

THE PREDECESSORS

Martín Fierro

(excerpt)

by José Hernández

Now I shall begin to sing
to the rhythm of the guitar,
for a man who cannot rest
from pain so extraordinary,
like a bird so solitary
comforts himself with song.

I ask the saints in heaven
to assist me in my thinking,
I ask them at this moment
in which I am going to sing my story
to refreshen my memory,
and clarify my understanding.

Come saints, with your miracles,
come all of you to my aid,
because my tongue is twisting,
and my sight growing dim—
I beg my God to help me
at such a difficult time.

Martín Fierro by José Hernández, XUL #4 p.4 (all issue references to XUL magazine)

Aquí me pongo a cantar al compás de la vigüela, que al hombre que lo desvela una pena extraordinaria como el ave solitaria con el cantar se consuela. Pido a los santos del cielo que ayuden mi pensamiento les pido en este momento que voy a cantar mi historia me refresquen la memoria y aclaren mi entendimiento. Vengan Santos milagrosos vengan todos en mi ayuda que la lengua se me añuda y se me turba la vista pido a mi Dios que me asista en una ocasión tan ruda.

I have seen many singers
whose fame was well won,
and after they've achieved it
they can't keep it up—
it's as if they'd tired in the trial runs
without ever starting the race.

But where another criollo goes
Martín Fierro will go to:
there's nothing sets him back,
even ghosts don't scare him,
and since everybody sings
I want to sing also.

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

Yo he visto muchos cantores, con famas bien obtenidas, 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 los fantasmas lo espantan y dende que todos canten 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.