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'Home Thoughts from Abroad':
W.H. Hudson's Argentine Fiction

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One of the tendencies of critics over the years has been to situate W.H. Hudson, when not ignoring him completely, in all-embracing but erroneous fashion, amongst the legions of viajeros ingleses who, in the nineteenth century, visited the River Plate region and recorded their impressions of the Argentine pampas and their fascinating inhabitants, the gauchos.1 The fact is that in chronological and geographical terms almost the reverse process is true of Hudson.

William Henry Hudson was born in Buenos Aires province in 1841 of American parents, lived there for thirty-three years, before embarking on a trip to England in 18742 and stayed in his adopted country till his death there in 1922.3 It is not surprising that, having lived for half a century in England and having produced all his literary work there, Hudson should be considered, if not a giant of English letters, at least an important writer, admired and respected by his contemporaries, especially his fellow-writers, if less so by the modern generation.4 Much ink has been

1 On the English travellers, see, for example, José Evaristo Uriburu, La República Argentina a través de las obras de los escritores ingleses: Compilación (Buenos Aires: Claridad 1948) and S. Samuel Trifilo, La Argentina vista por viajeros ingleses 1810-60 (Buenos Aires: Guré 1959).


4 See, for example, the praise of Conrad, Ford Madox Ford and, not surprisingly, Cunningham Graham, amongst many, in Robert Hamilton, W.H. Hudson: The Vision of Earth (London: Dent 1946) 49.
spilt, especially in Argentina, on the subject of the author's nationality and the manifestation of a national sensibility, consciousness and modo de ser. Whilst this is less obvious in Britain, there has been much soul-searching as to what contribution Hudson has made to Argentine literature. Scholars like Martínez Estrada, Guillermo Ara, Fernando Pozzo and others rightly stress Hudson's position within the framework of gauchesque costumbrismo, despite his writing in English, which would set him alongside Hidalgo, Ascasubi, Del Campo and Hernández in the nineteenth century, and Güiralde, Benito Lynch and others in the post-gaucho period of the twentieth century, as a painter of pampa expression and a guardian of gauchesque values — especially in his first novel The Purple Land (1885), the tales of El Ombú (1902), and the autobiographical Far Away and Long Ago (1918). Even Alicia Jurado in her iconoclastic treatment of the argentinidad of W.H. Hudson, recognised the useful function of Hudson's costumbrismo. The stressing of the Argentine qualities of Hudson and his work, which is most evident in the eulogistic, patriotic and idealistic study of Martínez Estrada, El mundo maravilloso de Guillermo Enrique Hudson (Hudson is even given the Spanish form of his name which he was never called), is further underlined by the praise of a kindred spirit, Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, one of los tres clásicos ingleses de la pampa, whom Hudson first met in 1890, and with whom he was to cement a strong friendship and continue a fruitful correspondence until his death. In a letter to Hudson's protector, translator and publicist, Fernando Pozzo, in

5 See, for example, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, El mundo maravilloso de Guillermo Enrique Hudson (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica 1951); Guillermo Ara, Guillermo E. Hudson: el paisaje pampeano y su expresión (Buenos Aires: 1954); Fernando Pozzo, Semblanza de Hudson (Buenos Aires: Edición del Instituto de Conferencias del Banco Municipal 1940).

6 See especially Introducción,’ 9-14.

7 Title of the short work of Enrique Espinoza (Santiago: Babel 1951). The third is Sir Francis Bond Head, British soldier-cum-mining engineer, later Governor of Upper Canada, author of Rough Notes Taken During Some Rapid Journeys Across the Pampas (London: John Murray 1826). For a detailed treatment of this pioneer English traveller in the Plate region, see my article From the Argentine Plains to Upper Canada: Sir Francis Bond Head: Gaucho Apologist and Costumbrist of the Pampa,’ Norte/Sur, Vol. v, No. 9, 97-120.

1934, Graham states: ‘Era argentino y lo fue hasta el último día de su vida ... Hasta en el físico conservó el tipo del gaucho; su hablar lento y su acento de la pampa, siempre me hacían pensar que tenía ante mí a un gaucho de viejo cuño.’

Hudson, of course, has contributed somewhat to this Argentine mythology, and the underlining of the importance of his native links, rooted in a nostalgic and autochthonous past. One of Hudson’s closest friends, Morley Roberts, in his detailed literary biography states that Hudson once confessed to him: ‘Perhaps I may state that my life ended when I left South America’ (Roberts, p. 21). Cunninghame Graham in the prologue to the Spanish edition of Far Away and Long Ago, translated as Allá lejos y hace tiempo,10 pursues the nostalgic idea: ‘Certainly Hudson suffered from “saudades” all his life. That was perhaps one of the reasons of his charm. His mind was always looking backwards to his youth, on the southern plains.’ Apart from the uncharacteristic confession to Roberts, Hudson himself, always a private person, spoke little of his past, destroyed almost all his correspondence, and even deliberately obscured events, dates and names from his Argentine past. Some critics have tried to insinuate some mystery, some passion into his youthful life that would account for his abandonment of his native home, but Hudson never said a word as to the “why” of his departure from the Argentine’ (Roberts, p. 27). In fact, Roberts, one of his few confidants, confirms Hudson’s reluctance to admit that he was not English by birth, and never referred to his technically being an alien before he became a British citizen in 1901, when he also received a pension.11 According to Roberts: This was always his home ... and he never truly regretted remaining in it, and therefore never retreading the pampa.

9 Quoted by Martínez Estrada, p. 91. Cf. also this statement by Cunninghame Graham: ‘To me his astonishing attraction is that, apart from all his other gifts, his style, quiet humour, sarcasm, and pantheistic mind, he was at heart an old-time gaucho of the plains.’ Introduction, Far Away and Long Ago (London: Dent 1931) ix.

10 (Buenos Aires: Jacobo Poesse 1945). Translated by Fernando Pozzo and Celia Rodríguez de Pozzo. But here I quote from the original English manuscript entitled Preface for South American edition of Hudson’s Works’ kept in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. I am grateful to the National Library and the Graham family for permission to quote from this manuscript.

11 Martínez Estrada, patriotic to the last, makes the fine distinction that Hudson may have changed citizenship but he never abandoned his nationality. It has been suggested by some Argentine critics that despite his long absence from his native land, Hudson never lost his strong querencia instinct, i.e., like the lost horse, he had the intuitive ability to find his way home.
which yet lived in his memory’ (Roberts, p. 47). And herein lies one of the secrets of Hudson’s artistry, as I shall demonstrate later. It was this very absence, this isolation (both geographical and chronological) that is at the root of his artistry, i.e., aesthetic distancing. Gradually the pampa of his native country became a dream land, a fantasy world, so beautiful that he preferred to keep it in his memory rather than return to find it changed by civilisation, progress and commerce, the triple-headed monster constantly lambasted by Cunninghame Graham in his sketches written after his return in 1914 to an Argentina different from the open and free lands that he had frequented in the 1870s. It is an interesting coincidence that Hudson was leaving Argentina just as Graham was arriving, and, as one remembers, Hernández was publishing Martín Fierro.

Alicia Jurado, perhaps a little harshly, but understandably so, since she was trying to write a counterbalance to the excessive claims of Martínez Estrada, Pozzo and other compatriots, tends to play down the Argentine elements in Hudson’s work:

Una leyenda, probablemente nacida de las fantasías de Ezequiel Martínez Estrada ... nos da la imagen de Hudson como una especie de gaucho nostálgico, perpetuamente ocupado en añorar el pago desde las brumas londinenses. Nada más lejos de la realidad. Si bien es cierto que Hudson expresó muchas veces la nostalgia de su tierra natal, también es verdad que no volvió a nuestro país porque no quiso hacerlo, como consta de su puño y letra; se sentía orgulloso de llamarse inglés — palabras publicadas en un libro suyo — y amó con pasión la campiña a la que dedicó sus mejores obras. (Jurado, p. 11)

It is true that of a score of books only six are specifically and totally about Argentina, but if one checks the chronology of his writings, every other year there appears a book, a chapter, an article, an essay on his youthful experiences in Argentina. Also, as I shall demonstrate later in my treatment of childhood and art, when he did choose to write his autobiography, it is significant that he confined it to the early years of his youth on the pampa. I do not agree with those who would see Hudson as some kind of bilingual master, switching easily from one language to the other, e.g., the Argentine critics like Ara, and especially Martínez Estrada and Jorge Casares, who even suggest that Hudson might have

12 Cunninghame Graham adopted this same attitude to Scotland also, especially in the last decade of his life when he forged a sentimental bond with Scottish Nationalism. The sketches of his later collections reflect this nostalgia for a long disappeared, even mythical, Scotland. See my Scottish Sketches of R.B. Cunninghame Graham (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press 1982).
thought in Spanish and then translated to English. Of course, there are words and phrases in Spanish sprinkled throughout his work (as in Graham’s), but, significantly, he wrote nothing in Spanish. In fact, one often finds misspelled, misquoted or misunderstood Spanish expressions in Hudson, which one cannot attribute to mere carelessness or shoddily corrected proofs, faults of which Hudson (unlike Graham) was never guilty. Thus, such defects should be attributed more to his lack of familiarity with the written expression of a language that he obviously knew and used in verbal form as a boy. This, of course, in no way detracts from his ability to render in English the rhythm, feeling and expression of his childhood Spanish. Graham, who had the spiritual and linguistic sympathy for the gauchos, recognises Hudson’s capacity to recapture in English the subtleties of the gaucho dialect:

Had Martín Fierro, Juan Moreira or Aniceto el Gallo been endowed with life, they must have hailed the writer as a compadre. No better presentment, I believe, exists of the “gaucho parejo.” Certainly no one has given in English so exact an interpretation of the language once spoken on the Pampas as Hudson in that tale [“Story of a Piebald Horse”]. To give the mere words of a gaucho talking is as easy as it is for an arribeño tracker to follow a horse’s trail, after a shower of rain. To give the interpretation of a mode of thought, that is another thing. Hudson has done it so perfectly that if it were translated into Spanish, it would seem an original piece of work.

13 Even Graham has at least one sketch which he wrote in Spanish, 'La vieja de Bolívar,' in El Río de la Plata (London: Wertheimer, Lea 1914), originally published in Hispania (London), 1 (1 October 1912) 322-3.

14 In his letters to Graham, Hudson admits that his memory and knowledge of Spanish is defective, e.g., in a letter dated 22 ??? (1902) (7), he takes the expression 'tintes orientales' to mean 'sin matices,' whereas in fact it means exactly the opposite: "Tintes orientales" — how funny you should set me ransacking my brain as to where I got that expression! Of course I mean without tints' (Letters, 72). The Argentine works like El Ombú and Far Away ... are sprinkled with errors that are orthographical rather than typographical.

15 Hamilton tells the story (p. 50) of the old English couple, not at all literary, who, after spending many years in Argentina, read The Purple Land and drew Hamilton’s attention to the Spanish style of the early romance.

16 From ‘Prologue to W.H. Hudson's The Purple Land,’ in R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Three Fugitive Pieces, with a Foreword by H.F. West (Hanover, New Hampshire: Westholm 1960) 33, 35. This is the English version, more or less, of the Prólogo to the Spanish translation, La tierra purpúrea (Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería 1928), trans. Eduardo Hillman. Quoting from the 1965 Uruguayan edition of the above translation of Hillman (Montevideo:
The link with Graham is not tenuous. Precisely because he was not one of the 'natives,' brought up English-fashion but mixing with the gauchos in their daily life, Hudson's attitude to them and their *modo de ser* is one of the interested and sympathetic observer — hence the obvious comparison with Gillespie, Head, Haigh and the other *viajeros ingleses* of the nineteenth century, over whom he has the advantage of not being a 'passing,' but a 'permanent' or 'exiled,' traveller. But he was a foreigner nonetheless, as he was to recall in *Far Away and Long Ago*, when he was chastised by the old gaucho as 'inglesito' for capturing the birds. His own mother, he confesses, found herself apart from the 'natives' (a distinguishing, if not pejorative, term he uses throughout the autobiography), for whom she had a gentle but patronizing indulgence:

The people of the pampas among whom her lot was cast must have appeared almost like the inhabitants of another world. They were as strange to her soul, morally and spiritually, as they were unlike her own people outwardly in language, dress and customs. Yet she was able to affiliate with them, to visit and sit at ease with them in their lowliest ranchos, interesting herself as much in their affairs as if she belonged to them. (p. 276)

As Alicia Jurado has shrewdly noted, it was in this very distance that was rooted his capacity to observe, judge and record faithfully, without any political or moral intentions, a way of life that was soon to pass.

Rather than an *escritor comprometido*, Hudson is the apologist for, and the painter of, two worlds, of the best of which he is an admirable

Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Previsión Social, one notes the subtle and felicitous differences in the Spanish version: Nadie ha dado en inglés, como Hudson, una interpretación tan exacta del lenguaje usado en otro tiempo en la pampa. Dar los términos que usa el gaucho al hablar, es tan fácil como le es a un rastreador arribeño seguir la rastrillada de un caballo después de un aguacero. Dar la interpretación de un modo de pensar, eso es otra cosa. Hudson lo ha hecho tan cabalmente, que si Martin Fierro, Juan Moreira o Aniceto el Gallo hubiesen sido dotados de vida, seguramente le habrían acogido como a compadre.

La manera lenta, cauta y sentenciosa del gaucho de aquellos días, está trazada como nadie que no haya nacido en la pampa podrá haberlo hecho' (p. 9).

Cf. the Introduction to *Far Away and Long Ago* for similar sentiments: 'No one, not even Argentines writing of their own country in their native tongue, have written of the Pampa better (or as well) as Hudson, who left it when it was almost untouched since the creation of the world, some sixty years ago, never again to see it, and to pass his life in Bayswater .... No one but Hudson, at least in English, has so well rendered all these things. No one but he has caught so intimately all the turns and phrases of the gauchos' speech, or reproduced so well the way they told a tale. He knew them, as they would have said themselves, into the marrow of their bones' (pp. x-xi).
and fortunate product. It is this very ambivalence with regard to Argentina/Britain, and his dual spiritual patriotism (rather than nationality) that contributes to the secret of the Hudsonian myth. When he lived in Argentina he always talked of England as home (‘la tierra de su deseo’); when he lived in England, Argentina was the land of his dreams (‘la tierra de su añoranza’), a physical and temporal form of his past — hence his ‘far away and long ago.’ Product of two worlds, Hudson, rather than the old gaucho who became anglicized (as Martínez Estrada and Graham would have it), is perhaps more fittingly described, in the felicitous phrasing of Alicia Jurado, as ‘un caballero inglés algo acirollado.’

Thus, it is not surprising that Hudson wrote in English, which is after all his mother tongue both in Argentina and in Britain — notwithstanding his explanation to Jorge Keen, as reported by the Japanese critic Masao Tsuda, that he thought it more appropriate to write about the gauchos in English so that the history of ‘a vanishing race,’ as Graham called them, might not die with them. One should take equally lightly his pretexts, that the Spanish gaucho is like a disappearing coals to Newcastle. The fact is that Hudson lived in England, wrote in English, and despite his familiarity with everyday Spanish, he did not master it. English was his appropriate literary medium to depict not only English flora and fauna, but also Argentina and its disappearing way of life. Despite the precedent of los viajeros ingleses, whose descriptions of nineteenth-century Argentina were translated and ploughed back into the field of national history and literature (for the want of comparable, pertinent material produced by Argentines too close to the scene to appreciate the value of such writings), Hudson’s case is different. Notwithstanding his valuable contribution to Argentine, especially gauchesque, literature, and his feeling for la expresión pampeana, which I shall demonstrate later, Hudson sits squarely in the mainstream of English letters — which in no way detracts from his capacity to transcend epochs and frontiers in his nostalgic and/or realistic depiction of an Argentine way of life now gone.

It is to his credit, then, that Hudson is claimed by both Argentina and England, though he wrote only in English — hence the surprise and disappointment of many English scholars when faced with the South American romances, and the Argentine tales in particular. This partly explains, for example, the dissatisfaction of a shrewd critic like Robert Hamilton who came to the romances only after the English nature essays. In Argentina the reverse is true, since the romances and his

17 Masao Tsuda, La huellas de Guillermo Enrique Hudson (Buenos Aires 1953) 88-9
autobiography treat of matters close to the national soul. In England, where he wrote and lived and where his work survives, there is no need to justify, or make claims about, Hudson's position, contribution or status. In the newer republics of the Plate region, where nationalism is more self-consciously overt, one searches, perhaps through insecurity or lack of confidence, for names to include in the patriotic roll-call — especially if the contribution is relevant, positive and formative. Argentine literature, especially the gauchesque genre, which can boast of Echeverría, Sarmiento, Hernández and Güiraldes, need not apologize for wishing to include Hudson; nor need he feel downgraded in such illustrious company.

Also, it is less than fair to Hudson to have critics try to classify his work by nationality. One ought to judge the whole corpus of his literary production and estimate the worth of, for example, The Purple Land, El Ombú, Far Away and Long Ago for themselves, as individual works of art in the first place, and as integral parts of the totality of Hudson's writings — especially since in his case one could say all his works are autobiographical. Hence his boast of not writing nor needing to write an autobiography. Our criterion for evaluating all literature, not only Hudson's, should be aesthetics, not nationality or nationalism, which, when not handled prudently, slips into chauvinism, even xenophobia, especially in Latin America. Whether the works are good or bad is more important than whether they are Argentine or English. However, when quality is equated with nationality, as has been the tendency with Hudson's work, it is the function of the critic to be aware of, investigate, and to comment on, these distinctions.

Alicia Jurado, herself an Argentine, reacting to the ultra-nationalist fantasies of Martínez Estrada, comes down rather heavily on any attempt to assess Hudson as an Argentine writer. Hamilton, a perceptive English critic, reaffirms Hudson's Englishness: In spite of his American-born father and American mother, and his birth and upbringing in South America, he was ... fundamentally English and the majority of his essays are among the most characteristically English writings, both in spirit and style, of our time' (Hamilton, pp. 72-3) — and this comment after a detailed analysis of both the nature essays (mostly English) and the fictional romance (mostly Argentine). There is no doubt that Hudson's essays are better known, e.g., Hampshire Days (1903), Afoot in England

18 Cf. a similar situation in Canada, where writers like Malcolm Lowry, Wyndham Lewis, Brian Moore et al. are squeezed into the ranks of CanLit on the basis of one book and/or a few years' residence, although the content and the spirit of their work hardly or rarely merit the Canadian label.
(1909), *A Shepherd’s Life* (1910), amongst a score of collections of pieces dedicated to the wonders of the English countryside. Written in and about England, they are related in the first person by a narrator who is generally recognized to be sensitive, compassionate, charming, sane, mature, conventional, i.e., a ‘real’ narrator. The romances (novels and short stories), also written in England but about South America, are less known; they are narrated also in the first person (usually) by a narrator who is, suggests Hamilton, primitive, emotional, passionate, cynical, pessimistic, self-absorbed, i.e., a ‘false’ or ‘artificial’ narrator. Hamilton, who admits to understanding little of the Argentine side of Hudson, thus sympathises with the conventional observer of the essays who reflects in unique fashion the everyday events, customs and values of the English countryside, i.e., in a simple but transcendental manner. Few would quibble with Hamilton and the other critics who recognize Hudson’s originality in depicting almost spiritually the ordinary, everyday life of nature’s creatures:

However, without rising to the hyperbolic heights of Martínez Estrada, Pozzo and the other Argentine eulogists, one ought to examine more closely and reevaluate the Argentine side of Hudson as reflected in the romances.

By conceding that the essays are superior as literature, one need not agree that the Argentine narrator of the romances is false or artificial. Perhaps he is just immature in literary as well as human terms, or merely different. It could even be argued that the narrator of *The Purple Land*, for example, young in chronological terms, rather than being unreal (in Hamilton’s view) is nearer to the real or true Hudson, i.e., the young Hudson, closer in time and space to birth, childhood, adolescence and youth, the formative years of the Argentina of the past, the barbarism of the nineteenth century, and aggressive nature — as opposed to England of the present, the civilisation of the twentieth century and controlled nature of the essays’ narrator. In almost Wordsworthian terms (‘Ode on the Intimation of Immortality’), the early Hudson might be considered even more authentic from the point of view of temporal purity and innocence, subject to a corrupting process which was accelerated by his ‘regretted’ (?) departure from his ‘birth-place,’ Argentina, for England.
Hamilton’s rejection of the ‘other’ side of Hudson as being artificial (thus the romances are unnatural, therefore inferior) takes no account of that age-old psychological condition to which all men are prone in some degree or other, i.e., the split between what Jung called the persona, the outward personality that is turned towards the world, and the inner hidden personality which, for the very reason that it is repressed, usually takes on a dark and negative form. Given Hamilton’s premise that Hudson is basically English, then the other side has to be, by definition, false. It is not surprising, then, that many critics have tried to read all Hudson’s romances as autobiographical, especially The Purple Land. Despite Hudson’s affirmation that he is not Richard Lamb, and that there was no Dolores in his past (a denial that many critics refute), he could be attributing to himself, if only by desire, some of the qualities of his romantic hero, par compensation.\textsuperscript{19} That Richard Lamb is not a particularly likeable or admirable young man is of little consequence. That he reflects Hudson’s own life, or at least his dream life, is entirely possible. The truly dark side of Hudson’s ego is reflected especially in the cuentos which are, paradoxically, if one were to accept the imaginative/artificial/inferior argument, the best crafted, if the most chilling, of his fictional works. Despite the defects of the romances, especially in their characterization and structure, as we shall see, even Hamilton is impressed by the redeeming features, the fantasy, the irony and the great sense of tragedy – hardly the stuff of the charming, conventional nature essays. Also, it should be pointed out that Hudson’s naturalist essays are not devoted exclusively to England. As if to prove that his Argentine side is not all black, some of his best nature pieces are about the Plate region, in \textit{Idle Days in Patagonia} (1893), \textit{Birds of La Plata} (1920), etc. The point is surely that it is difficult and dangerous to make generalizations about the Argentine side and the English side, about artificiality and realness, about romances and essays. The question at issue is not whether the essays are good because the narrator is ‘real,’ and the romances are bad because the narrator is ‘false.’ As Oscar Wilde pointed out, there are only two kinds of literature, good and bad. It is not for us, the literary critics, to say which side of Hudson was the true one. That we leave to the psychiatrists for whom, by the way, Hudson would have had little patience.\textsuperscript{20} When and where this darker side is reflected in the quality of literature, the critic can make judgments. To say that his essays are

\textsuperscript{19} This is a common literary practice. Cf. the heroes of Stendhal’s novels, or of Eduardo Barrios’s \textit{Gran señor y rajadíblos} (1948).

\textsuperscript{20} In conversation he always pronounced Freud as ‘Frood.’
superior to the romances for aesthetic reasons, suitably demonstrated, is quite acceptable. To cite as proof that the narrator of the romances is not the real Hudson, because he is Argentine, is treading on more dangerous ground. Throughout his life and his literary career both sides co-existed quite comfortably. Not till the end of his life, faced with death, did he bring them together finally in literary fashion in Far Away and Long Ago, as I shall demonstrate later.

Even within the framework of the romances, however, one can make further distinctions. It is generally agreed that although the novels, like The Purple Land and especially Green Mansions, are better known, even more popular, Hudson's shorter fiction, the novellas and short stories are more impressive and certainly more successful from the literary point of view. Even Hamilton, who finds the South American romances weaker than the English essays, recognizes within the totality of Hudson's fiction the superior craft of the shorter pieces. It is significant that the romances generally reflect the darker side of the young Hudson, the more overtly native Argentine. It is not surprising that, written in the tradition of Facundo and Martín Fierro, his Argentine romances should reflect something of the tragic sentiment of life. Within the framework of human tragedy, the romances represent more readily than the serene essays not only the note of pity and irony but much of the doubt and conflict that apparently resided and warred in the soul of Hudson, plus other characteristics that he suppressed from his non-Argentine works, i.e., passion, taste for adventure, sentiments of love and hate, terror and revenge. Such is the stuff of his first complete novel, The Purple Land, published in two volumes as early as 1885.21

The Purple Land has all the virtues and vices of Hudson's fiction. Whether it is autobiographical or not is less important than whether it is good literature. Since it is a first novel, some of it is possibly autobiographical, if not in fact at least in wish. In the youthful adventures of the hero Richard Lamb, Hudson depicts something of life in nineteenth-century Uruguay. The fact that he situates Lamb in the Banda Oriental and not in Argentina is in itself an anomaly, which reflects something of the escapist intentions of Hudson, who did not wish to be accused of portraying himself in the reality of his own country:

Lo que Hudson no había encontrado en su patria era la pasión, el amor sin cálculos que todo lo santifica y sublima; muerte, despojo, rigor. Dice Lamb al

21 It is an interesting coincidence that The Purple Land was published about the same date that is generally cited to represent the demise of the nineteenth-century gauchesque genre.
principio de la obra: "Yo que jamás he figurado entre los sensatos, yo que siempre he vivido en el seno de pasiones e ilusiones"; aquí está la clave de esta novela y por qué no es argentina, sino uruguaya. (Martínez Estrada, p. 196)

Though anomalous from the geographical point of view, *The Purple Land* is structurally typical of Hudson’s long fiction. Even those who give it limited praise like Borges, Alicia Jurado and Richard Haymaker, recognize its shortcomings, not least its characterization, plot, structure. Hudson never quite mastered the technique of writing a long novel, which he was unable to sustain successfully. There are interesting parts and pieces within *The Purple Land*, but it scarcely holds up in its entirety. Despite the well described, vivid incidents and episodes, Hudson has difficulty in writing an extended novel. To maintain the interest of his readers Hudson resorts to the picaresque technique of moving his hero from place to place, to different levels of society, meeting with different types of people, in an attempt to vary the essentially repetitive adventures of his peripatetic hero. To liven up the weak and laboured plot, he introduces extraneous episodes and anecdotes to compensate for the lack of structure. The character of Richard Lamb is slightly interesting, if only for the mildly mysterious question as to whether he is autobiographical or not, despite Hudson’s categorical denial in a letter to Cunninghame Graham (25 August 1898):

Thanks for your letter, and too flattering appreciation of the old “Purple Land.” But it is all a delusion on your part that the adventures there related are autobiographical. Richard is a purely imaginary person; his history was not made that way. The adventures in the book that are either wholly or partly true happened to different persons. Richard was only the string on which they are threaded. (Letters, p. 50)²³

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²² See, for example, Borges’s Pienso ‘Nota sobre La tierra purpúrea: El mayor defecto de esta novela es (me parece) la vana y fatigosa complejidad de ciertas aventuras. Pienso en las del final: son lo bastante complicada para fatigar la atención, pero no para interesarla. En esos onerosos capítulos, Hudson no parece entender que el libro es sucesivo (casi tan puramente sucesivo como los viajes de Simbad o como el Buscón) y lo entorpece de artificios inútiles’ (Antología de Guillermo Enrique Hudson [Buenos Aires: Losada 1941] 65).

²³ Despite the protestations of the author, Martínez Estrada insists: ‘Richard Lamb es el otro nombre de Hudson y sus opiniones, convicciones y raciocinios hubieron de ser exactamente los del autor en 1885’ (p. 295). Cunninghame Graham is equally insistent: ‘Although he used to say that the adventures in *The Purple Land* were not his own, yet they would certainly have happened to him, in the like circumstances’ (Prologue, p. 34).
It is hardly false modesty either that prompted him to cool Graham’s ardour (of the prologue) in a letter dated 15 April 1890: ‘I trust that you will be able to get a laugh out of “The Purple Land”; but really I know less of the country it relates to than yourself, as you will probably find on reading it’ (Letters, p. 19).

Thus in a way, he reduces the autobiographical element in the novel, or at least the significance of it from the literary point of view. It has long been a custom in Latin-American literature to equate Fiction/Biography, identifying the author with his character (cf. Rivera and Cova in La Vorágine or Barrios and Luis Bernales in Un perdido), a very dangerous practice that tends to vitiate to some extent the aesthetic level of Hudson’s novel which some are tempted to read as a roman à clef. The same fallacious tendency to view all literature as documents, sociological or otherwise, to the detriment of the aesthetic qualities, an equally dangerous practice, is endemic in Latin-American literature: ‘Grave consecuencia del sentido instrumental, pragamático, dominante ... en la mayor parte de las novelas hispanoamericanas, es que la critica se ha acostumbrado a tratarlas como documentos y no como obras de arte, desdeñando lo estético para destacar sólo lo sociologico en ellas.’

Morley Roberts reports that between the age of fifteen and twenty-nine Hudson travelled up the Rio Negro southward as far as the Banda Oriental, crossed the River Plate and went westwards over the pampa (Roberts, pp. 23-4). Though these data may be interesting and useful to biographers and literary detectives, they have less bearing on the work of art. Despite Martínez Estrada’s claims, there is no definite proof that he travelled to Venezuela or British Guiana, the setting for Green Mansions. This lack of geographical authenticity did not prevent him from writing what proved to be his most popular novel, though it is flawed in other ways. In fact, it may even be suggested that it is the very lack of precision which helps to create the ethereal, spiritual, non-material atmosphere, which is one of the characteristics and virtues of the novel. Cunninghame Graham does wrong to stress the geographical accuracy of The Purple

24 Anderson Imbert provides the antidote to this attitude, specifically with regard to Literature/Biography in his La critica literaria contemporánea (Buenos Aires: Gurré 1957) 77-8: ‘No hay duda que la biografía es muy útil ... por cuanto nos da noticias relativas a la vida privada y pública de un autor. Pero una cosa es la biografía como género literario o como contribución a la historia y otra el método psicológico’ (p. 77).

Land especially, and ironically, since in fact nature does not have a great role to play in this novel, as Hamilton has shrewdly pointed out. The inherent danger of recognition as a literary criterion is that critics have tended to become obsessed with the topographical, botanical and ethnographical — the same fate that Graham’s own sketches of the Plate region have also suffered. The fact that Graham shared Hudson’s notion that life in the pre-civilization days of the Banda Oriental was infinitely preferable and more rewarding than existence in a mechanised society undoubtedly coloured his view of the literary qualities of The Purple Land and the character of Richard Lamb.

The idea that Richard Lamb is not a likable nor an admirable young man, as Hudson admitted, is less important from the literary point of view. More relevant is the question as to whether he is more convincing and believable within the framework of that particular work of art. If Lamb fails as a character it is because he is not aesthetically satisfying, not because one finds his morals or his values unacceptable. Borges, who has much of the Anglo-Argentine in his own background, whilst recognizing the typical defects of the first novel, sees, beneath the superficial dimension of the successive adventures of Lamb, many of them boringly complex, the more profound level, the acriollamiento of the protagonist:

En realidades, su novela tiene dos argumentos. El primero visible: las aventuras del inglés Richard Lamb en la Banda Oriental. El segundo, íntimo, invisible: el acriollamiento de Lamb, su conversión gradual a una moralidad cimarrona que recuerda un poco a Rousseau y prevé un poco a Nietzsche. (Antología, p. 65)

It is an interesting fact that none of Hudson’s heroes of his novels (English

26 Well-meaning admirers of Graham, like Fernando Pozzo and Antonio Aita, who are generally not critical of his work, point out little errors of fact (botanical, geographical, etc.), as if his sketches were sociological documents or textbooks. I have had the same kinds of personal experiences in Argentina where people have complained to me that the places described by Hudson in his books were not really like that.

27 In a letter to Mrs. Edward Phillips, Vice-President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (7 July 1902), re The Purple Land: ‘... a tale of fictitious adventures — a sort of Picaresque romance, & the hero of it (who tells the story) is distinctly not a nice young man. It was my first book, published before the “Argentine Ornithology” was written, & it is full of faults, & the manner of it would seem rather quaint & out of date now.’ I am grateful to Ian Dawson, Librarian of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, for providing me with a copy of this letter.
and South American) is a very sympathetic figure — Lamb (The Purple Land), Abel (Green Mansions), Smith (A Crystal Age). And they all certainly pale in comparison with the female figures, who tend to be more stable, shrewd, sensible and tender. No less a figure than Unamuno waxed eloquent on the admirable variety and excellence of the female characters in The Purple Land: ¡Y qué mujeres! ¡Y qué españolas esas mujeres! Paquita, Dolores, Margarita, Mónica, Anita, Demetria, Candelaria, Cleta ... Por ellas solas viviría este libro. Esas mujeres son todo un paisaje del alma eterna de un pueblo.28 Though defective, then, in its characterization of the unsympathetic hero, The Purple Land is redeemed by the saving grace of its women. Flawed in its construction, this work of Hudson's immaturity is still valuable and attractive in its description of a past age, its customs and types, and is mildly interesting in its presentation of the hero, in love and war. One is hardly surprised that it was not well received, and was hidden away under the Travel and Geography label, though Hudson always had a ‘soft spot’ for his first born, weaknesses and all.29

Despite the excesses of immaturity and the formal defects of The Purple Land, a good example of Hudson's inability to handle convincingly the longer fictional genre, some good was to emerge. Unable to sustain the long romance, Hudson emerged as a better teller of short tales. This was already manifest in The Purple Land, which had some merit in the depiction of individual incidents and episodes — a pointer to Hudson's true vocation — which prepared the way for the authentic cuentos of El Ombú. In fact one short piece, 'Story of a Piebald Horse,' was originally a chapter of The Purple Land which Hudson removed and published as a separate cuento, on the advice of Cunninghame Graham. Even the adulatory Martínez Estrada recognized that The Purple Land was more a collection of short stories linked by a narrator than a genuine novel.30

28 'Epílogo a la versión española de La tierra purpúrea de William Henry Hudson, Madrid, 1928'; rpt. in Obras Completas de Don Miguel de Unamuno (Madrid: Afrodísio Agudo 1958), Tomo xvi, 801.

29 In a letter to Cunninghame Graham (21 April 1890), he refers to the harsh criticism meted out by the reviewers of Saturday Review (14 November 1885) and Athenaeum (26 December 1885), whose attacks were compensated for by the long, glowing review of the novel by Professor A.H. Keane in the Academy (23 January 1886). This favourable review sustained his spirits, and many years later in a letter to Morley Roberts (28 February 1920) he was to remember with gratitude Keane's words.

30 Thus it is clear that his ability to write short pieces also helps to produce the satisfactory longer book, in that he is able to write the shorter pieces (essays, articles, short stories, etc.) which can then be collected and put together in book
Green Mansions (1904), though also flawed, is generally recognized to be the nearest Hudson came to a true novel, and is certainly superior to both The Purple Land and A Crystal Age. Set in British Guiana (which he probably did not visit), Green Mansions achieved a surprising and perhaps undeserved popularity, especially in North America, possibly because of the strange mixture of fantasy, adventure and tragedy. More than any other of Hudson's books, it is a work of the imagination, probably situated out of the Plate Region to give more freedom to his imagination and to free him from any social compromise, because of the political theme, and from the need to depict with accuracy geographical and costumbrist details. Though it is not the primary concern of this study, which is devoted to his tales of the pampa, Green Mansions represents an interesting contrast with the Argentine romances, invites comparison, and delineates the stages of progress in Hudson's fictional evolution. The hero Abel, like Lamb of The Purple Land and Smith of A Crystal Age, is not an attractive figure nor an admirable type, nor is his relationship with Rima convincingly portrayed. In fact, it is in the love relationship between the protagonists that Hamilton, for example, finds the greatest defects — an incongruous eroticism that Hudson does not handle comfortably. Though obviously less fragmentary than The Purple Land in that there is a certain unity in the narrative, the structure of Green Mansions does not always hold up. There appears to be some middle padding, as if Hudson wanted to prolong what was only material enough for a long cuento or a novella — hence the success of 'El Ombú' and 'Marta Riquelme' but not The Purple Land. Despite the good beginning and the powerful ending (although there is some let-down in the anticlimactic conclusion), the protracted middle reduces the quality of the novel.

If one of the values of The Purple Land was its contribution to Argentine costumbrismo, Green Mansions is less important from this point of view, since it is essentially a work of imagination. Almost certainly Hud-

form. His successful South American works like Long Ago and Far Away, El Ombú, and all the English nature essay collections were produced thus.

31 It may be no coincidence that in the film version the role of Abel was played by Anthony Perkins, who has made a career of portraying psychotic or 'weird' personalities.

32 One remembers Hudson's opinion of the sexual elements in Lawrence's Sons and Lovers: 'A very good book indeed except in that portion where he relapses into the old sty — the neck-sucking and wallowing-in-sweating flesh. It is like an obsession, a madness, but he may outlive it as so many other writers have done' (letter to Edward Garnett [2 November 1913] in 153 Letters from W.H. Hudson [London: Nonesuch Press 1923] 116).
son did not visit Guyana, as it is now called. But despite, or because of, his not having been there, nature has a much more important role to play in *Green Mansions* than in the familiar *The Purple Land*. Hudson, from afar, captures the *spirit* of the jungle — probably because he had not been there — hence the value of aesthetic distancing, one of the most important and least appreciated qualities of Hudson’s South American romances. 33 Though not very successful in the creation of Abel, Nufflo (the grandfather) and other human characters, where Hudson did hit the mark was in the imaginative sphere of nature and especially the spirit of nature, of which Rima is undoubtedly a symbol. Hudson has effected one of the most felicitous creations in English literature in the figure of Rima (with whom Hudson has often been compared and identified), 34 who has survived when all his other novelesque figures have disappeared into oblivion. 35 This happy combination of bird and woman, which Hudson touched on briefly and less profoundly in its darker side in ‘Pelino Viera’s Confession’ (1883) and ‘Marta Riquelme’ (1902), is a pointer to the two aspects of his work that Hudson described best — birds and women. This notion of the spirit of nature destroyed by barbaric Philistines, linked with the fact of birds being killed by hunters, is the very stuff of Hudson’s naturalist essays and is an indictment of the evils of civilization. This destructive note at the end of *Green Mansions*, a reminder that all is not fantasy and escapism, reinforces the strong sense of tragedy, both human and cosmic, which is at the heart of all Hudson’s romance, particularly in the *cuertos* which are, despite the popularity of *Green Mansions*, the best examples of Hudson’s fiction, and certainly represent a step forward from the early Plate novel, *The Purple Land*.

33 ‘It was from Bates and Bell and Wallace, that he drew the spirit of the woods, and he placed the story in Venezuela which he had never seen, because its vast interior was as little known as the builders of Copan in Spanish Honduras, or those who carved Easter Island into gods’ (Roberts, p. 131).

34 Martínez Estrada is stubbornly insistent on the autobiographical in all of Hudson’s work: ‘En tal sentido *Green Mansions* contiene elementos autobiográficos tan ricos como *The Purple Land* o *Far Away and Long Ago*, y no menos disimulados. Rima es Hudson … . En una palabra Rima y él son dos hermanos gemelos, mujer y hombre, hijos de la tierra, animalitos divinos sostenidos por las mamas de la naturaleza, la luz, el agua, las plantas y los seres iracionales, que pueden hablar con los pájaros y las víboras’ (Estética y filosofía de Hudson in *Antologia*, 38).

35 Rima lives on in the ‘scandalous’ image sculpted by Epstein after Hudson’s death, commissioned by Cunningham Graham, chairman of the Hudson Memorial Committee. Unveiled in 1925, the hardy Rima has survived the shock, the ravages of war, weather and vandalism, and can still be seen in Hyde Park, London.
It is clear, then, that Hudson's South American romances do not represent the best of his fiction. However, despite the defects in structure, plot and characterization, both *The Purple Land* and *Green Mansions* deserve limited praise — the former for its contribution to the depiction of River Plate life and customs, the latter for its portrayal of the spirit of nature. Although inferior to the short fiction, as I shall demonstrate, *The Purple Land* and *Green Mansions* represent a logical and necessary stage in W.H. Hudson's fictional development.

II

One of the characteristics of W.H. Hudson's early novels, as I have already argued, is the episodic quality of their composition. Both *The Purple land* and *Green Mansions*, though lacking a structure tight and solid enough to support them, contain several fascinating incidents, characters and descriptions. In these very defects, however, one sees a good indication of W.H. Hudson's future virtues as a fiction writer. If he does not have the capacity to sustain a novel, he does have the gift for describing episodes, narrating anecdotes, and generally writing the shorter story. When he comes to recognize his limitations in the longer genre, Hudson begins to produce his best works of fiction.

Though the collection of short stories *El Ombú*, containing the title piece and 'Marta Riquelme,' the two best examples of Hudson's craft, was published in 1902, the two other pieces from the collection had already been published — 'Story of a Piebald Horse,' which was excerpted as a chapter from the 1885 *The Purple Land*, and 'Niño Diabolo,' which had appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1890. There is no doubt that the two new pieces, 'El Ombú' and 'Marta Riquelme,' reflect Hudson's grow-

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36 Dedicated to Cunningham Graham. See the letter of 1902 in which Hudson asks Graham's permission to dedicate the *cuentos* to him: 'I should like to have your permission to inscribe these little gaucho tales to you. They are of small merit, whatever Garnett may say — he is not infallible, as my still small voice assures me — but the two or three dedicatory words will at least serve to show that I can appreciate something better, and will [show] others (who do not know) where it may be found' (*Letters*, 71). The dedication reads:

TO MY FRIEND

R.B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

('Singularísimo escritor inglés')

Who has lived with and knows (even to the marrow as they would themselves say) the horsemen of the Pampas, and who alone of European writers has rendered something of the vanishing colour of that remote life.
ing maturity as a writer, especially when he is handling fiction which is short and Argentine. The measure of his evolution and the underrated importance of his Argentine romances can be seen in the development of his short stories over a twenty-year period. Though not included in the *El Ombú* collection, one other short story 'Pelino Viera's Confession,' written as early as 1883, is worthy of study if we are to have a complete picture of all his *Tales of the Pampas* — the title of an American edition of all the short stories of *El Ombú* plus 'Pelino Viera's Confession.' Also included in this 1916 collection is 'Tecla and the Little Men,' a rhymed 'legend of La Plata.' Like all of Hudson's poetry, which is mostly feeble and sentimental (hence his custom of using a pseudonym for his verse), it has little literary value and will not be treated in this study.

'Pelino Viera's Confession' (1883), which appeared even before the original edition of *The Purple Land*, may be said to denote the point of departure of Hudson's fictional career. Despite the obvious defects in composition, construction and style, 'Pelino Viera's Confession' is interesting because in it one finds the seeds of the mature Hudson's fiction. It is the fantastic story of a young Portuguese-Argentine who falls in love with a *femme fatale*, Rosaura, despite his tender feelings for her angelic sister Dolores. Gradually he comes to realize that his wife is a witch who drugs him nightly and, after anointing her body with magic lotions, grows feathers and wings, and flies off to Trapolanda for diabolical trysts. Pelino, by trickery, copies her actions, joins her meeting, strikes her down with his rapier, and precedes her home. Mortally wounded, she dies in the presence of her husband who, faced with the incredibility of his story, is charged with murder, despite his confession to an incredulous priest. The story purports to be the confession of Pelino, presented in the first person, but introduced by the narrator who claims to have found the confessional document hidden in the prisoner's cell, after the famous Buenos Aires jail break of 1829, which saw the escape of the 'young wife-killer.' The objective narrator, who came to possess the confession document through the jailer, presents it for our information and edification with the following warning:


38 In a letter to Cunningham Graham (15 July 1908) Hudson expressed his feelings about poetry and his doubts about his own poetic gifts: 'It is a feeling I suffered much from in long past days and eventually caused me to give up what I valued above everything, the desire to express myself in verse. I could never satisfy myself that I would ever be able to master that delicate, and difficult instrument and so destroyed it. That is to say, I destroyed what I had done and set myself to overcome the wish. Nevertheless the belief remains fixed in my mind that our deepest emotions and the best in us cannot be expressed in any other way' (*Letters*, 92).
I am not going to shock the enlightened and scientific reader by expressing belief in this confession, but give, without comment, a simple translation of it. Witchcraft in England is dead and buried; and if sometimes it rises out of its grass-grown grave it returns to us under some new and pretty name, and can no longer be recognised as that maleficent something that was wont to trouble the peace of our forefathers. But in Pelino Viera's country it is or still was in his day, a reality and a power. There, at the hour of midnight it is a common thing to be startled by peals of shrill hysterical laughter, heard far up in the sky; this is called the witch-laughter, and something about what is supposed to be the cause of it may be gathered from what follows. 39

Though the tradition of flying witches is European in origin, Hudson presents it in Argentine fashion, fantastic, horrifying and highly credible within the limitations of fictional verisimilitude. Apart from the first person narrative, which is quintessentially Hudson, and the technique of the found letter or manuscript, 'Pelino Viera's Confession' is interesting in that, as his first work of romance, it reveals Hudson's early fascination with the bird-woman theme that was to reach its peak in Rima (Green Mansions), and also with the whole preoccupation with birds and man's desire to fly which permeates all his work. 40 Despite the evil destination, Trapalanda (as the Indians called it), Hudson captures something of the exhilaration felt by man as he equals the birds in their capacity to soar, glide and float:

I felt strangely buoyant as I walked, and could scarcely keep my feet on the ground. I raised my pinions, and rose without apparent effort perpendicularly to a vast height in the air .... I glanced back for a moment to see the Verro, like a silver thread, far, far beneath me. Behind me in the northern sky shone the cluster of the seven stars, for we flew towards the Magellanic clouds. We passed over desert pampas, over broad rivers and mountain ranges of which I had never heard. (p. 121)

39 Tales of the Pampas, 87-98.

40 Hudson, in fact, is best known to many people as an ornithologist and writer about birds. Even while still living in Argentina, he was sending collections to the U.S.A. and publishing communications in the Proceedings of the Royal Zoological Society of London in the 1860s. One of his first articles in England was 'The London Sparrow,' Merry England 1 (July 1883) 223-8. His list of books on birds is substantial: Argentine Ornithology (1888), Birds in a Village (1893), British Birds (1895), Birds in London (1898), Birds and Man (1901), Adventures among Birds (1913), Birds in Town and Village (1919), Birds of La Plata (1920).
Given the essential qualities of passion and tragedy that one finds in all Hudson's romances, this is no mere escapist flight. The bird-woman theme is even closer to the legend of the kakue (evil spirit turned bird) that we shall find developed in 'Marta Riquelme.' In 'Pelino Viera's Confession' the tragic sense of life is already present and expressed by the protagonist: 'My evanescent passion had utterly passed away by this time; hatred had taken its place — fear and hatred, for these two ever go together' (p. 112). Having recourse to the curandera, Pelino has already sold his soul to the devil. Hudson has skilfully taken the English story of medieval witches and infused it with Argentine legends of a cursed city:

From childhood I had been taught to believe in the existence of this often vainly sought city in the wilderness .... All seemed to indicate that some powerful influence of an unearthly maleficent nature rests upon it. The very elements appear leagued together to protect it from prying curiosity .... The explorer turns in terror and dismay from this evil region, called by the Indians Trapalanda. (pp. 122-3)

With a description that is neither Dantean nor Joycean, Hudson depicts the depths of depravity to which mankind stoops — and this infernal fate that awaits the evil-doers:

At length I came on a black figure crouching on the floor before me; at the sound of my step it started up — a great gaunt man, with cavernous eyes that gleamed like will-o'-wisps, and a white beard reaching to his waist. His sole garment was a piece of guanaco hide tied round the body, and his yellow skin was drawn so closely over his bones that he looked more like a skeleton than a living being. As I approached him I noticed an iron chain on his ankle, and feeling now very bold and careless, and commiserating this sad object, I said, "Old man, what brought you here? We are comrades in misfortune; shall I give you liberty?" For a few moments he stared at me with a wild, astonished look, then bending forward till his lips almost touched my face, he murmured, "This is hell — do you not know?" (pp. 124-5)

Though cosmic in its dimensions, the tragedy that Hudson depicts is always essentially human. Confronted with his dead witch-wife, Pelino reacts thus: 'It was a horrible death she had met; still I felt no compassion, no remorse, though convinced that my own hand had inflicted her death-wound' (p. 129). This is the other side of Hudson that Hamilton and the other English critics fail to appreciate. That the narrator of A Shepherd's Life or Afoot in England could somehow be connected with the author of such black tragedy seems beyond the comprehension of
some. But evil exists in the world, especially in the barbarous backlands of South America, and that the young Hudson, only recently removed from this life, should choose to exercise his imagination in order to portray the crushing of the venomous serpent's head under his hero's heel is not so anomalous. For Hudson, as he confessed, as for many writers, the work of imagination is doubly meritorious since it implies not only writing but invention.\footnote{Cf. this attitude with Cunninghame Graham's, as reflected in his literary credo spelled out in the apologia to His People (London: Duckworth 1906): 'Still I believe, that be it bad or good, all that a writer does is to dress up what he has seen or felt, and nothing real is evolved from his own brain, except the words he uses and the way in which he uses them. Therefore, it follows that in writing he sets down (perhaps unwittingly) the story of his life.' It is not surprising, then, that Graham wrote no conventional fiction (p. x).}

If not a great work of art, 'Pelino Viera's Confession' is an interesting exercise in the fantastic, shows Hudson's feeling for Argentine legend and the existence of universal evil, and enables him to flex his literary muscles in the direction of tragedy, passion, hatred and the other strong emotions that were to be the stuff of his more mature Argentine romances.

Though rooted in European superstition, 'Pelino Viera's Confession' is a truly American work set in the New World, in the same way that 'La Cautiva,' though owing much to European romanticism, was a wholly Argentine romantic poem. Argentine though it may be, 'Pelino Viera's Confession' could hardly be said to be set in the gauchesque tradition, nor does it reflect much of the criollo or gauchesque costumbrismo that one finds two years later in The Purple Land, from which was extracted 'Story of a Piebald Horse' (1885) at the behest of Cunninghame Graham who praised it thus: 'It is such a wonderful piece of writing, so greatly imbued with the very marrow of the bones of the gauchos, that I thought it should stand by itself' (Prologue, The Purple Land, p. 33). The direct opening ('This is all about a piebald') understates the theme. It is in fact about the rivalry of two brothers (one adopted) for the love of their foster-sister, Elaria, who is in love with the adopted Anacleto, though her foster-father wants her to marry his son Torcuato.\footnote{Cf. Graham's 'Los seguidores' in Success (London: Duckworth 1902) for treatment of a similar theme.} By means of a 'story within a story' technique, we discover that the stranger killed in a cattle-marking accident who leaves unclaimed a beautiful piebald is in fact Torcuato, as we learn from his capataz-brother Anacleto, who discovers the horse tied and left outside a pulperia by Sotelo for identification purposes. Only then, three years later, by means of Anacleto's
story do we obtain the full details of Torcuato’s disillusionment at not finding his love returned, his killing of a fellow-gambler, and his subsequent flight from his estancia. Not until this moment do his broken, dy- ing words about jealousy, forgiveness and love make sense. Now that the mystery is solved, Anacleto and Elaria can marry freely, without breaking their promise to their dying father. And, on the advice of Sotelo, their future son should be named Torcuato and his dead uncle’s inheritance be kept for him. Though the technique of having a story (Anacleto’s) within a story (the narrator Lucero’s) may appear a little awkward, it is rather effective, especially since it maintains the suspense by keeping the reader waiting for the dead stranger’s identity. The relationship between the dead stranger, the girl, and the newly arrived Capataz is not cleared up either till Anacleto’s story. Though an immature work chronologically, ‘Story of a Piebald Horse’ is technically interesting and reasonably effective from the point of view of exposition, narrative and suspense. Like The Purple Land from which it was excerpted, it is not only a good example of la expresión pampeana, but a very useful and valuable demonstration of gaucho costumbrismo. The rodeo scenes, the cattle-marking, domador activities, the details of dress and customs, recalled by Hudson in English, underline the dominating creole spirit of the cuentos which are undoubtedly American: ‘El idioma es en ella europeo, el alma americana’ (Luis Alberto Sánchez). Despite his complaint to Cunningham Graham that he found it difficult to render in English the dialogue of the gauchos, here and in ‘El Ombú’ Hudson succeeded — reason enough for Argentine scholars to situate Hudson in the national tradition.43

But Hudson was no mere regionalist writer in his pampa cuentos. By means of his treatment of elemental emotions like love and hate, through passion and death, and pity and sorrow, so integral a part of all his Argentine romances, he was able to transcend epochs and national frontiers, and raise his work to a universal level. Enrique Espinoza, author of Los tres clásicos ingleses de la pampa, recognised the importance of Hudson: ‘Es el primer escritor contemporáneo que logra dar expresión universal al espíritu criollo a través de La tierra purpúrea, Dias de ocio en la Patagonia, Un naturalista en el Plata, El Ombú, Mansiones verdes y Allá lejos y hace tiempo’ (p. 54).

43 Apart from the aforementioned Alicia Jurado, Guillermo Ara, Martínez Estrada, Fernando Pozzo, and Jorge Casares, one thinks of other Argentine scholars like Luis Franco, Emiliano J. McDonagh, Justo P. Sáenz, Luis Horacio Velázquez, Haydée M. Jofre Barrosa, and Juan E. Azcoaga, who have devoted their energies to Hudson’s writings.
This same creole spirit is manifestly well expressed in 'Niño Diablo' which, though a part of the El Ombú collection, was first published in Macmillan's Magazine in 1890. Like its predecessor 'Story of a Piebald Horse,' 'Niño Diablo' embraces many aspects of pampa existence (plus rendering something of family and domestic life), if not the specialized domador, rodeo, cattle activities of the 'working' gauchos. It relates an incident reflecting the character of Niño Diablo, captured and orphaned by the Pampa Indians with whom he lived for five years before (like Martín Fierro) making his escape to rejoin his Christian brethren. Now a legend, a nature-boy and a horse-stealer, he amuses young girls (like the Magdalens of the story), plays tricks on blustering fools (like Cousin Polycarp) and rescues maidens in distress (like Torcuata, the wife of De la Rosa). As Richard Haymaker has so correctly observed, the emphasis in the story is on character, especially Niño Diablo's, though the minor characters, like Uncle Polycarp, the father Gregory, the spinster aunt Ascensión, the old grandmother, are swiftly but effectively sketched. If character counts, the portrait of Niño merits description:

He was slender in form, and had small hands and feet, and an oval olive face, smooth as a girl's except for the incipient moustache on his lip. In place of a hat he wore only a scarlet ribbon bound about his head, to keep back the glossy black hair that fell to his shoulders; and he was wrapped in a white woollen Indian poncho, while his lower limbs were cased in white colt-skin coverings, shaped like stockings to his feet, with the red tassels of his embroidered garters falling to the ankles.

This ambivalent mixture of Christian and Indian dress points to the synthesis of admirable qualities in his character. Horseman and horse-lover second to none, rastreador and baqueano, he was able to flit out and in the Indian camps, to sense the approach of visitors at a distance, entertain with amusing stories, attract girls with his personality, all the while not getting embroiled in the senseless political wars of nineteenth-century Argentina. Product of both the gaucho and his half-brother the Indian, later driven to the frontier and eliminated by this very gaucho who was himself to be civilized out of existence by the advance of progress, Niño Diablo reflects the two strains which are fused in the story. Though treating of matters gauchesque, 'Niño Diablo' is not devoid of the Indian

44 From Pampas to Hedgerows and Downs (New York: Bookman Associates 1954) 339
45 El Ombú (London: Duckworth 1902) 100
side of the pampa expression. The Indian element, incarnated in the 'stealthiness and preternatural sensitiveness' of Niño (to use Haymaker's happy phrase), is manifested in the all-pervading presence and fear of the marauding Indians, their malones, their fear-bearing lances, and their bestial celebrations. With a panache equal to Echeverría ('La Cautiva') or his kindred spirit Cunninghame Graham ('The Captive,' 'Los Indios'), Hudson depicts something of the Indian way of life, also long disappeared:

At the sight of home the savages burst into loud cries of joy and triumph, answered, as they drew near, with piercing screams of welcome from the village population chiefly composed of women, children and old men.

It is past midnight; the young moon has set; the last fires are dying down; the shouts and loud noise of excited talk and laughter have ceased, and the weary warriors, after feasting on sweet mare's flesh to repletion, have fallen asleep in their huts, or lying out of doors on the ground. Only the dogs are excited still and keep on an incessant barking. Even the captive women, huddled together in one hut in the middle of the settlement, fatigued with their long rough journey, have cried themselves to sleep at last. (pp. 122-3)

The pampa, equally well painted by Cunninghame Graham in his sketches ('La pampa, 'Paja y cielo') looms as large, if not as menacingly, as in Sarmiento's Facundo:

The wide pampa rough with long grass; a vast level disc now growing dark, the horizon encircling it with a ring as faultless as that made by a pebble dropped into smooth water; above it the clear sky of June, wintry and pale, still showing in the west the saffron hues of the afterglow tinged with vapoury violet and grey. In the centre of the disc a large low rancho thatched with yellow thrushes, a few stunted trees and cattle enclosures grouped about it; and dimly seen in the shadows, cattle and sheep reposing. (p. 89)

From within as from without, Hudson captures the essence of a rancho kitchen with meticulous detail:

The spacious kitchen was lighted by two or three wicks in cups of melted fat, and by a great fire in the middle of the clay floor that cast crowds of dancing shadows on the walls and filled the whole room with grateful warmth. On the walls were fastened many deers' heads, and on their convenient prongs were hung bridles and lassos, ropes of onions and garlics, bunches of dried herbs, and various other objects. At the fire a piece of beef was roasting on a spit; and in a large pot suspended by hook and chain from the smoke-blackened central beam, boiled
and bubbled an ocean of mutton broth, puffing out white clouds of steam redolent of herbs and cummin-seed. (pp. 90-1)

Skilfully going from the general situation (pampa) to the particular (rancho kitchen), to the inhabitants (Gregory's family) with a reduction process reminiscent of Facundo, Part 1, Hudson paints the scene and the character composition into which he introduces the protagonist who, characteristically, joins the company undetected. Having successfully effected the background and the characterization, Hudson maintains the authenticity of the whole with a language that is apt and an imagery which, as in Martín Fierro, never strains the credulity and never strays beyond the confines of the pampa perimeters. With a judicious sprinkling of refrains, sayings, proverbs and images, wholly consistent with the gauchesque modo de ser and the pampa expression, Hudson conveys the mood, paints the characters, and narrates the events: The web of the spider is coarse and ill-made compared with the snare he spreads to entangle his prey' (of Niño); 'When the eaglets have found out their wings let them try their talons' (of their sons fighting at the frontier); 'Why do you always drop on us in this treacherous way, like rain through a leaky thatch?' (of Niño). How well the following dictum reflects the philosophy of Niño (and the gaucho in general) with regard to material things: 'As for land, if God has given so much of it to the ostrich it is not a thing for a man to set a great value on.' On the basis of such pampa costumbres, natural descriptions, and subtle use of gauchesque dialect and folklore, it is difficult to argue with those Argentine literary partisans who rush to enlist Hudson in their ranks.

Though the tale is not devoid of the sense of impending death, characteristic of the primitive world (cf. Facundo), or the heroic sentiments and barbaric passions present in other pampa tales, the tragic note of 'Niño Diablo' is reduced by the light treatment of the protagonist. The world of Niño Diablo is more the world of myth and legend than the witchcraft and superstition of 'Pelino Viera's Confession' and 'Marta Riquelme.' Since characterization and description (sometimes even lyrical, p. 122) are more the rule than the unfolding of tragedy, Hudson, having painted the scene and situated the characters, terminates the whole in a series of short dénouements so that the finale, though not aesthetically displeasing, is perhaps anticlimactic and even disproportionate — though it is consistent with Hudson's tendency to give us a quiet ending (cf. Green Mansions), as if permitting us the cathartic experience of his essentially tragic cuentos. Although the tale is less tragically satisfying than the best of Hudson's cuentos, and perhaps technically unbalanced in its too abrupt conclusion, the unsensational, open-ended rescue does not
offend aesthetically or spiritually. Withal, ‘Niño Diablo’ has much merit in its colourful characterization, authentic costumbrismo and delightfully convincing use of gauchesque dialect.

To say that it is not of the calibre of Hudson’s two ‘original’ cuentos of the collection, ‘El Ombú’ and ‘Marta Riquelme,’ is hardly criticism. If his short stories are superior to his long romances, then these two are undoubtedly the cream of his fiction. These two, more than any other work, even in Hudson’s own opinion (and he was a harsh self-critic) contain the very essence of his native Argentina. ‘El Ombú’ (a title about which Hudson had some misgivings because of its esoteric connotations) is justified, since the cuento relates the experiences of the various occupants of a ranch named after the tree under whose shade the narrator Nicandro told his story. It really is a series of stories linked by the unifying force of the house struck by tragedy. Far from the lightweight hero of The Purple Land, the characters of ‘El Ombú’ are powerfully drawn. Through the narrative lens of Nicandro we see successively the old caudillo type Santos Lugarte who, despite having three wives and fathered many children, grieves at not having a legitimate son of his own. Taking a paternal interest in his favourite black slave Meliton, he is shocked that his protégé should want the dignity of freedom. Having expelled and later killed him, Santos is forced to spend the rest of his life in exile, and is seen at the end, his mind gone, sitting by the river waiting for the opportunity to return to Buenos Aires. The next occupant of El Ombú, Valerio, a poor but honest gaucho forced to go to the war, out of a strong sense of justice acts as advocate for his disgruntled army mates, only to be flogged almost to death by the maniacal officer Barboza. Barely having the strength to make it home to El Ombú, he expires in the arms of his wife Donata, in the presence of his son Bruno. Bruno’s story is equally tragic. He falls in love with Monica, the abandoned daughter of the gambler Sánchez, who had been taken in and reared by his mother. Only later hearing of his father’s brutal death, he goes off to the army seeking revenge on General Barboza. On his mother’s death, Monica is left alone at El Ombú. Indirectly, through the intermediary of a visiting old soldier who relates the events to the narrator, we learn that Bruno, attempting to assassinate Barboza, had been killed. Monica, hearing the news, loses her wits, goes off to live with neighbours, forlornly awaiting the return of Bruno, whilst the house is torn down. It has been truly said that résumés are very unsatisfactory, and seldom do justice to a fine story.

Although Hudson preferred ‘Marta Riquelme,’ since it was more a work of imagination, ‘El Ombú’ is a dramatic story of powerful emotions, tragic in its essence and tinged with the concomitant qualities of pi-
ty and irony. Though based on fact — in the Appendix Hudson discusses the original notes which he took in 1868 after talking to an old man — it is nonetheless a compelling work of fiction that rises to heights of pure tragedy in its best moments, beautified by the moving death of Valerio: ‘He who was so brave, so generous even in his poverty, of so noble a spirit, yet so gentle; whose words were sweeter than honey to me!’ (p. 38). Valerio at least managed to make his way home to El Ombú to die. Santos Ugarte, on the other side of the River Plate, was condemned to a life of exile, sitting on the rocks for long hours facing Buenos Aires, thinking of his home, El Ombú: ‘for what was life to him away from it, in that strange country? And that unsatisfied desire, and perhaps remorse, had, they say, made his face terrible to look at, for it was like the face of a dead man who had died with wide-open eyes’ (p. 39). With Donata dead from grief, the vengeful Bruno a victim of Barboza’s knife, and Monica alone with her reason gone, the house of tragedy was pulled down for the sake of the material to be used in the village. Monica, the sole survivor, now old and wrinkled, sits by the lake of Chascomus, looking across the water:

She watches for the flamingoes. There are many of those great birds on the lake, and they go in flocks, and when they rise and travel across the water, flying low, their scarlet wings may be seen at a great distance. And every time she catches sight of a flock moving like a red line across the lake she cries out with delight. That is her one happiness — her life. And she is the last of all those who have lived in my time at El Ombú. (p. 68)

The tragic final note of the story is in keeping with the overall mood. There is none of the frivolous amorousness of The Purple Land, nor of the occasional artificial eroticism of Green Mansions, in ‘El Ombú.’ If, as I have stated, the essence of the romance is black tragedy, human and cosmic, ‘El Ombú’ is an admirable example:

They say that sorrow and at last ruin comes upon the house on whose roof the shadow of the ombú tree falls; 46 and on that house which now is not, the shadow of this tree came every summer day when the sun was low…. It is true that evil fortune came to the old house in the end; but into every door sorrow must enter

46 Cf. Graham’s remarks at the end of his sketch, ‘La pampa,’ in Charity (London: Duckworth 1912): There were few landmarks, but in the southern and middle districts a dark ombú, standing beside some lone tapera and whose shade fell on some rancho or estancia, although the proverb said, “The house shall never prosper upon whose roof is thrown the shade of the ombú” (p. 238).
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— sorrow and death that comes to all men; and every house must fall at last. (pp. 2-3)

Nowhere if not in ‘El Ombú’ does this darker side of Hudson, a characteristic of the romances, manifest itself so strongly. Here we find one of the most powerful expressions of the tragic sense of life, without recourse to witchcraft or superstition, effective as these are in ‘Marta Riquelme’ and less so in ‘Pelino Viera’s Confession.’ Rather than a tragedy effected by supernatural agencies, ‘El Ombú’ is a potent human cry from the heart, running the gamut of emotions from love to hate, from compassion to revenge, from ingratitude to madness, from charity to remorse, from fidelity to delirium, from hope to despair. Hudson achieves the effect not just by the intensity of his passions, but by a skilful blending of the stories, all told by the narrator who knew all the characters and whose life had touched them. The unifying link is, of course, the ranch El Ombú where each of the protagonists lived, and the ill-fated ombú tree that gave its name to the house, of which nothing now remains but a bed of nettles.

Though rooted in Argentine reality, ‘El Ombú’ is less a work of pampa costumbres than a powerful human document. However, the historical elements of the story are strengthened by Hudson’s Appendix which gives a detailed description of the English invasion of the Plate Region by General Whitelock in 1807 and the ‘blanket’ incident, and also the long description of the game of el pato, the gaucho test of strength, incongruously, one might think at first, forbidden by the dictator Rosas, most macho of all the gauchos. Though not part of the story, Hudson’s comments on Rosas, whom his father and other Anglos admired for his ability to establish law and order in a land torn by civil war, and his shrewd judgement of the gauchos (‘absolutely devoid of the sentiment of patriotism, and regarded all rulers, all in authority from the highest to the lowest, as his chief enemies, and the worst kind of robbers, since they robbed him not only of his goods but of his liberty’ [p. 176]), lend a historical perspective to the story and help to create an authentic background. Within the story itself the warfare is more internal, confined to the common practice of ‘press-ganging’ Argentine youths and sending them off to the frontier to exterminate Indians, as happened to Valerio and Bruno. Their adventures there with the Indians highlight not only the bestiality of the pagans, but also the brutality of the Christians

47 ‘El Pato’ was first published in Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes 7 (October 1898) 402-16.
faced with their traditional enemies:

Our troop of horses, urged on by our yells, were soon in the encampment, and the savages, rushing hither and thither, trying to save themselves, were shot and speared and cut down by swords. One desire was in all our hearts, one cry on all lips — kill! kill! kill! Such a slaughter had not been known for a long time, and birds and foxes and armadillos must have grown fat on the flesh of the heathen we left for them. But we killed only the men, and few escaped; the women and the children we made captive. (p. 32)

More cruel for Hudson is the treatment of the soldiers, abused, exploited and even murdered by the authorities, both military and judicial (cf. Martín Fierro and Cruz). Less pronounced too is the obligatory gaucho costumbreismo. In ‘El Ombú’ the intent is not to portray the gaucho as a sociological problem (one aspect of Martín Fierro) nor as an aesthetic ideal (one dimension of Don Segundo Sombra). Santos Ugarte and Valerio are presented naturally, i.e., as constituent elements of nature and as human beings, not types, living in the pampa ambience — which does not, of course, prevent us from recognizing in Santos and Valerio certain traits common to various types of gaucho: Santos as the gaucho ‘que se desgracia,’ who kills involuntarily through some blind force; Valerio, as the gaucho pobre forced to the frontier, who suffers stoically, hoping for better times.48 The more concrete characterization of the gaucho is left to the non-fictional appendix, in which the gaucho is depicted as anti-patriotic, cynical to all governments, and supporting Rosas only because they thought he was one of them and would provide them with the perfect liberty they craved. Only too late they discovered their error. In ‘El Ombú’ the psychology of the gaucho is suggested, the atmosphere created, more by a technique that transcends the factual and the historical. In other words, Hudson creates the spirit of the gaucho and the pampa modo de ser by presenting the essence of things, to convey first impressions, first sensations which, filtered through the lens of art, produce a prose that is also spiritual — hence the use of words like ‘maravilla,’ ‘reino encantado,’ ‘sugestión’ by critics like Martínez Estrada and Guillermo Ara. Hudson, whose first intention was to make us see things, describes the visionary process thus:

Why then go back? ... because of the eternal desire in us, which must have fretted even the hearts of the men who dwelt in caves; to reveal, to testify, to point out

48 For a detailed treatment of the gaucho types, see Ara, pp. 267-79.
the path to a new enchanted realm, which we have discovered; to endeavour to convey to others some faint sense or suggestion of the wonder and delight which may be found in nature.\textsuperscript{49}

The fact that his works like ‘El Ombú’ sometimes have a documentary value and are claimed by the adherents of pampa \textit{costumbrismo} and gauchó apologists (for their historical and geographical elements) in no way detracts from their aesthetic value:

La naturaleza es la tierra que pisa, el verde de los pastos, el cielo azul, el árbol y el ave, pero es también al mismo tiempo, por la presencia de todo lo trascendente que late en ella, un universo de “maravilla,” “un reino encantado” que provoca en su adorador, estados de exaltación tocantes con el arrobamiento y el éxtasis.  
(Ara, p. 282)

Hudson would have shrugged off this kind of mystical identification, claiming that he was merely repeating one story of many told to him by an old gauchó, a story which in fact, according to Hudson, lost much in the translation. Hudson, however, is too modest in his estimation of ‘El Ombú’ as having only a certain historical value.\textsuperscript{50} By means of a process that disguises his literary intention and ability (the art behind the artlessness), in ‘El Ombú’ he has created a well-structured tale (romance), a unified novella (his best length), about the pampa (his native region) which surely describes something of a vanishing race and a disappearing way of life, has some historical and political value, and makes a useful contribution to pampa \textit{costumbrismo}. More importantly, however, transcending the obvious regionalist level, Hudson has produced a work of art, imbued with his own tragic sentiment of life which, if interpreted and experienced at its proper aesthetic level, should touch the soul of the reader who will respond to the emotions expressed therein and, after the characteristic quiet ending, have a cathartic and ennobling effect on his

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Adventures Among Birds} (New York: Dutton 1920) 290-1

\textsuperscript{50} In a letter to his friend Henry Salt (11 March 1902), Hudson plays down the artistic qualities of his tale: ‘El cuento del Ombú podrá tener cierto valor histórico para algunos sudamericanos, pues es un relato bastante fiel de las cosas que yo estaba acostumbrado a oír y en ocasiones a ver, en los días de mi infancia y juventud; éste es su único mérito.

Desgraciadamente, al verter estos viejos recuerdos al inglés, parece haber desaparecido toda la primitiva gracia original de la narración del gauchó. Sí, diría el viejo Nicandro, ésta es una historia que yo le conté — pero sin \textit{la sal y pimienta’} (Jurado, pp. 173-4. Despite extensive inquiries, I have not been able to locate the original letter in English).
life. Even those critics who consider the Argentine romances inferior to the English essays recognize the elevated position of 'El Ombú' in Hudson's fiction.

Hudson himself preferred 'Marta Riquelme,' judging it to be superior because, as an artist, he considered that there was more merit in a creative work of imagination than in what he deemed the retelling of a mere story which he had heard, as in the case of 'El Ombú' (Roberts, pp. 150-1). Hudson, who was generally a good judge of his own work — he saw the defects of A Crystal Age — is too harsh on 'El Ombú,' but he is right in thinking that 'Marta Riquelme' is a work of fine invention. If one tends to underestimate it, it is because of the fact that, although it is a work pregnant with human passions, the underlying motive and machinery are ultimately supernatural, though the effect on the human emotions at play is nonetheless staggering and tragic. Closer to 'Pelina Viera's Confession' in that it is rooted in superstition and legend, if not witchcraft, 'Marta Riquelme' uses the same technique of presentation, i.e., the first person narrative by means of a found manuscript, in this case of the Jesuit Father Sepulvida. The story relates the hard life of the young priest far from his native city, the civilized Córdoba, in the desolate backlands of the distant Argentine province of Jujuy, especially his relations with the beautiful young girl Marta Riquelme with whom he falls in love only to see her marry a wastrel, Cosme Luna, whom she follows in his life of abandon. Later captured, imprisoned and brutally treated by the Indians for five years, she escapes and returns to Yala where her husband refuses to recognize her. Thus, she flees her home and goes to live with an old charcoal-burner's family. When Fr. Sepulvida goes to look for her, he finds Marta greatly altered, and, in keeping with the legend of the Kakué (the bird into which suffering souls are reputedly transformed), before his very eyes he imagines the metamorphosis taking place. This intensely horrifying climax provokes a physical and spiritual crisis in Fr. Sepulvida who is forced to return to Córdoba, a much changed man. Encouraged by the advice of his superior Fr. Irala, he returns to Yala to face life — and death. A second climax sees the priest subjected to a violent attack of all the forces of the old pagan gods, which he resists, but only just, and, in the typical quiet ending, prays for the repose of the soul of Marta.

Right from the ominous opening up to the two terrifying climaxes (of Marta and Sepulvida), the tale is told with ferocious intensity. Given the early suggestive description of the Kakué bird that frequents the gloomy forest, and the legend that it is a metamorphosed human being whose life has been darkened by great suffering, Hudson prepares us for the dreadful calamity and makes the metamorphosis scene more easily acceptable:
... when suddenly, from the depths of the dense leafage above me, rang forth a shriek, the most terrible it has ever fallen to the lot of any human being to hear. In sound it was a human cry, yet expressing a degree of agony and despair surpassing the power of any human soul to feel, and my impression was that it could only have been uttered by some tortured spirit allowed to wander for a season on the earth. Shriek after shriek, each more powerful and terrible to hear than the last, succeeded, and I sprang to my feet, the hair standing erect on my head, a profuse sweat of terror breaking out all over me. The cause of all these maddening sounds remained invisible to my eyes ... . (p. 130)

Hudson contributes to the effectiveness of the transformation scene by subtly and ironically having Fr. Sepulveda comment on the man-animal transformation as a phenomenon common to the primitive religions of South America, only to inform the reader that these beliefs are dead or dying out (p. 132). If the Kakué legend maintains any hold on this community, it is only because of its isolation. Within the framework of the legend, given this geographical and spiritual atmosphere created by Hudson, and having been induced by the ready and voluntary suspension of our disbelief, we are persuaded with the priest that the climax is indeed real and that Marta has indeed undergone the traditional metamorphosis:

As I approached she raised her eyes to mine, and then I stood still, transfixed with amazement and horror at what I saw; for they were no longer those soft violet orbs which had retained until recently their sweet pathetic expression; now they were round and wild-looking, opened to thrice their ordinary size, and filled with a lurid yellow fire, giving them a semblance to the eyes of some hunted savage animal ... .

This movement [of the crucifix] appeared to infuriate her; the insane, desolate eyes, from which all human expression had vanished, became like two burning balls, which seemed to shoot out sparks of fire; her short hair rose up until it stood like an immense crest on her head; and suddenly bringing down her skeleton-like hands she thrust the crucifix violently from her, uttering at the same time a succession of moans and cries that pierced my heart with pain to hear. And presently flinging up her arms, she burst forth into shrieks so terrible in the depths of agony they expressed that overcome by the sound I sank upon the earth and hid my face. The others, who were close behind me, did likewise, for no human soul could endure those cries, the remembrance of which, even now after many years, causes the blood to run cold in my veins. (pp. 157-8)

Rarely has Hudson, or any other author, produced such a horrifying
climax of such verisimilitude — by the subtle use of superstition, legend and the supernatural.

The climax is doubly effective in that Hudson, no religious man himself, had already prepared the reader in the introductory part 1, through the exposé of the pagan gods (which provides the balance), for the epic spiritual struggle of Miltonic proportions at the end, by the hint of the existence of the ‘evil one’ in this God-forsaken region:

But I have not taken up my pen to complain that all the years of my life are consumed in a region where the great spiritual enemy of mankind is still permitted to challenge the supremacy of our Master, waging an equal war against his followers: my sole object is to warn, perhaps also to comfort, others who will be my successors in this place, and who will come to the church of Yala ignorant of the means which will be used for the destruction of their souls. (p. 126)

Hudson shrewdly links the supernatural to the natural. Kakué, the bird of doom and the incarnation of evil, is also the ancient name of the country, but was misspelt by the first explorers, and the corrupt name was retained. Thus more credibility is given to the metamorphosis climax because of the close link between the setting, the ambience created, and the evil incarnate in the human/fowl transformation. By a narrowing down process Hudson skillfully prepares the way by describing the general (province), the town (Jujuy), the settlement (Yala), an isolated, scattered village of ninety souls. The character of the place (rude, desolate, chaos, rocks, gigantic mountains) reflects the spiritual aridity of the people (ignorant, apathetic, Indians). Very quickly Hudson establishes the romantic identification of the man (natural aversion, despair, distrustful) with nature (wild, savage, strange). This same identification is highlighted just before the first (transformation) crisis:

Once more I went out to seek her; and this was the saddest journey of all, for even the elements were charged with unusual gloom, as if to prepare my mind for some unimaginable calamity. Rain, accompanied by terrific thunder and lightning, had been falling in torrents for several days, so that the country was all but impassable: the swollen streams roared between the hills, dragging down rocks and trees, and threatening, whenever we were compelled to ford them, to carry us away to destruction. The rain had ceased, but the whole sky was covered by a dark motionless cloud, unpierced by a single ray of sunshine. The mountains, wrapped in blue vapours, loomed before us, vast and desolate; and the trees, in that still, thick atmosphere, were like figures of trees hewn out of solid ink-black rock and set up in some shadowy subterranean region to mock its inhabitants with an imitation of the upper world. (pp. 155-6)
The unimaginable calamity is, of course, the 'imagined' metamorphosis, which possibility Fr. Sepulvida had ridiculed at the beginning of the narrative, despite his ominous and terrifying encounter with the Kakué.

Adjectives fail to describe the terror, horror and awe of the young priest's experience. In spite of the character of Fr. Sepulvida, whom Hamilton calls intellectually limited, and the abortive, undeclared and unreturned love for Marta, which some might even call imprudent, Hudson captures the fierce intensity of the passions, though one doubts if the priest's love is this ardent. In his ambivalent struggle between the extremes of civilization and barbarism, Christianity and paganism, good and evil, love and hate, one might even see something of the two sides of Hudson himself, the darker side of whose character Hamilton would like to believe is false, artificial and certainly not the authentic persona. The fact that Hudson preferred this tale to all others is a significant pointer to this aspect of Hudson's life and character which English critics, so used to the 'sane' narrator of the quiet essays of the English countryside, have failed to appreciate or recognize. Though not a great fictional character, nor particularly likable (like Hudson's other male heroes, Lamb, Smith, Abel), Fr. Sepulvida is an emotion-wracked individual, and most sympathetic when he is faced with spiritual and carnal weaknesses, and thus worthy of our compassion.

Marta Riquelme, however, the tragic heroine of the title, is the character most deserving of our pity. Deserted by her ne'er-do-well husband, ill-treated by her Indian captor and deprived of her children, she withdraws more and more not only from society but even from life, till she finds herself persecuted by Divine Providence. Oppressed by unbearable suffering, Marta derives some consolation from the notion of being changed by compassionate spirits into the Kakué, an idea that is appalling to her protector. For such a creature, without faith, hope or love, burdened by sorrow and despair, death represents at least an escape. Closely linked with the emotions of Marta are those of the priest who, from the initial despair he feels in this abandoned land, passes through fear, to anger at the apathy and ignorance of the villagers, to love for Marta and hatred for Cosme, and finally compassion for her as an Indian captive and a spurned wife. The tragedy of her transformation produces in him the travails of the dark night of the soul, for which the only release seems to be death. Recovered from his spiritual and physical malaise, he has but faith and hope to support him in his struggle against the forces of darkness. 'Marta Riquelme' is a powerful tragedy rarely exceeded in the English language for the intensity of its portrayal. If it is a tragedy, as I have demonstrated, it is so in the terms of my earlier discussion, both human in the struggle of Marta and Sepulvida against the evils
of individuals and society, and cosmic, in the monumental struggle of both against the powers of evil, legendary, traditional and divine:

Pachacamac, Viracocho, and many others; names which being translated mean, The All-powerful, Ruler of Men, The Strong Comer, Lord of the Dead, The Avenger. These were not mythical beings; they were mighty spiritual entities, differing from each other in character, some taking delight in wars and destruction, while others regarded their human worshippers with tolerant and even kindly feelings. (p. 167)

But it was not the benevolent ones who sought to win dominion over the soul of Sepulvida in his crisis:

Instantly all my doubts, my fears, my unshapen thoughts found expression, and with a million tongues shrieked out in my soul against my Redeemer. I called aloud on Him to save me, but He came not; and the spirits of darkness, enraged at my long resistance, had violently seized on my soul, and were dragging it down [to] perdition. I reached forth my hands and took hold of the crucifix standing near me ....

My hands relaxed their hold on the cross, and falling on the stones, I cried aloud to the Lord to slay me and take my soul, for by death only could I escape from that great crime my enemies were urging me to commit.

Scarcely had I pronounced these words before I felt that the fiends had left me, like ravening wolves scared from their quarry. I rose up and washed the blood from my bruised forehead, and praised God; for now there was a great calm in my heart, and I knew that He who had died to save the world was with me, and that His grace had enabled me to conquer and deliver my own soul from perdition. (pp. 165-6)

Only then does he see the reason for the resistance to religion in the hearts of the poor people of Yala; for the strange temptations of anger and the flesh that had assailed him only there; and even for the terrible happenings of Marta Riquelme’s life:

for all these things had been ordered with devilish cunning to drive my soul into rebellion. I no longer dwelt persistently on that isolated event of her transformation, for now the whole action of that tremendous warfare in which the powers of darkness are arrayed against the messengers of the Gospel began to unfold itself before me. (pp. 166-7)

With his new-found knowledge, renewed faith and the hope of his own
and Marta’s salvation, the powers of darkness, though they are always present, cannot harm him, for his soul is strong.

Though not an orthodox religious writer, Hudson in ‘Marta Riquelme’ has produced a powerful work of fiction in which the Christian message of love and hope rings out in the face of the tragic sentiment of life which he obviously experienced, and which is an integral part of all his novels. Apart from the everpresent pity, already highlighted, one is aware of the tragic irony sometimes overlooked,51 although Haymaker (p. 342), feels that in the drawing of the portrait the irony is at times too obvious, e.g., in the incident when reading in the memoirs of his predecessor that the natives welcomed the idea of an unquenchable fire in hell, since it would save them from wood-gathering, Sepulvida affirms: ‘So hard it was for.

their heathen intellects to comprehend the solemn doctrines of our faith!’ (p. 136). Beside the overpowering tragic qualities of human lives in crisis, the more superficial elements of regional costumbri smo and Indian customs pale in comparison. Whilst an integral part of Hudson’s narrative, they are of greater consequence for their contribution to the intensification of Marta’s and Sepulvida’s metaphysical evolution than for their mere local colour interest. The details of the unhappy captivity of Marta, and the cruelty at the hands of her Indian master, are the stuff of nineteenth-century gauch esque literature, and in Marta’s case combine to produce a more bitter emotional crushing culminating in the final tragedy, rather than providing mere creole costumbri smo. Also, there are fewer lapses here into what might have produced a dangerous tendency towards possible excesses, e.g., melodrama (in the case of Renata’s conduct in ‘El Ombú’) or the grotesque (Barboza’s blood-bath in ‘El Ombú’). Despite the occasional anomaly (e.g., the Indian captor not only allowing his wife to return home, but also permitting Marta to accompany them, not before he dropped her baby into a torrent), for a work of imagination, it is relatively free from structural lapses. Haymaker finds the concluding section v (in which Sepulvida wages war for his soul and Marta’s against the forces of the old pagan gods) rather long and drawn out. Though there is some point to his criticism, one should note that it is balanced by the historical and legendary disquisition of the introductory section i. It is rather ironic that some critics, on the other hand, have condemned the ending of ‘Niño Diablo’ as too abrupt. But this is small criticism. The spiritual struggle over, and Fr. Sepulvida at peace with God and his soul, Hudson concludes with the traditional quietist ending.

51 See Hamilton, pp. 55-6.
'Marta Riquelme' is a fine novella, one of Hudson's best, produced with a skilful fusion of emotions, and the interplay of the human and the supernatural, the search for which is the essence of man's existence. Hudson has taken a legend of a little known corner of Argentina, and out of this regionalist superstition has created a work of human tragedy, linking the people and the priest, that is born not only of the spirit of the area but of the area itself, in personal, geographical and historical terms. That he was able to transcend the regional and elevate it to the cosmic is a tribute not only to Hudson the observer, but also the artist.

And Hudson was an artist, despite his occasional attempts to disguise his artistry. In a letter once to Morley Roberts, with reference to *A Hind in Richmond Park*, he stated that his plan was to appear to have no plan (Roberts, p. 83). Many stories are told about his care in composing and correcting proofs. Despite Conrad's felicitous but, unfortunately, inaccurate description of his style (Hudson writes as the grass grows'), Hudson is a conscious and careful writer. Roberts states that he wrote barely a few hundred words daily. Ford describes a morning's work correcting and recorrecting one sentence, at the end of which Hudson had changed 'the hedges grew green' to 'the hedges were green.' It is clear that Hudson was a self-conscious, deliberate writer who worked slowly to produce his almost spiritual prose. Probably because of his modesty with regard to his own work, of no one could it be better said that his was the art behind the artlessness. No better example of this art can be found than his autobiographical *Far Away and Long Ago*, written appropriately at the end of his life.

As Hudson always claimed, despite the protestations of friends, it was never his intention to write an autobiography. In his middle years he had related some incidents of his boyhood in works like *The Naturalist in La Plata, Birds and Men, Adventures Among Birds*, and in several magazine articles, e.g., Chapter 1, 'Early Memories,' of *Far Away and Long Ago* appeared in the *English Review* (22, January 1916, pp. 11-20). His reasons for not writing an autobiography were aesthetic as well as personal, since he claimed that all his work represents the story of his life. His objections to a conventional autobiography are vividly portrayed in the opening pages of *Far Away and Long Ago*. Despite the fact that they are used to negate the principle of autobiographical writing, they are sharply and astutely detailed:

... for when a person endeavours to recall his early life in its entirety he finds it is not possible: he is like one who ascends a hill to survey the prospect before him on a day of heavy cloud and shadow, who sees at a distance, now here, now there, some feature in the landscape — hill or wood or tower or spire — touched
and made conspicuous by a transitory sunbeam while all else remains in obscurity. The scenes, people, events we are able by an effort to call up do not present themselves in order; there is no order, no sequence or regular progression — nothing, in fact, but isolated spots or patches, brightly illuminated and vividly seen, in the midst of a wide shrouded mental landscape.52

However, despite his misgivings, Hudson, as a result of a critical illness in Cornwall that lasted for six weeks, experienced what could almost be called a vision, which enabled him to recall episodes from forgotten stages of his life over which he was able to range with ease:

On the second day of my illness, during an interval of comparative ease, I fell into recollections of my childhood, and at once I had that far, that forgotten past with me again as I had never previously had it. It was not like that mental condition, known to most persons, when some sight or sound or, more frequently, the perfume of some flower, associated with our early life, restores the past suddenly and so vividly that it is almost an illusion. That is an intensely emotional condition and vanishes as quickly as it comes. This was different. To return to the simile and metaphor used at the beginning, it was as if the cloud shadows and haze had passed away and the entire wide prospect beneath me made clearly visible. Over it all my eyes could range at will, choosing this or that point to dwell upon, to examine it in all its details; or in the case of some person known to me as a child, to follow his life till it ended or passed from sight; then to return to the same point again to repeat the process with other lives and resume my rambles in the old familiar haunts. (pp. 2-3)

Under the influence of the ‘vision’ Hudson was able to recall clearly with almost mystical illumination the events of his childhood spent on the pampa — the childish games, the various teachers (Mr. Trigg, Fr. O'Keefe), the animals (especially dogs, like Caesar, and horses), birds and snakes, moving houses (from Los 25 Ombués to Las Acacias), the pampa storms, the political events of Argentina of the 40s and 50s (including the dictator Rosas) — and in general he depicted with feeling and perspicacity the coming of age of a boy growing up on the Argentine pampa. Although it covers a span of eighteen years, it is not meant to be completely chronological nor accurate. Periods are eliminated (from 12-15, for example), and others telescoped (from 16-19). Other discrepancies in age are glossed over as being unimportant, since his aim was more to create the spirit, the essence of his childhood long ago and

52 Everyman (London: Dent 1939) 1
far away, by impressions, as it were. The details are of less significance than his ability to recreate or remember. Richard Haymaker rightly senses that *Far Away and Long Ago* is more reminiscence than biography. The fact that it describes Argentina of the 1840s and 1850s, the life and customs, links it with *The Purple Land* and the tales of the pampas in its evocation of a past life and a vanishing race. Paradoxically, though not fictional, it is perhaps his most consciously aesthetic work, and certainly one immersed in spirituality.

From the very title, *Far Away and Long Ago*, we are made aware that this is a deliberate attempt to evoke a place (far away) and a time (long ago). The title also suggests something of the dream-like quality that one finds in much of the best literature — qualities that transcend geographical and temporal barriers, and link the autobiography with the universal and the common sense of mystery in the past. This quality of aesthetic distancing that one finds in all of Hudson's work about Argentina is highlighted because of the double strand of time and place, and becomes even more vivid since it is an aesthetic treatment of personal experiences, seen through the artistic lens of time, maturity and experience.

Even more than his fiction, to which it is bound by theme and setting, *Far Away and Long Ago* is a self-conscious, artistic, final attempt to bridge the two formative worlds in which he lived. Written in old age about his childhood, composed in England about Argentina, describing the past in terms of the present, through the miracle of art, Hudson makes a last-ditch effort to unite his two worlds and his two ages, through an artistic fusion, a synthesis that is a deliberate attempt to pull together what was and what is. In the final search for things and time lost, it may even be an attempt to reconcile his two personalities — the English and the Argentine, the civilised and the barbaric, the inner and the external personae. If some critics saw *The Purple Land* as autobiographical, then *Far Away and Long Ago* might be an attempt to correct the abuses, to redress the balance by writing an 'official' autobiography that covers the period before Richard Lamb's doubtful adventures, i.e., up to the age of eighteen, a period which Hudson is un-

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53 'On looking back over the book, I find that on three or four occasions I have placed some incident in the wrong chapter or group, thus making it take place a year or so too soon or too late. These small errors of memory are, however, not worth altering now: so long as the scene or event is rightly remembered and pictured it doesn't matter much whether I was six or seven or eight years old at that time. I find, too, that I have omitted many things which perhaps deserved a place in the book — scenes and events which are vividly remembered, but which unfortunately did not come up at the right moment, and so were left out' (p. 248).
doubtedly stressing as the important years of formation. Anything that happens after that is consequential. It is surely significant that, when Hudson does decide finally to write an autobiographical work, he should choose to limit himself to childhood impressions. In almost Wordsworthian fashion he depicts a simple emotional acceptance of life, the continual sense of wonder of the child faced with the beauty, magic and healing qualities of nature which moulds the child and to which the child is mysteriously drawn, e.g., the exhilaration that children feel, exposed to the scent of moist earth as they play on the banks of a stream. Hudson is able to recapture these sensations with a depth and clarity that is even more sustained than a Proustian glimpse or a Baudelairean fleeting correspondance:

I am now able to recall these sensations, and believe that the sense of smell, which seems to diminish as we grow older, until it becomes something scarcely worthy of being called a sense, is nearly as keen in little children as in the inferior animals, and, when they live with nature, contributes as much to their pleasure as sight or hearing. (p. 6)

Nowhere if not in Hudson is the Wordsworthian dictum, 'the child is the father of the man,' authenticated or validated. Nor are the links with Wordsworth merely tenuous. The 'mystical' experience of the 1915 'vision' is closely parallel to the experiences of the youthful poet of The Prelude a century before.

Though basically enjoying a happy childhood, with good parents, especially his mother with whom he shared a special relationship,54 close to his family and the all-pervasive, usually beneficial, influence of nature, Hudson does not shrink from the darker thoughts of childhood, especially with regard to death and immortality, two interlinked metaphysical problems that Hudson, like Unamuno, wrestled with and resisted all his life.55 The death of his dog Caesar and the tactless remarks of his teacher Mr. Trigg as to its fate, and that of all humans, combined with the tragic demise of their beautiful serving-girl Margarita, mark him indelibly: 'the very thought of it was an intolerable weight on my heart; but it was not grief that gave me this sensation, much as I grieved; it was solely my fear of death' (p. 38). Learning from his conversation with an

54 Thus, besides and above the love of mother and son, we had a spiritual kinship, and this was so much to me that everything beautiful in sight and sound that affected me came associated with her to my mind' (p. 280).

55 See especially Chapter xxiii, 'A Darkened Life,' 262-71.
old man, and from his readings of George Combe’s *Physiology*, that the desire for immortality was neither innate nor universal comes as a shock to Hudson who arrives at the conclusion that immortality is not spiritually instinctive nor of divine origin (p. 270). In a sense, this literary autobiography of his childhood, written in old age, might be considered an attempt to immobilise and capture for all time in print his happy boyhood, a way of warding off death and gaining a kind of personal immortality through art and literature.

This immortality theme is further strengthened by the analogy with Wordsworth’s ‘Ode on the Intimations of Immortality’ in the sense that this purity, innocence, closeness to Nature and the Ideal, which is a characteristic of childhood, fades and becomes more shadowy as one moves away from the first light of youth — hence the importance of childhood in his work, especially in the *Autobiography* which does not, one notes, pass beyond his adolescence. The further one moves from the point of birth, the more one moves away from the source of grace into the shadow of life. With the illuminating flash of the 1915 vision, which facilitates the recreation of the immediate post-natal period of life and light, in cyclical fashion the artist is led back, in a pre-mortal experience, to the almost paradisiacal felicity of the original clarity of childhood. Hudson was not unaware of the Wordsworth parallel, and in fact, on at least two occasions in the *Autobiography*, especially in the chapter on ‘A Boy’s Animism,’ makes subtle references to the poet’s pantheism in relation to his own spiritualised view of nature: Wordsworth’s pantheism is a subtilised animism, but there are moments when his feeling is like that of a child or savage when he is convinced that the flower enjoys the air it breathes’ (p. 203).

Despite his references to Wordsworth and other (usually minor) English poets, there is little doubt that Hudson himself was not a great poet. In spite of his early efforts which were facile, even trite, Hudson has not made his mark on literature for his verse. Recognizing this early in his career, he channeled his ‘poetic’ energy and skills into his ethereal prose. In *Far Away and Long Ago*, even more than in the romances and

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56 Hamilton, discussing the question of second childhood in old age, stresses that this period need not involve a debilitating senility nor a failure of the faculties:

*As Miss Elizabeth Myers put it in discussing J.C. Powys’s *The Art of Growing Old*, old age “is the ideal time consciously to practise what we unconsciously indulged [in] in our cradles — a packed and shameless enjoyment of our simplest and commonest sensations, increasing those moments which, as Santayana would say, are ‘each a dramatic perspective of the world,’ and bringing us close to the secret of the universe.” (p. 121)*
other works of the imagination, he transcends the purely narrative, autobiographical and historical. By a series of illuminating impressions, which are more than just memories of a past life and vignettes of a country and a people before they begin to be civilized, as he modestly describes the first drafts of Far Away and Long Ago,\textsuperscript{57} Hudson has produced one of the best evocations of childhood ever written.\textsuperscript{58} If poetry is, as his kindred spirit Wordsworth describes it, ‘emotion recollected in tranquility,’ the old Hudson, purged of his youthful passions, and having gone through the various contemplative and active stages before attaining illumination and final communion, has written an autobiography which is at once poetic and mystical, personal and universal, human and spiritual, and which appeals to a far away and long ago in all men's hearts.

If any justification is necessary to link the two worlds of W.H. Hudson, Far Away and Long Ago, in aesthetic and spiritual fashion, binds the world of his youth to that of his maturity. Notwithstanding the nationality debate, there is no doubt that Hudson belongs to both Argentina and Britain. Argentina is the land of his birth and his formation, which provided so much of the raw material for his later literary career in England. If Hudson did write in English and is in the mainstream of English letters, there is no doubt that his Argentine youth provided not only the themes but also the inspiration for many of his works, especially those novels and short stories dealing with the life and customs of the River Plate region. Since, on the whole, his writings about England are mostly short pieces about nature subjects, it is no surprise that he is best known in English literature as an essayist. The unfamiliarity of the English critics with his Argentine youth, and that side of his personality, has prompted the belief that the essays represent the real Hudson — hence the lack of appreciation of the South American romances in general, and the Argentine fiction in particular. Apart from the anomalous Green Mansions, which gained an inexplicable and probably undeserved popularity, Hudson's tales of the pampas, made up of the youthful, immature novel, The Purple Land, which is probably better known even in the Plate region than his short stories, of which one collection El Ombú contains examples of his best work, 'El Ombú' and Mar-

\textsuperscript{57} In a letter to Cunninghame Graham, 2 November 1915, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{58} He was a great admirer of childhood autobiographies, especially Serge Aksakoff's History of My Childhood (published in English as Sergei Timofeevich Aksakov, Years of Childhood. Transl. by T.D. Duff [London: Edward Arnold 1916]) and Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, both of which he praises in Far Away and Long Ago, 196, 275.
ta Riquelme, reflect much of Hudson's ability to tell a long short story and certainly put the novels in the shade. Hudson, like Cunningham Graham, probably because they both belong, in a sense, to both literatures in their treatment of Argentine themes, has not received just treatment for his tales of the pampas. Though Hudson himself may have corrected the balance and bridged the differences in *Far Away and Long Ago*, which fuses the two worlds, the feeling still persists amongst many critics that the South American romances do not fit into the main flow of English literature, and are certainly not representative, nor even worthy, of the English nature essayist that was W.H. Hudson. It is no wonder then, that Argentina, given Hudson's fictional and costumbrist contribution to that nation's literature, should embrace him warmly, even jealously, to its bosom.

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