

Dear Everyone

Greetings from sunny San Francisco. The 10th of November is known in Argentina as the *Dia de la Tradition* - Tradition day, so we thought we would write sometimes about traditions. Martin snapped this photo of some Gauchos - Argentina's answer to the Cowboy - waiting to process to a friend's funeral the other day. We don't often see Gauchos in our area, they are more commonly found in the north. Two hundred years ago, Gauchos would have been the "ordinary" rural folk found in every corner of the country. However their numbers were decimated during the 1800's, being used as cannon fodder under President Rosas, and later President Sarmiento introduced a policy of promoting immigration from Europe to Argentina, a major purpose of which was to dilute the native population whom he considered uncivilised and detrimental to Argentina's development. To this day, the clause promoting immigration from Europe remains part of Argentina's written constitution. Argentina's most iconic literary work is the epic poem *Martin Fierro*, by Jose Hernandez about a fictional Gaucho, Martin Fierro, who narrates his story of the injustices suffered by his people during the 1800's. Because it is written in dialect, the Spanish is not easy, but there are a few English translations around. Probably the best of these is at <http://sparrowthorn.com/> which also contains a good socio-historical introduction to the life and times of Jose Hernandez and Martin Fierro.



The Dia de la Tradicion on the 10th of November is mainly marked in educational establishments. Students wear Gaucho and peasant clothes, share traditional foods, drink *mate* - Argentina's national beverage, and perform folk dances. The flavour of the day is about celebrating traditions, from a position of standing in shared oppression. The Argentinean identity today can be (albeit) simplistically characterised as modern latinos conscious of their European roots, and as modern latinos there is a sense of shared oppression as part of the forgotten continent in the global south, so it is from this position that the European descendants stand with their Gaucho and native american brothers. What is still missing both from national psyche, and therefore educational curricular, is any discussion around the roles of the European immigrant forebears of today's population, and in particular the complicity of those antecedents in the

oppression of the Gaucho and native populations whose symbols we appropriate and whose traditions we celebrate.

Everything else; church, school, work, riding school, Scouts and the rest of life is mostly chugging on as normal for this stage in the year. This weekend is a long weekend and most of the extended family are taking a few days away in Miramar, a little resort town on the banks of a large salt lake some 100 miles away. Some of the household haven't left San Francisco since February, so we are hoping for a good time, and kind weather to relax and have some fun together. Thank you for reading, and for your ongoing prayers and support. Have a good month.



Hazel X Martin



Joni & Daniel

