento's Facundo: civilización y barbarie was more like literary warfare in which Sarmiento attempts to homogenize the *gaucho* culture as barbaric while Hernández tries to evoke feelings of nostalgia and pride in the real Argentine, the *gaucho*. This is pertinent when looking at the stark difference between the *gauchesque* Argentina and the cosmopolitan, European Argentina that Sarmiento sought to create. One Argentina attempted to preserve the slave trade, but also to promote black community while the other Argentina dreamed of an Argentina derived from western European immigrants. These "national projects" of opposing "Argentinas" are not the primary focus of this chapter: rather, this section seeks to delineate how a population can be marginalized by literature. In the following paragraph, Bernd augments her argument by stating:

In Brazil, the foundational epics of the colonial period (eighteenth century) and romanticism (nineteenth century) acted as sacralizing forces indicating a "naïve conscience (Glissant 192)", because they only recuperated and solidified the country's myths. On this level, literature incorporates an invented image of the Amerindian that excludes his or her voice, and that is most consistent with the construction of the national project. (87)

In this quotation Bernd begins to create an outline of the Other being confined to a certain space within an emergent culture. The following paragraph further develops this theory by naming the Other in Brazilian literature "the Afro-Brazilian and the Amerindian, who are often represented in a marginalized space and from a deforming perspective, if they are represented at all (94)." Martín Fierro and Facundo are interesting cases regarding the marginalization of blacks and Amerindians, but one could also argue that the extent of that representation illustrates the perceived significance of the aforementioned populations. Facundo mainly focuses on the actions of Facundo and does not develop many alternate characters, but Martín Fierro has three black characters that serve as

catalysts for turning points in the *gaucho*'s life. Hernández does not even name the black that Fierro kills after insulting the also unnamed black female companion. While important, these characters do not necessarily warrant being given names, but the final *payada* takes up a significant portion of the poem and the black plays the largest role before Martín Fierro's departure into the wild. This simple act of not naming the blacks takes away any concept of individuality or diversity amongst a subpopulation. As such, the black *payador* is not simply an individual black singer, but rather represents the black population of Argentina. The black *payador* refers to himself as such in the statement "El negro es muy amoroso (Hernández XXX)." This usage of the term "the black man" instead of simply "I" implies a more general meaning. The previous chapter gives evidence of the prevalence of blacks in the art of the *payada* and it seems that this is an attempt of the blacks to adopt a culture that may not necessarily be their own, but it is the adoption of one culture and the ignorance of another that is a part of constructing a national identity. The loss of a name is a notion that Bernd also touches upon when referring to a story in which an Amerindian woman must change her name upon entering European civilization:

The loss of her name corresponds to the loss her identity and symbolizes the alienation of the indigenous inhabitants, who had to divest themselves of their identity in order to be accepted by the colonizers in what was frequently a unidirectional process of transculturation (Bernd 92).

This quotation applied to the blacks of Martín Fierro defines the blacks as only having the identity assigned to them by a culture that only allowed them to remain as entertainers in the art of *payada*. In the context of this thesis it is this singular black voice that has to represent the entirety of the black population. Later in this chapter, the *payada* battle

between Fierro and the black man will be analyzed. However, it is important to remain conscious of the concept that it is not the black population that placed itself within the dance rooms and *payada* sessions, but rather a simple creation of the mind of Amerindians Hernández in his quest to create a national narrative. This must be kept in perspective but Bernd realizes that literature does not spring simply from imagined sources in that it must find a certain degree of truth in order to reflect the country. Bernd recognizes this by quoting Gilles Marcotte who states that “ literature makes the country and the country makes the literature (87).” The problem with the early literature of the Americas is that the marginalized populations were not able to tell their stories and, therefore, could be lost in a narrative that they did not have the opportunity to write. Some authors, such as Inca Garcilosa de la Vega, tried to include the culture of the oppressed, but were either censored or relegated to the margins. And this is especially true when realizing how the literature of nineteenth century Argentina is bereft of minority voices. It is left to Sarmiento and Hernández to create an identity for the voiceless margins.

#### Identities Attributed By Sarmiento and Hernández

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento is celebrated as the father of Argentina and is known as a proponent of civil liberties and it must be noted that it was his party that freed the slaves of Argentina. The novel Facundo is a book that really seeks to expose the problems with Rosas’ dictatorship and then creating a national identity after the fall of Rosas. It has already been stated that the blacks of Argentina largely supported Rosas’ in spite of his continuance of the slave trade. In Facundo, Sarmiento tends to ignore the black community throughout the Facundo with the early exception where he states that it

was a mistake to bring blacks to the New World (62). It is this absence from the conversation about founding a nation that speaks volumes about where blacks and Amerindians are to be placed in Argentine society. If minorities are absent from plans of the future then does that not mean that they are expected to disappear in the present? Sarmiento states “La raza negra, casi extinta ya, excepto en Buenos Aires,” The black race, now almost extinct, except in Buenos Aires, (my translation 68) referring to the low numbers of blacks living in the countryside in comparison to the blacks residing in Buenos Aires. This is a contradiction of what usually made up the liberal-conservative break up because the urbanites of Buenos Aires tended to side with a centralist, liberal Domingo Sarmiento much more often than with the federalist, conservative dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas. It appears that the *gauchesque* narrative of Amerindians Hernández would be more representative of the views of the black population due to their representation in the federalist army. Originally, the protagonist, Martín Fierro feels that it is his duty to defend the lands from the Amerindian threat and his disgust for them is not hidden (11). Hernández, like Rosas, appears to give more attention to the blacks while not necessarily asserting their equality. It is impossible to separate the voice of the black *payador* and the consciousness of Hernández so the final *payada* will conclude this chapter after looking at the concept of minority discourse in Latin American literature.

Josaphat Kubayanda delves into the topic of minority identity in literature in this aforementioned article and he begins by briefly discussing the differences and similarities between the Amerindians and blacks in the Americas. Originally, the Africans were shipped to the Americas to fill the void left by decreasing Amerindian populations and their susceptibility to European disease. The Africans and Amerindians are similar in that

their assumed position of inferiority made them a likely option for slavery. However, a difference that must be noted is the fact that the Amerindians were native to the land and never left the continent while Africans were much more likely to be forced to adopt European values and attitudes due to being brought by Europeans and always living in a European presence. Kubayanda addresses this issue in the following statement:

It seems to me that in theory, at least, there is almost no way that a Black minority discourse of the Americas can be separated from the historical collective memory of the propositions of some of the learned secular and religious humanists of Spain, or from the specific legacies of slavery, dispersal, and other forms of marginalization. There is little chance that it can be divorced from protest thought. (116)

Kubayanda recognizes that the hybrid of cultures that is Latin America means that European thought would influence black thought, but that does not mean that there is not a black collective thought distinct from the monolithic perspective of the majority culture. Kubayanda's essay is written with reference to Aime Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism in which Césaire speaks about "relations of domination and submission." These are the relationships that really drive the narrative of black experience in Latin America. Kubayanda expounds upon the nature of these relationships in the following sentences "Minority discourse necessarily reflects cultural contacts and the problems they generate and nurse " This contact with the counter or majority culture creates problems and feelings that are expressed in the narrative as " Who are we? What have we done? What has been done to us? What can we do? Where are we going?" These are the questions posed within minority discourse that are not issues when dealing with the literary discourse in the national narrative. Martín Fierro gives a black character who discusses his importance in his *payada* against Martín Fierro and it can be observed whether or not the question posed before is asked and answered. These are the questions

that must be answered when looking at an Argentina that quietly rid itself of its minorities to become the Eurocentric nation that it is today.

“¿Quien es el Negro Argentino y para donde va?”

Who is the Black Argentine and where is He going?

The template given for analyzing this section will be that of Kubayanda who asks the questions indicative of minority discourse. The first question is “who are we?” An interesting point to make is that Fierro’s black opponent refers to himself as a guitar player before declaring his race as he will do every so often in the course of his *payada*:

Yo no soy, señores míos,  
Sinó un pobre guitarrero (XXX)  
I am, gentlemen, only  
A very poor player of the guitar (Matheus’ translation XXX)

This discussion of his role in this Andalusian custom represents his appropriation of European culture and the inability to really separate the black collective identity from some aspects of the majority culture. In the very next stanza, one can infer Césaire’s concept of “relations of dominance and submission” by the black singer’s rhyme.

Yo también tengo algo blanco  
Pues tengo blancos dientes;  
Sé vivir entre las gentes  
Sin que me tengan en menos:  
Quien anda en pagos ajenos  
Debe ser manso y prudente  
I, too, have something white  
Since white are my teeth;  
I know how to live among folks  
Without their belittling me  
He who goes on another’s land  
Must be gentle and discreet. (Matheus’ translation XXX)

The reference to his teeth could be thought to mean that he must live within a land as a minority and that he has learned to live with this constant struggle by being “gentle and discreet” or submissive. His teeth are white and it represents that he has acculturated to a certain degree in that part of him is Argentine, but that it does not mean he is considered Argentine. An important point of this is the fact that he refers to “he who goes on another’s land” that the author of this thesis views as his concession that Argentina is the “another’s land” since he does not reference the land of anyone in particular. The black man feels absolutely no sense of entitlement to his land though he is a free black man. These first two stanzas of the black man have begun to answer the first question posed by minority discourse of “who are we?” The black *payador* has expressed that he is poor and accustomed to being submissive to the majority culture and the two following stanzas give more details regarding his identity.

El negro es muy amoroso  
Aunque de esto no hace gala;  
Nada a su cariño iguala:  
Ni a su tierna voluntá  
...Pero yo he vivido libre  
Y sin depender de naides  
Siempre he cruzado los aires  
Como el pájaro sin nido  
Very loving is the Negro  
Though he boasts of it not  
None equal him in affection  
Nor in tenderness of goodwill  
...But I have lived a free life  
Always I have swept the air  
Like a nestless bird  
(Matheus’ translation XXX)

The black man goes on later to talk about his mother having nine sons and the heartbreak that was to befall them. The quotations from the black *payador* seem to give away the answer to “what have we done?” He seems to realize that all he has done is

fulfill the role he is meant to play in a white world made evident by his statement regarding being “gentle and discreet” in the lands of another. However, he does not hesitate to talk about the wounds being inflicted upon the black community. This is a response to a question posed at him by Fierro who asks:

“¡Ah negro! Si sos tan sabio  
No tengas ningun recebo  
Pero has tragao el anzuelo  
Y, al compas del instrumento  
Has de decirme al momento  
Cual es el canto del cielo  
(Ah, negro if you are so wise  
Have no misgiving,  
But you have swallowed the hook  
So in time of your guitar  
You must tell me at once  
What is the song of the sky? Matheus translation XXX)

This question almost hurled, as an insult demands the following response from the black man:

Cuentan de mi color  
Dios hizo al hombre primero;  
Mas los blancos altaneros  
Los mismos que lo convidan  
Hasta de nombrarlo olvidan  
Y solo le llaman negro  
Pinta el blanco negro al Diablo,  
Y el negro blanco lo pinta;  
Blanca la cara ó retinta,  
No habla en contra ni en favor  
De los hombres el Criador  
No hizo dos clases distintas  
(They say of my color  
God made primeval man  
But the arrogant whites,  
The same who incited it,  
Forget even to mention it  
And only call my color black  
The white man paints the devil black  
The black man paints him white

Whether the face be white or dark  
Argues neither pro nor con:  
The Creator did not make  
Two classes distinct of men,  
(Matheus' translation XXX)

This means that the black singer recognizes that his identity has been attributed to him by the white population and he metaphorically describes this as being painted black as a devil by a white populace regardless of whether or not he is actually black like the devil. The black man in Martín Fierro answers some of the questions that must be asked in a minority discourse. The question lies in whether or not these questions are valid since a member of the majority culture of white Argentina authored them. Is Amerindians Hernández, an advocate of the dying *gaucho* culture able to mirror the needs of a minority culture based on ethnicity?

## CHAPTER IV

### EL GAUCHO NEGRO

Nineteenth century Argentina dealt with many of the contentious issues causing revolt and rebellion in the western world such as confederation versus federalism and conservatism versus liberalism. In many ways, Argentina represented the dichotomy of ideology and race. The racial composition of Argentina can be presented in three stages: a pre-Columbian Argentina of complete indigenous homogeneity, a multiethnic, multiracial grouping of Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians, and a modern Argentina composed of various European ethnicities generating an increasingly “white” nation. The first issue to be addressed is the ability of the Spanish and eventually the Argentine nation to reduce the Amerindian population and banish the remaining groups to the extremes of the nation. This tension between the Amerindian and white populations of Argentina was palpable if not actual. The Amerindians of Martín Fierro are only referred to in the abstract as a dangerous force to be protected against or a group to be lived peacefully among. This seems to support contradictory views regarding Hernández’s treatment of Amerindian populations, but it is more important to focus on the fact that they never factor into Martín Fierro’s concrete, daily reality, but their supposed “negative” consequence is not the direct source of his resentment. It is the government’s conscription of Martín Fierro that fuels his initial hatred and eventual violence. This illustrates two key arguments: the role minorities play in supporting political means in

this case the fear of Amerindian war provides foundation for free labor and that in this case it is better for them to be separate and distant to the point of almost denial of their existence. Fierro's resentment towards the government due to its arbitrary power reflects the major divide in Argentina relating to a liberal, centralized government or a conservative, federalist government. This fundamental division of political philosophy that focuses on the very nature of how a nation should be administered is the driving influence behind the text analyzed in this thesis. Republicanism and federalism are both schools of thought that influence the issues of slavery, immigration, and society in general. Republicanism found many of its adherents in the cosmopolitan, port city of Buenos Aires while federalism was popular with the rural, cowboy, farming populations of the Argentine countryside. Politically, the perspectives taken on race by the opposing sides are not incredibly distinct in many respects but their individual approaches to race affect the ethnic composition of a nation. The dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas and his federalist regime while encouraging the continuing of the slave trade gave blacks many opportunities in his army. Domingo Sarmiento, while ultimately founding the party that abolished slavery did not encourage the integration of blacks into Argentine society. In fact, Sarmiento was quite critical of blacks in society stating that they were unintelligent and only useful for manual labor which was common for the era. The blacks fought in the civil war on the side opposing the liberals of Domingo Sarmiento. The other main group who fought on the side of Rosas were the gauchos. This link between the gaucho and the black of nineteenth century Argentina is important especially when analyzing the text of the national epic poem, Martín Fierro. Martín Fierro gives a perspective from the black Argentine experience in the scenes referring to the *payada* battle. The *payada*, a popular

gaucho form of song and poetry, was known to have many black practitioners according to Andrews. The black population identified with the gaucho culture, which had its root in an Andalusian culture that valued independence, passion, and poetry according to George W. Umphrey (150). The idea that I feel must be presented at this point is that of the parallel between Argentine blacks and gauchos. The simple corresponding patterns can be found in the writings of Sarmiento who describes the blacks in Facundo as “La raza negra...habitantes de la ciudad, eslabón que liga al hombre civilizado con el palurdo.” The black race[...]inhabitants of the city, a piece of the chain that unites the civilized man with that of the ignorant idiot.” (my translation Sarmiento 62). He goes on to talk about the gauchos as violent, simple, uncivilized, barbarous, and stupid throughout the novel and equating them with the federalist Juan Manuel de Rosas. This concept is further illustrated in Martín Fierro by Fierro’s interactions with black and Amerindian characters. It has already been noted that Martín Fierro while eventually being conscripted to fight against the Amerindians leaves the novel with a statement about going to live amongst them. The “negro” or black characters in the poem seem to provide a much more concrete and simultaneous symbolic meaning to the story of Martín Fierro. The story begins with Martín Fierro leaving his military post to return to a family that is long gone and a farm that has been taken over. This anger against the government leads to his eventual insult towards a black woman and his killing of her black partner. The killing of the black man could be interpreted as an extension of his anger towards the invisible republic, but I would argue that the time has passed and he is almost resigned to the idea that life will never be the same. He realizes that his way of life is slipping away from him and he himself, or his concept of himself, is gone. Killing the black man is not

so much killing the “negro” as it is killing his old self. This becomes more apparent in his behavior after his crime. Martín Fierro refuses to submit and go to trial, which would probably not lead to a serious sentence rather, he decides to fight his would-be captors and lead a fugitive’s life. This idea is further developed in his final *payada* with the brother of the man he killed in the dance hall. There are two questions that seem to lead one to believe the gaucho and the black man as an interchangeable character. The first question is regarding the black payador’s ability to live in the land of another and this resonates with the *gaucho* Martín Fierro who begins the poem reveling in his freedom and independence: “Mi gloria es vivir tan libre como el pajarito del cielo .” My glory is to live so free, like the bird of the heavens. (my translation 96-97) The second question has to do with the statement the black *payador* makes regarding the fact that he has been prejudged by his color. The *gaucho* and the blacks of Argentina find that a decision has already been made about them and their contribution to society without any input or ability to change anything. The Argentina of Sarmiento had decided that the country was moving towards urbanization, republicanism, and immigration from Europe. There was no room in a modern Argentina for blacks or *gauchos*. Sarmiento talks about the mulattoes and blacks mixing with the country argentinians and it is this barbarous race that has been painted as the devil to use the terminology of the Martín Fierro’s *payada*. The parallels in Martín Fierro and the amalgamation of the two groups in Facundo gives evidence that affirms that *el gaucho es el negro* or the cowboy is the black man. The black man of Martín Fierro represents Martín Fierro as expressed by Peter Winn in “From Martín Fierro to Peronismo: A Century of Argentine Social Protest”: “[...] like the

black in Borges' sequel to Martín Fierro, who simultaneously destroys and fulfills Fierro”  
(92).

## WORKS CITED

- Alberdi, Juan B. and Domingo F. Sarmiento. La gran polémica nacional. Buenos Aires: Segundo Centenario, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2005.
- Andrews, George R. "Race versus Class Association: The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1850-1900." Journal of Latin American Studies (May 1979): 19-39.
- Andrews, George R. Afro-Latin America. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Bernd, Zilá. "The Construction and Deconstruction of Identity in Brazil." Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference. Ed. Amaryll Chanady. New York: University of Minnesota P, (1994.) 86-102.
- Chanady, Amaryll, ed. Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference. New York: University of Minnesota P, 1994.
- Cottrol, Robert J. "Beyond Invisibility: Afro-Argentine in their Nation's Culture and Memory." Latin American Research Review. 42.1 (2007): 139-156.
- Demarchi, Rogelio. "Facundo: Civilización y barbarie." 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Buenos Aires: EDICOL, 2006.

- Edwards, Erika D. "An African Tree Produces White Flowers: Black Consciousness in the Afro-Argentine Community During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." Diss. Florida International University, 2007.
- Foerster, Robert F. "The Italian Factor in the Race Stock of Argentina" Publications of the American Statistical Association. 16.126. (June 1919): 347-360. JSTOR. 2 Oct 2007.  
<<http://www.jstor.org>>.
- Gilles, Marcotte. "Les problèmes du capitaine." Liberté 111 (177): 78-86.
- Gutiérrez, Eduardo. Juan Moreira. Buenos Aires: La Biblioteca Argentina, Editorial Sol 90, 2001.
- Healy, Claire. "Review Essay Afro-Argentine Histiography." Atlantic Studies 3 (2006): 111-120.
- Hernández, José. El Gaucho Martín Fierro. 30 Jan. 2007. Buenos Aires. 30 Sept. 2007 <[www.comunidad.ciudad.com.ar](http://www.comunidad.ciudad.com.ar)>.
- "Inca." The Columbia Encyclopedia. 2007 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 30 Oct 2007.  
<[www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com)>.
- Kubayanda, Josaphat B. "Minority Discourse and the African Collective: Some Examples from Latin America and Caribbean Literature." Cultural Critique 6 (1987): 113-39.
- Matheus, John F. "African Footprints in Hispanic Literature." The Journal of Negro History 23 (1938): 265-289.

Mendoza, Marcela. "Western Toba Messianism and Resistance to Colonization, 1915–1918." The American Society for Ethno-History. 51 (2004): 293-316. Project Muse. 8 Oct 2007. Maryville College, Maryville, TN. <[www.projectmuse.org](http://www.projectmuse.org)>

Pacheco, Roberto. "Invisible but not forgotten: The Afro-Argentine and Afro-Uruguayan experience from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries." Florida International University. (2001): 305 pages. ProQuest. 2 October 2007

Penn, Dorothy. "Sarmiento- 'School-Master President of Argentina' of Argentina." Hispania. 29.3 (August, 1946): 386-389. <[www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)>.

"Quechua." Britannica Concise Encyclopedia. 2007. 9 Oct 2007. [www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com).

Randall, Vernellia R. "Racial Discrimination in Argentina." Human Rights Documentatin Center. University of Dayton Law School. February 2006. 2 October 2007. <<http://academic.udayton.edu/race/06hrights/GeoRegions/SouthAmerica/argentina01.htm>>.

Renan, Ernest. "Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?" Discours et Conferences. Sorbonne. 09 Nov. 2008 <[www.tamilnation.org/selfdetermination/nation/renan.htm](http://www.tamilnation.org/selfdetermination/nation/renan.htm)>.

Rock, David. "State-Building and Political Systems in Nineteenth-Century Argentina and Uruguay." Past and Present. 167 (May 2000): 176-202. JSTOR. Maryville College, Maryville, TN. 12 Oct 2007 <<http://jstor.org>>.

Sarmiento, Domingo F. Facundo: Civilización y barbarie. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Buenos Aires: EDICOL, 2006.

Schweimler, Daniel. "Argentina's forest people suffer neglect." BBC News. September 27, 2007. September 29, 2007 <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/7014197.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7014197.stm)>.

Umphrey, George W. "The Gaucho Poetry of Argentina." Hispania 1 (1918): 144-56. Van Cott, Donna Lee. "Institutional Changes and Ethnic Parties in South America." Latin American Politics and Society. 45.2 (Summer 2003): 1-39. JSTOR. Maryville College, Maryville, TN. 2 Oct 2007 <<http://jstor.org>>.

Williams, Caroline. A. "Resistance and Rebellion on the Spanish Frontier: Native Responses to Colonization in the Colombian Chóco, 1670-1690." Hispanic American Historical Review. 79.2. (1999): 397-424. Project Muse. Maryville College, Maryville, TN. 8 Oct. 2007.

Winn, Peter. "From Martín Fierro to Peronism: A Century of Argentine  
Social Protest." The Americas. 35.1. (July 1978): 89-94. JSTOR.  
Maryville College, Maryville, TN. 13 Oct .2007  
<[www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)>.