

THE ALPHABET,
NUMERICAL VALUE

17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26.
q. r. s. t. u. v. w. x. y. z.
total the precise and fixed quantity of 1847, the year
in order to bring peace to the republic.

2. 16. 8. 1.
p h a
20. 5. 18. 19.
t e r s243

1. 12. 12. 25.
a l l y
24. 8. 5. 18. 5.
x h e r e315

9. 24. 19. 1. 12.
l i x s a l
2. 5. 18. 19.
b e r s327

19. 3. 1. 12.
s c a l
5. 1. 18.
e a r206

15. 13. 9. 14. 9. 1. 14. 25.
o m i n i a n y217

8. 20. 19. 5. 5.
h t s e e153

18. 21. 7. 21. 1. 25.
r u g u a y209

14. 4. 21. 14. 9. 20. 25.
n d u n i t y177

.....1847

ALFABETICO, CON EL/ NÚMERO
LETAS/ 1. a. 2. b. 3. c. . . . / Versos
Numeros, dan en la suma total la
que han llegado los ministros
de la República. / 12. 1.
Alfabeto243/ 21. 17.
Total315/ 19. 23.5
Cables327/ 15. 20. 5
.....206/ 1. 23. 15 . . . /
22 . . . / Patentehallará
.....209/ 12. 1. 23 . . . /
es, que la incógnita cabalística es el

Though he later identified with the countryside, Ascasubi lived his early years between the cities of Buenos Aires and Córdoba. In 1824, he founded the *Revista de Salta*. Using his poetry to speak out against Juan Manuel de Rosas, he spent many years exiled in Montevideo. His poetry, written in the first person using the language of the gaucho, is witty and humorous. His poetry represents a serious attempt to write using a vernacular language that before him was not seen as “literary.” Ascasubi enjoyed the support of wealthy, educated intellectuals but also of indigenous groups, the poor, and, of course, the gauchos themselves. He died in Buenos Aires. PRINCIPAL WORKS: *La refalosa* (1877), *Trovas y lamentos de Donato Jurado, soldado argentino a la muerte de la infeliz Doña Camila O’Gorman* (1848), *Santos Vega, o Los mellizos de la Flor* (1872)

The Slippery One / La refalosa

Molly Weigel, trans.

Taunt of a mazorquero and throat-cutter, one of the number besieging the plaza of Montevideo, to the gaucho Jacinto Cielo, gazetteer and soldier of the Argentine Legion, defender of that plaza

Hey, gaucho savage!

I don't lose hope,
and it's no joke,
of getting you to try
ting-a-ling and the slippery one.
I'll tell you how it goes:
listen up and don't be a scaredy—
for you, this little song
is sadder than Good Friday.

Any Unitarist we catch,
We lash down;
or else just leave him standing
while our comrades string him up
from behind
—mazorqueros, of course.
They bind
him with a double tether
so he's elbow to elbow
showing the world his birthday suit.
Savage!

Here's where your ordeal starts.

Later after that, a three-ply leather thong
will hug his feet, like a horse

fastened up to a stake so neat,
and while he's standing there
we have him begging loud;
half-teasing, we let him have
a little jab,
and when he screams, we sing
the slippery one, and ting-a-ling
without a violin.

But we follow the sound
in the brass sheath
when we whet
the knife, and test
the point
on the nape of his neck.
That chicken savage jumps,
which makes us laugh,
and when some start to tear their shirts
and cry,

that's the best of all;
we feel as lucky
as our dear President.
And the cackle of joy
spreads far and wide
when we hear the pretty music
and the fun we're giving
to the savage we've got tied.

At last,
when we think the time is ripe
and we've had our fill
of fun, we decide
to stop his breathing;
and to do it right,
one grabs a lock of hair
while another
holds him by the legs
like a young horse,
so if he moves
it's on all fours.

Meanwhile,
he's begging us in the name of whatever saint
might be up there in the sky;
and to comfort him and ease his fear

INFUENCA O THE 1R

we cut across the veins
of his throat,
just a little below the ear,
with a well-sharpened blade
in what's called the mercy stroke.
And how does he say thank you?
—He starts to bleed,
a real treat,
and his eyes roll up in his head
from shock.

Ah, sissies!
We've seen a few
who bite themselves,
make gestures and faces
that'd make the savages scalp themselves,
then stick out their great big tongues—
among ourselves it's no disgrace
to kiss'em
and make'em half-satisfied.

What a high old time!
We laugh so much
we split our sides
to see how it even makes him shiver;
so we untie him
and loosen him up,
then pull him up short
to watch him do the slippery one.
He'll dance in blood
till he has a cramp
and falls down kicking
and shaking all over
—very proud—
till he's stretched out tight.
Inspired by this, we cut off a strip
of his skin that we know how to use
to make a razor strop.

Now we cut his ears,
his beard, sideburns, eyebrows, hair,
and scalped,
we leave him in a heap
to fatten up some hog
or vulture.

So, my Savage,
now you see—
a mere nothing has to happen to you
to make you scream,
“Long Live the Federation!”

Amenaza de un mazorquero y degollador de los sitiadores de Montevideo dirigida al gaucho Jacinto Cielo, gacetero y soldado de la Legión Argentina, defensora de aquella plaza.// Mirá, gaucho salvajon,/ que no pierdo la esperanza,/ y no es chanza,/ de hacerte probar qué cosa/ es Tin tin y Refalosa./ Ahora te diré cómo es:/ escuchá y no te asustés;/ que para ustedes es canto/ más triste que un viernes santo.// Unitario que agarramos,/ lo estiramos;/ o paradito nomás,/ por atrás,/ lo amarran los compañeros/ por supuesto, mazorqueros,/ y ligao/ con un maniador doblao,/ ya queda codo con codo/ y desnudito ante todo./ ¡Salvajon!/ Aquí empieza su aflicion.// Luego después a los pises/ un sobeo en tres dobleses/ se le atraca,/ y queda como una estaca/ lindamente asiguroa,/ y parao/ lo tenemos clamoriando;/ y como medio chanciando/ lo pinchamos,/ y lo que grita, cantamos/ la refalosa y tin tin,/ sin violín.// Pero seguimos el son/ en la vaina del latón,/ que asentamos/ el cuchillo, y le tantiamos/ con las uñas el cogote./ ¡Brinca el salvaje vilote/ que da risa!/ Cuando algunos en camisa/ se empiezan a revolver,/ y a llorar,/ que es lo que más nos divierte;/ de igual suerte/ que al Presidente le agrada,/ y larga la carcajada/ de alegría,/ al oír la musiquería/ y la broma que le damos/ al salvaje que amarramos.// Finalmente:/ cuando creemos conveniente,/ después que nos divertimos/ grandemente, decidimos/ que al salvaje/ el resuello se le ataje;/ y a derechas/ lo agarra uno de las mechas,/ mientras otro/ lo sujeta como a potro/ de las patas,/ que sí se mueve es a gatas./ Entretanto,/ nos clama por cuanto santo/ tiene el cielo;/ pero ahí nomás por consuelo/ a su queja:/ abajito de la oreja,/ con un puñal bien templao/ y afilao,/ que se llama el quita penas,/ le atravesamos las venas/ del pescuezo/ ¿Y qué se le hace con eso?/ larga sangre que es un gusto,/ y del susto/ entra a revolver los ojos.// ¡Ah, hombres flojos/ hemos visto algunos de éstos/ que se muerden y hacen gestos,/ y visajes/ que se pelan los salvajes,/ largando tamaña lengua;/ y entre nosotros no es mengua/ el besarlo,/ para medio contentarlo.// ¡Qué jarana!/ nos reimos de buena gana/ y muy mucho,/ de ver que hasta les da chucho;/ y entonces lo desatamos/ y soltamos;/ y lo sabemos parar/ para verlo Refalar/ ien la sangre!/ hasta que le da un calambre/ y se cai a patalear,/ y a temblar/ muy fiero, hasta que se estira/ el salvaje: y, lo que espira,/ le sacamos/ una lonja que apreciamos/ el sobarla,/ y de manea gastarla.// De ahí se le cortan orejas,/ barba, patilla y cejas;/ y pelao/ lo dejamos arrumbao,/ para que engorde algún chanco,/ o carancho.// Con que ya ves, Salvajon;/ nadita te ha de pasar/ después de hacerte gritar:/ ¡Viva la Federacion!

Hernández is the author of perhaps one of the most widely read Argentine books, *El gaucho Martín Fierro*. This national epic masterpiece was not initially well received by the literary critics of Buenos Aires. Based on the story of the gaucho as the ultimate rural character, *Martín Fierro's* popularity can be attributed to the duality of its domestic and universal relevance. Hernández's work became canonical in part because of the masterful way it captures the vernacular language of the countryside. PRINCIPAL WORKS: *El gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872), *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879)

Excerpt from Martín Fierro

Molly Weigel, trans.

I have seen a lot of singers
 who've worked hard for their fame
 and as soon as they get it
 they don't try to keep it—
 as if they got tired of warming up
 before they got to the race.

But where another man goes
 Martín Fierro goes;
 nothing makes him back off.
 Not even ghosts scare him,
 and since everyone's singing
 I want to sing too.

Singing I'll die,
 singing they'll bury me,
 and singing I'll arrive
 at the feet of Our Father;
 I came out of my mother's belly
 and into this world to sing.

May my tongue stay limber
 and words not fail me;
 singing will make my glory
 and if I put myself to singing,
 they'll find me singing still,
 even if the earth opens up.

I sit down in a hollow
 to sing how it happened;
 I make the grasses shiver

like a wind blowing.
My thoughts play there
with diamonds, spades, hearts, and clubs.

I'm not a singer with learning,
but if I put myself to singing
I won't want to stop
and I'll grow old singing:
verses come flowing out of me
like water from a spring.

With my guitar in my hand
even the flies don't touch me;
nobody steps on me
and when my heart gets tuned up
I make the high string wail
and the low string cry.

I'm a bull in my corral
and a bigger bull in somebody else's;
I always thought I was pretty good
and if you want to try me
you others come out to sing
and we'll see who comes out worse.

I won't stand to the side of the road
even if they come around cutting our throats;
I'm soft with the soft
and tough with the tough,
and in a tight spot
no one has ever seen me hesitate.

In danger—Christ Almighty!
my heart swells wide,
for all the world is a battlefield,
which shouldn't surprise anybody:
anyone who calls himself a man
knows how to stand his ground anywhere.

I'm a gaucho, so understand this
as my tongue explains it to you:
for me the world is small
and could be bigger;
the snake doesn't strike me
nor the sun burn my brow.

I was born like the fish
at the bottom of the sea;
no one can take away from me
what God gave me:
what I brought into the world
I'll take out of the world.

My glory is to live as free
as the bird in the sky;
I make no nest on this earth
where there's so much to suffer,
and no one follows me
when I take flight again.

Yo he visto muchos cantores,/ con famas bien otenidas,/ y que después de
adquiridas/ no las quieren sustentar:/ parece que sin largar/ se cansaron en
partidas.// Mas ande otro criollo pasa/ Martín Fierro ha de pasar;/ nada lo
hace recular/ ni las fantasmas lo espantan,/ y dende que todos cantan/ yo
también quiero cantar.// Cantando me he de morir,/ cantando me han de
enterrar,/ y cantando he de llegar/ al pie del Eterno Padre;/ dende el vientre
de mi madre/ vine a este mundo a cantar.// Que no se trabe mi lengua/
ni me falte la palabra;/ el cantar mi gloria labra/ y, poniéndomé a cantar,/
cantando me han de encontrar/ aunque la tierra se abra.// Me siento en el
plan de un bajo/ a cantar un argumento;/ como si soplara el viento/ hago
tiritar los pastos./ Con oros, copas y bastos/ juega allí mi pensamiento.// Yo
no soy cantor letrao,/ mas si me pongo a cantar/ no tengo cuándo acabar/
y me envejezco cantando:/ las coplas me van brotando/ como agua de
manantial.// Con la guitarra en la mano/ ni las moscas se me arriman;/
naides me pone el pie encima,/ y, cuando el pecho se entona,/ hago gemir
a la prima/ y llorar a la bordona.// Yo soy toro en mi rodeo/ y torazo en
rodeo ajeno;/ siempre me tuve por güeno/ y si me quieren probar/ salgan
otros a cantar/ y veremos quién es menos.// No me hago al lao de la huella/
aunque vengan degollando;/ con los blandos yo soy blando/ y soy duro
con los duros,/ y ninguno en un apuro/ me ha visto andar tutubiando.//
En el peligro iqué Cristos!/ el corazón se me enáncha,/ pues toda la tierra es
cancha,/ y de esto naides se asombre:/ el que se tiene por hombre/ donde
quiera hace pata ancha.// Soy gaucho, y entiéndanló/ como mi lengua lo
esplica:/ para mí la tierra es chica/ y pudiera ser mayor;/ ni la víbora me
pica/ ni quema mi frente el sol.// Nací como nace el peje/ en el fondo de la
mar;/ naides me puede quitar/ aquello que Dios me dió:/ lo que al mundo
truje yo/ del mundo lo he de llevar.// Mi gloria es vivir tan libre/ como el
pájaro del cielo;/ no hago nido en este suelo/ ande hay tanto que sufrir,
y naides me ha de seguir/ cuando yo remuento el vuelo.

Cries are heard . . . the whip cracks.
And more and more they fly . . .

Shackled to the links of a single chain,
the famished multitude staggers,
And cries and dances there!
One delirious with anger, another goes insane . . .
Another, brutalizing his martyrdom,
Singing, moans and laughs!
Meanwhile, the captain orders a maneuver,
And after looking at the sky that opens
So pure above the sea
Says from behind his thick tobacco smoke:
"Crack the whip strong, boys!
Make them dance some more! . . ."

And the orchestra laughs ironically, shrilly! . . .
And from the fantastic dancing round the serpent
Slithers in mad spirals . . .
Like in a dantesque dream, the shadows fly . . .
Screams, cries of woe, curses, and prayers sound!
And Satan laughs! . . .

.....
Canto VI

There is a people that its flag lends
To cover such infamy and cowardice! . . .
And lets it in this orgy be transformed
In the filthy cloak of a cold bachant! . . .
My God! my God! What flag is this
That impudently dances upon the mast?! . . .
Silence! . . . Muse! weep, and so long weep
That the ensign is washed in your tears . . .

Oh green-gold banner of my land,
That the Brazilian breeze flaps and flutters,
Standard that puts an end to the sun's light,
And the divine promises of hope . . .
Thou, that from the liberty of war's end,
Wert raised upon the heroes' lance,
Would that thou hadst been rent in battle
Than to a people serve as burial shroud! . . .

Cruel destiny that destroys the mind!
Extinguish in this hour the filthy brig
The road Columbus opened in the waves,

Like a rainbow on the watery depths! . . .

. . . But the infamy is too much! . . . From the land ethereal

Rise up, heroes of the New World . . .

Andrada! strip that banner from the air!

Columbus! close the door to your seas!

I/ 'Stamos em pleno mar . . . Doudo no espaço/ Brinca o luar—dourada borboleta;/ E as vagas após ele correm . . . cansam/ Como turba de infantes inquieta.// 'Stamos em pleno mar . . . Do firmamento/ Os astros saltam como espumas de ouro . . . / O mar em troca acende as ardências,/ —Constelações do líquido tesouro . . . // 'Stamos em pleno mar . . . Dois infinitos/ Ali se estreitam num abraço insano,/ Azuis, dourados, plácidos, sublimes . . . / Qual dos dous é o céu? qual o oceano? . . . // 'Stamos em pleno mar . . . Abrindo as velas/ Ao quente arfar das virações marinhas,/ Veleiro brigue corre à flor dos mares,/ Como roçam na vaga as andorinhas . . . // Donde vem? onde vai? Das naus errantes/ Quem sabe o rumo se é tão grande o espaço?/ Neste saara os corcéis o pó levantam,/ Galopam, voam, mas não deixam traço.// Bem feliz quem ali pode nest'hora/ Sentir deste painel a majestade!/ Emibaixo—o mar . . . em cima—o firmamento . . . / E no mar e no céu—a imensidade!// Oh! que doce harmonia traz-me a brisa!/ Que música suave ao longe soa!/ Meu Deus! como é sublime um canto ardente/ Pelas vagas sem fim boiando à toa!// Homes do mar! ó rudes marinheiros,/ Tostados pelo sol dos quatro mundos!// Crianças que a procela acalentara/ No berço destes pélagos profundos!// Esperai! esperai! deixai que eu beba/ Esta selvagem, livre poesia . . . / Orquestra—é o mar, que ruge pela proa,/ E o vento que nas cordas assobia . . . // . . . // Por que foges assim, barco ligeiro?/ Por que foges do pávido poeta?/ Oh! quem me dera acompanhar-te a esteira/ Que semelha no mar—doudo cometa!// Albatroz! Albatroz! águia do oceano,/ Tu que dormes das nuvens entre as gazas,/ Sacode as penas, Leviathan do espaço!/ Albatroz! Albatroz! dá-me estas asas// . . . // IV/ Era um sonho dantesco . . . o tombadilho/ Que das luzernas avermelha o brilho,/ Em sangue a se banhar./ Tinir de ferros . . . estalar de açoite . . . / Legiões de homens negros como a noite,/ Horrendos a dançar . . . // Negras mulheres, suspendendo às tetas/ Magras crianças, cujas bocas pretas/ Rega o sangue das mães:/ Outras moças, mas nuas e espantadas,/ No turbilhão de espectros arrastadas,/ Em ânsia e mágoa vãs!// E ri-se a orquestra, irônica, estridente . . . / E da ronda fantástica a serpente/ Faz doudas espirais . . . / Se o velho arqueja . . . se no chão resvala/ Ouvem-se gritos . . . o chicote estala./ E voam mais e mais . . . // Presa nos elos de uma só cadeia,/ A multidão faminta cambaleia,/ E chora e dança ali!/ Um de raiva delira, outro enlouquece . . . / Outrô, que martírios embrutece,/ Cantando, geme e ri!// No entanto o capitão manda a manobra,/ E após fitando o céu que se desdobra,/ Tão puro sobre o mar,/ Diz do fumo entre os densos nevoeiros:/ "Vibrai rijo o chicote, marinheiros!/ Fazei-os