

LITERARY BORDER CROSSING AND CULTURAL BELONGING IN FREDERICK SCHILLER FAUST'S *THE GENTLE GUNMAN*

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Abstract: When Frederick Faust wrote *The Gentle Gunman*, locating it in Argentina, he did more than entertain American readers with new terrain in his western. By choosing to border-cross between the western and the Argentine gauchesque, he creates an opportunity to ask questions about the modernity of American and Argentine cultures and the national identities emphasized by both societies.

This article begins by analyzing the characteristics of the western and the gauchesque in Faust's novel. This article also provides an overview of the historical moment of the novel's creation, expectations of readers from the time period, and Faust's decision to eroticize the western's setting. By doing so, this article answers the question about the hero's displacement in a modern world that values class elitism above heroic characteristics. While scholars have analyzed different elements of Faust's life and works, they have not discussed his border-crossing between the literary genres of the western and the gauchesque, two genres that emphasize national identity. By focusing on Faust's border-crossing, it will become evident that Faust championed specific traits embodied by the cowboy and, in one case, the gaucho--all of which foster a sense of who belongs to the landscape and who does not.

I.

A 1927 *New York Times* article titled "Douglas Fairbanks Uses New Weapon, the Bolas," described Fairbanks's extensive training for his upcoming film *Over the Andes*, later renamed *The Gaucho*. In order to wield the bola with ease, Fairbanks solicited two experts from Argentina to train him. The *New York Times* contributor goes on to remark that the *bola* is "almost unknown to the North American Continent" and insists that Fairbanks's prior role as a Mexican (he was well known, for example, for playing Zorro in the 1920s *The Mark of Zorro*) did not help train him to "impersonate" a gaucho because Mexicans are as "unfamiliar [with the *bola*] as croquet to an American Indian or baseball to an Eskimo" (6). As a result, Fairbanks undertook extensive training--not to portray Argentine culture authentically, but rather to create "dramatic effect in the picture" (6).

Fairbanks's impersonation of foreign figures like the gaucho was not isolated, but rather part of an ongoing trend in American cinema and literature in the 1920s. While one-dimensional depictions of Native Americans and Mexicans had long appeared in westerns, in the 1920s, the figure of the gaucho was added to the genre. Despite Fairbanks's extensive training, his portrayal of the gaucho was influenced by images that had become familiar in depictions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands--a region he had been engaged with since at least 1915 when he played a Texan in *Martyrs of the Alamo*. According to this logic, Fairbanks's gaucho was easily interchangeable with the Mexican

vaqueros that appeared in other films from the same time period.

The Gaucho was not the only creative work to import the gaucho in the 1920s. For instance, three years prior to Fairbanks's film, in 1924, Frederick Schiller Faust-- writing under his *nom de plume*, Max Brand-- published *The Gentle Gunman*. *The Gentle Gunman* used the gaucho in order to render a frontier that seemed both familiar to and distinct from the U.S. *The Gentle Gunman* began as a serial originally titled "Argentine" in *Western Story Magazine*, a popular publication with a wide readership. As a result, Faust capitalized on the popularity of westerns, while he excited their audiences by reaching elsewhere for new frontiers. In doing so, he helped open the door for the future incorporation of the gaucho into the western genre. Through efforts like Faust's, Fairbanks's, and later, Herbert Childs's, in *Way of a Gaucho* (1948), the gaucho became an easily identifiable figure in westerns, somewhat familiar in its likeness to American cowboys and Mexican vaqueros, but exotic enough to seem new.

Although adventure stories on the frontier attracted Faust, he moved away from the familiar site of the U.S.-Mexico border even as he re-articulated the symbols of this border in his text that takes place in Argentina. Creating new border-crossing opportunities for American readers to enjoy became one method that forged a sense of belonging and national identity in 1920s readership. As a result, Faust chose to explore an Argentine literary tradition--the gauchesque--which by

the twentieth century had become a vehicle for Argentine nation-building much like the western. Because of the similar emphasis on nation-building in both the western and the gauchesque, Faust's choice to border-cross appears to encompass more than a chance to entertain readers. Rather, by choosing to border-cross between genres, Faust creates an opportunity to ask questions about the modernity of both American and Argentine cultures in ways that would not occur without this literary border crossing. He incorporates tendencies of both the western and the gauchesque--namely, the cowboy hero and the outlaw gaucho figure--to ask questions about the hero's displacement in a modern world that values class elitism above heroic characteristics like bravery, honesty, and frontier skills. While Ariana Huberman and Josefina Ludmer have discussed the gaucho genre, and William Bloodworth and Jon Tuska have examined Faust's contribution to the western genre, to date scholars have not provided a deep analysis of Faust's border-crossing between genres in *The Gentle Gunman*. This article seeks to fill that gap.

II.

In *The Gentle Gunman*, as with many of his other westerns, Faust actively considered reader interest as he wrote, in order to bolster his career. From the 1920s through the 1950s, Faust published hundreds of westerns and detective stories, despite his purported resistance to telling stories about "stinking cowboys" (Bloodworth 58). Because single-genre magazines were growing in popularity

(58), Faust understood the financial benefits of producing westerns. He published, on average, two short stories per issue of *Western Story Magazine*, sometimes under different pen names, including Max Brand (59). Pulp magazines such as *Western Story Magazine* were "driven by market forces" because they discovered "exactly what it was that readers wanted in the way of literary entertainment" (23). Editors conducted surveys to ascertain which sorts of stories readers wanted to consume, and used these as a basis for their editorial decisions (Tuska and Piekarski 387). Faust did not write so much about "people who might exist, as he did of people the reader would like to believe could exist" (qtd. in Tuska and Piekarski 441). William Bloodworth argues that Faust offered a generous importation of "European lore, a faith in action that reduces the significance of both characterization and setting, and a strangely complex treatment of men and women" (178). Faust sought to create work that would sell. In order to appeal to his audience's desires, *The Gentle Gunman* incorporates themes from the most popular genres of the time period, such as the western, the gauchesque, and the detective story, although the novel relies more heavily upon the western and the gauchesque.

Because financial gain and consumer interest motivated Faust, he turned his attention to Argentina, a country that had been developing an economic relationship with the U.S since the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, this relationship between the U.S and Argentina had greatly changed, and it had led to increased interest in the South

American country by mainstream Americans. By 1910, for example, the U.S exported \$40.4 million worth of goods to Argentina, which made Argentina the ninth largest recipient of American products (Sheinin 39). Furthermore, in Argentina, foreign companies controlled the most profitable industries, such as meatpacking, communication networks, and manufacturing (Bergquist 88). Historian David J. Goldberg calls the 1920s a “business-dominated decade” for the U.S, largely because of its control over foreign markets (8). By 1925, American companies like Standard Oil owned 143,000 hectares of land in the Argentine provinces of Jujuy and Salta, thus limiting Argentine control over its natural resources (Brennan and Pianetto 75). This included its human residents: when Standard Oil workers were ambushed, robbed, and killed while driving along a highway in 1926, Standard Oil executives took matters into their own hands by apprehending and flogging the suspects (76).

The control exercised by Standard Oil was not an anomaly in Argentina. Throughout the 1920s, U.S. investors took advantage of Argentina’s economic decline (Alexander 157). American investors won concessions for high-power telegraph communications between New York and Buenos Aires and proposed major projects like the construction of an extensive grain elevator network and a steamship service between North and South America (Sheinin 45). By 1917, the U.S had also established virtual monopolies on Argentine lumber, agricultural machinery, and sewing machine exports (47). Foreign

capitalists exercised “dominant [...] control over the transport, processing, and commercialization of export products,” which left Argentines painfully dependent on American economic power (Bergquist 87).

American investment in Argentina eventually increased the interest of mainstream Americans in the South American nation’s politics, economics, and popular culture. The same interest, however, caused many to view Argentina as a dependent and unformed nation. Although the 1920s exhibited profoundly nativist attitudes at the time, it was also, as historian Gary Dean Best insists, a period of great change that cast many Americans into a “sea of normlessness,” or a lack of cohesive norms to follow, that encouraged them to look beyond the U.S for sources of exotic intrigue (xiii). Many liberal thinkers from the time period did advocate cultural pluralism. This intellectual turn, however, failed to eradicate prejudice (Selig 41). Instead, as Best notes, it led many Americans to exoticize foreign cultures and reduce their complexities to simple stereotypes (37). The fashion industry, for example, “found inspiration in the museums, borrowing [...] from the costumes of Arab chieftains, Chinese mandarins, guildsmen of medieval Japan, the tribes of the frozen Siberian tundras, the graves of ancient Peru, the ceramics of Mexico, and the Indians” in indiscriminate ways (37). In doing so, Americans sought distinction and originality in order to alleviate their sense of cultural *ennui*. Films like *The Cheat* (1915) and *Broken Blossoms* (1919), orientalist films on Chinese/Japanese themes respectively, also helped

Americans imagine exotic foreign cultures.

In *The Gentle Gunman*, Faust capitalized on the thirst for the exotic while retaining the familiar landscape of the frontier via the Argentine pampas. Bloodworth suggests that Faust imported mythology from abroad because he found the American West to be an infertile place for the imagination (180). In the novel, Faust echoes a reversal of Bloodworth's claims when he marries depictions of Argentine frontier life with the mythologized American West. According to Tuska and Piekarski, Faust researched gaucho culture (Tuska and Piekarski 378) to provide realistic portrayals of gaucho clothing, their saddles, and descriptions of the Argentine pampas.

To this end, Faust incorporates elements of the gauchesque, such as the outlaw gaucho figure, his love for family, and his fierce loyalty to those he loved, best characterized by works like José Hernández's *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and Rafael Obligado's *Santos Vega* (1885). In twentieth-century gauchesque literature, the outlaw gaucho figure used by Faust had become passé. Elena Castedo-Ellerman draws attention to the difference between nineteenth-century works like Hernández's with this trope and twentieth-century portrayals of the gaucho when she suggests that "literary men have portrayed him [the gaucho] in different, sometimes contradictory ways ... During the first half of the 19th century, Sarmiento, in *Facundo*, depicts the gaucho as a crass barbarian. During the second half of the century, however, novels in verse

idealize and idolize the gaucho" (13). Domingo Sarmiento portrayed the gaucho as holding back Argentina's progress as a nation in his polemical work *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (1845). By the early twentieth century, immigration had altered Argentina's landscape as a nation, thus forcing many Argentines to look to the past for cultural representation in the figure of the gaucho.

By the early twentieth century, writers' tendency to position the gaucho as a symbol of Argentine national identity instead of a hindrance to progress, as did Sarmiento, was prolific. Authors such as Leopoldo Lugones in *La Guerra gaucha* (1905) hailed the gaucho as the symbol of *argentinidad*, or what it means to be Argentine, that would help combat the social problems he connected to increased immigration. In *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), Ricardo Güiraldes expands upon Lugones's ideas when he shows modernized gauchos working on industrialized ranches owned by foreigners. To combat this loss of land, Argentines must embrace and model themselves after the noble, loyal, and hard-working working-class gauchos like Fabio Cáceres and Don Segundo. Because of the disparate manner of portraying the gaucho, Jason A. Bartles argues that the "gaucho genre is rather a space in which the gauchos are constantly appropriated and used to carry out a variety of ideological and aesthetic programs" (133).

While Faust incorporates the traits illuminated by Güiraldes in *Don Segundo Sombra*, he returns to a past portrayal of the pampas—something reminiscent of *Facundo*—when he presents the pampas as an unmodernized,

virgin land ready to be cultivated. In this nostalgic portrayal of rural Argentina, it becomes obvious that Faust patterns his work as a fairly traditional western (Etulain 265) full of mythical figures and cultural ideology, rather than a work of historical accuracy. The romanticized and mythologized landscape is also a characteristic of both nineteenth and twentieth-century gauchesque works. Faust provides cultural familiarity and exotic differences to his readers who will recognize this nostalgic portrayal of the pampas from reading similar descriptions of the frontier in westerns. Yet, his nostalgic depiction of the pampas extends beyond mythologizing. Beverly J. Stoeltje argues that nostalgia is oftentimes used in depictions of the cowboy in order to look “back at a past period or event” and construct a “view that glamorizes it, removing the danger, disease, and death, and creating unity in the present” (52). By looking nostalgically into the past, Faust gives his protagonist, Dupont, a new but familiar romanticized place to explore and grow in ways that the contemporary industrialized west will not permit him. Faust’s strategy to bring the site of gauchesque works--the Argentine pampas--into the western seemed to have been ultimately successful, as he later continued to explore the Argentine frontier in *Montana Rides* (1933).

III.

Despite the fact that the majority of *The Gentle Gunman* takes place in Argentina, Faust begins it in the U.S. in order to illuminate common traits of cowboy culture. Señor

Valdivia, an Argentine landowner in the novel, attempts to do the same thing--albeit with ulterior motives. Valdivia buys Charles Dupont’s horse so that it does not fall into the hands of the latter’s rival. In order to express his gratitude and loyalty to Valdivia, Dupont agrees to help the landowner defeat El Tigre, Valdivia’s gaucho nemesis. At first, Juan Carreno, Valdivia’s simple-minded assistant, cannot understand his boss’s intentions. Valdivia clarifies them to both Carreno and the reader when he states that “I have paid eight hundred pesos not for a horse, but for a man” (103). And later, Valdivia argues that:

Dupont is honest. Besides this, he will be made doubly formidable because he will know, my friend, that this task, if he undertakes it, is a well-nigh lost cause--a forlorn hope. Such desperate adventures are dear to the hearts of these northerners. Show them a great danger and for its own sake the danger becomes a delightful thing. Show them a north or a south pole surrounded by hundreds of leagues of terrible ice, of blizzards, of deadliest famine, and they cannot rest until they have pressed forward to find it. Hundreds die. They are forgotten. One man breaks through to victory. All the agony of a century of effort is overlooked because of one triumph. What use is all the labor and the peril? Of what advantage is the north pole or the south? None whatever! But the labor is its own reward simply because it is great [...] You will see in Charles Dupont that the great risk will appeal to him because of its greatness. (46)

Valdivia's speech illuminates the idealized characteristics that define American cowboys like Dupont, or what Stoeltje calls the "embodiment of American values" (50). Valdivia touches upon what these values might be when he refers to "northerners'" relentless self-sacrifice and rugged adventurism, no matter the cost of their efforts. Yet rather than admire those characteristics or even align them with gaucho culture, Valdivia scorns and exploits them: "I shall use him [...] as the knight in the old days used his sword. It saved his body. It also saved his soul" (42). Valdivia attempts to take advantage of the cowboy's admirable characteristics to dupe the novel's hero. At the same time, Valdivia and Dupont only manage to cross paths because of Dupont's current rootlessness. In his analysis of the cinematic western, Shai Biderman describes the cowboy as "outwardly and inwardly" manifesting "the notion of loneliness" (qtd. in McMahon and Csaki 13). Biderman considers this trait to be the most "conspicuous trademark of his [the cowboy's] character" (14). In addition to this, the cowboy tends to keep to himself (21). Douglas J. Den Uyl suggests that "perhaps no image is more symptomatic of the American western than the lone hero, abandoned by all, skillfully performing some act of courage in the cause of justice" (qtd. in McMahon and Csaki 31). These characteristics describe the essence of Dupont's interior being. Although Faust does not mention specific elements of modernization like Güiraldes does with industrialized ranching, he alludes to it when he begins his novel with a cowboy protagonist who is out of work and who has lost his horse—a hero all

alone, looking for a cause. Valdivia's scheme works on Dupont because it is reminiscent of an idealized nineteenth-century American frontier where cowboys always have a place to belong.

Faust expands upon specific characteristics of cowboy culture and the western, such as frontier skills and the heroic acts of self-sacrifice mentioned by Uyl, before beginning to link these skills with gauchesque figures. Honest to a fault, Dupont, for example, wants to believe in others' honesty, and he spends the majority of the novel trusting Valdivia's heroism and the gaucho El Tigre's duplicity. According to Jon Tuska, loyalty, for Faust, was one of the greatest virtues, and "should a man lose that, he has lost everything" (375). Valdivia tells Dupont that twenty-five years before, he intended to marry a young girl, Dolores, from a neighboring estate. El Tigre allegedly could not stand to see Valdivia possess the woman, so he kidnapped and ran off with her into the pampas where she later died giving birth to their daughter, Francesca. In this story, Valdivia appeals to Dupont's values through narratives of unrequited love, the sully of female purity, and injustice. Valdivia tells Carreno that "you do not know these [American] men, Carreno. It is impossible for you to conceive the iron of which they are made. He is now a madman—a crusader. To destroy El Tigre and bring the girl [Francesca] away is now his only thought" (52). As Valdivia's actions become more and more debased, Dupont's responses always reinforce the tenets of cowboy culture.

Through Valdivia's narrative about El Tigre, Faust incorporates one of the major symbols of nineteenth-century gauchesque narratives like *Martín Fierro*: the gaucho outlaw. Ariana Huberman explains that the term gaucho was first associated with "vagabonds who threatened the ranchers' lot" (15). In addition to this, some were considered gauchos "'malos' (outlaws, rural bandits), and others gauchos 'buenos' (patriotic soldiers, peasants, laborers)" (15). During the nineteenth century, the term gaucho came to refer to "country people," or those who worked in farming, with cattle, or mining (Huberman 15). As the organization of the Argentine state changed, the vagabond lifestyle of the gauchos was no longer possible (16). According to Huberman, economic changes in the latter part of the nineteenth century such as portioning of land, compulsory military draft, the arrival of the railroad, and immigrant labor forced "many gauchos to abandon their anarchic way of life" (16). With the death of the real-life gaucho, within the literature, he became a national icon. Faust utilizes one of the first representatives of the literary gaucho--the gaucho *malo*--with the figure of El Tigre. Yet, the gaucho outlaw resembles the cowboy himself: both are figures of loneliness who are self-sufficient and rugged men bent on righting a wrong. In *Cowboys, Gauchos, and Llaneros*, Richard W. Slatta argues that gauchos and cowboys function as symbols of "rugged individualism, unbending principle, and frontier spirit and courage" (95), evident in Faust's description of first Dupont and then later, El Tigre. By combining characters from westerns with those of the gauchesque, Faust attempts to

create a multicultural world of both American and Argentine frontier figures.

As Faust slowly incorporates more gauchos into his novel, his protagonist finds few similarities between cowboy and gaucho culture--at first. As Brown notes, "notions of cultural difference readily become systems of judgment and coercion by which one group marks off and dominates others" (660). Dupont's response to gauchos verifies Brown's claims. When Dupont first sees gaucho cow herding techniques, for example, he rejects them, finding their ranching skills to be antiquated and inefficient in comparison to those learned by cowboys like himself in the U.S. In this part of the novel, Dupont fancies himself an expert on ranching because he supposedly possesses more knowledge than the gauchos on how to survive the frontier--even one that remains largely unknown to him. At one point, he remarks that "such a saddle as this could not be thrown on as a waddie throws his in the West of the States" (Faust 82-3). Dupont's perspective ignores the long history of the gauchos' life riding horseback. Slatta argues that gauchos spent so much time in the saddle that some "gauchos could barely walk" (96). Although the effectiveness of gaucho saddles seems self-evident given Slatta's point, Dupont considers them insufficient for withstanding long cattle drives, nor does he express any interest in learning more about them or using them himself. Dupont even extends this viewpoint to the animals that he manages. When he meets another American cowhand on the ranch, Jeff explains "what would a Hereford do in

this man's country? They'd get bored and die [...] This here is a land of milk cows" (82-3). In depictions like these, Dupont views gaucho culture as feminized, weak, and unformed, an inferiority that trickles down to the prominent elements of ranching culture. In her analysis of Américo Paredes, Stoeltje illuminates Paredes's claims about frontiersman, such as this figure's association with machismo, and machismo's parallel to a sense of nationalism (52). Dupont evidences machismo tendencies when he manages to ride thirty unbroken horses, falling only once and therefore beating the records of Valdivia's gauchos. For Dupont, the gaucho's ranching skills cannot compare to those of a cowboy, thus showing Dupont's nationalist attitude at this point in the novel.

As the novel progresses, Dupont encounters more opportunities to explore gaucho culture on Valdivia's ranch; however, he continues to reduce their culture to superficial elements. When Valdivia kicks Dupont off the ranch as part of his plan to capture El Tigre, for example, Dupont pretends to be a gaucho in order to steal his horse Twilight and leave the ranch. The other gauchos, unable to see his face in the dark, fall for the disguise. Only when it is too late do they realize Dupont's true identity. In Huberman's analysis of gauchesque novels written by foreigners, she discusses characters' imitation of gaucho culture as a method of survival (47), which applies to Dupont to a certain degree. Dupont recognizes that without his horse, he cannot survive the frontier. Yet, his tone throughout this scene demonstrates

more than survival techniques. Rather, he approaches the situation with a degree of condescension. According to Kwame Dawes, certain novels are flawed by the heavy-handed application of Western values, prejudices, and belief systems (113). In this scene, Dupont's reduction of gaucho culture to a simple disguise demonstrates his inability to understand other cultures beyond what he can see through the lens of American values and cowboy culture. Essentialist generalizations like these depict "homogenous groups of heterogeneous people whose values, interests, ways of life, and moral and political commitments are internally plural and divergent" (qtd. in Matthes 355). Cynthia S. Hamilton argues that in general Faust's western heroes inhabit the role of "trickster, bluffing his way through the narrative, constantly fooling others who are more privileged by social class or opinion than he is" (qtd. in Bloodworth 62). Although Dupont certainly plays a trickster in this scene, at the same time, at this point in the text, he has not triumphed over class privilege or opinion. Rather, his pretend gaucho routine reduces gaucho culture to the laughable, rather than functioning as an example of the ideological and lifestyle similarities between cowboy and gaucho culture.

The theme of disguise evolves to include figurative ones that separate the novel's heroes from its villains. While Dupont's disguise, albeit a culturally insensitive one, functions as a means for Dupont to play the hero in capturing El Tigre, Valdivia's figurative disguise is meant to fool and defeat

Dupont. For this reason, Valdivia spends the entire novel cast as a duplicitous character. Although Dupont believes Valdivia to be El Tigre's victim, the other characters like El Tigre and eventually Carreno recognize him as the real threat. As Valdivia's villainous plan against Dupont and El Tigre comes to fruition, for example, he states, "Valdivia was closing a noose around the throat of Dupont as truly as any hangman. So felt Valdivia himself, and enjoyed a thrill of exquisite power" (Faust 127). As the theme of figurative disguises and duplicity takes the forefront of the novel, a characteristic of both western and gauche novels, the debate between modernization and barbarism emerges once again.

Besides his duplicity, the main traits of Valdivia's character link him to a nostalgia for an unmodernized past. While Dupont experiences a lack of belonging and cultural displacement because of modernization, Valdivia rejects elements of modern life, such as print culture, choosing to define himself instead through elements of a pre-industrialized past. The wealthy landowner tells Carreno "newspapers are the invention of the devil. They are intended to make the human race weak-minded" (38). Instead of relying on print culture, Valdivia repeatedly turns to oral stories in order to exert power over his enemies. The debate between oral versus print culture has always conjured up the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism. Yet, as Slatta explains, on the frontier oral traditions transmit important cultural information when other sources are not available (172). In fact, he compares oral traditions from *Martín*

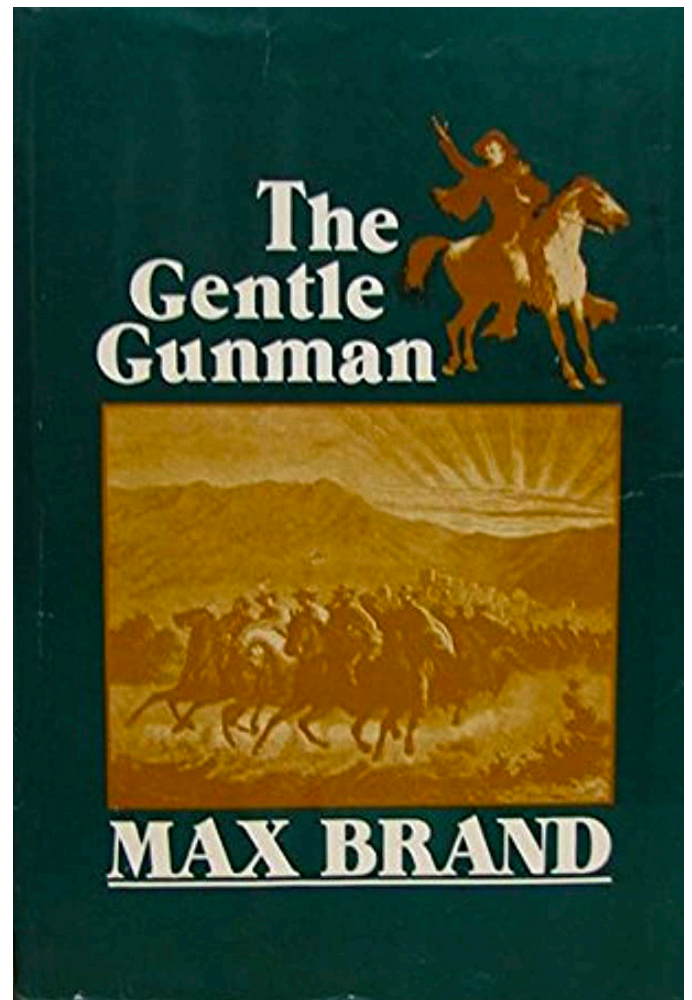
Fierro to cowboy stories and poetry, thus suggesting that both cultures subscribe to oral traditions regardless of Valdivia's beliefs. Yet, the fact that Valdivia relies on oral culture in a modern era serves to locate him within an unmodernized past despite his upper-class landowning status.

Faust's depiction of Valdivia's reliance on oral culture contrasts with the rise of print culture in Spanish America in the modern era. Stephen M. Hart explains that "It is well known that, throughout much of the nineteenth century in Spanish America, at least until the 1870s, the link between literature and high social office was an unbroken one" (165). Hart draws attention to famous figures like Domingo Sarmiento who played the role of both President and writer. During the period of 1880 to 1910, the development of the *folletín* allowed a literate urban proletariat to consume print culture before finally reaching the masses (167). According to the evolution of print culture in Spanish America, Valdivia should have embraced it as part of his role as an upper-class Argentine. When Faust depicts Valdivia as culturally backwards via his reliance on a simpler past, he uses these characteristics to pit Valdivia against culturally progressive characters like Carreno.

In contrast to characters like Dupont and Valdivia who have complicated relationships with modernity, characters like Carreno come to embrace it. Jennifer Tebbe argues that "people lived easily in the world of print, and print revealed the intersection of elite and general thought" (268). Tebbe also showcases

scholars like Catherine L. Covert's work with newspapers and this form of print culture's usefulness for understanding the past (268). Up until this point, Carreno, the simple-minded character who adores Valdivia's intelligence, willingly believes all of the landowner's fabrications. Motivated to help his employer, Carreno attempts to research Dupont's movements across the pampas by reading newspapers, thus temporarily substantiating Tebbe's argument about the world of print culture's relationship with different class groups. He then compares information garnered from print culture with that learned from oral narratives. The information is contradictory; however, Carreno ultimately believes the print narratives' contents, thus aligning him with notions of progress and forward thinking.

Faust's border-crossing illuminates the effects of a changing world on his characters who want to return to a nostalgic, mythical past. Jennifer L. McMahon and B. Steve Csaki argue that the "myth that westerns convey is both anchored in the history of the West and itself helped shape the historical settlement of the American frontier" (1). In her analysis of the gauchesque, Huberman describes a tendency in this body of literature to "idealize the *criollo* lifestyle that predated mass immigration, and where foreigners do not play an important role" (27). Both genres employ a degree of historical accuracy while largely mythologizing conquest and figures like the cowboy and the gaucho, respectively. In Faust's novel, Dupont and Valdivia both long for a mythologized past. Both Dupont's



Cover of "The Gentle Gunman."

and Valdivia's belief systems limit their understanding of the world--whether this is Dupont's lack of appreciation of and respect for gaucho culture or Valdivia's refusal to embrace print narratives. When their paths cross, the displacement caused by modernization allows the two characters to enact a mythical performance of a cowboy hero and a wealthy, corrupt rancher. In other words, Valdivia's obsessive desire to seek revenge against El Tigre forces him to play a mythical, almost romanticized foil to Dupont's cowboy

hero. Unlike Carreno who seeks truth through varied methods, Dupont and Valdivia can only view the world looking backward.

As Faust further explores the contrast between print culture and oral culture, he incorporates an opportunity for Dupont to expand upon his worldview through oral narratives. As McMahon and Csaki argue, the myth of the West present in westerns was forged out of both print and performance cultures (1), all of which Faust includes in *The Gentle Gunman*. Yet Dupont cannot appreciate oral narratives when he encounters them, which causes him to dismiss their authenticity in a similar way that he rejects gaucho culture. When Dupont witnesses a bank robbery in Nabor, for example, he critiques how the townspeople spread tall tales about the event: “no one hunted for truth. Every one was interested in the picturesque only” (155). As he immerses himself in Argentine life, Dupont comes to believe that oral storytelling merely entertains rather than informs people. He does not acknowledge the value of entertainment when telling tall tales, despite the fact that it is a part of cowboy culture too. In cowboy culture, according to Lee Clark Mitchell’s analysis of *The Virginian*, telling tall tales helps cowboys triumph over villains using words, not bullets (67). Dupont neglects to view Argentine reliance on storytelling as a way to be included in a society that has otherwise undermined them via class difference. Nor does he recognize his own subscription to the “picturesque” when he plays the cowboy hero on the pampas. When Dupont rejects oral storytelling like

this, he silences Argentines in what Heyd calls a “subversion of the original culture’s voice” (38). In this instance, when Dupont rejects oral storytelling, he also rejects elements of cowboy culture that he seemingly longs to represent, such as the use of multiple formats for narratives.

IV.

Dupont’s attitude regarding gaucho culture does not remain stable throughout *The Gentle Gunman*. Dupont’s change in attitude regarding gaucho culture begins with his first sighting of El Tigre after the townspeople put the gaucho outlaw on display. In previous scenes with gauchos, Dupont homogenizes them, making them easy for him to later imitate. In this scene, however, Dupont denigrates working-class Argentines looking for a spectacle while uplifting heroic gauchos like El Tigre. After a colonel captures El Tigre and puts him in a cage in the city center, Dupont observes that “in all this crowd there was not one who appreciated the horror of showing such a man to a crowd and making a show out of his downfall. For, great though the sins of such a man might be, at least he was brave, and courage is a virtue which wipes out the worst of vices, to some extent” (166). Dupont’s witnessing of El Tigre’s inhumane imprisonment allows him to reconsider his opinion of gaucho culture. Richard Harvey Brown draws attention to the societal tendency of classifying different groups in order to enact “definitions of personhood, hierarchies of value, and forms of power” (659). These classifications are more than labels, but methods

for “organizing perceptions, knowledge, and moral relationships” (Brown 659). Dupont has spent the majority of the novel creating classifications that position gaucho culture as somehow less than cowboy culture. El Tigre’s underdog status changes his mind. Like many westerns such as *The Virginian* and *Shane*, Faust champions the underdog and cowboys over the elite, landowning upper classes. Richard Slotkin argues that dime-novel Westerns after 1875 “abandoned Indian-war settings in favor of conflicts between ‘outlaws’ and ‘detectives,’ and the struggle between classes” (127). Faust’s novel illustrates Slotkin’s claims by using Dupont’s changing worldview to cast working-class Argentines in an unwelcome light while uplifting chosen gaucho characters like El Tigre.

Faust now positions notions of class difference as the cause that distances the two men from mainstream Argentines. Dupont’s observations about the people who flock to the spectacle engendered by Colonel Ramirez, the man who arrested El Tigre, prove this:

There were rich estancieros, the officials of the town, the bankers, the great men of the community, dressed in their best, proud of themselves, a little frightened at going into the presence of such a person as the colonel had so recently proved himself to be. They went in stiff and awed. They came out smiling, glancing to one another, exchanging pleased comments. Evidently the colonel was a man who knew how to receive others with a certain social grace. (167)

The upper classes that surround the colonel envision themselves as class-based superiors to outlaw gauchos like El Tigre. Yet Dupont refuses to view them as cultural superiors, but rather as corrupt elites willing to exploit their power to benefit themselves and those like them at the expense of worthy Argentines like El Tigre. When Faust depicts the Argentine upper classes as a unified mass, he utilizes cultural misrepresentation. Thomas Heyd describes misrepresentation as the appropriating of cultural goods by outsiders which can lead to people from small-scale societies entering “our imaginations in a caricatured fashion” (38). Ryan Cho explains that “elements of an appropriated culture are (intentionally or unintentionally) distorted and/or used as a gimmick or a costume when normally they would be treated with some respect” (59). Although Cho speaks of appropriated culture, Faust intentionally distorts the Argentine upper classes in order to champion the ideology of cowboy and gaucho cultural superiority.

As the issue of class-based difference takes precedence in the novel, Faust blames upper-class corruption for the displacement of gaucho figures like El Tigre. Tomás Errázuriz and Guillermo Giucci describe class-based divisions in their analysis of progress, technology, and class in the Southern Cone (74)—all of which have multifaceted origins and solutions. Faust, however, simplifies the solution to upper-class corruption when he unites two ideologies of the gaucho and the cowboy. As Josefina Ludmer argues, “the discussion of the gaucho’s place and function in society and of

the type of relationships that may be established between him and the other, political and learned, sectors takes place within the genre" (110). In Faust's novel, El Tigre becomes a gaucho outlaw having been displaced by corrupt Argentine elites like Valdivia. As the novel progresses, however, Faust positions El Tigre within an ideology that pairs cowboy and gaucho heroes who seek to defeat the upper-class Argentine, Valdivia. Throughout the novel, Valdivia's scheme to get Dupont into El Tigre's camp has worked, yet when Dupont spends enough time with the gaucho outlaw after the latter's imprisonment and release, he begins to seriously doubt Valdivia's claims. Dupont states, "if I should find out afterward that you have lied to me--then, Valdivia, I swear to you that I would never rest, day or night, until I had put a bullet through your head. Because from what I have seen with my own eyes, this Milario [El Tigre] is a king among men. But I have your word against him. And I have trusted your word!" (195). Later, he states that:

What a thing it is to live with a man, eat with him, hear him open his mind, feel his trust like a hand on one's shoulder---and then betray him at the end! [...] If I am wrong, God strike me! I have done my best to be honest. But this thing more. You are rich, Valdivia [...] justice can be turned aside with money. There are great brains in the law which may be hired. (197)

Faust links the belief systems shared by Dupont and El Tigre with their working-class status. For this reason, Dupont's speech

touches upon the dishonesty exercised by upper-class Argentines like Valdivia, such as bribing corrupt lawmakers. Within the gauchesque, Ludmer notes that "The genre of the gaucho has definitively defined itself by what is low in order to define itself as Argentine" (36). Faust hits upon this element of the gauchesque when he shows the dysfunction of the upper classes that displaces gaucho heroes who represent all that is Argentine. This tendency appears as a repeated trope in westerns as well. Near the end of the novel, Carreno, another member of the working class who has likewise been previously tricked by Valdivia, uncovers the ways in which cowboys and gauchos resemble one another, thus further connecting him to Dupont's circle of worthy, soon-to-be expatriates.

The championing of working-class and lower-class characters like Carreno and El Tigre provides an ideological conclusion. Unlike their upper-class counterparts, figures like Carreno and El Tigre ultimately reflect the traits garnered from cowboy culture that Dupont holds most dear, such as hard work, honesty, and integrity. After Valdivia's defeat, for example, admirable, working-class Argentines, such as Carreno and El Tigre follow Dupont to San Francisco: "and as the ship drove on, they passed through the Golden Gate and came into view on the wide, blue waters of the Bay, dancing in the bright sun of California" (222). In contrast to Dupont's arrival in Argentina, which was accompanied by floods, a sinking ship, and a near-death experience, the American West is tranquil, sunny, and welcoming. By presenting

these vastly different scenes of arrival, Faust suggests that Argentina had been held back because of characters like Valdivia who abuse their class status to dominate the nation. In turn, mainstream Argentines like the spectators in the city center scene merely follow this corrupt example, thus reinforcing their own powerlessness.

At first, during Dupont's first adventures in Argentina, he cannot recognize any cultural similarities between cowboys and the gauchos he meets. When he begins to develop relationships of substance with characters like El Tigre and Carreno, however, he finally acknowledges the cultural similarities between cowboy culture and working-class gaucho culture. Additionally, the journey that the group makes to San Francisco seems to insist upon Argentine acculturation into the American frontier. Françoise Lionnet defines acculturation as a "process whereby all elements involved in the interaction would be changed by that encounter" (102). Lionnet refers to acculturation as two cultures changing when they interact with one another. Faust's novel illustrates Lionnet's claims. In *The Gentle Gunman*, Argentines like Carreno and El Tigre choose to radically alter their lives and circumstances, while Dupont learns to expand his view of cultural worth after discovering that gauchos are fundamentally similar enough to cowboys to accept them without reorientation.

V.

Although Faust does not provide an in-depth portrayal of gaucho culture or the literary gauchesque in his novel, he utilizes some elements of the gauchesque in order to border-cross and expand his protagonist's worldview. At the beginning of the novel, Dupont critiques gaucho culture, refusing to admit its similarities to cowboy culture or its worth on its own merits. Once he integrates himself into El Tigre's world, however, he begins to view gaucho culture in a much more positive light. Faust uses elements of the western and the gauchesque to illuminate the cultural displacement of mythologized figures like cowboys and gauchos. Once the two cultures unite, they successfully battle upper-class corruption by destroying Valdivia. Only through this unification can the cowboys, gauchos, and their friends restore their sense of belonging at the novel's close.

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