

Inodoro Pereyra: The *Gaicho* as a National Icon¹

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Con un segno grafico scarno e allusivo, Fontanarrosa propone questo antieroe senza storia, o meglio, la cui historia è stata definita da altri testi: il *Martín Fierro*, le parole delle canzoni pseudofolkloriche, tutta la mitologia letteraria che gli fa portare sulle spalle il peso dell'«essere nazionale».²

Introduction

Created in 1972 by the Argentine Roberto Fontanarrosa, the comic series Inodoro Pereyra recounts the adventures of the *gaicho*³ Inodoro Pereyra – also known as *el renegáu*⁴ – and his dog Mendieta, with the occasional appearance of Eulogia Tapia, Inodoro's partner. The series first appeared in *Hortensia* as a parody of the poem *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández.⁵ Fontanarrosa subsequently left *Hortensia* for *Mengano*, then *Siete Días* and finally became affiliated with *Clarín*.⁶ In 2005, the magazine *Sudestada* placed *Inodoro Pereyra* among the “10 comics that changed history”, alongside *El Eternauta*,

¹ I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Fernanda Peñaloza and Dr. Vek Lewis for their feedback and Dr. Antonia Rubino and Dr. Meg Greenberg for their help with the elusive “allusivo”.

² R. Campra, *América Latina: L'identità e la maschera* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1982), pp. 39-40: “With a minimalist yet expressive graphic style, Fontanarrosa creates an antihero without a story, or better said, whose story has been defined by other texts: *Martín Fierro*, the lyrics of pseudofolkloric songs, the entire literary mythology which makes the weight of the “national being” rest on his shoulders.” (My translation)

³ The *gaicho* is the Argentinean, Brazilian and Uruguayan equivalent of the cowboy. See H. Fontanet, ‘Infamación del gaicho del XIX, estadio inferior del exilio del XX’, *Especulo: Revista de estudios literarios*, Año XIV, no. 41 (marzo-junio, 2009), at <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero41/ingaucho.html>. Accessed 19/03/2010 and S. Paullada, *Rawhide and Song: A Comparative Study of the Cattle Cultures of the Argentinian Pampa and North American Great Plains* (New York: Vantage Press, 1963).

⁴ *El renegáu* = the renegade.

⁵ J. Gociol, ‘Cronología’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 674.

⁶ J. Gociol and D. Rosemberg, ‘Los gauchos’, in *La historieta argentina: una historia* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2000), pp. 299 & 301.

Mafalda, *Ernie Pike* and *Patoruzú*.⁷ The first volume of the series was published by Ediciones de la Flor – which also publishes other well-known Argentinean comics such as *Mafalda*, *Clemente* and *Gaturro* – in 1974 and there are now a total of thirty-two volumes, most of which were written and drawn by Fontanarrosa alone. Indeed, Fontanarrosa only stopped drawing six months before passing away in 2007, although he continued to create the stories for *Inodoro Pereyra*.⁸ Fontanarrosa was much loved by the people and his loss was deeply felt in Argentina. Indeed, a day of national mourning was declared and his funeral was attended by thousands.⁹ Tributes to *El Negro*, as he was called, came from fellow graphic artists, the football team Rosario Central (of which he was a fan), the Ministry of Education and Bar el Cairo, which used to be a meeting point for Fontanarrosa and his friends.¹⁰

Gauchos have been celebrated in literature and two of the best known and most typical *gaucho* *œuvres* are *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández (1872) and *Don Segundo Sombra* by Ricardo Güiraldes (1926).¹¹ In fact, according to

⁷ Uncredited, ‘Un país de historietas’, *Sudestada* (Agosto 2005), pp. 4-11.

⁸ C. Vazquez, ‘En el día de su adiós, un cuento de Fontanarrosa volvió a juntar en la pantalla a Echarri y Dupláa’, *Clarín.com* (20 de julio, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/07/20/um/m-01461393.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010.

⁹ Uncredited, ‘Roberto Fontanarrosa 1944-2007: Duelo de la Cultura Nacional’, *Secretaría de Cultura: Presidencia de la Nación*, (19 de Julio, 2007), at

<http://www.cultura.gov.ar/prensa/?info=noticia&id=264>. Accessed 24/06/2010; Uncredited,

‘La Cultura Nacional de duelo y banderas a media asta por el Negro’, *rosario3.com* (19 de julio, 2007), at <http://www.rosario3.com/noticias/noticias.aspx?idNot=15744>. Accessed

24/06/2010; M. Aguilar, ‘El adiós a un grande: Rosario, movilizada por el dolor y el afecto: El “Negro” Fontanarrosa, despedido como un verdadero ídolo popular’, *Clarín.com* (21 de julio, 2007), at

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/07/21/sociedad/s-05601.htm>. Accessed

29/04/2010. For the love shown to Fontanarrosa prior to his passing away, see D. Samper Pizano, ‘El Negro Fontanarrosa, ¿primer santo argentino?’, *El Tiempo* (Colombia) (6 de julio, 2007), at

<http://www.casamerica.es/casa-de-america-virtual/arte-y-exposiciones/articulos-y-noticias/el-negro-fontanarrosa-primer-santo-argentino>. Accessed 14/09/2009.

¹⁰ Uncredited, ‘Los humoristas gráficos homenajearon al “Negro” Fontanarrosa a través de sus personajes’, *Clarín.com* (20 de julio, 2007), at

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/07/20/um/m-01461359.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010;

Uncredited, ‘Una despedida gigante para Fontanarrosa’, *Clarín.com* (12 de agosto, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/08/12/deportes/d-06501.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010;

Uncredited, ‘Ministerio de educación: Homenaje a Roberto Fontanarrosa’, *Clarín.com* (15 de agosto, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/08/15/sociedad/s-03205.htm>.

Accessed 29/10/2010; Uncredited, ‘Fontanarrosa tiene su mural en el célebre bar El Cairo’, *Clarín.com* (26 de noviembre, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/11/26/um/m-01550830.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010.

¹¹ Fontanet, ‘Infamación del gaucho del XIX, estadio inferior del exilio del XX’.

Campra, it is the figure of the *gaucho* in *gaucho* literature that becomes a symbol of Argentineanness, rather than “real-life” *gauchos*.¹² Be it as it may, *lo gauchesco* is – together with tango – the most commercialized national icon in Argentina, according to David William Foster.¹³ In this article I propose to look at how national identity is represented in *Inodoro Pereyra* through the main character and how this has affected Argentinean self-representation outside the series. In order to approach the representation of national identity in *Inodoro Pereyra*, I will use the concepts of parody and satire. However, the concepts of “civilization”, “barbarism”, and “primitive modernism” as well as an overview of the place the *gaucho* in Argentinean history are central to understanding what it is that Fontanarrosa parodies (*Martín Fierro*) and satirises (folklorism). After exploring “civilization”, “barbarism” and “primitive modernity”, I will explore how Fontanarrosa uses parody to question what María Alejandra Minelli refers to as “the essentialization of the figure of the *gaucho* as a national symbol” and how he then uses this to satirise folklorism.¹⁴ To finish, using the lenses of “primitive modernity”, I will look at how Fontanarrosa’s extensive *œuvre* has affected self-representation in Argentina, in what I call “The Inodoro Effect”.

‘Civilization’, ‘Barbarism’ and ‘Primitive Modernities’

The dichotomy of “civilization” and “barbarism” was put forward by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in 1845 in his book *Facundo*.¹⁵ For Sarmiento civilization was based on the European concept of progress and human control of nature, while barbarism was linked to nature, the country life and its traditions.¹⁶ The work of Sarmiento – who, as well as being a writer, was a politician and a “nation-builder” – had a deep impact on the way Argentina was constructed

¹² Campra, *América Latina*, p. 35.

¹³ D.W. Foster, ‘Gauchomanía y gauchofobia en *Las aventuras de Inodoro Pereyra de Roberto Fontanarrosa*’, in *Literature and Popular Culture in the Hispanic World: A Symposium, Montclair State College, USA, 13 March 1981*, eds JoAnne Engelbert, Linda Goulde Levine and Robert McCormick (Gaithersburg: Hispamérica, 1981), p. 109.

¹⁴ Ma. A. Minelli, ‘La Pampa de los senderos que se bifurcan: El humorismo gráfico Fontanarrosa y Caloi’, *El Corredor Mediterráneo* (Río Cuarto / Río Tercero / San Francisco / Villa María) (6 de febrero, 2008), at <http://www.culturaenlinea.com.ar/corredor/CORREDOR145.pdf>. Accessed 17/09/2009, p. 4.

¹⁵ L. Di Pietro, ‘Reflexiones sobre la cuestión nacional, 1900-1970’, *Revista de Filosofía Latinoamericana y Ciencias Sociales*, no. 18 (junio, 1993), pp. 40-1.

¹⁶ C. Briones, ‘Construcciones de aboriginalidad en Argentina’, *Société suisse des Américanistes / Schweizerische Amerikanisten-Gesellschaft*, no. 68 (2004), p. 78; Di Pietro, ‘Reflexiones sobre la cuestión nacional, 1900-1970’, p. 41.

and the discourse of “civilization” and “barbarism” is still very much alive, as well as an ongoing need to define the *ser nacional*, the national being.¹⁷

Argentina was built on the assumption that a nation-state had to be ethnically homogeneous, following the European model.¹⁸ Due to this assumption, there was a sense of having internal frontiers with the Chaco and with Patagonia, which were mainly populated by “Indians”.¹⁹ To remedy to the perceived problem of “Indians” as “barbaric” people – and thus an obstacle to the construction of the “civilized” nation-state – Chaco and Patagonia were labelled deserts, although they are fertile, because rather than settling in one place indefinitely, the “Indians” roamed the land.²⁰ This desert was then presented as a space to filled and the conquest of the desert was launched in 1879.²¹ The *gauchos* were sent to the “frontier” to fight against the “Indians” and bring “civilization” to the region. The conquest of the Chaco was launched in 1884, again, with the aim of bringing “civilization” to the area.²²

¹⁷ M. Quijada, ‘Ancestros, ciudadanos, piezas de museo: Francisco P. Moreno y la articulación del indígena en la construcción nacional argentina (siglo XIX)’, *Estudios interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe*, vol. 9, no. 2 (julio-diciembre, 1998), at http://www.tau.ac.il/ejal/IX_2/quijada.html. Accessed 15/03/2010. On the *ser nacional*, see J. C. Chiaramonte, ‘¿En qué consiste hoy el ser nacional de los argentinos?’ *Clarín.com* (8 de septiembre, 1998), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/1998/09/08/i-01501d.htm>. Accessed 04/03/2010; Uncredited, ‘La argentinidad al palo’, *Clarín.com* (15 de octubre, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/10/15/espectaculos/c-00402.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010; Di Pietro, ‘Reflexiones sobre la cuestión nacional, 1900-1970’.

¹⁸ Quijada, ‘Ancestros, ciudadanos, piezas de museo’.

¹⁹ P. Navarro Floria, ‘Un país sin indios: La imagen de la Pampa y la Patagonia en la geografía del naciente estado argentino’, *Scripta Nova: Revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales*, no. 51 (noviembre, 1999), at <http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn-51.html>. Accessed 15/03/2010.

²⁰ Quijada, ‘Ancestros, ciudadanos, piezas de museo’; F. L. Blanco, ‘Fronteras étnicas: Consideraciones generales a partir de un caso particular: El Chaco argentino’, *Anos 90: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul*, vol. 6, no. 9 (1998), at <http://www.seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/anos90/article/view/6206/3697>. Accessed 15/03/2010, p. 89; A. Andreassi Cieri, ‘Las raíces del genocidio: los antecedentes de la militarización de la política y de una ideología del exterminio en Argentina, 1880-1920’, *Boletín americanista*, no. 46 (1996), at <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/BoletinAmericanista/article/view/98642/146597>. Accessed 29/04/2010, p. 32.

²¹ Fontanet, ‘Infamación del gaucho del XIX, estadio inferior del exilio del XX’; Briones, ‘Construcciones de aboriginalidad en Argentina’, p. 78.

²² Andreassi Cieri, ‘Las raíces del genocidio’, p. 34; Blanco, ‘Fronteras étnicas’, p. 90; Fontanet, ‘Infamación del gaucho del XIX, estadio inferior del exilio del XX’; Quijada, ‘Ancestros, ciudadanos, piezas de museo’.

Following the independence war – in which the *gauchos* were involved, particularly from 1810 to 1820 – and the conquest of the deserts, *gauchos* became symbolic of the Argentinean nation.²³ This was not to last, however, as after the conquest, the government encouraged European immigration and settlement in these so-called deserts.²⁴ As European immigration increased in Argentina, *gauchos* became a problem as they continued to be nomadic.²⁵ *Gauchos* thus became pariahs around the turn of the century and, ultimately, were ascribed to the category of barbaric people.²⁶ At the same time, however, the local population started to feel that Argentina was losing its identity due to the number of European immigrants.²⁷ In the 1930s the gaucho regained his position as a national symbol, one that could not be claimed by social-climbing European newcomers and that – to paraphrase Rosalba Campra – represented the rural values that no longer existed.²⁸ According to Campra, this choice was due to the fact that, besides having fought in the wars that established the Argentinean state, the gaucho no longer existed and thus no longer posed a threat to “civilization”.²⁹

As a counter-discourse to the dichotomy of “civilization and barbarism”, Florencia Garramuño uses the term “primitive modernities” to refer to the apparent paradox in the fact that precisely at the moment when Argentina and Brazil were being constructed as modern countries (in the 1920s and 1930s) with their own specificities, samba and tango began to be perceived as national dances. The sense of the national in these dances appears to be particularly self-contradicting as the more “primitive” and “exotic” aspects were those that were made more salient and perceived as representative of the nation.³⁰ Garramuño explains this apparent “oxymoron” by the fact that in Latin America, modernization meant nationalization.³¹ Thus, it is no surprise that Argentina’s vanguard nationalist magazine was called *Martín Fierro* and the authors associated with it – amongst which were Ricardo Güiraldes and Jorge Luis Borges – were mainly concerned with writing about Europe from an

²³ Fontanet, ‘Infamación del gaucho del XIX, estadio inferior del exilio del XX’; Campra, *América Latina*, p. 35.

²⁴ Briones, ‘Construcciones de aboriginalidad en Argentina’, p. 78.

²⁵ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 35.

²⁶ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 35.

²⁷ Di Pietro, ‘Reflexiones sobre la cuestión nacional, 1900-1970’, p. 44.

²⁸ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 38.

²⁹ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 38.

³⁰ F. Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas: Tango, samba y nación* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de cultura económica, 2007), p. 15.

³¹ Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*, p. 41.

Argentinean perspective, as well as promoting national culture as different from European culture.³² Therefore, the national vanguard could not be the same as the European vanguard to truly be avant-gardist. For this reason, while adopting the idea of the avant-garde and modernism from Europe, the Argentinean vanguard broke away from the European traditions to embrace “primitivism” as part of the national past and in a way negate the European influence.³³ Garramuño also points to the commercial aspect of the vanguard, as tango was basically exported to Europe as a cultural product.³⁴ Moreover, successful self-marketing on the part of the musicians in Europe granted them prestige and it is in its marketing abroad that tango begins to acquire a “national specificity”.³⁵

Parody and Satire

I use parody and satire as they are defined in Linda Hutcheon’s *Theory of Parody*.³⁶ Parody is “repetition with a critical difference”, similar to an echo, which does not necessarily imply an attack on the parodied work. Quite the contrary, there is a sense of respect for the parodied piece in the parodic piece and the effect of this respect can be observed in what Hutcheon terms the paradox of parody: “In imitating, even with critical difference, parody reinforces”.³⁷ Satire, on the other hand, is used to attack, sometimes with the aim of initiating change and sometimes purely to ridicule.³⁸ Or as Nabokov puts it: “Satire is a lesson, parody is a game.”³⁹ One important aspect of parody that Hutcheon points out is that by “Imitating art more than life, parody self-consciously and self-critically recognizes its own nature.”⁴⁰ Satire, on the other hand, is “extramural” and is aimed at the “social or moral”.⁴¹ Thus, it is

³² F. Lebenglik, ‘El periódico Martín Fierro en las artes y las letras (1924-27): Apuestas estéticas martinfierristas’, *Página/12* (20 de abril, 2010), at <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/6-17670-2010-04-20.html>. Accessed 21/04/2010; Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*, pp. 131 & 144.

³³ Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*, pp. 130-131.

³⁴ Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*, pp. 150-151.

³⁵ Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*, pp. 153 & 159.

³⁶ L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985).

³⁷ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 26.

³⁸ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 78.

³⁹ V. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 75 in Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 78.

⁴⁰ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 27.

⁴¹ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 62.

possible to have in the same piece a parody of a work and a satire which is not directed at the parodied work.⁴²

Satirising the *ser nacional*

Inodoro Pereyra tackles both the questions of “civilization and barbarism” as well as the *ser nacional* and the parody and satire are undeniable. It is clear that *Inodoro Pereyra* parodies *Martín Fierro* and *gaucho* literature in general, but does not satirise it. Indeed, not only did Fontanarrosa admit to having great respect for *Martín Fierro* — which he referred to as “the *gaucho* bible”— but Inodoro himself refuses to have a bath for two months after hugging Don Segundo Sombra, and suggests he may be related to *Martín Fierro*.⁴³ In line with Hutcheon’s description of parody as being “intramural”, Campra says that Inodoro is “a *gaucho* born not of the Pampa but of gauchoesque literature”, to which García Canclini adds “he comes out of the cross between literature and the media”.⁴⁴ While Fontanarrosa parodied *Martín Fierro* in *Inodoro Pereyra*, it is the commercialization of Argentinean folklore to attract tourism, the dichotomy of “barbarism” and “civilization” and the eternal concern with defining the *ser nacional* that *Inodoro Pereyra* satirises.

In the aptly titled episode “El ser nacional”, an expert declares that Inodoro Pereyra is without doubt the best representative of the national being. This finding provokes great admiration in his colleague as, while everyone is struggling to define the *ser nacional*, this expert claims to have found him.⁴⁵ However, being the national being incarnate does not make Inodoro exempt from attempts to glamorize his image. Indeed, only three episodes after having been declared the near perfect embodiment of the national being, Inodoro is visited by a representative of the authorities who reproaches him for not being representative of the *ser nacional*. Indeed, Inodoro is too short, not altruistic, trustworthy or pious and does not offer a realistic representation of life. To remedy this lack of realism, the representative gives Inodoro new clothes and turns him into Supereyra. (Figure 1) While Inodoro retains his basic gaucho

⁴² Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 58.

⁴³ M. Frías, ‘La (re)construcción [sic] del héroe’, *Clarín.com* (7 de noviembre, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/11/07/espectaculos/c-00811.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010; R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Ni el agua bendita’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 647.

⁴⁴ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 62; Campra, *América Latina*, p. 40; N. García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 253.

⁴⁵ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El ser nacional’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 313.

clothes, he stands arms akimbo, with a cape flowing over his shoulders, a shield with an I on the front of his shirt and his *chiripá*⁴⁶ is smaller and tighter than usual, to resemble the superhero underwear-over-tights look – hardly a realistic look.⁴⁷ Thus, for the authorities, the national being, in the person of Inodoro, needs to let go of barbarism and embrace civilisation. The opinion of the authorities, however, have no power of conviction as in “El ser nacional”, Inodoro declares that “como futuro mío, no me convenzo” and in “El gaucho, ese símbolo” he reminds Mendieta that the adventures of Supereyra need to be realistic, which seems unlikely considering his superhero costume.⁴⁸



Figure 1. Supereyra⁴⁹

⁴⁶ A *chiripá* is a piece of fabric that *gauchos* wear over their *calzoncillos* (a long undergarment that resembles a pair of trousers, sometimes with fringes or intricate embroidery on the lower part). The *chiripá* is passed between the legs and held at the waist by a belt. It vaguely resembles a nappy in terms of shape but it falls around knee-length.

⁴⁷ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El gaucho, ese símbolo’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 316.

⁴⁸ Fontanarrosa, ‘El ser nacional’, p. 313: “I don’t find myself convincing as my own future” (my translation); Fontanarrosa, ‘El gaucho, ese símbolo’, p. 316; Minelli, ‘La Pampa de los senderos que se bifurcan’, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Source: R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El gaucho, ese símbolo’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 316. © 1998 by Ediciones de la Flor S.R.L. Gorriti 3695, C1172ACE Buenos Aires, Argentina www.edicionesdelaflor.com.ar

International organisations are as divided as local authorities regarding what to do with Inodoro. Indeed, just as the local authorities find him to be perfect as he is, then attempt to change him, Inodoro reveals that he has been declared world heritage and is thus not allowed to change his hairstyle without consulting with the United Nations first. This wish to keep him frozen in time is in sharp contrast with the demands of the other UN agency, the IMF, which wants Inodoro to work, although this damages his image of lazy *gaucho*.⁵⁰

To Minelli, the government officials, journalists, tourists and intellectuals who come to visit Inodoro Pereyra represent “civilization”, while Inodoro himself – the antihero – is ascribed to “barbarism”. Inodoro however, shakes the foundations of this dichotomy and does not accept this imposition. His methods for blurring the edges include scepticism (as in “El ser nacional”), irony (as in “El gaucho, ese símbolo”), silence and misinterpretation.⁵¹ Inodoro also explicitly assigns himself and Mendieta to the category of “intelectuales” (sic), although he is unable to recognise an *inodoro*⁵² and interprets it as a modern sculpture.⁵³ However, although he assigns himself to the category of the “civilised”, Inodoro openly questions Sarmiento’s choice of “civilization” over “barbarism”, as he looks up at the sky and asks: “Domingo Faustino... what did you choose civilization for if we were quite content with barbarism?”⁵⁴ Yet another method used by Inodoro and Mendieta to unsettle the dichotomy is to deflect the concept of the *ser nacional* in a number of ways. Indeed in “Dos personajes sentados” Inodoro brings the issue down to a more local level by telling Mendieta that he is more concerned for the provincial being than for the national being.⁵⁵ Mendieta, for his part, fragments the idea of a homogenous nation by declaring “the International being” a more accurate description of the nation than the national being in “Un raviol a la cruz”. (Figure 2) Moreover, as Inodoro wonders about the future of the being,

⁵⁰ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Patrimonio de la humanidad’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 599.

⁵¹ Minelli, ‘La Pampa de los senderos que se bifurcan’, p. 4.

⁵² *Inodoro* = toilet.

⁵³ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Los pampas del cacique Lloriqueo’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 27 (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2007), p. 64; R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El cacique Aguila Mocha’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 24 ([Buenos Aires]: La Flor, 2000), pp. 76-7.

⁵⁴ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El esqueleto de su tío Pedro’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 27 (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2007), p. 26 (my translation).

⁵⁵ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Dos personajes sentados’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 570: “rather than worrying about the national being, I worry about the provincial being” (my translation).

Mendieta points to the futility of such a concern, as he reinterprets the question as being related to the verb “to be”, which he obligingly conjugates in the future for Inodoro.⁵⁶



Figure 2. Deflecting the national being.⁵⁷

Inodoro further satirises the essentialization of the *gaucho* by using his own body in a rather literal way to represent Argentina. Indeed, it is known that *gauchos* are of mixed origins: “Indian” and Spanish, as well as the less advertised black element.⁵⁸ Early on, he says: “I am a mix of Indian and Spanish. And I think that my Indian half is the lower one. Because it is

⁵⁶ Fontanarrosa, ‘Dos personajes sentados’, p. 570; R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Un raviol a la cruz’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 479.

⁵⁷ Source: R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Un raviol a la cruz’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 479. © 1998 by Ediciones de la Flor S.R.L. Gorriti 3695, C1172ACE Buenos Aires, Argentina www.edicionesdelaflor.com.ar

⁵⁸ Paullada, *Rawhide and Song*, p. 30.

unexplored, savage, rugged and quite unfaithful”.⁵⁹ Inodoro thus assimilates the southern part of his body with the southern part of Argentina, that is to say, Patagonia. However, as the *ser nacional* personified, Inodoro is very confused and inconsistent about his origins, and sometimes speaks of himself as being purely white and sometimes he is so confused about the *ser nacional* that he does not know whether he is a creole, an immigrant or a refugee from Laos.⁶⁰ The ridicule reaches new heights when Inodoro uses his own pulse to measure time because “the gaucho is the yardstick for everything”.⁶¹



Figure 3. The gaucho is the yardstick.⁶²

⁵⁹ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Mezcla de indio con español’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 607. Note that Inodoro uses the word “infiel”, which translates as both ‘unfaithful’ and ‘infidel’.

⁶⁰ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Siempre hay un indio espiando’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 29 (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2007), p. 58; R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El peor de los pecados’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 431.

⁶¹ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Una sopa de lentejas’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 28 (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2007), p. 57.

⁶² Source: R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Una sopa de lentejas’, in *Inodoro Pereyra* vol. 28 (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2007), p. 57. © 2004 by Ediciones de la Flor S.R.L. Gorriti 3695, C1172ACE Buenos Aires, Argentina www.edicionesdelaflor.com.ar

“Argentinidá for expór”⁶³

Besides satirising the “civilization and barbarism” dichotomy and the concerns with defining the *ser nacional*, Inodoro Pereyra also satirises the folklorism that was fashionable at the time the series was created.⁶⁴ In Campra’s opinion *Inodoro Pereyra* “denounces... the absurdity of a will to make the *gaucho* outlive himself... [and] thus reveals the purely literary nature of the national being.”⁶⁵

Like the “Indians”, Inodoro Pereyra is a tourist attraction and the tourists who come to see him generally treat him like a circus animal.⁶⁶ Eulogia, Mendieta and Inodoro are all aware of this “for expór” nature of folklore, although they have different attitudes towards it. In “El diablero malambador”, one of the rare instances where the story is told from Eulogia’s perspective, she expresses great concern for Inodoro’s safety, lest he should kill himself while performing a show. (Figure 4) All her fears are quickly dispelled when Inodoro appears with several artisanal products, which he bought with very little money.⁶⁷ Mendieta, on the other hand, is quite prosaic regarding folkloric shows. Indeed, when all of Inodoro’s physical exertion to entertain God results in a dollar note falling from the sky, Mendieta simply states that it was a very “for-expór” show.⁶⁸ Inodoro, however, shamelessly tries to tap into his iconicity. Early on, he advertises the espadrilles “Bandidas Malambo” and seems quite convincing and convinced about their quality, until he walks away, expressing disbelief at “the things one needs to do to earn a few bucks”.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, later in the series, and out of his own initiative, Inodoro tries to earn money by declaring the front and the back of his shirt advertising spaces.⁷⁰

⁶³ Eulogia’s words in R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El diablero malambador’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 333: “Argentineanness for export” (my translation).

⁶⁴ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 252.

⁶⁵ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 40.

⁶⁶ See for example R. Fontanarrosa, ‘A la derecha: un gaucho’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 258 and R. Fontanarrosa, ‘¿Dónde vas, gringo?’ in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 42.

⁶⁷ Fontanarrosa, ‘El diablero malambador’, p. 333.

⁶⁸ Fontanarrosa, ‘Dos personajes sentados’, p. 570.

⁶⁹ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Al que me hable mal del caucho’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 265. Espadrilles are typical rural shoes, Bandidas is a reference to both the brand Adidas and the banditry often associated with *gauchos* (*bandido/bandida* = bandit). *Malambo* is a traditional dance.

⁷⁰ R. Fontanarrosa, ‘Al toro que tiene mañas’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 253.



Figure 4. Argentineanness “for export”.⁷¹

The Inodoro Effect

Linda Hutcheon says that “In imitating, even with critical difference, parody reinforces”.⁷² This is certainly true when we look at what has happened since the publication of the thirty-two volumes of *Inodoro Pereyra*. The interest in the figure of the *gaucho* and other folkloric elements has not diminished. Quite the contrary, Inodoro has been co-opted and incorporated into the national imaginary and helps represent that which he parodied as well that which he satirised. Writing about Fontanarrosa’s work, Campra says that *Inodoro Pereyra* was “[la] dissacrazione del mito. O forse la creazione di un mito nuovo.”⁷³ In fact, almost all those linked with the series, in real life or in the series, have been affected by *Inodoro Pereyra* and have gained greater visibility.

An instance of the adoption of the figure of Inodoro Pereyra can be seen in the FERIA de Mataderos. This *feria*, which takes place almost every weekend and celebrates all things folkloric, is placed number thirteen on the Buenos Aires official tourism website list of “must-see” options in its “visits” section.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Source: R. Fontanarrosa, ‘El diablero malambiador’, in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 333. © 1998 by Ediciones de la Flor S.R.L. Gorriti 3695, C1172ACE Buenos Aires, Argentina www.edicionesdelafior.com.ar

⁷² Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 26.

⁷³ Campra, *América Latina*, p. 41: “the debunking of the myth. Or maybe the creation of a new myth.” (my translation).

⁷⁴ Uncredited, ‘Feria de Mataderos’, *Turismo Bs As – Sitio oficial de turismo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*, (© 2004-2010), at http://www.bue.gov.ar/recorridos/?menu_id=18&info=imperdibles&atractivo=124&orden=13. Accessed 01/05/2010; Uncredited, ‘La Feria de Mataderos...’, *Feria de Mataderos* -

Despite the fact that folklorism was very much satirised in the series, Inodoro is currently on the official logo of the *feria*, dressed in the Argentinean national colours. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Inodoro Pereyra on the poster of the Feria de Mataderos.

A real-life person who was affected by the series is the real Eulogia Tapia, who was unknown to the general public when the series was created. Fontanarrosa himself did not know she existed, and she first entered the series in “Eulogia”, a parody of a song titled *La pomeña*, which had been written for and about her by Manuel José Castilla. Since the real Eulogia Tapia discovered the existence of the song, and was “rescued” by an “expedition” of journalists, she has been able to use her famous name, to obtain some material benefits for herself and her community. Thus, according to Carlos Juárez Aldazábal, having her name in a song and in *Inodoro Pereyra* has given Eulogia Tapia some power but has also turned her into an “archaeological artefact”.⁷⁵

página oficial, (2009), at <http://www.feriademataderos.com.ar/feria.htm>. Accessed 01/05/2010.

⁷⁵ C. Juárez Aldazábal, ‘Saberes conjeturales alrededor de un sujeto: de *La Pomeña* a Eulogia Tapia’, *Terceras Jornadas de Jóvenes Investigadores, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani*, 2005, at http://www.iigg.fsoc.uba.ar/Jovenes_investigadores/3JornadasJovenes/Templates/Eje%20id entidad-alteridad/Aldaz%Elbal-identidad.pdf. Accessed 14/09/2009; C. Juárez Aldazábal, ‘Sujetos populares en la poesía de Manuel J. Castilla: el caso de Eulogia Tapia’, IX

The very idea of the *ser nacional* has also been affected by Fontanarrosa's work. In fact, Fontanarrosa himself was almost declared the best representative of the *ser nacional*, just like Inodoro in the series. Indeed, Fontanarrosa was the first runner-up in the "popular arts and journalism" category on *El gen argentino*, a television show that ran in 2007 and aimed to find "the DNA of our [Argentinean] national being".⁷⁶ Moreover, Inodoro Pereyra himself has become a national icon, not only in the series, but also in real life. Indeed, Judith Gociol calls Inodoro "un verdadero mojón de la argentinidad".⁷⁷ Furthermore, Inodoro Pereyra has, in a sense, become Martín Fierro.⁷⁸ Indeed, although, or probably because he had spent many years parodying Martín Fierro in particular and gaucho literature in general, Fontanarrosa was asked to illustrate the original work by José Hernández in book form (released in 2004), and a few years later he was asked to illustrate an animated movie titled Martín Fierro (released in 2007). The directors were quite clear about why they chose Fontanarrosa: "queríamos Inodoro Pereyra en el diseño".⁷⁹

Yet another example of the importance Inodoro Pereyra has acquired as a national icon can be seen in the fact that Inodoro was chosen to be the face on the stamps commemorating the world cup in 2006, although in the series Inodoro much prefers barbecuing the ball to kicking it.⁸⁰ (Figure 6) Whilst—based solely on the series—this choice does not appear to be an obvious one, there are many outside factors which can help explain this choice. First there is

Jornadas Nacionales de Investigadores en Comunicación: "Las (trans)formaciones de las subjetividades en la cultura contemporánea. Reflexiones e intervenciones desde la comunicación", Instituto Académico Pedagógico de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional de Villa María, 2005, at

http://www.redcomunicacion.org/memorias/pdf/2005juju_rez_aldaz_bal.pdf. Accessed 14/09/2009; R. Fontanarrosa, 'Eulogia', in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 22.

⁷⁶ Runner-ups and winners in other categories included Argentinean figures of world renown such as Eva Perón, Che Guevara, Jorge Luis Borges and Diego Maradona. See Uncredited, 'La argentinidad al palo'; L. Ma. Hermida, 'Cerca del ser nacional', *Clarín.com* (29 de agosto, 2007), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/08/29/espectaculos/c-00501.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010.

⁷⁷ J. Gociol, 'Inodoro y su tata', in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 15: "a veritable landmark of Argentineanness" (my translation).

⁷⁸ F. Peñaloza, Personal Communication, 19 April 2010.

⁷⁹ Norman Ruiz in 'Making of', bonus feature on *Martín Fierro: La película DVD* (SBP S.A. Worldwide, 2008): "we wanted *Inodoro Pereyra* in the drawing" (my translation).

⁸⁰ R. Fontanarrosa, 'La tradición del Indio Guayta', in *20 años con Inodoro Pereyra* (Buenos Aires: La Flor, 2003), p. 338.

the fact that Fontanarrosa was a great fan of football who not only created many strips on the subject but who had also previously been asked to comment the 1994 world cup match between Argentina and the US, as well as the 1998 world cup in France, which he did through a character called Hermana Rosa.⁸¹ However the choice of Inodoro rather than another one of Fontanarrosa's characters seems justified in light of the fact that when Argentina hosted the world cup in 1978, the mascot was Gauchito, a boy *gaucho* and the fact that Inodoro himself has become assimilated with the *ser nacional*.⁸² Considering the importance of football in Argentina, the significance of the world cup and the ambassadorial function of a stamp overseas, this is indeed a great honour and an official recognition of Inodoro as a representative of Argentina.⁸³



Figure 6. Inodoro Pereyra stamp sheet commemorating the 2006 world cup.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Gociol, 'Cronología', p. 676; Uncredited, 'Repartirán cuentos de Fontanarrosa entre hinchas de fútbol', *El Universal* (10 de agosto, 2007), at <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/442179.html>. Accessed 01/05/2010; F. Soriano, 'El Mundial en el aula: el manual para que el fútbol sea un hecho pedagógico', *Clarín.com* (18 April, 2010), at <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/04/18/sociedad/s-02183158.htm>. Accessed 29/04/2010; P. Muñoz, 'El autor', in *Inodoro Pereyra, el renegáu*, eds Ricardo Kirschbaum and Jorge Ezequiel Sánchez (Buenos Aires: Diario Clarín, 2004), p. 18.

⁸² 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa, 'FIFA World Cup: 25 Facts you May or May not Know!' *FIFA Communications & Public Affairs Division - Content Management Services*, (26 February, 2010), at

http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/mencompwc/01/17/75/48/e25factsyouneedtoknowaboutthefifaworldcup_10-00556_101_en_en.pdf. Accessed 01/05/2010, p. 3.

⁸³ See Polakovic's article from *La Nación – Suplemento cultura y nación* (22 June, 1978), p. 6, quoted in E. P. Archetti, 'Argentina 1978: Military Nationalism, Football Essentialism and Moral Ambivalence', in *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, eds Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), p. 136:

⁸⁴ Inodoro Pereyra posando con la camiseta de la selección argentina de fútbol, acompañado de los personajes de la tira cómica "Inodoro Pereyra, el renegáu", sello postal

Based on the above examples of “The Inodoro Effect”, it is fairly safe to say that for all the parody and satire, Inodoro has been co-opted as a national icon in real life. This does not, however, nullify Fontanarrosa’s work. Indeed, while he may reject the binary of “civilization” and “barbarism”, deflect the *ser nacional* and satirise folklorism, Fontanarrosa does not deny the existence of the latter phenomenon nor that of the former discourses. Rather, he confronts them and shakes the foundations of the dichotomy, without necessarily privileging one over the other. Indeed, Fontanarrosa shows them both as being part of what makes the *ser nacional*, in all his complexities, and thus *Inodoro Pereyra* fits in with Garramuño’s concept of “primitive modernity”. As Ana Merino puts it: “*Inodoro Pereyra* is the perfect example of the conflict between tradition and modernity. This Fontanarrosa work is a reinterpretation of the Argentinean folkloric past that became present through the mass media space of comics.”⁸⁵

conmemorativo a la Copa Mundial de la FIFA Alemania 2006. Negocios Filatélicos. Dirección de Marketing y Negocios Corporativos - Correo Oficial de la República Argentina S.A.

⁸⁵ A. Merino, ‘Inodoro Pereyra, a “Gaucho” in the Pampa of Paper and Ink: Folkloric and Literary Intertextuality and its Reformulations in Argentinean Comics’, *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2000), p. 190.