

**Sarmiento, Echeverría and Hernández's Implementation of Historical  
Reciprocation in Argentina's Battle of Oppression**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Spanish

Auburn, Alabama  
August 9, 2010

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## Abstract

The socioeconomic state of Argentina during the mid-nineteenth century is characterized by a search for identity and rescue from governmental oppression. The study of various genres of literature is valuable in developing a proper understanding of the problems and remedies presented by the authors of that time period. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, writer of *Facundo*, Esteban Echeverría, author of “El Matadero” and *La Cautiva*, and José Hernández, writer of *Martín Fierro* offer a fitting variety of works including prose and poetry to this study of their common theme of oppression as a socioeconomic issue in Argentina’s search for identity. Throughout this investigation, each author implements historical reciprocation by utilizing a past event and the drama within the work to diagnose the issue of governmental oppression and offer a prognosis for the future of the nation. Furthermore, a brief biographical sketch of each author offers an understanding of his political and personal viewpoints during the time of composition, while maintaining a consistent theme in light of each works’ variation of literary genre.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for providing the ability, will power, and vision to complete this work. Without Him, I would be nothing. Many hours, days, weeks and months have been invested in this work, and it would not have been possible were it not for the direction offered by Dr. Patrick Greene. Thanks go to Dr. Jana Gutiérrez for her continual support and encouragement along with her academic and personal guidance throughout my graduate school career. The wisdom and experience from a fellow academic offered first hand knowledge and understanding of the discipline required to fulfill the requirements for this thesis. Furthermore, I acknowledge the moral support provided by my family, Russell G., Vickie, and David Buys. The guidance and accountability offered spurred me on to this work's completion. Thanks also go to my father, Dr. Brian and his son, Josh Stretch, and Anna Tadlock for dedicating hours to reading the text and offering their respectable opinion and guidance. Lastly, I would like to thank Anna Tadlock for her relentless support, prayers, encouragement and example of personal discipline and understanding.

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## Introduction

### I. 1 Thesis

An author's perception differs upon a possibility of various circumstances that influence him. Argentine authors such as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Esteban Echeverría and José Hernández all composed internationally recognized literature that unites on one common principle: oppression in Argentina beginning with the Independence in 1810 into Sarmiento's presidency, 1868-1874. The oppression that the Argentine people experience shifts from the Spanish control of the colony to the oppression implemented by the lack of stable government the newly independent country experienced. While the oppressor in each author's work may differ in a slight degree, the oppressed stays constant: the citizens of Argentina. According to Sarmiento and Echeverría, the oppressed represents the population that suffers on account of Juan Manuel de Rosas's Federalist dictatorship. On the other hand, the oppressed for Hernández represents the marginalized gaucho from the Pampas. Each author implements a unique writing style in expressing his personal and political views, while simultaneously upholding a cause and effect methodology to depict the oppression he views as problematic. For example, Sarmiento pens his most famed work, *Facundo*, in a novel-like form using Rosas as the cause of oppression that leads to fear, poverty, and ignorance. Echeverría writes "El Matadero" in essayist form and accuses Rosas to be the cause

of the dehumanization of the common people. In *La Cautiva*, Echeverría uses poetry to depict the oppression of the Unitarist Party and the cause to be Rosas and his Federalist government as well. José Hernández implements the style of gauchesque epic poetry that portrays oppression's cause as immigration encouraged by Sarmiento and the effect to be the loss of what is at the heart of Argentina's national identity: the gaucho.

Each writer is noted for his ability to write about issues that present themselves within a social context while excelling in the art of literature. The authors seek to portray reality in its truest sense with hopes of inspiring and effecting change. Pinto refers to Argentine literature and mentions three of the works in this study:

Nuestra literatura es la primera expresión concreta de nuestra realidad. Antes de estar constituidos y organizados, ya teníamos expresiones testimoniales de nuestra realidad en *Recuerdos de provincia*, *Facundo*, *La Cautiva*, y *El Matadero*. (J. Pinto 165)

Each author's different perspective noted in Argentina's oppression in the middle of the nineteenth century are due to different elements such as place and time of birth, childhood experiences, education, morals and values, and personal convictions. Per chapter, a study of the authors' lives, their primary works that belong to a unique genre of protest literature, and their themes appear. Sarmiento, Echeverría, and Hernández are all authors that play an important role in shaping the future of Argentina's literature and the national identity nascent at that time. Each author's work in this study belongs to a different genre of literature yet maintains



many of the same themes and ideas that merit a comparative analysis. *Facundo*, “El Matadero”, *La Cautiva*, and *Martín Fierro* are all works that are placed at the pinnacle of Argentine literature because of their unique composition but more so due to their thematic pertinence to the social unrest prevalent in Argentina during their composition and their accurate depiction of reality. For example, *Martín Fierro* is placed at a canonical level: “[es un] ‘poema épico nacional’ y lo colocan en el punto de origen de la literatura nacional” (Vázquez 425). The Argentine critic, Juan Pinto, mentions three of the four works when unfolding Argentine originality:

En estas obras [*Facundo*, *La Cautiva*, *Recuerdos de provincia*, *Martín Fierro*] surge la primera diferenciación de lo hispánico, una voluntad de originalidad, más allá del idioma y de la raza. Podemos, en cambio, decir que la sangre derramada por ambos bandos, fue simiente de argentinidad. (146)

The seed of originality is attributed to the common theme of oppression that appears within each work. Therefore, this study of governmental oppression in Argentina on various facets of society in the middle of the nineteenth century is conducted in light of these works.

*Facundo*, “El Matadero”, *La Cautiva*, and *Martín Fierro* incorporate a literary device I term historical reciprocation. This writing philosophy takes place when an author seeks to make a diagnosis of the political, social or economic state of a given population, place or government. To accomplishing this feat, an author first uses some past occurrence to foreshadow the future; secondly the author

presents an accurate depiction of reality and accomplishes an opinionated diagnosis of the problems that the given subject faces. Lastly, the author seeks to make a prognosis by recalling the past occurrence in the introduction, the work's drama, or the conclusion. Historical reciprocation does not pertain to or occur in only one genre, but can present itself across different literary styles such as poetry and narrative. Hayden White states:

After a historian had discovered the true story of “what happened” and accurately represented it in a narrative, he might abandon the narrational manner of speaking and, addressing the reader directly, speaking in his own voice, and representing his considered opinion as a student of human affairs, dilate on what the story he had told indicated about the nature of the period, place, agents, agencies and processes. This aspect of the historical discourse was called by some theorists the dissertative mode of address [...]. (27-28)

At a particular point in the works of Sarmiento, Echeverría and Hernández, each author breaks from a narrative style of writing, whether it be in narrative or poetic form. For Sarmiento, his question and answer form at the end of Chapter 15 represents his interpretation of history. Echeverría uses “El Matadero” to offer a depiction of the *matadero* while utilizing it as a way to relay his opinionated theory on the cause of Argentina's oppression. At the beginning of “El Matadero”, Echeverría demonstrates his opinions of Juan Manuel de Rosas and the Federalist Party at the mention of an ensuing flood. In the epilogue of *La Cautiva*, Echeverría seeks to display the importance of fighting against barbarism by taking on

unorthodox characteristics. Hernández accomplishes this opinionated representation by keeping in voice with the protagonist in *Martín Fierro* and stating the gaucho's loss of identity. White breaks down the various methods of narrative writing in historical theory into five groups. The authors of this study fit into the description of his second group: "This group regarded narrative historiography as a nonscientific, even ideological representational strategy [...]" (31). In their own style, Sarmiento, Echeverría, and Hernández successfully refer to some past event to diagnose Argentina's present state in attempt to make a prognosis towards the future. Each author utilizes history's repetitive nature to warn against oppressive governments similar the government of Rosas. Dehumanization is a tool that each author implements to reveal the gravity of oppression that is experienced. The use of dehumanization, nature's wrath, and marginalization demonstrates White's observation that for these writers "political history [is] conceived as short-term, "dramatic" conflicts and crises lending themselves to "novelistic" representations, of a more "literary" than a properly "scientific" kind" (31-32). The literary methods that each author undertakes fall into different genres of literature such as narrative writing with *Facundo* and "El Matadero" and poetry with *La Cautiva* and *Martín Fierro*. The genre variation across this study demonstrates the ability of an author to incorporate historical reciprocation into different forms of literature.

## I. 2 Literary Movement

The works in this study cannot be placed into one literary movement for the different genres they belong to, the time of their composition, and their place of

construction. These two genres are represented in this study of the Argentina's oppression as seen through the eyes of Sarmiento, Echeverría, and Hernández: narrative and poetry. These genres can be further broken down into subgenres. *Facundo's* (1845) narrative offers glimpses of the dissertative method of writing while it has some novelistic characteristics in its structure through the storyline of Horacio Quiroga. Echeverría's *La Cautiva* (1837) has several characteristics of an epic poem in that the drama tells various stories, hosts a protagonist and antagonists, includes long discourses and dialogues, and a deviation from a continuous versification. The ten-line stanzas and eight-syllable lines take precedence in the poem but do not stay constant throughout the poem. In "El Matadero" (1871), Echeverría implements a strategy of including both essay and short story qualities into his work. Written in narrative form, the work that Echeverría accomplishes is the essayist discourse at both the beginning and end of this work, which will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Furthermore, Echeverría poses a short story in that he narrates the event of the *matadero*, which includes various dialogues and possesses a plot, typical of a short story. Hernández uses the art of poetry to express an independent genre of literature, gauchesque poetry, in his epic poem *Martín Fierro*. Hernández uses the typical gaucho language to further connect with the reader without breaking from said language with a poetic discourse from an omnipotent author. *Martín Fierro* is made up of two independently written books, each one hosting several parts broken into the prominent, but not consistent, six-line and eight-syllable verses. Similar to *La Cautiva*, Hernández includes various long discourses like the one in Part XI of the

*La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (II, XI). By looking at the broad genre variation of these works, it can be said that historical reciprocation and the theme of oppression cannot be restricted to only one area of literature.

Each work's genre pertains to the foundation that oppression serves a common theme across genres in Argentine literature in the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, a look into the different literary movements of that day and age in Latin America and Europe help to better understand the method of historical reciprocation and how the theme of oppression fits perfectly into the time period. In 1825, the Romanticism penetrated France from its origin country of Germany. During this time in France, the country was at odds in the social realm as it recovered from the dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte. The post-Napoleonic age in France bred a new form of writing in the Romanticism as authors began to write literature concerning social issues that Jitrik notes as "literatura social (novela realista y poesía sentimental)" (16). Two primary French writers during this time were Enrique Rouvroy and Count of Saint-Simon. The Romanticism was in full force in other European countries as well, notably in England. Writers who are noted for their influence on Latin American writers include Schiller, Goethe, and Byron. Travel to Europe for advanced education by students from Latin America was a common practice during the middle of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the literature of authors like Sarmiento and Echeverría who traveled abroad possesses many characteristics of the literature they studied. In 1830, the Romanticism was at its height in France; however, the Romanticism did not reach its height in Latin America until the 1860's. During the 1870's, elements and practices from the

oncoming Realism began to take root and appear in various works around Latin America. Because of the Atlantic gap between the European and American continents and the sluggish means of communication and trade, literary movements often overlapped and took place in constant fluid motion rather than an abrupt change. According to this timeline, *Facundo* possesses very few Romantic elements in its text. Sarmiento uses nature as a means to establish a setting but refrains from the common Romantic device of incorporating it as a way to display the emotional state of the characters. Echeverría's "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva* present the most devices and themes from the Romanticism. The nationalistic tone and use of nature to inflect on the characters in the work of "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva* are two of the main forms of displaying the oppression that the characters experience. *La Cautiva* also integrates a sentimental tone when dealing with the action of the work and the tragic destiny of the protagonist. Hernández writes *Martín Fierro* over three decades after the publication of "El Matadero" and *Facundo*; therefore, his writing style is somewhat different in that it contains various anti-Romantic themes such as a pragmatic and anti-nationalistic tone due to the marginalization of the gaucho by the government. On the other hand, he utilizes nature and the tragedy-determined protagonist to illustrate said marginalization.

The four works in this study include Sarmiento's *Facundo*, Echeverría's *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero", and Hernández's *Martín Fierro*. Hernández's *Martín Fierro* offers a genre of literature to this collection known as protest literature. While Hernández's poetry is still in the poetic genre, *Martín Fierro* belongs to the genre of gauchesque literature in the form of an epic poem. Sarmiento's narrative

of *Facundo* represents a genre that hangs in the balance between fact or fiction within a novel due to its factual depictions and stories with exaggerations.

Echeverría's *La Cautiva* is a purely Romantic poem, and "El Matadero" appears as a narration in essay form. Sarmiento's style of writing in *Facundo* is diagnostic and scientific in form. His intention is to inform the reader of the country's issues by giving a historical account of Rosas's rise to power, the present state of the Republic of Argentina, and remedies that lead to overcoming the issues at hand. His method includes presentation of the setting, occurrence of the drama, and a diagnosis and prognostication of the matters he includes in his work. The prognostication that Sarmiento includes can be seen throughout *Facundo* yet notably dedicates Chapter 15 to the question and answer form prognosis referred to in Chapter 1 of this study. Similarly, Echeverría uses a personal account to relate many of the same issues to the reader. In *La Cautiva*, Echeverría implements a story from his childhood, in which he changes certain facts of a story in an attempt to better relay his intended message to the reader. In contrast to Sarmiento, his method of writing in *La Cautiva* does not include a prognosis for the issues. Rather, he maintains a fluid storyline throughout the poem by beginning with a setting and ending with the drama. His Romantic poem includes a tragic hero, María, whose destiny is death from the very beginning. He utilizes the Romantic element of nature to describe the tones and characters' emotional states in the work. Similarly, "El Matadero" includes several commonly used Romantic elements. One example is the use of a description of nature to depict the emotional and physical state of the characters in the work and the country's state of being. However,

because the work is in narrative form, it is more easily relatable to Sarmiento's *Facundo* than *La Cautiva*. Echeverría uses "El Matadero" to depict a starving, dehumanized people as a result of Rosas's Federalist government. The event in the *matadero* protests the current state of the government by directly stating the problems of the country, but it also prognoses the conquest of Rosas's tyrannical government through his Biblical correlation of the Great Flood in Genesis. "El Matadero" is not a religious work, yet it criticizes the church for its part in the scandalous government. Echeverría utilizes religion as a form of irony to deliver a message that the church, which claims to be good, is merely an institution in collaboration with Rosas's manipulation for its best interest.

### I. 3 Historical Context

In 1810, the War for Independence from Spain takes place that highlights two key points in Argentina's history: 1. The unity of all peoples with one common goal of independence and 2. The rise of internal sectors, or political parties. Here marks the first appearance of the issue of civilization versus barbarism in the Argentine culture. The city of Buenos Aires maintained an interest in centralized government, economic progression through foreign trade, education, and Europeanization. These concepts are later combined to form what became known as the Unitarist Party. The Pampas, or the interior, represented a desire for provincial governments, freedom from state, and isolation from foreign powers. These concepts are later combined to form what becomes known as the Federalist Party, which was against centralized government but in favor of the caudillo system



of government. This more autonomic governmental system allowed for greater freedom for each province, or caudillo, but restricts progress for the country as a whole, as views the Unitarist Party.

Bernardino Rivadavia was the first head of state and claimed primarily Unitarist views. He encouraged immigration and education along with progressive culture. During his short-lived presidency, culture, instruction, schools, literary circles, libraries, and theatres opened and sprouted. However, due to an unstable government, his position was soon dissolved. After experiencing different leadership of two more leaders between 1827-1829, Juan Manuel de Rosas took the position as head of state of what became known as the Argentine Confederation. Though he lost his position from 1832-1835, he retained his position in 1835 and served as head of state until 1852. The War for Independence from Spain invoked a fear of conquest by foreign powers in many of the Argentine people, and Rosas's government actively discouraged and eventually prohibited immigration from European powers such as Spain, France and Italy. Rosas cutoff Argentina from the rest of the world by prohibiting trade and immigration, which resulted in a severely damaged economy. In the state of political and social unrest, critics began to publish anti-Federalist literature from which was born the Generation of 1837, a respected group of thinkers and intellectuals from Argentina, which included names such as Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi and Bartolomé Mitre. Two years after Rosas's defeat, the Republic of Argentina was formed. Presidents such as Santiago Derqui and Bartolomé Mitre began the work that Sarmiento continued with his presidency. The development of public works, railway construction, and

agriculture all succeeded under Sarmiento's leadership. Sarmiento also sought to further the development of the country through European emigration and education. The emigration of thousands of Europeans led to the pushing the existence of the gauchos further away. During this time, over 60,000 foreigners made their way to Argentina.

## Chapter 1:

### Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: Enduring Oppression and the Search for Liberation

#### 1.1 Introduction

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888) is one of the most famous writers in Argentine history. As author of many literary works, his works display his ability to write fact and fiction. As President of the Republic of Argentina, his political position offers insight to many of the themes of his works. In this chapter, I will investigate the theme of oppression by a dictatorial government and the social, and economical issues that arise from that oppression within Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845), his most famous work. The work's primary theme is seen in his title: barbarism versus civilization. A thematic and structural exploration provides deeper understanding of the issues that are a result of governmental oppression in Argentina in the middle of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Juan Manuel de Rosas. The method of accomplishing the diagnosis of political oppression as the cause of unrest in Argentina is historical reciprocation. The three-way process of achieving this method of writing is through the mention of a past event to help foreshadow what will happen in the future while diagnosing the present state. Through providing the reader with the exaggerated story of Facundo, his conquest, and the Rosas's rise to power, Sarmiento gives a first hand example of

governmental oppression and manipulation that is causing unrest and hindering civilization in Argentina. This point of reference allows the reader to understand the root of the problem at the beginning of the work, while at the end, Sarmiento uses the policies that Rosas instilled as a tyrannical leader to depict the troubled times of the country in his present day and to foreshadow what will come of the country's social, economic, and political state. The genre placement of *Facundo* is debatable due to the different writing styles within the work. For example, Sarmiento narrates the story of Facundo and at the end of his work he writes in a question-answer format. The details and events of Facundo's activities and conquests within *Facundo* are exaggerated. Such an exaggeration offers proof to White's theory that the writings of mid-nineteenth century intellectuals and politicians were "inherently 'novelistic' and 'dramatizing' [...]" (32). However, this style of writing proves effective through the popularity and recognition that Sarmiento's *Facundo* receives by being placed at the very height of Argentine literature.

To consider the life and works of Sarmiento will further the understanding of how and why he retains his views in opposition to the policies and practices of Rosas. Both at home and abroad, an interest in politics and an advanced education help expand his understanding of what policies function within government and what should be abolished. A bibliographical sketch of Sarmiento's life shows the influences that lead to the conception of *Facundo*. A study of *Facundo*'s text will illustrate the opposition to the oppression of Rosas's government.

Sarmiento's work incriminates the Federalist Party and alludes to the leadership that will lead to the salvation of the country's politically tough times:

No se renuncia [the future of the Argentina] porque los demás pueblos americanos no puedan prestarnos su ayuda; porque los gobiernos no ven de lejos sino el brillo del poder organizado, y no distinguen en la oscuridad humilde y desamparada de las revoluciones los elementos grandes que están forcejando para desenvolverse; porque la oposición pretendida liberal abjure de sus principios. (*Facundo* 257)

The future of Argentina is only perceptible to men who have visionary skills to see past the problems of the present time, diagnose those problems, and take the necessary steps to bring change. Sarmiento is one of these leaders. *Facundo's* publication occurs twenty-one years before his presidency, exhibiting his foresight about the country's future.

*Facundo's* character offers an example to the reader concerning the oppression and captivity that is present in Argentina in the given time period. Oppression takes place in two forms within the work: by force and by choice. Both forms of captivity stem directly from Rosas and his Federalist government and incorporate the Unitarists in society, the gaucho, and the men that Rosas enlists to serve in his military.

## 1.2 Biography of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento

The literature of Sarmiento is full of aspiration. His humble beginnings stem from two lower class citizens in society who take an active role in the politics of the day. His father, José Clemente Quiroga Sarmiento y Funes, served in the military throughout the War for Independence while his mother, Doña Paula Zoila de Albarracín e Irrázabal, was a hardworking woman who in spite of their poverty supported her family in the absence of her husband. Sarmiento's extended family impacted his future accomplishments by mentoring him in the areas of politics and religion. Sarmiento was born during a time of political transition in Argentina when tension is high and negative political talk common.

In 1823, Rivadavia, the present Minister of State and future President of the Republic offers the twelve year old Sarmiento a scholarship to attend a school of higher education in Buenos Aires. Rivadavia sees the importance of raising up young intellectual students through education for the benefit of the Republic. At this school, Sarmiento proves his intelligence and takes a vocal position about his political views and opinions. His school attendance is his first encounter with political education, notably a political education provided by the government. Sarmiento's education is another factor that inspires the production of the literature and political Sarmiento. His education is responsible for informing him of the political parties developing in the country: the Unitarist Party and the Federalist Party. Rivadavia's convictions follow those of the Unitarist Party, which is in favor of progression through agricultural, educational and social means. Sarmiento realizes the fruits of education firsthand and receives a passion that is visible

throughout his works and political policies. *Facundo* demonstrates the anti-Federalist views that Sarmiento possesses, which are a direct result of the fostered education that Sarmiento receives at an early age.

In 1827 under his uncle, he continues his education and receives his first post as an educator at a primary school in the Andes Mountains. His studies also lead him to read works by thinkers who inspire the development of his opinion such as Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Condorcet, Leroux, Guizot and Cousin. He receives a summons to return home to his parents where he chooses to fight against Quiroga in the civil war. His choice to fight leads to his first exile to Chile. In 1831 while in exile, he begins to publish political literature in periodicals in opposition to Federalist leaders such as Quiroga and Juan Manuel de Rosas. In 1836, he returns to Argentina where he finds an anti-federalist periodical known as *El Zonda*. Due to his accomplishments, Sarmiento begins to become publicly recognized as a political activist and joins the Generation of 1837. In 1845, the publication of Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* expresses the hardships and oppression the Argentine society faces under the control of the barbaric Federalist Party. Oppression of the people is a personal experience of Sarmiento's that is traceable through his exiles to Chile. Sarmiento's life experiences allow him to evaluate the problems of Argentine society in an attempt to offer freedom from oppression by the government. His picturesque description of the geography of Argentina begins *Facundo* with an initial distinction between civilization and barbarism. His personal passion of the importance of education to all society's members is seen without question. Later in life, Sarmiento establishes

several schools in Argentina, recruits educators from all parts of the world to Argentina, writes works such as *De la educación popular*, *La escuela normal de preceptores de Chile*, and *Viajes a Europa, África y América*, where Sarmiento travels around the world to study the most effective educational methods. Through these accomplishments, he becomes known as the “Schoolmaster of America”. *Facundo* is the beginning of this work. Schwartzman states the impact of Sarmiento of his time period when talking about literature and politics: “Si hubiera que pronunciar un nombre que fuera la cifra de este período, ese nombre sería, sin duda, el de Sarmiento” (13).

### 1.3 *Facundo*

Sarmiento’s *Facundo* is the first Argentine work to receive such grandeur on a universal level of popularity. Sarmiento’s work serves as a benchmark to the establishment of an identity for Argentina by implementing historical reciprocation. He uses the present as a point of reference to diagnose issues that need attention and require change for the well being of the future:

*Facundo*, es bien sabido—dice—, constituye el primer libro argentino que suscita verdadera resonancia en las letras mundiales; cuatro idiomas lo traducen. Por su agencia adquieren universalidad literaria la Pampa y el Gaucho, Quiroga y Rosas, Sarmiento percibe la originalidad de nuestra naturaleza y de los tipos que engendra y los lleva a su libro. En lugar de imitar lo extraño revela un mundo



nuevo, bárbaro y primitivo aún, pero lleno de grandiosidad y poesía.

(Palcos 272)

The Introduction of *Facundo* prepares the reader for this diagnostic method of writing by stating all of the obstacles that prevent Argentina from experiencing a successful government. He lists them in detail, stating their causes and effects and then offers a simple remedy that will lead to their defeat: “¡No! ; no se renuncia a un porvenir tan inmenso, a una misión tan elevada, por ese cúmulo de contradicciones y dificultades. ¡Las dificultades se vencen; las contradicciones se acaban a fuerza de contradecirlas!” (*Facundo* 258).

*Facundo* possesses several themes present in Argentina in the middle of the nineteenth century. The most well-known and studied theme present in the text is barbarism versus civilization. The dichotomy of barbarism and civilization provides for further investigation into the political issues that lead to the social and economic problems that the country faces under the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas. The issues and problems facing the people of Argentina are a direct result of a government-instituted oppression. Sarmiento uses *Facundo* as a means to communicate his opinions of what problems exist and the necessary means to repair his homeland. In 1845, *Facundo*'s first publication is released. Sarmiento is a man on a journey with passions in education, politics and social identity. He begins writing *Facundo* as a series of articles that a Chilean newspaper publishes during one of his three exiles. Experiences, sights, sounds, successes and failures help form the main theme of *Facundo*—civilization versus barbarism. *Facundo*'s

impact changes the future of the country because it inspires its readers to conversation and follows by action.

In the text of *Facundo*, Sarmiento is direct when he clearly states that Rosas is the root of the problem. He continues to evaluate the problems within society by beginning his text with a thorough description of the geographical makeup throughout the entirety of Argentina. He continues to the cities within the different areas of Argentina. Next, he proceeds to the society, economics, and politics of each city. Lastly, he transitions to a description of the people who make up each society.

Sarmiento's *Facundo* begins with an exhaustive description of the geographical landscape that surrounds the action within the work. For the first time in Argentine literature, Sarmiento is able to offer a description of Argentine landscape on a level in which its readers are able to grasp a mental image of the layout of the land. One critic asserts that Sarmiento's detailed geographic portrayal is powerful and real.

Él (Sarmiento), no sólo formula acusaciones, señala derroteros, sino que revela una poderosa realidad geográfica que, hasta ese momento sólo era visión de viajeros, imprecisas descripciones de estudiosos o concepto abstracto, intelectual, como en *La Cautiva*. (J. Pinto 150)

Sarmiento divides the nation of Argentina into three different categories. Dense forests with impenetrable branches characterize the northern part, near Chacos. The central part shares the Pampas and jungle, depending on the location

of water to support and sustain life. In the south, the Pampas characterizes the land that still seeks nourishment in its desert-like description.

Sarmiento transitions from a geographical description to offering the reader an orientation of the various provinces of San Juan, Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero, San Luis, Mendoza, la Rioja, Tucumán, Salta, Jujuy and Córdoba. He utilizes the society and different elements of these cities with two purposes. Not only does he use his focus as a literary means to lead from a layout of the country to an analysis of the society and its inhabitants, he also uses this as a tool to reveal the economical prosperity in these societies before Rosas's rise to power and to offer examples of how Rosas's oppression chokes the progression of Argentina. By successfully depicting the past and the present state Argentina, two aspects of historical reciprocity are being accomplished simultaneously: the point of reference of a past event and the description of the present through a diagnosis of why it has reached such a point of oppression.

In his distinction between the countryside and the cities, the first appearance of civilization and barbarism occurs. In respect to this theme, Salomon reiterates the common understanding that barbarism, for many critics, represents "el campo", or the countryside, and civilization represents "la ciudad", or the city. He theorizes that the countryside has two elements that have two distinct representations for Sarmiento. As he breaks down this theory, he concludes that the countryside is composed of agricultural and rural aspects (122). The agricultural countryside is the very element that produces civilization and represents the betterment of society. In expression of Sarmiento's view, "la ciudad agrícola del interior podría ser el

mejor foco del progreso argentino” (Salomon 123). Sarmiento focuses on his home province of San Juan to demonstrate the importance and value of progressive agriculture within the economy. The relationship between the countryside and the city remains healthy until Rosas separates these two elements of society. Upon the capture of San Juan by General Facundo, San Juan fell under the power of Rosas. Rosas severs the hands of the farmers and traders through the monopoly that Rosas maintains. As a result, the inhabitants virtually abandon the city as they flee for safety to other countries. San Juan becomes a skeleton. The relationship between the countryside and the city is of utmost importance as each represents barbarism and civilization, respectively. Furthermore, the separation of two harmonious aspects of society display a form of oppression by Rosas that directly affects the economic state of Argentina. Rosas serves as the barbarian that impedes the path to continued civilization of both countryside and the city. Juan Pinto suggests the importance of Sarmiento’s dichotomy:

Él es la primera integración total del hombre argentino del siglo XIX: Sarmiento, el Civilizador, asume en sí la barbarie de su contorno, de sus circunstancias. Rosas era toda la pampa, era el gaucho que no podía asimilar la civilización, porque destronaba su modo de ser patrón, de ser estanciero de la gran estancia Argentina. (151)

Where San Juan serves to investigate the facet of agriculture that Rosas’s regime negatively affects, Córdoba represents the educational facet of society, a matter of great importance to Sarmiento. He speaks highly of the thinkers and

scholars' education of Córdoba alongside his criticism, which include the stagnant old school of thought, passivity and lack of skill in waging war, which are the characteristics that lead to the Cordovan fall by defeat at Facundo Quiroga's hands.

His description of the various cities includes Sarmiento's mention of the issues that plague Argentina such as passivity, deplorable state of education, and undeveloped agriculture. Next, Sarmiento expresses his frustration with the present state of the Republic. He charges the people to resist barbarism: "Esta es la historia de la ciudades argentinas. Todas ellas tienen que reivindicar glorias, civilización y notabilidades pasadas. Ahora el nivel barbarizador pesa sobre todas ellas. La barbarie del interior ha llegado a penetrar hasta las calles de Buenos Aires" (*Facundo* 57). He speaks of barbarism as if it is an infection that reaches the core of their being: an oppression that weighs the people down who fall under the sufferance of Rosas's Federalist government. He further makes reference in Chapter 4 that European civilization is the catalyst that will be responsible for reviving the sick nation.

Among the description of the landscape, cities, and the inhabitants of the country, he portrays the social tendencies, politics, religion and organizations. After establishing a setting through exhaustive characteristics, he then presents the protagonist of his work: Facundo Quiroga. Sarmiento adopts a broad to narrow method in creating his setting by using the country as a whole, diving further into the cities and countryside of the country, and the people that inhabit the land. His next step is to arrive at his primary character in Facundo Quiroga. His scientific method of writing correlates to his development of delivering his desired message.

Sarmiento personifies three groups of oppressed people in Argentina through his description of the landscape. The three groups include the barbaric Argentine, the civilized Argentine and the educated Argentine. Marked by its desert terrain and the difficulty in growing crops, the Pampas represents the barbarous people that do not present any positive futuristic vision for the nation's well being. In regard to nature's descriptions in their works of *Facundo*, "El Matadero", and *La Cautiva*, the literary skill of Sarmiento and Echeverría notes the first symbol of national identity in Argentine history: "El primer aspecto del paisaje patrio que asumió línea y color en nuestra literature, fue (...) la pampa" (Battisteta 147). The northern part represents the civilized race, which are full of resources. And lastly, the central part represents the people who are lost in the middle of the Rosas's regime and the education of a better Argentina. Late in the work, Sarmiento makes mention of the uneducated part of society that Rosas uses as instruments in his government. According to Sarmiento, this group of people should be pardoned for their actions simply because they are following orders without consciousness of wrong from right. Sarmiento says:

Todo depende de las preocupaciones que dominan en ciertos momentos, y el hombre que hoy se ceba en sangre por fanatismo era ayer un devoto inocente y será mañana un buen ciudadano, desde que desaparezca la excitación que lo indujen el crimen. (*Facundo* 237)

He relates these members of society to the French citizens during the French Revolution in 1793 who were pardoned for their cruel actions. Only sixty people

were murdered, along with the head, Robespierre, and the others became contributing members of society thereafter. This type of people, referred to as the *mazorqueros* in Rosas's regime, are puppets and are manipulated, influenced or ordered in whatever way their leader desires (*Facundo* 237). This principle is also present at the beginning when Sarmiento is setting the scene for Facundo's entrance. He mentions, while speaking about the recruitment of troops:

El gobierno de las ciudades es el que da el título de comandante de campaña; pero como la ciudad es débil en el campo, sin influencia y sin adictos, el gobierno echa mano de los hombres que más temor le inspiran para encomendarles este empleo, a fin de tenerlos en su obediencia; manera muy conocida de proceder de todos los gobiernos débiles, [...] (*Facundo* 44)

In the same way the commanders of the caudillos exercise this method along with past leaders in France and Spain, Rosas does the same. This is the very reason that Rosas maintains control through oppression for so long.

The oppression that Rosas exercises over the people is one of force. Clearly, Sarmiento states that the goal of Facundo and Rosas, independently of one another, is to enlist the men into whom they invoke the most fear. The oppressed men fight for their own lives, not asking or caring what the purpose or consequence of their actions are. In this way, they become controllable by the government and a tool that Rosas uses to achieve his will.

In Chapter 1, Sarmiento divides the inhabitants of Argentina into two distinct groups: Spanish and indigenous. He also mentions the mulattos (black

slaves) in making a connection between the civilized and the rustic man. To begin his classification of barbarism in regards to the people, Sarmiento states while talking about these three groups of people:

La fusión 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 de ponerle espuela y sacarle de su paso habitual. Mucho debe de haber contribuído a producir este resultado desgraciado la incorporación de indígenas que hizo la colonización. Las razas americanas viven en la ociosidad y se muestran incapaces, aun por medio de guido. Esto sugirió la idea de introducir negros en América, que tan fatales resultados ha producido. (*Facundo* 16)

Sarmiento clearly blames the indigenous races of the Americas as the cause of the problems that Argentina is currently facing. Sarmiento continues his clarification of society's different peoples as he states the role of the tracker and the scout.

An overwhelming interest in barbarism pervades his work. For example, mention of el *rastreador* (tracker) and el *baqueano* (scout) and their descriptions intricately portray their talents in knowing how to track a fleeing animal or person and how to determine one's exact location, respectively. Throughout the work, Sarmiento places a great emphasis on the description of the gaucho and its characteristics of the countryside, but means to rid it of existence. In reality, Sarmiento seeks to rid Argentina of the backwards gaucho but makes it a national



symbol. In his introduction, he speaks of the gaucho's continual presence in the nation's culture and traditions when he says:

“¡No!; ¡no ha muerto! ¡Vive aún! ¡Él vendrá!” ¡Cierto! Facundo no ha muerto; está vivo en las tradiciones populares, en la política y revoluciones argentinas; en Rosas, su heredero, su complemento; su alma ha pasado a este otro molde más acabado, más perfecto y lo que en él Rosas en sistema, en efecto y fin. (*Facundo* 252)

He relates the barbarous and uncivilized traits of Facundo directly to Rosas and is so bold to state that these traits will end in failure.

Throughout his masterpiece, he sets up the last chapter to break down, in a series of questions, the troubles of the Republic from the past that lead to the present state, and offers what will come of said troubles in a positive light. Chapter 15 of *Facundo* performs historical reciprocation in its most simple form. Each question is a manifestation (diagnosis) of some sort of oppression on society caused by Rosas's government. Each response offers a varied positive aspect in which immigration is viewed as a necessity for society's well being to recover (prognosis) and raise out of oppression. Therefore, in this question and answer form, the past story of how Rosas came to power and the oppression of the Indigenous race, the gaucho, and the common people, is the historical point of reference that Sarmiento uses to diagnose the issues that plague the country. The response to each question serves as a hopeful prognosis on a variety of issues such as immigration, free expression, education, and foreign trade. These questions include:

“¿Aborrece Rosas a los extranjeros?” Sarmiento uses such a simple question to exemplify the hate that foreigners have for Rosas himself along with their willingness to take up arms against him.

“¿Ha privado a sus conciudadanos de todos los derechos y desnudados de toda garantía?” Sarmiento replies to his own inquiry to state the involvement of foreigners in business and society. Native Argentines fear Rosas’s vigilance with such intensity that foreigners are employed and used as business associates for fear of treachery.

“¿Los gauchos, la plebe y los compadritos lo elevaron?” In the attempt to reveal such a truth of the tyranny of Rosas, the author states that Rosas has murdered the people that lifted him to his position. He offers irony in his report of the famous sayings characteristic of the Rosas regime:

La población argentina desaparece, y la extranjera ocupa su lugar en medio de los gritos de la Mazorca y de la *Gaceta*: *¡Mueran los extranjeros!* Como la unidad se realiza gritando: *¡Mueran los unitarios!* Como la federación ha muerto gritando: *¡Viva la federación!* (*Facundo* 229)

“¿No quiere Rosas que se naveguen los ríos?” The importance of the Río de la Plata is of equal importance in Argentina as the Mississippi River is in the colonization of North America. Sarmiento speaks of its lonely waters due to Rosas’s single control and exploitation in which he alone experiences achievement. Sarmiento believes, in time, that other countries, joined with his own, will grow to

understand the vitality of the river for success in both importation and exportation of valuable goods that are demanded around the world.

“¿Ha perseguido Rosas la educación pública y hostilizado y cerrado los colegios, la Universidad y expulsado a los jesuítas?” The issue of education to all facets of society is a matter of utmost importance to Sarmiento. In this light, Sarmiento incorporates both the importance of emigration as well as education from abroad. The inevitable infection of foreign education as it relates to political policy, philosophy, and the arts, will take root in the deserted land of Argentina because of the hundreds of students that attend institutions in countries such as France, Chile, Brazil, North America, England and Spain. Sarmiento believes these students will return to their homeland to fight, without arms against a “tirano semibárbaro” (229).

“¿Tiene una antipátia mortal a los poderes europeos?” Sarmiento observes the placement and number of armies and navies around the world while comparing the fully armed and guarded Buenos Aires to the placement of a single foreign warship in neighboring free American states such as Chile. What does this mean? The author is attempting to state Rosas’s fear of foreign powers, indirectly his fear of defeat, as well as the necessary surveillance of such a radical leader by foreign powers.

“¿Triunfará?” Here we have a simple question that Sarmiento dignified with a simple, yet profound, response. Because of Rosas’s cruel, brutal tactics, the emigrants who return with the aforementioned education and will to defeat the tyrant will avenge the citizens under Rosas that perished.

The last question that is presented to the reader is the pinnacle of the theme of oppression within his work:

¿Ha encadenado la prensa y puesto una mordaza al pensamiento para que no discuta los intereses de la patria, para que no se ilustre e instruya, para que no revele los crímenes horrendos que ha cometido y que nadie quiere creer a fuerza de ser espantosos e inauditos?

*(Facundo 228-230)*

Initially, a one-word answer to these great accusations reveals Sarmiento's passionate state to this absurdly hypothetical question. That one word is Sarmiento's own: "¡Insensato!" (230). Throughout his novel, Sarmiento describes many of the horrific measures Rosas takes to attain his position as leader of the Republic and moreover, his brutality in sustaining his power. Rosas represents the very essence of oppression through the evil and fear he exercises over the Argentine people during his regime. Throughout his tenure, he destroys in ten years, what takes centuries to achieve. These achievements range from improved education, foreign affairs, economical growth, and immigration, with many others. The fear of making an utterance in opposition to Rosas was instilled by the cutting of the throat of those that dared do so. The result, over ten years of suppressed silence, is a shriek of disgust by foreigners as well as Argentines themselves in a cry for freedom, for rights, for good, for peace. Rosas desired to put a hindrance on thought, but Sarmiento states in his prognosis of the disgustful scream that only expression can be hindered, not thought.

Many critics suggest that the development of Facundo Quiroga throughout his book is not only a biography of said character but also an autobiography of Sarmiento. The theory supports itself because of the similarities between the character of Facundo and the life of Sarmiento. For example, both were without a home. Sarmiento and Facundo are both Argentine citizens who strive to better their homeland, each in his own way. However, Facundo, a gaucho, traveled from place to place defeating and conquering. Facundo suffers from the oppression of his freedom. His mindset as a gaucho is one of freedom from all superior forces. Facundo continually chases anyone who challenges him into a battle. This pride and arrogance leads ultimately to his death at Barranca Yaco.

Sarmiento was exiled from Argentina on three separate occasions because of the threat he presented to Rosas. Therefore, he, too, traveled from place to place, seeking refuge as well as political advancement. Sarmiento used Facundo as a character that could relate to all members of the Argentine society, even that of the foreigner. The gaucho was Facundo himself in his attire, walk, habits, personality, and relationship with nature. The educated peoples can see themselves in Facundo as well. The ability to lead troops and manipulate the thought and actions of his troops requires intellect. The soldier can mirror himself in Facundo; the desire to fight to the death and never suffer defeat is a characteristic of many great soldiers during the Argentine revolution. The political leaders can relate to Facundo; the ability to charge a group of soldiers into a war without questioning their leaders strategies or intentions is innate and only mature in time.

Sarmiento exercises a relationship between Facundo and every member of society with a two-fold purpose: 1. He seeks to relate to his audience so that all peoples are able to understand the importance of the oppressive situation owned by the Republic and seek to rise above it. 2. He demonstrates that Facundo's death represents the death of all members of society at one point or the other. Sarmiento fuses all aspects of society in time and circumstance by describing the past and present, and instilling hope for the future: "Tiempo y Circunstancia. (...) este concepto engloba el sarmientino 'Civilización y Barbarie', que también significa un evento temporal, circunstancial que luego se integra en un solo concepto: la Nación Argentina" (J. Pinto 151). Without leaving a single aspect of society unable to identify with at least a part of the text, Sarmiento offers a challenge to be influential and contribute to society's well being in whatever role into which a person is born. Sarmiento proclaims the importance of every person in society to input his or her natural abilities for society's overall good.

Sarmiento tends to emphasize his description of Facundo as well as other aspects of barbarism in his work. In fact, the first description of the Argentine gaucho in Chapter 2 that Sarmiento presents to the reader is exotic and captivating. He recognizes the poetic side of the conditions of Argentina's pastoral life: "No puede, por otra parte, negarse que esta situación tiene su costado poético, fases dignas de la pluma del romanticista" (25). The publication and reception of the famous epic poem *Martín Fierro* demonstrates the fruition of Sarmiento's prophetic statement. The gaucho's strong will infatuate Sarmiento. As a result of that strong will, Facundo was driven to death at Barranca Yaco, as can be seen in Chapter 13,

even while receiving several signs and forewarnings of his impending death. An interesting connection to make, considering the vicarious method in which he tells his own story, Sarmiento admires the strong will of the gaucho and the so-called barbaric people, yet, he seeks to rid them from society. He manages to still connect with these characteristics, yet criticize them strongly throughout the work. One of Sarmiento's intentions is to focus on the evil desires and negative aspects of his society with hopes to gain knowledge on how to approach them. In Chapter 3, he makes one of his many criticisms toward the caudillos as well as the Rosas regime: Los hombres de Rosas alejan el mal del momento presente para que se produzca más tarde en dimensiones colosales (*Facundo* 44). Many Argentine leaders, especially Rosas, focus on implementing change, ignoring those problems and hoping they will disappear as a result of change. As stated in the Introduction, Sarmiento's life is full of instituting change that furthers his nation's success, but is characterized by dealing with problematic issues first. Sarmiento makes clear the importance of resolving the issues that cause oppression's knot:

Necesítase, empero, para desatar este nudo, que no ha podido cortar la espada, estudiar prolijamente las vueltas y revueltas de los hilos que lo forman y buscar en los antecedentes nacionales, en la fisonomía del suelo, en las costumbres y tradiciones populares, los putnos en que están pegados. (*Facundo* 252)

Sarmiento uses *Facundo's* character as a method to describe his country as he views it. He seeks to describe the different stages of *Facundo's* life from birth, infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, and adulthood to manifest his opinion and

vision of Argentina. As every nation possesses an infancy, Facundo Quiroga begins in this juncture. Through the life of Facundo, Sarmiento strives to iterate the barbaric habits and characteristics that will lead to a nation's demise if measures are not taken to free itself from the oppression that restricts Argentina's progression. Sarmiento's two forms of oppression include a lack of education and a lack of political unity. In the same way, Sarmiento speaks of the political unrest of his motherland in this time period and seeks to claim a cause to the effect. That cause is barbarism. Barbarism, to Sarmiento, entails anything indigenous, gaucho, uneducated, and Rosas. Barbarism's effects render political instability and social unrest. The next step in his process is to state through his work what barbarism is at its core. The heart of the role of Facundo Quiroga in his work is Rosas's Federalist barbaric oppression of the Argentine people.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

*Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie*, Sarmiento's most famous literary publication, seeks to make clear the oppressive state that Argentina suffers from under Rosas's government by using historical reciprocation. Two forms of oppression are prominent in the text: oppression by force and oppression by choice. The groups of people that Sarmiento depicts as suffering from Rosas's oppression are the Unitarists, the gaucho, and the men in the military drafted or enlisted for service. While the Unitarists and the gaucho endure oppression by the forceful Federalist government, the people that serve in the military often do so by choice and submit themselves to the puppetry of Rosas's wishes. The main theme within



the work, civilization versus barbarism serves as a basis for which a reader can derive the theme of oppression.

The description of nature's landscape serves to distinguish between the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism. Through his description of the past state of the various provinces, the present and his forecast into the future, he practices historical reciprocity in a diagnostic and scientific method of writing. He offers a diagnosis to the symptom of governmental oppression in Argentina, which is the barbaric Federalist government of Rosas. More symptoms the choking of progression include the severance from immigration, lack of personal rights, no foreign trade, and lack of education. Sarmiento suggests that Rosas intentionally limits thinking and original thought among the people in an attempt to maintain their cooperation. Sarmiento diagnoses the problems of the country and further seeks to present remedies for the situation. He speaks of the positive influences of European civilization, public and higher education, immigration, foreign trade, and centralization of government. Through Sarmiento's writing of *Facundo*, he offers to his audience the most complete description of Argentina's suffering from political oppression up to his time. The origin and identity of Argentina is furthered by the recognition of the gaucho and the Pampas as unique characteristics that play a primary role in the oppression throughout Argentina's society and literature.

## Chapter 2:

### Esteban Echeverría and the Oppression of a Slain Captive

#### 2.1 Introduction

Sarmiento offers a solid foundation when studying the theme of civilization and barbarism within the confines of Rosas's government. However, in this chapter, the aim is to consider the method of historical reciprocation that Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851) undertakes poetically and in narrative form to demonstrate the oppression of Rosas over the people and the issues that accompany such a stark difference of opinion by the opposing Federalist and Unitarist parties. First, through a biography on the life of Echeverría, it becomes clear how he develops and why he possesses the convictions that are prevalent in his writings. After an analysis of his childhood, travels, education and sociopolitical position in Argentina, a direct relationship to his writing style and principles are easily comprehensible. Echeverría's works of *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero" incorporate the three-step process of accomplishing historical reciprocation by mentioning a past event to identify the struggles of governmental oppression and offer suggestions or prophetic statements toward the future such as the metaphorical flood that will conquer Rosas's government in "El Matadero".

Throughout this investigation of "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*, social, economic, and political views arise as a part of the diagnosing the problems within

Argentina under Rosas's regime. Each viewpoint expressed goes against the Federalist government of Rosas:

En esa correspondencia de agosto de 1845 un vergonzante Gutiérrez confiesa a su amigo que acaba de elogiar el *Facundo* en la prensa antes de leerlo y expresa su temor sobre la repercusión nociva que tendrá la profusión de sangre de la obra de Sarmiento. Prieto quiere imaginar que el crítico tiene en mente el manuscrito de Echeverría... (Schvartzman 8)

Schvartzman makes the connection between a controversial text that speaks out against the Federalist Party and Rosas in both *Facundo* and Echeverría's "El Matadero".

With these negative views in consideration, these two works are in favor of the Unitarist party and in opposition to the very thought of anything Federalist in government. Many critics and experts in this field of study have inspected and written on both "El Matadero" (1871) and *La Cautiva* (1837). Their ideas and opinions are essential to the support and opposition of the new theory presented.

The first work of Echeverría investigated in this thesis is "El Matadero" (1871). This work was published posthumously, and is considered a short essay hosting the theme of civilization versus barbarism primarily by directly relating the civilized to the Unitarist party and the barbarians to the Federalist party. In this work, themes of religion and social unrest that become dominant by his continual utilization of irony and metaphors to describe the church and the sufferance of the Unitarists, respectively. Echeverría accomplishes this task by implementing a

Romantic style in this short story as well as in his publication of the poem *La Cautiva* through his profound description of nature.

*La Cautiva* is Echeverría's most popular and well-known poem in which he seeks to deal with the captivity and oppression that Rosas maintains over the different levels of society. These levels include his men, the Unitarists, the Indians of the desert, the church, and the government. In looking into the poem's drama, a direct relationship can be made between Facundo in *Facundo*, the young Unitarist in "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*'s own character, María. Each character serves multiple forms of captivity and experiences multiple forms of oppression and grief.

Both works are vital to the understanding of nineteenth century Argentina—a time period plagued with uncertainty and betrayal. When coupling the two major works of Echeverría with that of Sarmiento's *Facundo*, it is possible to look inward through two different literary genres to see outward through the eyes of their authors.

## 2.2 Biography of Esteban Echeverría

José Esteban Antonino Echeverría is born into a state of political unrest in Argentina. Its future unstable, viceroys rule the country while under oppression from neighboring countries. It is important to note Argentina's state of unrest during his childhood for an understanding of the process that leads to the composition of his future works. In 1810, a revolution takes place that highlights, the first appearance of the issue of civilization versus barbarism in the Argentine culture. The city of Buenos Aires is represented by an interest in centralized

government, economic progression through foreign trade, education, and Europeanization. These concepts are later combined to form what becomes known as the Unitarist Party. The Pampas, or the interior, is represented by a desire for provincial governments, freedom from state, and isolation from foreign powers. These concepts are later combined to form what becomes known as the Federalist Party.

Little is known of Echeverría's childhood other than the fact that he had nine siblings and sought to please his parents, who were wealthy bourgeois residents of San Telmo. His father died when Echeverría was only eleven years of age, leaving him to care for his siblings and mother. Shortly after his father's death, he and one of his brothers enroll in the school of San Telmo along with another 180 students. Here he studied reading, writing, Christian doctrine and politics. Rivadavia was in place as head of the government at this time and evidence of political involvement in the education system was evident in that schools undertook the task of instilling a patriotic passion in students. In 1822, Echeverría's mother died, making a profoundly painful impact on him. He stated after his mother's death, "Calla por no afligirme, pero yo he creído leer en su semblante mi acusación y mi matirio [...] yo robé al mundo aquella vida tan preciosa" (qtd. in Jitrik 9). The deaths of his parents play a vital role in the development of his life's trajectory because his pain renders him susceptible to a thirst for knowledge to subdue the pain he feels from such dramatic experiences in his adolescence. These occurrences will demonstrate the fit that he and the Romanticism have together.

In 1822, after the death of his mother, he enrolls in the Department of Preparatory Studies of the University where he studies Latin with Mariano Guerra and philosophy with Juan Manuel Fernández de Agüera. He also studies art and business and chooses to spend his free time learning French, poetry and history. His mentors and teachers become impressed with his capacity to learn, and encourage him to travel to Europe to further his education, as was common of the time; however, Rivadavia's government urges students to remain in Argentina to become as educated as possible within the state by forming a business or involving themselves in politics. Nevertheless, in 1825, Echeverría embarks for Europe. He arrives in Paris later that year and begins studying various sciences such as chemistry, geography, and art. Jitrik suggests this accumulation of knowledge is a rebirthing process for a scarred young man (16).

In July of 1830, Echeverría departs for Argentina for economic reasons. Echeverría's return to Argentina marks a crossing point in which he makes the transition from student to intellect. Rosas becomes governor of Buenos Aires in this same year, which allows Echeverría to step into a role of a sociopolitical writer. He does just that with one of his first works, *Elvira*. Completed in 1832, it exercises Romantic elements such as the individual, sadness, and an evocation of feeling and is met with reception. Echeverría assumes responsibility for the impact his writing can have when he says "He debido malgastar la sustancia de me cráneo en esteriles rimas debido a la desdichada situación por la que pasa mi patria" (qtd. in Jitrik 24). According to the rephrase of Jitrik, "la poesía no es actividad autónoma sino al servicio de algo que la trasciende" (24). Echeverría's passion to

write politically to speak his convictions had a profound effect on the future of his homeland. Juan Pinto states when writing concerning the literature of Echeverría:

Llega nutrida por la savia del romanticismo, entonces en boga en Francia y halla como campo propicio en los hechos históricos que a partir de 1837 hasta 1852, determinaron una forma de nuestro país: negación o afirmación; libertad o dictadura. (173)

As a result of the French Romanticism, or European Romanticism, Echeverría writes with a Romantic style in both his prose and his poetry. Two of his most famous works are *La Cautiva* and “El Matadero”. The profound effect of *La Cautiva* is due to its incorporation of so many elements within society:

tiene por lo menos estas consecuencias: consagra la implantación del romanticismo, incorpora el paisaje argentino a la gran literatura, inicia una poesía nacional..., y da lugar a la ‘gauchesca culta’, sin contar con que expresa ideas y conceptos polémicos de actualidad a través de la literatura. (Jitrik 25)

Each of these consequences within *La Cautiva* is a result of his life experiences and influences.

Echeverría writes “El Matadero” at least a decade after the publication of *La Cautiva*. This suspicion is present because the text of this short essay is Romantic in its narration; however, it contains elements of Realism. Additionally, it follows that this work is written around 1849 because the Realism was beginning to take its course in Europe at this time. Echeverría, as an educated man, no doubt was aware

of the latest writings and styles used. Had he written it earlier, his work would have maintained a strictly Romantic tone similar to that of *La Cautiva*.

With an understanding of the influences that mapped the life of Echeverría, I will take a look at “El Matadero” in detail to discuss its themes as it relates to the social and political status of the country through his views.

### 2.3 “El Matadero”

Echeverría’s influence as a writer had a great effect on Argentine society. Echeverría’s time in France influenced him to the Romanticism. Upon his return to his home country, he adopted these literary elements as can be seen through his works such as “El Matadero” and *La Cautiva*. These works employ many Romantic characteristics such as the idea of revealing the writer’s message to the reader through a careful evocation of nature’s bounty. Echeverría also writes his most famous piece, “El Matadero”, with irony to produce a profound sense of sarcasm and absurdity in criticizing the Republic’s government. Echeverría learned this style from studying Voltaire in France, a writer of the French Enlightenment, who composed his works nearly a century before Echeverría and was famous for his wit and satire. Other European influences include English writers such as Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Echeverría exercises both of these tactics in “El Matadero” in the very beginning of his work through the description of the setting.

The metaphor of land and weather to describe the state of Argentina is imperative in establishing a vision for the reader. First, one must consider how the



author sets up this metaphor while considering Sarmiento's *Facundo*. Sarmiento writes his masterpiece with great respect to detail in his descriptions. Different from Echeverría's style, his is very direct, which is characteristic of his other writings such as *De la educación popular* and *Educación común*. As a result, Sarmiento's descriptions follow with an explanation of his opinions, leaving the reader affected but with little to determine for himself. This can be seen firsthand in Chapter Fifteen of *Facundo*. Sarmiento performs this explanation through making a statement or posing a question of effect then continues with an extensive account of a cause and offers reasoning to overcome the mentioned struggle:

¿Ha perseguido Rosas la educación pública y hostilizado y cerrado los colegios, la Universidad y expulsado los jesuítas? No importa; centenares de alumnos argentinos cuentan en su seno los colegios de Francia, Chile, Brasil, Norteamérica, Inglaterra y aun España. Ellos volverán luego a realizar en su patria las instituciones que ven brillar en todos esos Estados libres, y pondrán su hombro para derrocar al tirano semibárbaro. (*Facundo* 229)

Therefore, it is safe to say that Sarmiento writes literally in many cases, while Echeverría writes literarily in most cases. The reader can recognize the influence of Echeverría's vast education in his writings by his use of literary elements, such as the implementation of metaphors using nature, prosopopeia, personification, simile, hyperbole, satire, irony, allegory, and foreshadowing. This chapter will interpret these devices to demonstrate Echeverría's concern for the social and political status of his country.

Echeverría begins implementing literary devices at the beginning of his work by describing the design of the land in Buenos Aires. His point of reference is even more precise as to mention the Barrio del Alto de San Pedro, a suburban area of Buenos Aires. The diagnostic step of historical reciprocation occurs in this particular part of his work as he speaks to the reader in regard to the suffering social state of Argentina, which in Echeverría's opinion, is due to the government of Rosas. Through his description, he leads the reader to believe that the Argentine citizens are subjected to the victimization of nature's wrath that human actions evoke. These actions can be inferred to be a direct act of Rosas and his government. The mention of the city overflowing with watery mud can be determined to represent the depraved and polluted society infected by what Echeverría believes to be Rosas's Federalist government ("El Matadero" 92). Born in Buenos Aires, Rosas represents the catalyst of the infection that comes from within the city. The only means to rid the country of such a disease is from an outside source of nature. It is important, then, to compare the description of nature in both Sarmiento's *Facundo* and Echeverría's "El Matadero".

Sarmiento begins *Facundo* with a very detailed and exhaustive geographical description of Argentina in its entirety, as opposed to Echeverría's pinpointed description of the occurrence in Buenos Aires. However, Echeverría's description is arguably as detailed as Sarmiento's description in *Facundo* when considering the scientific approach that Sarmiento practices and the literary approach of implementing literary devices that Echeverría practices. Mentioned in the First Chapter, Sarmiento took the first four chapters of *Facundo* to establish his setting

through his description of nature, the cities, and the people that inhabit those cities. In opposition, Echeverría chooses to incorporate only one city in his work, which represents the heartbeat of Argentina, and the heartbeat of the writer. Echeverría mentioned the geography, the arrangement of the city, and the people that inhabit it, as did Sarmiento. One must take into account that Echeverría chose to write about his home city, readers may sense the writer's sense of urgency and depth of importance his words hold. Sarmiento's *Facundo* possesses this same characteristic when realizing that he also wrote this work as a means to didactically reveal to the reader problems that infect his homeland. Both writers composed their works during this time of unrest in Argentina, accounting for the profound sense of urgency and importance to which the reader can relate (J. Pinto 173). Echeverría writes as if the city, his city, has been cut off from the rest of the world, hopeless and facing certain demise. This can be seen through his description that, to the north of the city, the land is filled with water and mud. The river and rains are growing rough and pushing water throughout the low lands, breaking the banks of the rivers and ditches. Echeverría creates a dark scene in the mind of the reader with his use of vocabulary such as "contaminar", "los pantanos", "embravecido", "bajas tierras", "lluvia copiosa", "acuoso barro", "turbias aguas", to list a few ("El Matadero" 92). The fact that Echeverría chooses to paint such a dark scene by a city surrounded by water gives evidence that his description is mythically and carefully calculated to deliver his message. When water surrounds a city during these times, the city often experiences great socioeconomic success due to its location because of its access to navigation and trade. In this case, Echeverría is not

stating that the water is the evil. In fact, he is arguing that the very source of success for many other countries and cities around the world will be the saving grace for Argentina. The water, as will be seen through its description later in this chapter, represents fate that is knocking on Argentina's door. This fate represents the prognosis step of historical reciprocation and the future is a metaphorical flood that will drown Rosas's government.

This hope for the future can be seen in one word when Echeverría describes the landscape from the southern side of the city. He states, first, that the water is filled with small boats, blackened chimneys and the tops of trees floating along. He continues with personification by stating, "La ciudad... echaba desde sus torres y barrancas atónitas miradas al horizonte como implorando misericordia al Altísimo" ("El Matadero" 92). A sense of desperation invoked by a fear of destruction by the citizens of Buenos Aires is felt in this statement. The emotional status that Echeverría displays on behalf of the inhabitants of the city leads the reader to believe that they are stricken with poverty and hopelessness. At the beginning of his description, however, he states that the water has a whitened tint, beginning his foreshadowing for the future ("El Matadero" 92). The whitened water is determined to represent purity, cleanliness, goodness, and hope to the future of Argentina. Echeverría's foreshadowing claims the future will possess a purifying flood to rid Argentina of what he believes to be tyranny and governmental dictatorship in Rosas. Echeverría's method of including color to represent thoughts and feelings in his description of nature is a pure example of a Romantic characteristic in his literature.

The inference of an imminent flood is the manner in which Echeverría opts to begin his work. His first sentence is ironic, setting the tone for his intense use of satire throughout the remainder of “El Matadero”. He begins by stating that he will not write concerning ancient history, like the story of Noah, and lists a genealogy, as is the accepted and normal way of writing for the time. If the reader accepts the text at face value, one can interpret that Echeverría pays homage to those writers who precede him as not to criticize them. When considering the placement and context of his work, this seems to only be a part of the parody within the work. However, he ironically and intentionally seasons the reader for the allegory that is to occur in his work. Another intention in beginning with mention of a Biblical reference and the immediate resignation from such a theme is to create an open line to criticize the Catholic Church in Argentina. Had Echeverría not begun his work in this manner, he would not have retained such success in his brilliant metaphor. The mention of the Biblical event of the Great Flood serves as Echeverría’s tool in historically reciprocating the events of the past to foreshadow what will happen in the future. This removal of time constraints within his work generates an opportunity to demonstrate this historical reciprocation of events. This element in his work is essential in developing the action and is a valid example of the direct relationship between history and literature.

Echeverría’s choice to include the story of Noah, which can be found in the book of Genesis 6-8 of the Bible, is unique. It is important to note that he never mentions the Great Flood from the Bible. However, he does mention a flood once he transitions into present day. He represents an indirect separation of the two

Argentine political parties, Federalist, the party of Rosas, and Unitarist. As a Unitarist, Echeverría is considering himself one of the chosen to be saved, like Noah. Once Echeverría makes mention of a flood, his statements are prophetic like those from Genesis 6. In the same way the people of the earth needed to be wiped out because of their great evil, he mentions a “día del juicio” is coming and a “colera divina rebosando” that “se derrama en inundación” (“El Matadero” 93). His courageous statements in regard to Rosas and his regime follow suit to the damnation of the evil ones that perish in Genesis Chapter 8. Furthermore, in the same manner that God stated the evil of mankind, Echeverría states his accusations by saying, “Vuestra impiedad, vuestras herejías, vuestras blasfemias, vuestros crímenes horrendos, han traído sobre nuestra tierra las plagas del Señor. La justicia del Dios de la Federación os declarará malditos” (“El Matadero” 93). The manner, which Echeverría utilizes a Biblical reference to describe the relief that will occur, is from the oppression that Rosas exercises over the society both politically and economically. As a result of cutting off trade from all foreign powers in fear of foreign invasion, Rosas’s dictatorial control of the country results in economic oppression for the entire country. Many products that were once exported and imported lost their demand and business and families suffered to survive.

A second Biblical reference occurs in the former quote. Echeverría makes a correlation between the plagues of Egypt that occurs in Exodus 5-11 and the government of Rosas. In the same practice of using the flood to foreshadow what is to come for the future of Argentina, the plagues represent the punishment that is to come for Rosas’s government. The children of Israel, who were enslaved by the

Egyptians at the time of the plagues, represent the Unitarists who have fallen under the oppression of a modern day Pharaoh: Rosas. Like the children of Israel, due to the evil Pharaoh, the Unitarists have been submitted to Rosas's oppression just as the Egyptians experienced the plagues. Echeverría, in this case, is referring to the unwarranted suffering that the Unitarists have experienced and continue to experience as a result of the acts of Rosas. Just as Noah and anyone who boarded the ark were saved from the great flood, and Egypt was punished for its oppression of the children of Israel, Echeverría's description of the waters that are rising and surrounding Rosas offers hope that the country will be purified through a symbolic flood, which will result in the survival of only the Unitarists, or, the civilized. The great flood, inevitable and necessary according to Scripture, is the form of punishment that Echeverría uses to relate to that of the inevitable effects of nature surrounding his people.

The elimination of time constraints in the initial portion of the work allows for the presentation of a historical occurrence that resonates with the reader while making the transition into the present day. Again, in this portion of his work, historical reciprocation is implemented: when a writer uses the present day as a point of reference to describe the present circumstances while using past occurrences to foreshadow what will occur in the future. Echeverría continues to rid his work of time constraints by directly attacking Rosas, his government, the Federalist Party, and the Catholic Church. He threads both time periods, past and present, together while simultaneously incorporating the future. This presence of

the future is evident through his deliberate damnation of the Federalist Party and his offering of hope to the Unitarist Party.

Upon considering a proposed hope for the future deliverance of Argentina's proposed tyranny, a question of Echeverría's placement of this theme in "El Matadero" arises. Echeverría offers this hope at the beginning of his work and the end is marked by violation and bloodshed. A presentation of hope is not the primary purpose of this work. Rather, his primary theme seems to demonstrate his opinion concerning the barbarism of the Rosas regime and the level to which all of society has been diminished as a result of his leadership. The sequence of events lays for Echeverría a foundation to which he is able to write critically with unharnessed freedom. His tone at the outset is one of urgency and gravity to state: regardless of any measure Rosas can impose to maintain his government, its fall is inevitable.

Echeverría uses the order of events in his work to transition from physical setting, to socioeconomic and religious setting, to characters, to drama. The social and economic poverty is evident throughout this allegory. Also, the weaving of different time components leads smoothly into an introduction of characters that will further demonstrate the socioeconomic troubles presented. By this transition, Echeverría accomplishes the third step of historical reciprocation by presenting the event of his present day *matadero*. This event shows the governmental oppression that is taking place in Argentina as a result of Rosas.

The descriptions of the characters in the work are vivid and detailed. Both the *matadero* and the *carnicero* are depicted as grotesque images. First, the



*carnicero* is described as having a knife in hand, arms and chest showing, long, unkempt hair, while wearing a shirt and a chiripá with a blood-covered face (“El Matadero” 100). This description possesses several similar characteristics with that of the gaucho of the Pampas. The *carnicero*, in turn, serves as foundational representation of barbarism here in “El Matadero”, as serves the primary purpose of the gaucho in *Facundo*. As seen in the Chapter 1, many critics and literary analysts have proposed a commonly accepted theme of barbarism versus civilization present in *Facundo*. These critics include Juan Pinto in his work *Pasión y Suma de la Expresión Argentina*, Noé Jitrick in his direction of *Historia Crítica de la Literatura Argentina*, and Noel Salomon in his article “El Facundo de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento Manifiesto de la preburguesia argentina de las ciudades del interior”. Many of these same critics make a valid connection through the representation of barbarism in the countryside versus the culture of the city, respectively. However, it is important to take note in “El Matadero” what Sarmiento states so bluntly and directly in *Facundo*: “The barbarism of the interior [referring to the Pampas] has come to penetrate the streets of Buenos Aires” (89). By the description of the *carnicero*, the reader can see, firsthand, the presence of barbarism within the city. Echeverría continues with the description of the massacre of the bulls by describing a location that is flat, marshy, and full of mud. The building where the *matadero* sits is old, rundown, and rat-infested. The *matadero* is depicted as being similar to that of the *carnicero*, using obscene and vulgar language. The common people that wait for any pieces left behind by the *carnicero* are described alongside the vultures that soar overhead while cawing.

Echeverría describes the vultures as producing a shade cloud because of their great number. This cloud of shade produced by these vultures is a representation of evil in that the writer describes their presence as a celebration of the massacre. This evil, therefore, is produced by the order of man, not by the nature of God. The people are like these same predators, voraciously collecting entrails of the bulls and are allowed to do so only until the judge of the massacre reestablishes order. The illustration of this event lessens the value of mankind and diminishes even the educated to a state of barbarism from starvation, which is a result of governmental instituted social inequality. After detailing the event by establishing the setting, people and drama, Echeverría states, “En fin, la escena que se representaba en el matadero era para vista, no para escrita” (“El Matadero” 103). In other words, no description will suffice to offer justice to the horror that took place in the *matadero*. In further investigation, however, Echeverría’s depiction seeks to reveal the social and economic troubles that arise as a result of this event. Pinto recognizes Echeverría’s attempt to mix both literature and life: “Literatura y vida... descubre una dimensión nueva a sus contemporáneos y les revela la doble posibilidad: una estética americana y un código social” (J. Pinto 173). The style of writing that Echeverría implements is new and breaks from the “cuadro de costumbres” that other authors previously practiced (Calabrese 88). The rupture in the normal practice of writing is visible in the social code that is dealt with in the event of the *matadero*. Socially, a clear sign of the social inequality can be deduced from such an event, as stated above and is seen through the expressed hierarchy in the text: Rosas, the judge of the event, the *carnicero*, the horsemen who control the bulls and

finally, the common people. All are participants in the event, each possessing a distinct role.

Rosas dictates to the judge what orders are to be given. Identically, Rosas depends on his generals to execute his plans to sustain order in his government. He exercises complete vigilance over his men by forcing them to follow his orders. The cost of disobeying orders normally follows with a severe beating or, at times, a death sentence. The oppression his men feel assures their cooperation. Rosas also receives first fruits of whatever is killed as a display of affection and submission to his will during the *matadero*. The manner in which he maintains his government is one characterized by vigilance. Another characteristic that can be found in both *Facundo* and “El Matadero” is the description of the red sash and/or red shirt that is worn by all citizens and members of the regime in demonstration of loyalty to Rosas. In *Facundo*, it is written that the price of not wearing red could be death. In “El Matadero”, it serves primarily as a sign of barbarism directly implemented by Rosas. Those who voluntarily wore the red ribbon were likely to voluntarily shed another’s blood to maintain his position. On the contrary, those who wore red out of fear and obligation were more likely to have their blood shed involuntarily even in their innocence, just as the bulls in the *matadero*. Such an observation concurs with the two forms of oppression that Sarmiento presents in *Facundo*: oppression by force and oppression by choice. For another supporting example, if an officer were to make a complaint with no justification against a common citizen, the citizen’s livelihood would be in grave danger. This theory also appears in *Facundo* by Sarmiento’s explanation of the positive aspects of having foreigners serve as

business partners to reduce the amount of vigilance exercised by Rosas through spies, and to diminish false accusations (Sarmiento 239-240). The last and final example is the chanting of slogans and phrases that curse the Unitarists and bless the Federalists. Echeverría includes two slogans in the moment in which the judge of the *matadero* is preparing to take the life of the young bull, “¡Mueran los salvajes unitarios! ¡Viva el Restaurador de las Leyes!” (“El Matadero” 110). The slogans the judge calls out possess great worth in Rosas’s regime. When speaking of the barbarism of that day and age Pinto describes the importance of the Federalist slogans in the culture of the time:

los otros apelan al eslogan ‘barbarie primitiva’, según Sarmiento, como ‘Federación o muerte’, o el escatológico ‘mueran los salvajes e inmundos unitarios’... Quienes los plantearon estaban inmersos en su tiempo, vivían dramáticamente *su hora* y, a su modo, ambos bandos centraban su lucha por la argentinidad. (J. Pinto 146)

The fact that Sarmiento and Echeverría both make mention of these sayings in their works demonstrate their dramatic and extensive efforts in making a statement within their works of literature. As Pinto refers to both sides above, Federalists and Unitarists fought for what each believed to be the future of Argentina. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter in our investigation of *La Cautiva*, the battle between these parties evolves into a war between “ ‘Civilización y Barbarie’, que también significa un evento temporal, circunstancial que luego se integra en un solo concepto: la Nación Argentina” (J. Pinto 151). These slogans developed into a symbol of political faith and religion by definition. For example, by stating these

slogans, the judge is claiming the blessing of Rosas on his actions and dedicating his following actions to him. This became commonplace in the time and entailed severity of what can be considered a brainwashing on the part of Rosas to retain complete control of the actions of his men.

The next person listed in the hierarchy in respect to Echeverría's work is the judge of the *matadero*. Considering the control that Rosas had over him as depicted by the author, the judge sits to watch everything occur and is put in place by Rosas himself. In the work, Echeverría criticizes this position using satire. He refers to him as a puppet, lacking in intellect performing his ordered actions without asking questions. This relates directly to the *mazorqueros* that Sarmiento refers to who are characterized by their willingness to perform whatever order given, whether it is derived from fear or good will. The danger to society that this creates is robotic actions lacking completely in original thought. Through Sarmiento and Echeverría's descriptions, the longer a man in the judge's position is not required to think independently and even is restricted from thinking independently; he loses his ability to do so. More importantly, if a man loses his ability to develop and create independent thought, he loses his moral compass. Values, morals, conscience, beliefs, convictions and truth become comprised and justified by the responsible party who severs the heart and mind and what is being demanded. This is the root of the tree called barbarism and is the ultimate form of oppression.

While every level of this proposed hierarchy is often described or can be described as being covered in blood, the *carnicero* is the primary source from whose hands the blood actually flows. Echeverría depicts him as being heartless

and very mechanical in his actions like the judge. He is a prime example of barbarism within the culture due to his unquenchable thirst for more blood. In the description mentioned earlier in this chapter regarding the crowds of people waiting like vultures to take whatever the *carnicero* leaves on the carcass, the work paints a picture as if the *carnicero* leaves almost nothing behind. This illustrates an aspect of the culture that implies greed on behalf of those in Rosas's hands. Other notable qualities include pride on behalf of the *carnicero* from his position, mercilessness in his refusal to leave any meat behind, and insolence in his refusal to follow the traditions of his faith.

When comparing the *mazorqueros* and the judge of the *matadero*, one must stop to also consider the same relation between the *mazorqueros* and the herdsmen that work directly under the judge of the *matadero*. These men, referred to as *enlazadores* and *piliadores*, are responsible for the herding of the bulls as well as maintaining control of the common people. Echeverría describes these men as wearing a vest, a handkerchief, and a red *chiripá*, the color of Rosas's regime. These men, in the midst of the *carnicero*'s work of killing the bulls while maintaining other responsibilities, are trained to follow any orders given by the judge. These men are described as barbaric in nature and appearance and they too can be said to have lost their own will power. Just as they are herdsmen by order of the judge, they too have been diminished to cattle herded by the judge and ultimately by Rosas.

The last level of the hierarchy is the common people. The aforementioned simile, which states that the common people are like vultures and furthermore

compared to dogs, continues to depreciate them to a level below cattle. Left with nothing more than entrails from the *matadero* to recover, the things that these people were left to eat were often indigestible (“El Matadero” 102). Echeverría is using these indigestible foods listed as the entrails of cattle, as symbolism to state the physical, emotional, and spiritual intolerance the common people possess for Rosas’s government. The destiny, without change, will be their death as a people, and as a country. Taking it further, there exists a political metaphor in that the country cannot survive socially or economically in the government’s current state. It may also be inferred, as the city casts a beggar’s stare toward the heavens in appeal for mercy from God in awareness of the ensuing flood, the common people beg for deliverance from the political tyranny that Echeverría depicts.

Disgust for political tyranny, a possible interpretation of Echeverría’s viewpoint, can be seen through the episode with the bull that runs through the streets (“El Matadero” 104-106). The bull clearly represents the Unitarist’s mistreatment by the Federalists, and judging by its actions, the tolerance has reached capacity, rendering its rebelliousness. In the same method in which the young bull runs angrily through the streets resulting in its violation and death, the character of María in *La Cautiva* can be related to the young bull by her acquisition of masculine characteristics in the Pampas when planning and executing her and her husbands escape from the Indians who hold them captive.

## 2.4 *La Cautiva*

Through his works such as “El Matadero” and *La Cautiva*, Echeverría serves as of a mentor of a political-cultural movement in Río de la Plata. Judging from the framework and aim of his works, he is the introducer of Romanticism in the Americas, and the spokesperson for the adequacy of this movement in a new world marked by contradiction (Fleming 55). In Fleming’s opinion, *La Cautiva* is one of the first poems in Latin America that focuses on the national scene that seeks to portray reality. Echeverría uses poetry as his means of focusing on social issues of his day with an agenda to promote his personal political ideas and doctrines. This is a common approach in protest literature used by Sarmiento in *Facundo* and Hernandez in *Martín Fierro* as well.

Echeverría’s poetic works are in part due to the introspection that comes from his own personal journey; therefore, the connection of the drama in the poem with its author is notable. He chose the Pampas as the setting for this work although he was born and spent his childhood and adolescence in Buenos Aires. His personal connection with the Pampas was due to some time spent in Las Talas, an area northeast of Buenos Aires where Echeverría’s parents owned a farm. There, he met a young girl named María who lost her boyfriend and her father in a surprise attack by Indians. Her boyfriend and father were working for the government in a dangerous area. Being fond of María, he had taken certain measures to have them relieved from their duty through his connections with the current Secretary of War. However, his efforts proved to be in vain as the Indian



attack occurred before he could successfully negotiate their reassignment.

Echeverría's personal experience has a direct effect with the action in his work:

En la legalidad de la ficción, importa poco que haya o no un soporte ajeno a la creación misma, pero el hecho de poder probar, en este caso, la existencia de ese antecedente, es relevante porque engarza directamente con una de las características del credo romántico: que la obra nazca comprometida con el medio social y físico en el que se gesta. (Fleming 58)

There is a sense of heartfelt compassion and urgency in the reading of *La Cautiva* that is also present in "El Matadero".

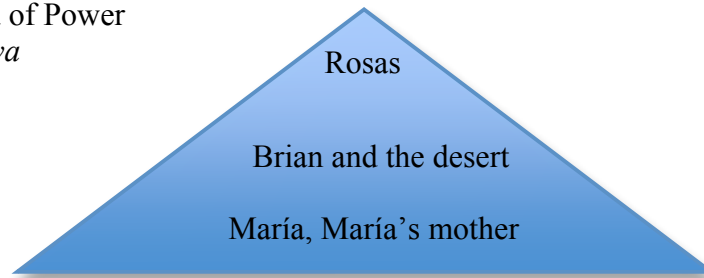
Echeverría uses death to portray the oppression and inconsolable pain that is wrought to the innocent. To Echeverría, pain experienced from the death of a loved one is not justifiable when the death is brought about by political agenda. The Captive, or *La Cautiva*, not only refers to the military man but also to his survivors. First, the feminine gender of the title refers to the protagonist, María, a woman defined by her captivity, robbed of her proper name and re-baptized anonymously as a defeated subject. Echeverría uses the feminine María to represent the nation of Argentina whose rights and identity have been stripped by Rosas. When referring to the military man, I am making reference to the captivity and control that Rosas possesses over the men in his regime. This idea can also be supported by the image portrayed of the judge of the *matadero*, *carnicero*, *enlazadores* and *piliadores* in "El Matadero". All of the men in these positions are nothing more than instruments used by Rosas to complete his agenda. Sarmiento makes reference to this same

idea when he mentions the incapacity of the *mazorqueros* to think independently in *Facundo*. *La Cautiva*, however, uses the desert of the Pampas to serve as the captor (Fleming 58).

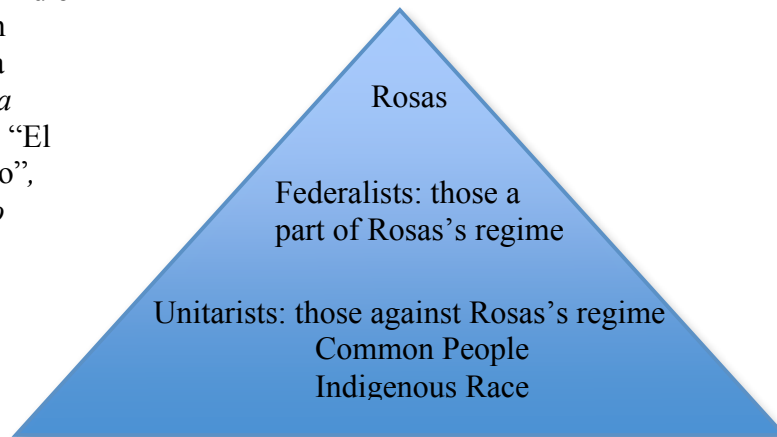
If these men are considered captives of the government, so are the survivors of these men. There is also another facet of society that is represented as captives of Rosas's government, leading to a proposed pyramid of captivity. This pyramid is not based on historical fact but only on the interpretation of Echeverría's text in *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero". Rosas can be said to be at the pinnacle of this pyramid, in the most powerful position. If Rosas were to be removed from this position the pyramid of captivity would no longer function. The second level of the pyramid is formed of the men in Rosas's regime: *mazorqueros*, judge of the *matadero*, *carnicero*, *enlazadores*, *piliadores* and the husband and boyfriend of María and her mother. These men are nothing more than the enforcers of Rosas's will. Those that are being enforced represent the third, most populated and final part of the pyramid. The citizens of Argentina who have been subjected to the negative effects of Rosas's actions are these people. In "El Matadero", the obvious representation is the men, women and children who are made equal by Echeverría with scavengers such as buzzards. In *La Cautiva*, this third level can be seen in the characters of María and her mother along with the Indigenous people of the Pampas who suffer as a result of the evil desires of the tyrannical Rosas.

This proposed pyramid scheme is seen in the works of *Facundo* and "El Matadero" as well when considering the political theme of these works.

2.1 Pyramid of Power  
in *La Cautiva*



2.2 Pyramid of  
Power in  
umbrella  
form: *La  
Cautiva*, “El  
Matadero”,  
*Facundo*



The theme of love is a common characteristic in the Romantic time period in which Echeverría wrote *La Cautiva*, and the theme is a catalyst of the action in the work. As can be seen throughout the work, María is at the foundational level of the pyramid, resulting in her suffering and inability to rise above her state of captivity. Brian, on the other hand, suffers from a prison of ideal love. Moreover, the reader can also find him in a prison where he is cognizant of his actions yet unable to break from the chains by which he is tied to the very monster that will deliver him to death. His situation warrants rebellion, however, the result of his rebellion will certainly lead to his death. Nevertheless, his death becomes a reality at the hands of an Indian raid bringing to fruition the Romantic theme of love which

ends in disaster every time. His internal struggle for freedom from his enslaved position as servant to the Republic and from his unattainable love can be seen firsthand within the poem (*La Cautiva* 189-196). Here he reaches a point of *anagnorisis*, which is a realization of certain demise given his circumstances. This is a common characteristic in Romantic works.

Within *La Cautiva*, Echeverría implements the description of nature in a unique manner that is worth noting. The commonly used purpose of using nature's description within Romanticism was to offer introspection into the characters' internal state of being. Within this work, however, Fleming points out that Echeverría often uses nature to describe other elements such as the aspiration of a desired state of being and the description of the captors, as opposed to the protagonists of the work. However, Echeverría's use of the frontier as a method to diagnose the problems within the Republic and offer an antidote to that diagnosis makes up two of the three steps in historical reciprocation. The diagnosis is when María encounters the Indians; Echeverría is demonstrating the inevitability of contact with the frontier—the crash between barbarism and civilization. This battle must be fought and overcome to bring about a better future for the Republic.

Operé presents two arguments of *La Cautiva*: “el poema *La Cautiva* es un texto programático cuya argumentación funciona en doble dirección” (548). The two arguments encompass the issue of the Indian and the universal destiny reserved to Argentina. These two arguments are directly related by a cause and effect method. The barbarism of the frontier exceeds the civilization of the city in the work of *La Cautiva*, presenting a discrepancy in a country's ability to understand,

much less agree on a future plan for success. Therefore, this controversy results in few words and much bloodshed leading to little progress. This controversy is within the confines of territorial ownership. For example, when Argentina was consumed in its war for independence, many Federalists and Unitarists, alike, hired Indians and others from the interior to fight on their behalf; all were unified for a common cause. In the age of Echeverría and Sarmiento, this unity dissipated and was left to what can be deemed a civil war between the civilized and barbarians in search of their own interests. Each group wanted ownership of what was assumed to be its rightful territory.

Echeverría describes María by placing her on a pedestal with descriptions such as “belleza peregrina”, “delicada flor”, “tímida doncella” (*La Cautiva* 548). One must take into account the picture he paints in the reader’s mind while leaving this description to enter into the drama of the poem. Within the drama the reader will note her description as the perfect woman becomes distorted and skewed through her actions, leaving the reader to question who is the woman with such bravery and valor. Echeverría represents the Argentine nation by charging its citizens to assume its responsibility to fight for survival and well being. This charge serves as a part of the prognosis and suggestion of historical reciprocation, and is incorporated in the drama of the work. This reverse role of a woman within the text was commonplace in the Romantic literature of authors who influenced Echeverría. These authors include Balzac, a Frenchman who composed *La Comédie Humaine*, and the Englishman, Coleridge (*Operé* 550). At this point,

María has set out to rescue Brian from imminent death at the hands of the Indians that had captured them both:

María en vez de aguardar la fatal conclusión, se rebela contra las circunstancias y haciendo alarde de fuerza e iniciativa no propias de su sexo, rescata al amado de una muerte segura y emprende la huida a través del amenazador desierto. (Operé 550)

This transformation from tender, stereotypical description of a woman took place in perilous circumstances. She rose to the occasion to deliver her own life and that of her husband's. The masculinization of María during the rescue offers several interpretations. Operé offers that the description she bears at this point in the work is that of an androgenous character (550). In the Epilogue, these words are used to describe her, "Oh María! Tu heroísmo, / tu varonil fortaleza, / tu juventud y belleza" (1-3). Additionally, he describes her:

Pero a cada golpe injusto  
retoñece más robusto  
de su noble alma del valor;  
y otra vez, con paso fuerte,  
holla el fango, do la muerte  
disputa un resto de vida  
a indefensos animales; (V, 97-103)

Some critics, such as Masiello, suggest that Echeverría uses Brian in a form of feminization as a method of demonstrating pacification of the barbarism ordered and permitted by Juan Manuel de Rosas (22). If such a suggestion is true,

Echeverría achieves another diagnosis of the passive attitude of the common people in Argentina. In place of calling out the individual of Brian as a singular man, he calls out the nation of Argentina as a whole through María's masculinization as seen in the title of *La Cautiva* instead of "el cautivero". This proposal is debatable by stating that Brian is nothing more than a prisoner who falls captive to the Indians; an instrument in *La Cautiva* utilized to set up the masculinization of María illustrated by her actions and descriptions aforementioned.

Inside the drama, the question of how María is able to take on these qualities is answered in the text of Operé: "una vez en el desierto, superada la prueba a la que es sometida, María cae víctima, como el resto de sus habitantes, de los tentáculos asfixiantes del medio físico" (553). The oppressing chains are the cause of María's rage. As a result, María not only falls captive as prisoner to the Indians but also takes on barbaric tendencies like her captors. The barbaric tendencies include the ability to rescue her lover and escape from the Indians through the desert without sleep, rest, or nourishment to survive. She acts without fear in reaction to the requirements for survival.

By taking on these masculine qualities, it is Echeverría's suggestion that all peoples are capable of living together in unity. If a woman who is beautiful, tender and loving has the ability to assume those traits of a warrior and those traits of a wife to fight for her family, and those traits of an Indian to survive in the desert, and those traits of a mother to care for her child, then every person has the ability to adapt to the environment in which he is placed. As a captive, he has the capacity to rebel against his captor and fight for freedom. Pinto states in his theory relating

time and circumstance to the civilization and barbarism that infects Argentina within this given period, “ ‘Civilización y Barbarie’ deben ser considerados como un mojón en el proceso histórico de la Nación y no un punto de partida para nuevas querellas” (152). María undeniably merges her civilized nature with the barbaric tendencies of the Indians to execute the necessary actions that result in her escape. Echeverría presents the ideal of necessity in evaluating the qualities from both sides and fostering this evolutionary process with the ultimate goal of living in harmony with one another. Pinto also states, “la pampa, es un signo fundamental en el proceso evolutivo de nuestra cultura” (325). This argument supports the claim that Echeverría clothes María with the characteristics of a typical inhabitant of the Pampas for the purpose of her survival.

On the other hand, the fact that María assumes a broken spirit when she is informed of her son’s death, shows that each captive has a breaking point in which he is defeated. Within the text, the description of María changes at this crossroads when the reader is informed of her resignation from rebellion and inscription into the traditional role of a woman within the society of the age. In the end, her captivity becomes a reality once again and she falls victim to her rebellion. For María, a double sentence was in place from the very beginning due to nature’s course. To refrain from rebellion meant certain death for both her and her husband; to rebel meant punishment of death for her and her family. As Operé states, “Al retornar a las dulzuras y comodidades de la civilización sus fuerzas le abandonan y cae víctima del proceso de ficcionalización” (550).



Operé suggests that “La María de *La Cautiva* simboliza la Argentina criolla, la nueva y soberbia nación a la que Echeverría aspira en puja por resurgir liberada de las amenazas del mestizaje y la hibridez cultural” (551). Echeverría’s call for a resurgence of Argentines that possess the character of María to rise and fight against the captivity they experience is equally as strong as his warning for the future. María’s murderers would have faced much more opposition had there been more people present. From *La Cautiva*, Echeverría’s charge is dependent upon numbers. The people, the Unitarists, women and children, must simultaneously stand together to fight for their future.

The time and circumstance in which Echeverría writes in Argentina plays into the Romantic method of writing perfectly. The people of Argentina hoped for many years for peace and prosperity. Echeverría is able to use the themes of love with tragedy to illustrate the problems of his home country in attempt to educate.

The night of the rescue, the Indians had fallen asleep after an indulgent party. The message that Echeverría is relaying to his reader is the moral of “what is sown will also be reaped”. This party in which the Indians became incapacitated allowed for the escape of María and Brian. In the same way, the foreshadowing for the future is that Rosas’s government will be taken over when he least expects it. This can also be seen in “El Matadero” through the flood that is imminent as the young Unitarist is ravaged and murdered in cold blood at the end of that work.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Esteban Echeverría's works of "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva* play an important role in the genre of protest literature in Argentina in the midst of governmental transition. "El Matadero" represents the shared theme of civilization versus barbarism that occurs in Sarmiento's *Facundo* as well. In both "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*, Echeverría criticizes the power and control that Rosas exercises of society through the use of historical reciprocation. The social levels that suffer from said oppression are the men that fight in his army and serve him, like the judge of the *matadero*, *piliadores* and *enlazadores*. Other groups include the Unitarists, the Indians of the desert and the women and children. Each of these characters in their respective works acquire a description that, in most cases, dehumanizes them with the intention to demonstrate the gravity of the emotional, physical, and economic oppression of that day and age. In "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*, Echeverría demonstrates the victimization of the various groups that suffer from Rosas's oppression, whether by choice or by force. In "El Matadero", nature's description, similar to that in *Facundo*, depicts the marginalized city that is cut off from the rest of the world as a result of Rosas's vigilance and fear of foreign conquest. The marginalized city suffers from poverty and a halted stagnant civilization. In "El Matadero", Echeverría also uses nature's description surrounding Buenos Aires as an ironic metaphor to express Rosas's policy against foreign trade while simultaneously expressing a Biblical reference that will result in liberation from the economic and social oppression that is caused Rosas's government.

If one considers the text and subliminal message within *La Cautiva* concerning the frontier, this problem does not appear to have a remedy: “La frontera, pues, se asoció a partir de finales del siglo XVI con una vaga idea de aventura y peligro, salvajismo y viaje a los infiernos” (546). The importance of the interior, or the Pampas, plays a vital role in the literature composed in the nineteenth century by authors such as Echeverría, Sarmiento, and Hernández in their most popular works. Within these works the characteristics of barbarism that Echeverría depicts in *La Cautiva* and Sarmiento portrays in *Facundo* are manifested by Operé’s claim:

Surgieron otros teóricos que articularon nociones impregnadas de pesimismo y ambigüedad, aunque en general, como argumentan David J. Weber y Jane M. Rausch, ‘Latin American intellectuals have seldom considered their frontiers central to the formation of national identities or of national institutions’. (546-547)

Operé goes further to discuss this statement by disagreeing with Weber and Rausch. His basis for argument is the in depth study of the frontier by Sarmiento in *Facundo* as well as Echeverría’s detailed description of the frontier in *La Cautiva* (547). Albeit pessimistic and problematic, the frontier is realized by both authors as a raveled stitch in a garment that must be repaired for the future functionality of the Republic of Argentina:

Los intelectuales decimonónicos contemplaron las fronteras como zonas generadoras de violencia más que de riqueza, de despotismo

más que democracia, de caudillos y dictadores más que de hombres libres (Operé 547).

Historical reciprocation is evident in the breaking from time constraints in his work of “El Matadero” and in *La Cautiva*. In “El Matadero”, Echeverría uses Biblical references, his present day event of the *matadero*, and Biblical prophecy to educate the reader of history, portray the issues and oppression of the day, and foreshadow the future hope for the Republic, respectively. In *La Cautiva*, the diagnostic and prognostic processes occur within the drama through María’s masculinization and death’s escape from the hands of the barbaric Indians.

## Chapter 3:

### José Hernández and the Oppression of Identity

#### 3.1 Introduction

The reader who is familiar with Sarmiento's *Facundo* can expect similar characteristics possessed by the gaucho in *Martín Fierro*. With its publication of both parts together in 1879, *Martín Fierro* assumes the position as the only gauchesque epic poem in Argentina's history. The first half of the two-part *Martín Fierro*, *La Ida de Martín Fierro* (1872), preceded the second part, *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879), by seven years. The work's popularity is responsible for the establishment of the gaucho as an Argentine national symbol. While Sarmiento seeks to rid the country of the gaucho's existence, José Hernández distinguishes the gaucho's presence to bear great responsibility in the development of the Republic of Argentina and believes that the gaucho should receive recognition for his contributions.

The presence of the gaucho and Indians in the Pampas appears in Sarmiento's *Facundo*, Echeverría's *La Cautiva*, and here in Hernández's *Martín Fierro*. Sarmiento and Echeverría both aim to eradicate the Pampas of the barbaric gaucho, while Hernández seeks to revive the gaucho's lost identity. However, one primary theme remains constant among the four works mentioned in the previous chapters: governmental oppression. Though published forty-two years after

Echeverría's *La Cautiva*, *Martín Fierro* highlights the same issues that cite a problematic situation caused by the uncivilized, uncontrollable gaucho and the Indians of the Pampas. Hernández uses the gaucho as a point of reference to illustrate many of the modern day political and social problems of Argentina. The issues Hernández articulates differ from those in *Facundo*, *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero" due to a difference in the authors' political views and time period of composition. The life of Hernández and the events that lead up to the composition of *Martín Fierro* serve a vital role in the development of his political and personal conviction. His childhood and early political involvement lay a foundation for the writing of his work. Exposure to the gaucho and the gaucho's environment implants within Hernández sentimentality and sympathy that find their way to the page.

The theme of governmental oppression provides a path of commonality among the works of *Facundo*, *La Cautiva*, "El Matadero" and *Martín Fierro*. Though each work hosts a different primary theme, oppression and its various forms of captivity appear throughout all of the works. However, Hernández accomplishes a method of deliverance never before done by using the gaucho language in an epic poem. Hernández uses the language of the gaucho to deepen the sense of realistic depiction in his work as opposed to didactically approaching the subject in third person. This language is similar to what is used in the epic poem *Cid Campeador*, which maintains deep roots in the medieval age in Spain and validates its worth in the canon of Spanish literature. The work receives much

popularity because it can be compared to the works of the *Siglo de Oro* in Spain and also the work of *Cid Campeador*:

El ensayo argentino hasta el Centenario pretendió demostrar el arraigo del gaucho en la tradición étnica de España. Defendió su pureza de la acechanza del mestizaje. Por eso la lengua de la gauchesca, sería vista heredera del Siglo de Oro Español. [...]  
España la Madre y del gaucho su Hijo. (Rubione 97)

Critics consider *Martín Fierro* to be a work that demonstrates the heritage that the Americas retained from their mother country of Spain.

*Facundo* and “El Matadero” utilize the third person to present the subject matter to the reader, while the works *La Cautiva* and *Martín Fierro* achieve both first and third person to unfold the drama in the work. These two different methods have two contrasting effects on the reader. The reader receives the message from *Facundo* and “El Matadero” in an educational and informative manner, as if being instructed from a completely ignorant beginning point. In contrast, the reader of *La Cautiva* and *Martín Fierro* is able to place himself amidst the action in the work of a storyline and develop a feeling of connection with the characters.

### 3.2 Biography of José Hernández

José Hernández (1834-1886) is from Chacra de Puyrredón, a province of Buenos Aires. Little is known about his infancy and adolescence other than he spent a substantial amount of time in the countryside because his father worked as a foreman on cattle ranches. A common occurrence in Argentina was the hire of

former black slaves and gauchos to run cattle and work on the ranches. The exposure Hernández received is the planted seed that greatly influenced his composure of such a work. An example of this influence is reflected in the dialect of the gaucho, which is different than the dialect of the common or civilized man in Argentina. Idiomatic expressions and pronunciations vary; however, Hernández was still able to accomplish *Martín Fierro* in a gauchesque language.

In 1856, he became a member of the Federalist Reform Party, which was a party that opposed many of the political policies of Domingo Sarmiento and his Unitarist Party. Hernández's opposition to the centralization and Europeanization that Sarmiento fostered is clear in *Martín Fierro* as he depicts a loss of Argentine originality due to the immigration of thousands of Europeans. As a result of his participation in the Federalist Reform Party, he decided to serve in the Confederation army in the battles of Cépeda and Pavón. While in the Confederation army, he was exposed to the gauchos who were recruited forcefully by the government to serve in various expeditions. Hernández fought beside these men and spoke with them, heard their stories of misfortune, and became their friend. The relationships that developed between Hernández and these men built a case for his work in *Martín Fierro*. His military career was short-lived, and soon he returned to a political life. He founded a newspaper, *El Río de la Plata*, which served to speak against the government of Sarmiento. When the newspaper survived for less than a year, he opted to enlist in an attempted revolution against Sarmiento in 1870, which led to his exile to Brazil. He was pardoned by Sarmiento two years later and returned to Buenos Aires where *El gaucho Martín Fierro*, the



first part to the two-part *Martín Fierro*, was published the same year. It is suggested that he wrote the majority of the work while in exile reflecting on Sarmiento's insistence to eradicate the country of the gaucho and Indigenous peoples. The work did not experience immediate success in spite of its recognition in various newspapers around Buenos Aires. However, its social protest grew in popularity when the first part was published in eleven different prints and over 50,000 copies were circulating in both Argentina and across the world by 1878 (*La República*). The following year in 1879, Hernández published the second part to *Martín Fierro*, *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*. The second part serves as a sequel to the first, yet the first year of publication of the two works compiled is unknown. Hernández's popularity rose resulting in the epithet "the senator Martín Fierro".

José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* now stands as a national anthem for the identity and originality of the gaucho in the Argentine Pampas. The oppression of the gaucho depicted in his epic poem reveals a variation of social issues that the country faced as a result of governmental progression. Hernández sought to educate the people through an orientation of their roots. The work experienced great success not so much for its literary qualities but because of its depiction of real conditions (Carrion 5). Sarmiento's *Facundo*, and Echeverría's "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva* seek to educate the people about Rosas's tyrannical government but with a stark contrast that includes exaggeration and cynicism toward Rosas's government. Hernández literarily uses his work to depict reality in a harmonious blending of artistry and pragmatic moralizing.

### 3.3 *Martín Fierro*

José Hernández achieves the height of popularity for any Argentine literary work published in his epic poem *Martín Fierro*. The work experienced immediate worldwide success upon its publication of the two parts together: *La Ida de Martín Fierro* and *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*. As a piece of literature that seeks to criticize governmental oppression and offers a cry for the remembrance of the Argentine gaucho, Hernández's piece receives recognition as a new benchmark for reality in Argentina, replacing the work of *Facundo*: es "el estudio social más completo, más exacto y más bien intencianado que se ha llevado a cabo entre nosotros" (*Advertencia editorial*). Though *Facundo* was the most achieved work in Argentina at the time, Hernández appeals to the better nature of the Argentine people and offers a protest to the theme of civilization versus barbarism. The tale of *Martín Fierro* resonates as the Argentine people become aware of their origins and history. *Martín Fierro* experiences a great reception from the general public as well as from the modern critics and well-known literary authorities of the time. Jorge Luis Borges considers the poem to be more of a novel in verse as opposed to an epic poem. He expresses the lack of popularity between the publication of *La Ida de Martín Fierro* and the two works together is a result of its realistic depiction of the age. Readers of the work need a time period of reference or distance from the text that achieves an accurate description of reality, which allows the reader to reflect on the work's importance in society. Miguel de Unamuno, Juan Valera, and Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo bring to light the similarities between the two great epic poems of Spain and Latin America as well as many other positive

characteristics of *Martín Fierro*. All are respected Spanish critics who write in favor of *Martín Fierro* within twenty years of its publication but declare its popularity is credited to its Spanish roots. Luis C. Pinto disagrees by proposing that Unamuno, Valera and Menéndez y Pelayo are only affirming its worth (Carrion 7). The appearance of *Martín Fierro* gains great success worldwide; however, for Argentina the work stands as the most popular and greatest work published in Argentina by an Argentine writer. The Argentine critics Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas recognize the profoundness of its publication: “ambos ponían al poema en un lugar central de nuestra literatura” (Blanco 478). With a stable government in place and economical progression developing throughout the country, the future appears promising. All great histories begin with an epic poem: Spain with *Cid Campeador*, France with *La Chanson de Roland*, Russia with the *Tale of Igor’s Campaign*, and England with *Beowulf*; Argentina has *Martín Fierro* (Alfieri 531).

A study of the purpose of José Hernández’s poem must begin with the words of the author himself. In a letter from Hernández to his friend José Zoilo Miguens, the purpose of *Martín Fierro* is to reflect faithfully “ese tipo original de nuestras pampas [...] y que, al paso que avanzan las conquistas de la civilización va perdiéndose casi por completo” (106). Furlan suggests further that “civilization’s conquest” is Hernández’s reference to the immigration that takes place in Argentina after 1852 (635). Hernández believes that Europeanization and immigration fostered by Sarmiento results in the loss of national identity, which is represented by the loss of the gaucho. On the other hand, Sarmiento believes that immigration

is the means by which to populate and civilize Argentina. Sarmiento refers to the necessity of immigration for the progression of civilization within Argentina in *Facundo*. The war for independence from Spain in 1810 invoked a fear of foreign conquest in the Argentine people, and the newly found government actively discouraged immigration from European powers such as Spain, France and Italy. Rivadavia was the first head of state to encourage such immigration, but it did not last long. The next Argentine head of state, Juan Manuel de Rosas isolated Argentina from the rest of the world as is evident in Echeverría's "El Matadero". Fostered immigration did not occur again until the presidencies of Bartolomé Mitre and Sarmiento. During this time, over 60,000 foreigners made their way to Argentina. As a result, Hernández writes *Martín Fierro* using the gaucho as a free man whose habitat is being overrun and whose identity is disappearing. The second part of the work, *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* appears when the colonization of the immigrants is at its height. Culture, instruction, schools, literary circles, libraries, and theatres appear for the first time in many parts of the country. *Martín Fierro* is a call to the Argentine people to remember, salvage and protect its originality while continuing with its civilization process. At the end of the poem Hernández makes his charge clear:

Y si la vida me falta,  
tenganló todos por cierto  
que el gaucho, hasta en el desierto.  
sentirá en tal ocasión  
tristeza en el corazón

al saber que yo estoy muerto. (II, 4871-4876)

Martín Fierro's character is a symbol of the gaucho and the identity that is being lost.

Hernández's educational goal complements his method of romantically unifying the people through personally relating with every facet of society. Inhabitants of the towns and cities as well as the gauchos and Indians in the Pampas become familiar with one another's ways (Vázquez 427). To bridge this gap between the two contradicting sides of society advances political stability, and the presence of a symbol of identity stimulates greater patriotism. Evidence of the fusing of society's different components is visible at the end of the poem in the scene of the *payada* when the *moreno*, or black man, and Fierro have a conversation in verse with an audience of the *criollos*. The black man and Fierro converse without violence and learn from one another while the *criollos* listen for entertainment.

In this piece of protest literature, Hernández offers a new style of writing that had not appeared in Argentine literature: the epic poem (Carrion 1). The Romantic elements that comprise the works of *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero" are not prevalent in *Martín Fierro*. Hernández does incorporate a description of the landscape but with a less sentimental approach of corresponding nature's elements to the purpose of orienting the reader of where the drama occurs. This implementation of nature's layout may be owed to the transition of genres that occurs in Argentina at the time of its composition but most definitely attributes to its incorporation into gauchesque literature. During this time, the Romanticism's

dominance in Argentina and around the world is still in its prime. However, *Martín Fierro* does not possess many qualities from the Romanticism; rather, it presents a crossroads of elements that are Romantic and anti-Romantic. The Romantic characteristics that are visible within the poem are the continual description of nature and the protagonist's role as a tragic hero destined to lose his place in society. The anti-Romantic characteristics are the pragmatic and anti-nationalistic tone in the text (de Medrano 28-29). *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* possesses the pragmatic tone in its didactic delivery. The anti-nationalistic tone appears in the text by his gaucho's suffering of marginalization by the Argentine government. These are all thematic subjects that are discussed later in this chapter. A primary example that demonstrates the crossroads between genres occurs when Fierro says, "Y es necesario aguantar / el rigor de su destino: / el gaucho no es argentino / sino pa hacerlo matar." (II, 3867-3870). The implied message is that the gaucho does not belong to the nation of Argentina; instead, his identity is his own, and he belongs to the Pampas. The anti-nationalistic tone is easily derived, yet sadness is present because of the lack of identity or belonging. Therefore, what is anti-nationalistic is absent of contentment and displays a desire to have a social identity.

The poetry of the gauchos along with their feeling of marginalization incorporates these elements:

La poesía de los gauchos [...] se caracteriza por su marginalidad, por una economía de substancia, en la que lo ancestral es más importante que lo actual, lo espontáneo popular y lo artesanal más que lo artístico puro, lo manual más que lo mecánico; con valores positivos

en los planos ético, social y artístico, de cambios muy lentos, con una asimilación de lo foráneo, que lleva generaciones, y en la que la poesía adquiere una importancia no ajena, por otro lado, a prácticas sociales muy diversas de la misma comunidad ‘folk’, tales como la gestualidad, la danza, la música. (Rubione 98)

The gauchesque poetry of Hernández in *Martín Fierro* applies each of these characteristics with addition of a special twist. The issue that qualifies its popularity and success worldwide is the governmental oppression that is choking the gaucho’s poetry into silence. In this manner, the author’s practice of historical reciprocation presents itself. Hernández uses the element of the popular gauchesque poetry and drama within the work to account for the past and the present state of the gaucho and the roots of identity of the Argentine people. The future prognosis is the marginalization of the gaucho and, in turn, a loss of heritage for the country as a whole. Hernández uses the practice of historical reciprocation through the narration of the protagonist, Martín Fierro, to present the past events to foreshadow the loss of identity that Argentina is experiencing. At the end of both books, *La Ida de Martín Fierro* and *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, Martín Fierro offers his advice and makes a cry to remember him and his kind when he is gone. Therefore, the diagnosis of the country’s lack and loss of national identity occurs in the political corruption that leads to the gaucho’s marginalization. The prognosis lies in the death of Argentina’s roots: the gaucho.

The theme, tone and language that Hernández uses in *Martín Fierro* are the elements that place it in gauchesque literature. The theme is the gaucho’s

marginalization as a result of the government's oppression and abuse of the gaucho in fighting the battles against the Indians of the Pampas. The tone lies in a request and message of wisdom to pass down to present and future generations in Argentina. This request and message is the remembrance of the gaucho. Therefore, the loss the gaucho's presence and identity in Argentina directly relates to the tone of hopelessness and sadness.

Hernández establishes a deeper connection between the reader and the characters in the work by his use of the gaucho language, which is opposite of Echeverría's educational parlance in *La Cautiva*. The versification of *Martín Fierro* is typical of an epic poem in that its six, eight syllable lines per stanza are prominent throughout. The versification varies in the poem with shorter stanzas of four lines and longer stanzas that make up an entire section in the poem. The work's rhyme and measure account for its placement in poetry; however, the language applied in *Martín Fierro* place it in the subgenre of gauchesque poetry. Another common term for gauchesque poetry is "poesía campestre", or poetry of the countryside (Rubione 96). The countryside in this context refers to the uneducated, raw and untamed portion of society like what is represented in the Pampas. As mentioned before, *Martín Fierro* utilizes the gaucho dialect of the time to relate to the audience in a more effective manner. The ability and knowledge of how to use this dialect stems from Hernández's life experiences of contact with the Indians and gauchos. The popularity that *Martín Fierro* receives is a result of the language used by its author. The language of the Pampas and amidst the gauchos is unique because it represents an important moment in the history of Argentina.



*Martín Fierro* retains the Argentine feelings of evil, untrustworthiness and marginalization toward the gaucho by representing the people's fear of the gaucho and the threat both sides present to one another. In *Martín Fierro*, the criollos use the gaucho as unpaid militia to fight in wars against the Indians. The criollos, representing the government, fear the gaucho's capability and wild qualities painted in *Martín Fierro* and even more so in *Facundo*. The gaucho fears the eradication of his own people.

The language used by José Hernández ties the work to several different venues within the history of literature, the current and past state of Argentina's government, and the national identity that Argentina desires to develop. *Martín Fierro* relates to literature's history through the connections made between the characteristics of its composition and canon works such as *Cid Campeador* and other milestones in Spanish and Latin American literature. The themes circulating around government place it among other works in Argentina as protest literature such as *Facundo*, *La Cautiva* and "El Matadero". The subject of national identity and sociological placement of a race relates it to works such as *Facundo* with its dealings of the gaucho. *Martín Fierro* takes the issue of governmental oppression and puts it in comprehensible language for every level of Argentine society for the first time in the Argentina's literary history:

Tal arte [la poesía gauchesca] es, si bien se mira, el reflejo de la honda fermentación racial producida en la patria por la ocupación española, por las guerras de la independencia, por las luchas civiles, por las conquistas del desierto patagónico, por la crisis étnica de la

inmigración cosmopolita. Por eso vemos como protagonistas de esa literatura del indio, al gaucho, al colono actual—Siripo, Fierro o Cocoliche—con el desierto como ambiente. (Rojas 153)

By composing a work that belongs to the gauchesque literary genre, José Hernández not only applies the use of a dialect or language that connects with all aspects of society but also envelops an array of themes that stem from the single root of oppression.

Several different types of oppression are present in the action of *Martín Fierro*, which is seen in the quote by Rojas above: racial oppression, the Spanish presence in Argentina, the wars for independence, the civil wars, the conquest of the Pampas, the ethnical crisis as a result of the cosmopolitan immigration. The issues that Rojas mentions offer a makeup of gauchesque literature in *Martín Fierro*; however, each issue is a result of some form of governmental influence or political institution. For Hernández, both Juan Manuel de Rosas and Domingo Sarmiento are worthy recipients of his criticism. Sarmiento and Echeverría base their publications of protest literature on the political corruption practiced by the Argentine dictator Rosas during his Federalist regime. Hernández writes over forty years after Sarmiento and Echeverría, and he maintains crucial views that defy the Unitarist's principles upheld by Sarmiento and Echeverría and implemented by Sarmiento as President of the Republic. While Sarmiento paints the gaucho as rough and untamed in *Facundo*, and Echeverría depicts the Pampas as host to the uncivilized part of society in *La Cautiva*, Rubione suggests that *Martín Fierro*'s publication marks the beginning of a new approach to the gaucho in the Argentine

Pampas and across the world: “Lo gauchesco será desde entonces refinar el conocimiento, mediante aportes de la estilística, el folclore, la antropología, la historia, de aquella drama casi imperceptible” (98). The readers become aware of oppression’s various forms that the gaucho experiences as a result of governmental progression. The gaucho is not the only facet of society that receives the government’s persecution; the gaucho, the Argentine woman, and the Indian of the Pampas represent groups of people that suffer. Each group suffers from at least one or multiple forms of oppression. These types of oppression include: manipulation by the government; foreign oppression; physical oppression; loss of identity; emotional oppression; and marginalization. Political oppression is the cause to each of these effects and ties each to one another in an unbreakable weave.

The theme of exile goes hand in hand with the oppression, loss of identity, and marginalization that the gaucho experiences. Through a brief study of exile’s role in the work, the aforementioned forms of oppression become evident in their role and position in the work’s drama as well as in Argentine history. In respect to exile, various words appear in *Martín Fierro* that deserve notice: *emigrar*, *desterrado*, *deportado*, *ostracismo*, and *exiliado* (de Diego 432).

The word *emigrar* signifies to abandon a country deliberately and not forcefully, which implies the political pressure applied to both the Indians and the gaucho to flee from the country. In the action of the poem, Martín Fierro and his newfound friend Cruz do not casually leave the country but flee from their oppressors in the military. They then emigrate to the Pampas to join the Indian tribes. Described as barbarians and uncivilized beasts in Echeverría’s *La Cautiva*,

the Indians of the Pampas receive this marginalization on an even greater height than the gaucho. In *Martín Fierro*, the gaucho is caught in the middle of two societies: the Indians and the civilized of the city, derived from Sarmiento and Echeverría's definition of civilization in *Facundo* and "El Matadero".

The poetic speaker of *Martín Fierro* criticizes the Argentine government: "La Provincia es una madre / que no defiende a sus hijos" (II, 3711-3712). Instead of fostering an environment for betterment of the gaucho, the government uses the gaucho as a tool to whisk it whichever way is to the government's advantage. For example, the political figures in *Facundo* manipulate Facundo and his army of men to fight for their political ambitions, which in turn lead to the establishment of Rosas's regime. In "El Matadero", the *piliadores* and *enlazadores* receive a description very similar to the description of the gaucho in *Facundo* and in *Martín Fierro*. These men who play a distinct role in the action of the *matadero* are victims to the vigilance and puppetry of Rosas.

In *Martín Fierro*, the government sends recruiters to enlist the gauchos for military service by promising their pay and freedom after six months of service (I, 359-360). Once the gauchos arrive at the post, they realize the poverty and working conditions, and as with *Martín Fierro*, the unfulfilled promise of pay is merely the government's attempt to manipulate action from the gauchos (I, 625-630). Another example is when an official tells Fierro that he is preparing to teach his horse to eat grain, yet he never sees the horse again. This oppression left the men without resources and in desperate poverty without the ability and will to fight back. "Más bien me daba por muerto / pa no verme más fundido; / y me les hacía el dormido /

aunque soy medio dispierto” (I, 795-798). Their physical oppression is the vine from which stems the emotional oppression and lack of will. The quote above refers to the gaucho when being whipped or punished for some action of rebellion or lack of cooperation desired by a military officer or governmental official. They often wished to act as incompetent to possibly receive a small bit of mercy from the abusing officer. Fierro states that he witnesses gauchos often being beaten without justifiable reason, like in Palermo where Juan Manuel de Rosas called his residence (I, 421-427). The gauchos receive the same treatment as slaves and are left without any possessions. Hernández makes reference to his severe poverty on several occasions. In the first book, Fierro speaks of the gaucho’s misery in poverty (I, 635-640). In the second book, however, Fierro goes further in detail by describing all the deprivations: lack of clothes, home, credit for their service, money, material possessions, women, and food. The absence of all of these elements leads to the dehumanization of the gaucho to an object: “ya es un hecho, / no tiene ningún derecho, / ni naides vuelve por él” (II, 3654-3656). Rephrasing, the gaucho becomes the blade that the government uses to cut.

The idea of fighting back is absent because of the governmental oppression implemented by Sarmiento: “Soy la liebre o soy el galgo / asigún los tiempos andan; / pero también los que mandan debieran cuidarnos algo” (I, 981-983). Fierro continually runs from the government to flee oppression, yet he also fights the government to flee from oppression. In this internal reflection, he says he has always been at the bottom of the society’s hierarchy and doesn’t know what life is to be in charge or have authority. Through this double role that the gaucho Fierro

endures, the captivity that he undergoes is not only due to physical oppression but also what is acceptable: “Y después dicen que es malo / el gaucho si los pelea” (I, 269-270). The idea of retaliation against their oppressors is not acceptable. Much like being trapped in a coliseum and being forced to fight for life, the gaucho is placed in a position of fighting for survival: “Yo soy toro en mi rodeo / y toraso en rodeo ajeno” (I, 62-63). When considering the most well known works in Argentine protest literature, the metaphor of Fierro being a bull trapped in a ring is, perhaps Hernández’s attempt to relate the political captivity described by Echeverría in “El Matadero” with the murder of the young bull. Hernández uses the animals in the Pampas to identify the state of the gaucho on various occasions. Though the gaucho has no rights and the government wants to control him, Hernández uses Cruz to say that abuse from the government leaves only enough energy left to endure the mistreatment. They are beaten to the point of believing that fighting for themselves is beyond worth (I, 2096). However, just as Fierro relates himself to a bull locked in a ring, he also relates himself to a bird of the sky, which represents a cry for freedom: “Mi gloria es vivir tan libre / como el pájaro del cielo” (I, 91-92). Within the description of the gaucho in *Facundo*, Sarmiento highlights the liberty that a gaucho desires and practices; yet, later in *Martín Fierro*, Hernández makes a simile that the gaucho is like a bird that sings in a tree without flowers. He presents a gray scene without life and color, offering a sense of darkness, depression, and most of all, oppression by an uncontrollable power. In *Martín Fierro*, Cruz states the lack of ability to counteract and fight the government; however, he presents later the gifts that God gives to fight against

oppression: heart, understanding, tongue, and courage—all within the heart and soul. Finding the qualities that God bestows upon the gaucho, Fierro and Cruz choose to escape the oppression of the government and flee into the Pampas to join the Indians.

In the action of Hernández's work, the mild form of slavery, which is disguised as governmental employment, of the gauchos to fight against the Indians demonstrates the political oppression and manipulation that the gauchos face. On the other hand, the contact that Martín Fierro has with the different levels of society demonstrates José Hernández's desire to denounce all forms of social inequality between the Argentines, the immigrants, the gauchos, and the Indians (Bratosevich 188). Fierro serves alongside the government officials in the military, plays cards with the officers in the military, sings and plays with the black man, chases the Indians, and later lives with the Indians. His sons have contact with government officials like the judge, inherent material possessions, suffer from poverty, and survive for years in the absence of a mother and father. Through all of these events in the action of *Martín Fierro*, the reader reaches a thematic crossroads between the marginalization that the gaucho's experience and Hernández's attempt to break down all walls of separation between society's departments. The reader is left feeling divided emotions between admiration of Fierro's adventures and pain in sympathy for his lack of social status: "Y he de decir ansimismo, / porque de adentro me brota, / que no tiene patriotismo / quien no cuida al compatriota" (II, 3721-24). Fierro criticizes the disunity in the country and blames the government for a lack of patriotism. Lines become drawn by the progressive political practices

such as the immigration and education brought upon by Sarmiento, and they encourage distinct separations in society. Fierro later states that the only place the gauchos can claim citizenship is within the Pampas. The severance from society leaves the gaucho without a home and ostracized without purpose.

The words *desterrado*, *deportado*, and *ostracismo* are all results of explicit decisions by some governmental power towards a group of people in a society. The Argentine government made certain efforts to ostracize the gauchos and the Indians. As for the Indians, clearly Sarmiento attempted to eradicate the Indigenous race from the Pampas by engaging them in war. In *Martín Fierro*, the role of the gaucho in the plan of eradicating the Indigenous peoples is obvious. The gaucho is used as a tool to fight and kill any Indian that comes within contact of one another. Hernández describes the Indians as the barbarians and depicts the gaucho as more civilized. He recognizes the marginalization of the gaucho by describing his lack of identity, but dehumanizes the Indians with a goal to bring to the forefront the gaucho's qualities and service for his country. Hernández says the Indians kill and steal anything within reach such as livestock, arms, merchandise, food, and women. They invoke fear upon sight and can remain awake throughout the day and night. They keep their reins in their left hand and their spear in their right at all times (I, 489-490). The savage-like description that the Indian receives is similar to the description that Echeverría makes in *La Cautiva* and Sarmiento in *Facundo*. The Indians appear to have no desire for betterment and civilized progression any more than the animals of the desert. In *Martín Fierro*, the Indians' fear and sight is that of lions and eagles, respectively. In Part 5 of the first book, the portrayal of the



Indians possess a tone of evil in depicting their barbaric characteristics. They are even compared to little devils (Pt. I 777). In Hernández's case, the Indians rather than the gauchos are portrayed as the barbarians of the desert. He mentions they are violent, untrustworthy and ignorant.

The illustration of the Indian in *Martín Fierro* serves as an object for which the gaucho can blame his horrendous actions and crimes. However, the irony that occurs here is that the actual blame goes to the government for serving as the director of the process. Fierro executes his first murder of an Indian by cutting the throat of a warrior who attempted to kill him. A moment of transition in the text takes place when Fierro realizes he is now a savage and no different from the Indians he hunts because the government has assisted in making him this way. When he flees in Parts 6 and 7 from the military, he murders a black man at a party only because he picks a fight with him. His savagery grows, and Fierro says his troubles only become larger and more frequent (I, 1127-1128). Later Fierro is guilty of insulting a black man: “a los blancos hizo Dios / a los mulatos, San Pedro; / a los negros hizo el diablo / para tizón del infierno” (I, 1167-1170). Fierro gives a heartless insult, which serves as a demonstration of his insanity. He kills this same black man with an s-shaped dagger that the gaucho is known for carrying. Realizing his savagery and offering justification for Fierro's actions, Hernández says that a man is much like the animal he hunts: “Pero yo ando como el tigre / que le roban los cachorros” (II, 1115-1116). Sarmiento also uses a simile in *Facundo* to depict the gaucho's wild tendencies by relating him to a tiger.

For Fierro, to remain as a slave to the government would lead to certain death, but to flee to the Pampas results in Fierro and Cruz's slavery and service to the Indians. After Fierro's experience as a slave to the Indians, Hernández uses Fierro's thoughts to criticize the government's control of the gaucho. In verse 795 of the first book, Fierro says the oppression of the Indians is not as bad as the oppression by the Christians. Hernández dedicates a great number of lines to describe the barbarism of the Indians, and with only one line do Fierro and Cruz describe a desire into slavery of the Indians as if it is a rescue.

The gauchos' families suffer and serve as another element of determinism in the work. When Fierro returns home after his escape from the Indians, he finds his house destroyed, his cattle gone, his wife taken by another man, and his children considered orphans. He believes that his sons receive a curse because he is cursed and will experience oppression because of his status as a gaucho. Hernández offers another representation of social inequality by stating that his sons will suffer because he suffers, yet the *criollos* and gringos do not suffer (II, 1809-1814).

Throughout *Martín Fierro*, Hernández seeks to criticize the political corruption that is rampant in Argentine government. He uses the death of the judge in Chapter 12 of the second book to reveal the secret businesses and scandals of how he stole livestock, land, and money from innocent people. Political corruption in the government has a great presence throughout his work as in "El Matadero". Echeverría criticizes the laws and rules put in place by Rosas by describing the *matadero* as an experience in which Rosas is excused from the Catholic ritual of refraining from the consumption of meat during Lent. In *Martín Fierro*, Fierro says

the law only affects the poor and the children (II, 4235). The law cuts like a sword without seeing whom it effects. Hernández implies the government officials place themselves above the law and only have their best interest in mind, which result in the oppression of the rest of society.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Perhaps the most popular work in Argentine literature, José Hernández successfully portrays the gaucho's marginalization in society. His use of the gauchesque language throughout the work renders a comprehensible understanding of the political corruption that leads to oppression of different areas of society. Works like "El Matadero", *Facundo*, and *La Cautiva* coincide with the determinism of oppression's theme that finds its way into different genres within Argentine literature. Caught in the middle between the coercion and persecution of the government and the danger of the Indians, the oppression of gauchos like Martín Fierro is inevitable. The inevitability of the oppression exposes the use of determinism throughout the work of *Martín Fierro*. In *Martín Fierro*, Hernández goes to great lengths to incorporate this ideal into his writing with the purpose of illustrating the gaucho's determined plight of suffering. Another work that possesses this type of determinism is *La Cautiva*. María is determined to suffer as a result of being the lover of the soldier, Brian. In her plight, she faces a certain death if she decides to stay and fight the Indians or attempt an escape.

Peligro era atropellar  
y era peligro el juir

más peligroso seguir  
esperando de este modo,  
pues otros podían venir  
y carníarme allí entre todos. (II, 1165-1170)

In “El Matadero”, the Unitarists are determined to rise above their plight even though the government of Rosas is determined to make them fail. In *Facundo*, the gaucho is determined to be ridded from the country and like “El Matadero”, Rosas is determined to be overthrown. In *Martín Fierro*, danger presents itself in whichever path is taken as well.

The same theme that is common through the work of *Facundo* and “El Matadero” is the oppressed people’s inability to fight the oppressor, which plays a strong role in this part of Hernández work. Just as the *mazorqueros* from *Facundo* fight without asking questions such as who or why, and the *piliadores* and *enlazadores* obey the judge of the *matadero* in “El Matadero”, the gaucho becomes caught in this same trap of being forced to fight in battles of which they have no knowledge or don’t agree with the reason for the fight (I, 281-282). The various groups that are oppressed include the gaucho, women, Indians of the Pampas and the families of each group. In *Martín Fierro*, governmental manipulation, foreign oppression through immigration, physical and emotional oppression, and marginalization are all forms of oppression represented. Hernández utilizes Romantic and anti-Romantic elements to compose his epic poem that serves to call for remembrance of the gaucho as a symbol of originality in the Argentine culture. His realistic depiction utilizes, as does *Facundo*, *La Cautiva*, and “El Matadero”,

historical reciprocation to represent the reality of the oppression put into motion by the governments of Juan Manuel de Rosas and Sarmiento. As illustrated in the action of the poem, the marginalization and fear invoked by these governments seeks to encourage the native Argentine citizens to fight for their originality and identity.

## Conclusion

The theme of oppression is of utmost importance in Argentine literature in the middle of the nineteenth century. Present in Sarmiento's *Facundo*, Echeverría's "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*, and Hernández's *Martín Fierro*, are the different forms of oppression that manifest themselves within Argentine literature in the respective time period. Each work that appears in this study represents a different literary genre: *Facundo*, in novel-like in form, "El Matadero", an essay, *La Cautiva*, a poem, and *Martín Fierro*, an epic poem.

Although each work belongs to a different genre and each author writes from a new perspective, all of the works possess one common thread that sews them together: the theme of oppression, which demonstrates its importance in the Argentine society. *Facundo* and "El Matadero" focus on criticizing the political corruption that exercises governmental oppression and offering potential remedies for the negative effects that the government is guilty of producing. Their didactic approach to diagnosing society's problems and offering a prognosis for the future differs to the approach taken in *La Cautiva* and *Martín Fierro*. Echeverría and Hernández seek to illustrate the problems in society in these respective works by giving an account of a story that focuses on the oppressed rather than the oppressor. For Hernández, the members of society that suffer from the government's oppression are the gaucho, the Indian of the Pampas, and the women and children. In *La Cautiva*, Echeverría depicts the oppressed as the families of the soldiers that

serve in Rosas's regime, the soldiers themselves, and the Indians of the Pampas. The suffering of society's marginalization, in turn, hinders the progression of civilization and diminishes Argentina's identity, as seen with the disappearance of the gaucho. In *Facundo* and "El Matadero", the facet of society that endures oppression is the common people. Sarmiento and Echeverría demonstrate that the people are ripped of their rights and liberty as a result of political oppression. This removal of freedom presents itself in oppression's theme on the protagonist in Echeverría's *La Cautiva* and Hernández's *Martín Fierro*. The protagonist in *La Cautiva*, María suffers oppression's pains as a result of the romantic love she possesses with her husband Brian and through the captivity she faces at the hands of the Indians that hold her and Brian captive. Upon her escape and rescue of Brian in the night, she assumes a masculine role in the poem that leads to her death. Martín Fierro suffers from the oppression of losing all he knows. His search for identity is an internal battle that is fought in the epic poem through the adventures he faces to overcome this alternate form of oppression.

Furthermore, the vigilance practiced by the government causes two primary forms of oppression: oppression by choice and oppression by force. The common people that compare to vultures in "El Matadero", the children who compare to canines in *Martín Fierro*, and the Indians that equal beasts in *La Cautiva* serve as examples of the people who endure oppression by force. The presence of the Romantic element, determinism, illustrates the inevitable suffering they will experience due to their social status, as seen in *Martín Fierro*. The *mazorqueros* in *Facundo*, the *piliadores*, *enlazadores*, and the judge of the *matadero* in "El

Matadero” serve as examples of the people who endure oppression by choice. Compared to untamed beasts, they choose to be submitted to a part of the machine that Rosas drives, as is referred to by Sarmiento and Hernández. Hernández makes a clear analogy when he compares Martín Fierro to a hare and a hound. The part of society that follows the government’s orders do so out of fear and choose not to rebel for fear of losing their life. In this manner, the parts of Rosas machine become like the animals, beasts, or hunted savages. The judge of the *matadero*, *piliadores*, *enlazadores*, *mazorqueros*, and even the gaucho become puppets for the government to direct in whichever way it pleases.

Each of these aggressive writers implements historical reciprocation as a method of educating the reader regarding the problem of oppression in his own culture. The practice of historical reciprocation is evident in each of the four works rather directly or indirectly. By utilizing a point of reference in the past, the author depicts the issues in the present and warns and offers advice towards the future. The issues that each author incorporates stem from governmental oppression. Sarmiento accomplishes historical reciprocation by giving an account of the political corruption that Rosas involved himself in to achieve his position as Head of State, diagnosing the problematic issues in the present and offering advice and remedies to overcome the issues. Echeverría accomplishes historical reciprocation in “El Matadero” by making a Biblical references in the past, giving an account of the present day event of the *matadero* and referring back to the Biblical reference of the flood to foreshadow the defeat of Rosas’s government. In *La Cautiva* and *Martín Fierro*, Echeverría and Hernández directly verbalize the past and present by



giving an account of a story, but the evaluation and prognosis lies within the drama. However, the poetry of Echeverría and Hernández differs drastically in form. Gauchesque poetry, represented by *Martín Fierro*, is dichotomized by *la poesía criolla*, represented by *La Cautiva*, which is from an urban origin that is civilized and academic, yet it failingly attempts to include vernacular content and scenes (Rubione 98). Both authors, though differing in form, maintain commonality in that they incorporate the writing method of historical reciprocation when writing on the issue of oppression in Argentina, as it is a result of the political unrest and absence of a national identity. In *La Cautiva*, Echeverría uses the tragedy of María and Brian to demonstrate both the past development and present state of the issues as well as to offer the future outcome of tragic and inevitable death if measures are not taken to fight against oppression. Hernández achieves historical reciprocation through the story of Martín Fierro, the oppressions he faces, and the presentation of a request for remembrance at the end of the second part of *Martín Fierro*.

The dialect of the gaucho gives the reader of *Martín Fierro* an opportunity to enter into the viewpoint of Martín Fierro with the goal of educating him. The colloquialisms and idioms along with its poetic nature provide for the work to become a story that is told by mouth even among the illiterate. A characteristic that relates the work to *Cid Campeador* is the similarity it possesses in being told by traveling storytellers around the country, in taverns and bars, political settings, literary circles, newspaper articles, and in families. Ultimately, the story is passed down generation after generation. The language that Sarmiento uses in *Facundo* is different in its educational and scientific approach to dealing with the issues of

governmental oppression and its didactic cause and effect format talked about it Chapter 1 of this study. Sarmiento's advanced education and intellect is visible in his embellished vocabulary and diagnostic approach throughout the work. Echeverría implements a language that demonstrates his education in "El Matadero"; his intellectual superiority to the common person is visible through his use of literary devices as well as his protest to the government of Rosas. In both "El Matadero" and *La Cautiva*, a use of colloquial terminology is present. Although they maintain their Argentine originality, both works are still within in the confines of understanding by the educated reader. In *Facundo*, "El Matadero", and *La Cautiva*, the issue of governmental oppression takes precedence as a main theme within the work: "Un rastreo a través de las obras de Esteban Echeverría... Domingo Faustino Sarmiento... entre otros autores; un rastreo a través de sus paginas nos daría una visión viva, animada, una imagen real de lo argentino (J. Pinto 32).

The works of Sarmiento, Echeverría, Hernández offer a true depiction of the reality of oppression in Argentina in the mid-nineteenth century. This true depiction is not based on historical fact but a personalized perspective by each author demonstrated by the works he composed. The four works in this study all serve as the very basis of the canon of Argentine literature and its national identity. Less than a century independent from European domination, the country searched for an autonomic form of government that secured its independence and dissolved political oppression.

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