

ENRIQUE AMORIM AS A NOVELIST

A THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It has been said that although Spanish America has produced several great novels, it has never produced a great novelist. The reason underlying this statement seems to be the fact that although Spanish America has had many capable writers, they have never produced good works in any volume. The emergence of Enrique Amorin appears to contradict this statement. As any reader of Amorin soon learns, this author is not only a versatile artist but one of consistent high quality work who rarely touches upon a field in which he does not excel. About Enrique Amorin, Juan Carlos Welker has commented: "Ha sabido hacer lo que muy pocos escritores, especialmente novelistas y cuentistas hacen. Este es escribir mucho y muy bien."<sup>1</sup>

Enrique M. Amorin was born in Salto, Uruguay, July 25, 1900. Unfortunately, there does not exist a great amount of readily available biographical material. His family was one of the land-owning class, and Amorin himself spent a considerable amount of time in the rural environment. This no doubt gave him a tremendous wealth of experience on which to base his rural novels. It is

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<sup>1</sup>Juan Carlos Welker, "Nuevos narradores" Historia Sintética de la literatura Uruguaya, Montevideo: Alfredo Vila, Editor, 1931, p. 9.

clear in his early novels that he is more sympathetic toward this theme than any other.

He seems to have possessed an insatiable appetite for travel as many years of his life were spent in Europe and North America.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note his opinion of the United States. In the Forward to the English translation of El Caballo y su sombra, Amorin states:<sup>3</sup>

Not long ago when I crossed North America from New York to Los Angeles I realized that this earth's most prodigious accomplishment is the formation of the United States. I believe that if I were faced with the problem of describing earthly life to an inhabitant of Mars, or Saturn, I'd be content to try to tell him about the United States.

He wrote regularly for La Prensa of Buenos Aires. He has written scripts for movies, and this influence appears at times in his novels. His works have been translated into French, German, Italian, and English and one novel, El asesino desvelado, has been edited and used as a classroom text.<sup>4</sup> He was active in the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores and representative of the P. E. N. Club at meetings in The Hague and New York (Preface to El caballo y su sombra, p. 6.).

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<sup>2</sup>Enrique Amorin, preface to El caballo y su sombra, (Buenos Aires: Club del Libro A.L.A., 1941), p. 6. The first time a novel is mentioned the complete footnote material is given. Thereafter merely the name of the novel and page are given in the body of the thesis.

<sup>3</sup>J. Chalmers Herman and Agnes Brady (eds.). Introduction to El asesino desvelado. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. viii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

One of the unique points of Amorin's work is the variety to be found throughout. This extreme variety leads to difficulty in attempting to group his works into classes or types. The novels are set in different backgrounds, vary in length, plot, technique, and characterization as well as in intrinsic literary value. This makes any division or grouping of his works purely arbitrary, but an attempt has been made to place them in categories which would appear most obvious and simple to follow.

Although Amorin's treatment of all types of personalities demonstrates a wide interest in human relationship and his outstanding trait is the depiction of the individual in relation to his society, a single recurring theme appears. This theme, possibly tied closely with his own life, is the struggle for supremacy between the city and the country. The treatment of his novels will follow those groupings of country, city, and his later mystery novels.

Amorin has published poetry, drama, and is well known for his cuentos, but the novel has been his mainstay and it is for this genre that Amorin will be remembered.

Although studies have been made of Amorin, none have been inclusive as far as total works are concerned. The writer feels that now, due to the passing of this great figure, July 28, 1960, in Salto, his works are definitive and a study of his total work in the field of the novel may now be made.

## CHAPTER II

### NOVELS OF THE RURAL SCENE

It is the rural atmosphere, the estancia, for which Amorim has seemed to show his preference. There are episodes in these novels where, it is true, the atmosphere and climate of the large cities appear, but he seems always to return to his first experiences and is on safer ground when treating the campo. His novels of the country form his most significant group and have achieved a higher level than his attempts with the urban ambiente.

#### TANGARUPÁ

His first novel, a short one entitled Tangarupá, appeared in 1925 along with three of his cuentos. It is apparent that Amorim was influenced in this work by the great cuentista, Horacio Quiroga, also of Salto, not only because of his admiration for Quiroga, but also because of the same atmosphere which both experienced in their formative years. The preface to one of his novels states: "La primera novela de Amorim, 'Tangarupá', abunda en sintéticas impresiones de paisajes sentidos a la manera quiroguiana" (Preface to El caballo y su sombra, p. 5). Quiroga's influence did not extend farther than this one novel, however, for Amorim developed in a very different direction.

The story evolves around four main characters. Nicolás Acunha, the owner of an estancia in northern Uruguay, lives obsessed



by the failure to achieve two goals: the provision for an heir to the estancia and the annihilation of a colony of ants. His wife María, "La Machorra" (barren female), is characterized by a strange and disconcerting habit of punctuating her speech before and after by Igo yo ("Digo yo"). La curandera, Felipa, lives by her wits and "explotaba, a su vejez, sus canas y sus impresionantes manos sarmentosas".<sup>5</sup> El guacho, Panta, cared for by Felipa, is an abandoned child whose origin is uncertain.

The description of the countryside is realistic; immense in its sadness, poor and dry. It is a picture of the campo as it really exists: rude, sensual, superstitious, without love, lacking religion and ideals.<sup>6</sup> This ability in description is due in large measure, no doubt, to Amorim's personal experience with country life. About this Welker has to say: "Esta novela que puede considerarse la más seria de Amorim, es tal vez, la concreción de todos los frutos de su honda experiencia campera".<sup>7</sup> It is in this novel that a preoccupation with a sexual theme is demonstrated, one that is to appear many times in his later novels. This is one of the most tremendous problems of the pampas, a land harsh and dry, where only one woman exists for every five men. Amorim gives an outstanding

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<sup>5</sup>Enrique Amorim, Tangarupá, (Paris: Editorial Le Livre Libre, 1929), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Welker, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

picture of this problem, brutal in the extreme and realistic, but he never loses quality or style.

The novel abounds in the superstition that is prevalent among the peons. Braulio, one of the peons, in characteristic country dialect comments on María's inability to conceive: "Las machorras por ojo se curan, patrón...Quién sabe no li han codiciado la patrona...O la mujer aquella, que vivió con usted, no la ha dañado a la patrona, con sus ojos dobles..." (Tangarupá, p. 24).

Later, another peon gives another possible reason:

Asiguro eya no inora que el patrón anda combatiendo juerte las hormigas...En ocasiones eso suele ser malo. Si la médica no puede aventarle el mal a la patrona, es porque Dios castiga al patrón... (Tangarupá, p. 53).

Thus, according to the peons, María's sterility is due either to a spell cast by Nicolás' former mistress or is God's punishment to him for combatting the ants, for this is an attempt to interfere with God's will.

Delineation of character predominates throughout the work of Amorin, neither theme, plot, nor setting being considered so important as the clear picture of character. Amorin's manner of description varies in large measure, but he often succeeds in giving a clear picture of character through description of the physical characteristics alone. He uses this technique in conjunction with other methods of delineation, of course, but generally his descriptions

possess such power of suggestion that one gains a clear impression of character through them alone.<sup>8</sup>

The characters in Tangarupá are well delineated if not so strongly defined as in other novels. The outstanding character as far as personality is concerned is Misia Felipa, the curandera. Not only is her personality demonstrated by actions, deeds, and dialogue, but Amorin gives the following physical description:

Toda ella era un espectáculo de miedo. Sus rotas ropas negras; sus ojillos grises y vivaces; la desdentada boca, sumida y seca; sus uñas largas; sus brazos esqueléticos y el pecho hundido, como si tuviese el corazón escondido en una cueva... (Tangarupá, p. 30).

This realistic and impressionable description in addition to her subsequent actions combine to form a character reminiscent of the Celestina. Her scheming and conniving are successful when María is able to present a son to Nicolás, even though unbeknown to him it is really Panta's child.

Certain cuadros de costumbres are worthy of mention for their realistic and forthright presentation. Payday at the pulperia presents a picturesque scene and the appearance of the two strangers, especially the one with the dancing duck, inserts a bit of humor into an otherwise serious novel. These and the rather humorous deception of the smugglers seem to give the reader a needed rest and relieve the tension somewhat for a short time. In this manner

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<sup>8</sup>Mary Helen Lewis, "An Analysis of the Cuentos of Enrique Amorin" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1948), p. 59.

the entire novel maintains its tension through even the last chapter ending with the horrible and agonizing death of Panta in a fishing accident.

As was mentioned before,<sup>9</sup> Tangarupá was accompanied by three short cuentos. "Las quitanderas (segundo episodio)", "El pájaro negro", and "Los explotadores de pantanos". The importance of these stories lies not only in their inherent literary value but in that they demonstrate an interesting habit of Amorim, that of plagiarizing himself. All three cuentos appear in the second novel of Amorim, La carreta, and are incorporated as part of the plot, in their entirety, almost without alteration. The second episode of "Las quitanderas" in its entirety forms the fourteenth chapter of La carreta; the other two stories are also used as chapters of this same novel; "Los explotadores de pantanos" as chapter XIII and "El pájaro negro" as chapter XI.<sup>10</sup> The use of this already published material is certainly intentional, and it appears that the author felt that the originality of the theme of "Las quitanderas" was destined for greater extension. The interest awakened by this type of woman, la quitandera, has led to a great deal of discussion. Amorim gives a definition of the term, "Quitandera: En América, a la vagabunda ameresa de los callejones patrios".<sup>11</sup> As regards this type of character, there is no evidence that it has ever

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<sup>9</sup>Cf., p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

existed either in Uruguay or Argentina. Lexicographers disagree as to the origin of the word, but are generally agreed that it has more basis in the artistic imagination of Amorin than in reality.<sup>12</sup> Amorin has succeeded in the realistic creation of this type of woman, one of easy morals whose carreta or "prostibule rodante" represents "el amor vagabundo", and has presented this type so successfully and realistically that one French author<sup>13</sup> went so far as to plagiarize Amorin's character. He published a novel in Paris entitled La quitandera, supposing that this type of character was as commonplace as the gauche.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not the quitanderas existed is not important. The important thing is that Amorin has created a character which would be an integral part of the life of these outlying districts should such a type exist.

LA CARRETA

It was with the appearance of La carreta in 1929 that Amorin achieved fame and a place in the history of the Rioplatense literature. La carreta has been classed as a novel but it consists of a number of episodes grouped around the trajectory of the carreta, which is really the central personage. The carreta continues its journey through a desolate plain without agriculture, meeting new faces

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<sup>12</sup> Enrique Amorin, La carreta, tercera edición, (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Triángulo, 1933), pp. 235-58.

<sup>13</sup> Adelphe Falgairelle

<sup>14</sup> Welker, op. cit., p. 14.

and incorporating them in the story. It is this which gives the book its episodic character and allows Amorim to incorporate the three stories in the plot, which would otherwise have been impossible.

In this tale, Amorim demonstrates again his preoccupation with the sexual theme. He presents the pampas of rural Uruguay in which these men, alleviated only by the arrival of the quitanderas, wandering prostitutes, who stop for short periods of time in or near each village which happens to lie in their meandering path.

The two central personages are Matacabayo and his son, Chiquiño. Matacabayo is not one of those men who age tranquilly. At one time a strong gaucho and now ill, he cannot resign himself to a life of inactivity, and takes charge of the woman and her wandering carreta until many years later he is felled by a bullet while trying to deliver to a revolutionary leader his woman. His son is almost identical, well known as a baqueano or guide, and also dies a violent death in the midst of the lonely pampas. Death is touched upon in various other scenes, almost always violent. Correntino, with the nickname of "marica" (homosexual), dies due to a beating administered him to stop "ese de llorar por una hembra" (La carreta, p. 77). The death of the storyteller, whose identity is never unveiled, is mixed with superstition. His body is found in the flooded river, while in the distance, the aguafiestas<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Aguafiestas, a term used to describe a person imposing unhappiness or destroying the gaiety of a party.

gallops away, his black poncho in the wind "con aletazos de pájaro que huye", like a bird of ill omen (La carreta, p. 86). Death takes on a more macabre aspect with the brutal vengeance of Chiquiño. His victim, Alfaro, who has been intimate with Chiquiño's wife, is not to know the peace of a graveyard. His body is disposed of by Chiquiño's pigs which have not been fed for two or three weeks.

The sexual theme abounds throughout the story. In one scene, Florita, a girl of thirteen, is to be sold to an old man. There is also the love scene of Tonasa and Maneco which, apart from not being related to any episode of the carreta, does demonstrate the sexual life of the estancia.

In one case, these two themes, death and sex, are intermingled, such as the scene depicting the sexual profanation of the corpse of his wife by the Indian Ita in his final good-bye. The scene is described simply, objectively, and in a matter-of-fact manner. However, the accent is upon the reaction of the horror-stricken criollo who observed the scene. In all these scenes of death, Amorim's style evidences a rather fatalistic attitude. His matter-of-factness is an indication of apparent acceptance of death's inevitability and therefore he does not waste time on it, but rather treats the subject only briefly and objectively.

Amidst all the suffering and violence, a few elements of humor are interposed. Even in the infamous transaction of the sale of Florita to don Caseros, the scene takes on a comic aspect before the perplexity of don Caseros and the innocent abstraction of the

young girl. Also humorous and containing an element of the picaresque is the trick played upon the quitanderas by don Pedro. Aided by the dark night and a police order prohibiting any lights, don Pedro accomplishes his deceit. The women fulfill their assignment unaware that they are receiving pieces of plain paper in payment.

There exist scenes in La carreta of great intensity, but none perhaps so minute in macabre detail as the one of Chinquino's delirium. He lies dying next to the fence, bathed in moonlight, his decision to open the coffin of his wife impeded by a blow on the neck. Nevertheless his dream prolongs the action, that of opening the coffin, retrieving the putrid bones, washing them in the arroyo, until one by one they escape through his fingers to lie, dispersed, at the bottom of the stream.

In these scenes, Amorim has demonstrated an insight in the psychology of the individual that gives him the ability for creation of character that is equalled by few authors. Juan B. González comments:<sup>16</sup>

Amorim muestra, en La carreta, garra de legitimo escritor, observador tan fino como despiadado, capaz, en breves lineas, de hacer vivir tipos que se ensartan en la retina del lector. Amorim no solo da una vision del campo, sino tambien, la idea, su idea del campo.

To classify La carreta as a novel is somewhat questionable since it has no individual or collective conflict as a central theme.

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<sup>16</sup>Juan B. González, "Una novela gauchesca", Nosotros, vol. I (1936), p. 441.



However, be it enough that Amorim has presented a work of art distinguished by the personal tone of his originality.

#### EL PAISANO AGUILAR

In spite of the relation between La carreta and El paisano Aguilar, the latter does not always seem to reach the high plane of the former. Amorim has attempted to incorporate in this novel a central personage, abandoning the episodic character for which La carreta is noted. In this sense he demonstrated a preoccupation in search of new forms, but somehow fails to achieve the intensity and the atmosphere in which the characters of La carreta appear. This is not to say, however, that El paisano Aguilar is lacking in literary merit. The Uruguayan critic, Zum Felde states:<sup>17</sup>

"Publicó luego El paisano Aguilar, novela no tan recia como la anterior, pero en la que se acusan sus excelentes facultades de escritor narrative."

In this novel is expressed, perhaps more vividly than in any other, the recurring theme of the city versus the country. Perhaps stemming from his own life, divided between the cosmopolitan and the campesino, this preoccupation is evidenced in the alternation from one environment to the other in the settings of his novels. Each atmosphere has its own influence on character and nowhere is

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<sup>17</sup>Alberte Zum Felde, Proceso intelectual del Uruguay y crítica de su literatura, (Montevideo: Editorial Claridad, 1941), p. 613.

this better demonstrated than when the two come together in one person. This story is centered around the metamorphosis of the main character and the whole theme could be summed up as "la ciudad vencida por el campo."

After years of living in the city where he has studied, Pancho Aguilar returns to the estancia. Due to the dispersion of his brothers and the death of his parents he is the only heir. He arrives, therefore, to take charge and there begins the transformation. The first requirement is to adapt himself to the campo without the peons noting his long years of absence. This is achieved; but, in doing so, Aguilar finds himself now lost to the city and its civilized life, but confronted with two new alternatives: that of choosing to remain on the estancia, non-productive and decaying, or to take up the carefree life of the smuggler with no responsibilities. Here again he vacillates between the two extremes, undecided and confused as to his real desire. This indecisive element leads to some confusion at times on the part of the reader, leaving him pondering over certain elements that lead to no end. On the other hand, several scenes are reminiscent of the intensity of La carreta: the one in which Pancho Aguilar gains the admiration of the peons by exposing a chicken thief; the scene between Aguilar and Don Cayetano, a neighbor, both drunk, each escorting the other home until finally Cayetano falls asleep in the saddle; and above all the scene in which don Farias, Aguilar's foreman, trying to save the herd from the rising arroyo, is swept away and drowned.

Delineation of character is Amorin's strong point in this novel as it is in many others. In his descriptions, he achieves a tremendous power of suggestion. Here he gives a picture of Juliana, the housekeeper:<sup>16</sup>

Juliana era una mujer cuarentona de evidente salud, opulenta y de movimientos graves. No era fea, pero distaba de ser una buena moza. Tenía esa hermosura que conforma en el campo, porque no era antipática. El cutis de su rostro, descuidado, estaba provisto de un vello rubio y abundante. Su vientre, prominencia sospechosa, era abultado, y si reía se le agitaba de arriba a abajo. Desde niña había tenido aquella silueta, por lo general corriente entre las campesinas.

Malvina, the daughter of Juliana, is only about thirteen when she arrives on the Aguilar ranch, but already mature enough to be the subject of a dispute between Cayetano and Aguilar. She is shy, timid, as one accustomed to obey, but realizes she is beautiful as her mother is not. She is laconic but among her few words is discovered a feeling of empathy. At the death of Fariás, she is able to divine correctly the feelings of Aguilar and to attempt to calm his remorse by a lie, attributing Fariás' death to suicide rather than to the fact that Aguilar had ordered him to round up the herd.

The description of Aguilar's metamorphosis from ciudadano to campesino is admirably accomplished. All manners of the city have been thrown off, and Aguilar is now completely spaisanado. He goes to town only once a month, has given up his city sweetheart,

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<sup>16</sup>Enrique Amorin, El paisano Aguilar, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1937), p. 21.

has stopped reading magazines and newspapers, and has nothing to do with strangers or even old friends in town. But perhaps Amorim's description displays it more forcefully:

Hablaba omitiendo sílabas; en los plurales comía las eses; pronunciaba palabras de la jergónsa campesina; decía juerza en lugar de fuerza; y a cada instante se le escapaba un "canejo" o un "ahijuna" que traspasaban los oídos de Sofía.

Y había por fin, una violencia en el rostro de su novio, infundidora de miedo. Violencia de la llanura, mirada de lucha, terquedad en el juicio, intolerancia y vehemencia, arrinconadas en su silencio, en una parquedad casi misteriosa. En la frente estrecha de Pancho Aguilar, tres surcos cruzaban de sien a sien. Los poros negros, la vellosidad exagerada, la piel roja. Las mismas características faciales que en el colegio le dieran el mote de "paisano", ahora en el campo, se hacían permanentes, fatales; eran ya su verdadero rostro. Tenía el físico del rol, la cara del hombre internado en las pampas. Pero, algo más gravitaba sobre su persona, algo más le tiraba hacia el centro de su círculo determinante.

El paisano Aguilar era ya definitivamente del paisaje campesino, como un árbol o como un arroyo (El paisano Aguilar, p. 133).

Perhaps the most intriguing personage in the story is Don Cayetano Trinidad. Nicknamed "Quemacampos" for his habit of doing just that, he rides forth over the plains, lighting matches and throwing them over his shoulder, never bothering to look behind to see where they fall. Amorim's description follows:

Odiaba la chirca, los pastizales, el yuyal, y era partidario-- tales sus palabras--de las quemazones que limpian los campos de garrapatas y hacen brotar pasto fino y alimenticio (El paisano Aguilar, p. 31).

Once while visiting his brother in Brazil, he set fire to the underbrush and while the holocaust raged, jokes about his grandfather, buried in the pantheon in the middle of the fire, being

somewhat warm for a while. Touched upon again in this episode is the death scene, treated objectively by Amorim, as he is accustomed to do, but definitely possessing a morbid slant. The brothers, while watching the fire, begin to reminisce about their grandfather, who used to sit in a big chair while the children played around him. The only sign of life evidenced was the occasional flutter of his eyelids. The scene continues:

Se fue quedando sequito, pequito a poco... Papá estaba cansado de verlo, ¿se acuerdan? Yo, para descubrir si vivía, le miraba a los ojos y apenas pestaneaban... (El paisano Aguilar, p. 33).

After the death of the old man, the children continued to play around him, taking him from his coffin and setting him up on a promontory. They had become so accustomed to seeing him in the attitude of death, dried up and mummified, that the only difference was that his eyelids no longer fluttered.

The episode of Don Cayetano is not only interesting for its imaginative character creation but also because it illustrates again Amorim's habit of self-plagiarism.<sup>19</sup> This episode, entitled "Quemacampo" and another one, "Un peón" both appeared first in one of Amorim's collections of short stories, Horizontes y bocacalles and were incorporated subsequently in the plot of El paisano Aguilar.<sup>20</sup>

When Amorim treats of love, he almost always uses "el amor" synonymously with sexual gratification. As has been seen in

<sup>19</sup>Cf., p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 6.

Tangarupá and La carreta, it is always the physical aspect that is pictured. Amorim is more preoccupied with sex than is evident upon casual reading. This theme appears repeatedly, always treated objectively. It is never for sensation but simply because it is a problem that is highly important to these people. They have many other problems, but none more constantly compelling.<sup>21</sup>

Aguilar epitomizes this type of love. He has no real love for his novia nor even for his mistress Malvina and his son, as evidenced by his willingness to leave them for the smuggler's life. His regular patronage of the prostíbulo accents this physical side, and certainly no one could feel any love for his wife when deliberately trying to force a miscarriage of his child.

Perhaps this purely physical aspect of love is one of the gaucho traits, for Aguilar is certainly a gaucho at heart. He is not capable of rebuilding the run-down estancia, nor is he even interested in doing so. His urge is to leave the ranch, his wife and son, and all his cares behind in order to become a smuggler. In this sense he demonstrates the nomadic tendency of the gaucho. One wonders how much of the gaucho Amorim himself possessed in view of his constant traveling. Insofar as his own ideas in the realm of love are concerned and what influence they had on his works, one can only speculate. In his works he displays a preoccupation with the love theme, but his personal attitude toward love is never disclosed.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

Juliana, Malvina, and don Farías, along with Aguilar and Cayetano are really life-like personages and in this novel are the antecedents for the characters in El caballo y su sombra. For in the later work, Malvina will become Bica and don Farías, with his knowledge of the plains, will become, along with don Cayetano, a new character in El caballo y su sombra. But most of them will be displayed with more force and intensity than in El paisano Aguilar.

#### EL CABALLO Y SU SOMBRA

This novel treats of a serious social problem arising today in Uruguay. It is the fight of a reactionary to conserve the status quo, to maintain the feudal past, against the incoming tide of refugees and the inexorable march of social progress that accompanies them. The novel depicts the transformation of the immense open plains by means of populating these pampas with men dedicated to the plow and furrow. This process is certainly not operating without repercussions, for anything that tends to change the current situation is fighting against a past that refuses to die. The new population signifies the division of land, agricultural activity, family life, schools, a port, and a road; in other words, civilization and progress. On the other side, the refugees represent the destruction of all tradition. With this social problem ever present, the novel unfolds, the plot woven about the private conflict of the central personages.

Nico Azara, the owner of the estancia, El Palenque, is the representative of the past. He carries with him the desire to make of the estancia a place out of the ordinary, where time has stopped and change is non-existent. His brother, Marcelo, arrives from Montevideo after many years of absence. His pretext for coming is the delivery of a stallion ordered by Nico to improve the blood lines of his stock. But this is not the real reason behind Marcelo's departure from Montevideo. As becomes clear later, he desires to disappear from the city for a time until the scandal is quieted concerning the illegal entry of refugees into the country. The ironic part is that these are the same refugees that are populating the outskirts of Nico's estancia, and Marcelo is deeply involved in the affair. The arrival of Marcelo creates, for diverse reasons, a turbulence among the inhabitants of the ranch. Bica, la gaucha, holds for him a deep and tender curiosity. The mother, doña Micaela, avaricious in the extreme, decries the expense incurred in the purchase of the horse, Don Juan. Nico, as soon as the novelty of the stallion has passed, feels once more fraternal rivalry, a rivalry that has increased since childhood to the point of mutual hate. Nico's wife, Adelita, a tender and intelligent woman set in the rude environment of the estancia, is grateful for the opportunity to converse at last with someone of her own civilized class.

With the passage of time, the rivalry between the two brothers increases to the breaking point. Nico, with all his



hatred for the refugees, who plow the land and harvest their crops while occasionally helping themselves to his beef, becomes aware that it is his brother, through political manipulations, who is responsible for their entrance into the country. A bitter dispute takes place in the open country, for it is a rule of the estancia that no arguments occur in the house, and Marcelo is ordered to leave. He departs, leaving his brother filled with hatred for him. But if he leaves hate behind, he also leaves love because the strange romance between him and Bica, in which never a word is spoken, results in a child.

The second half of the novel, in which the narration is given from the viewpoint of the refugees, is the most absorbing part. Amorim moves the setting from the estancia by means of a Bach sonata to which Marcelo is listening by radio and takes it to the house of Hoffman, a refugee, who is also listening to the same music. The author describes the contrasting way of life, the differences of viewpoint, and yet brings out one universal feeling between the refugees and the creoles: a common dislike for Nico Asaras. This is demonstrated by the trick played upon Nico by one of his peons and a refugee in which the pure-bred stallion, Don Juan, and a little mare are bred without the knowledge and consent of the estanciero.

The enmity between the two elements, civilization and barbarianism, continues growing and the tension continues to rise until reaching its climax in the duel between Rossi, an Italian

immigrant, and Nico, Rossi, desirous of reaching the vaccine needed to save his child, is stopped by the plowed ground ordered by Nico to prevent trespassing on his land. The car becomes stuck, the baby dies, and Rossi stumbles around until a transformation takes place. He becomes once more what he was: a soldier. Marching across Nico's property, he comes upon the owner of the estancia. In the ensuing duel, Nico is killed but, before he dies, he orders his men not to harm Rossi, thus carrying out the gaucho tradition of amnesty for the victor.

The book reaches a high dramatic plane in scenes such as the preceding. Another picturesque episode is the tale of don Ramiro, a peon, of being trapped in a tree to escape the rising tide of the arroyo, with deadly vipers and spiders for his companions. This shows the dialect of the inhabitants of the plains. A picaresque element is introduced in the trick played upon Nico by his peon and a refugee, and tenderness is displayed in the scene between Bica and Adelita in which the latter comforts Bica in her anxiety over her future with Marcelo's child.

At times Amorim's profound feeling for the country is shown in scenes which could almost be the work of a poet or painter, such as the description of the twilight in which Adelita says: "Esta es una hora de prueba, Marcelo, ...si la soportas o si la gozas con esta tranquilidad, habrás vencido la terrible soledad del campo" (El caballo y su sombra, p. 50).

In all these scenes, nature appears in each of its creatures, not to a degree where it loses its purpose, but precisely enough to explain the actions of the personages who are the product of this environment.<sup>22</sup> It is through this method that Amorin demonstrates his profound knowledge of rural people as well as his love for country life. Not only is a high degree of insight displayed in his delineation of characters but also a deep sympathy for animals as well. This is exemplified in his description of the stallion, Don Juan, but even more so in the death of the little mare, with her sad eyes, awaiting the arrival of dawn to die.

The story ends with an epilogue: a scene which, describing Bica nursing her baby and watching the horse give birth, manages to attain a beautiful mixture of nature, man, and animal. As the title suggests, all these events take place in the shadow of the horse.

This book, El caballo y su sombra, published in 1941, is Amorin's masterpiece. It is well known in Spanish America as well as in many other countries, having been translated into Portuguese and English.<sup>23</sup>

It is in this novel that we see the beginning of Amorin's preoccupation with social problems, an interest that will carry

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<sup>22</sup>L. L. Barrett, "El caballo y su sombra," Revista Iberoamericana, VI, No. 12, 1943, p. 504.

<sup>23</sup>Enrique Amorin, The Horse and His Shadow (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943).

through almost all the rest of his novels. Whereas up until now, in his rural novels, he has treated only the inherent problems of the pampas, he now demonstrates an interest in outside influences and pressures; i. e., the arrival and effect of displaced persons and refugees from Europe.

The death of Nico Azara symbolizes the near end of the decadent feudal system on the pampas. He leaves no heir behind, his son having died at the age of three days, while his wife Adelita is the sole remaining member of the Aguilar family. Marcelo has returned to Montevideo to his political machinations, and the only remaining link with the past is Bica, the servant girl. She is the daughter of Pancho Aguilar, who appeared in El paisano Aguilar, and his servant girl, Malvina. To make the parallel with Malvina even more striking, Bica also bears an illegitimate son. This son, who is a mixture of the peasant stock and the landowning class, seems to represent to Amorin the solution to the problems besetting Uruguay today. For in his preface to the English translation of El caballo y su sombra, Amorin says:<sup>24</sup>

The Horse and His Shadow gathers all these themes (of the preceding novels) and resolves them in the light of today's life. The horse...represents the traditions that made life on the plains beautiful. Bica, the inarticulate peasant girl, holds in her provident hands a sane and hopeful solution to all the struggles I have reflected.

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<sup>24</sup>Herman, Brady, op. cit., p. viii.

This solution is due not only to the fact that Bica's son is a mixture of the two extremes, peasant and aristocracy, but also because Bica was given a parcel of land from the estancia on which to raise her child. It is in this division and cultivation of the huge estancias where the hope of Uruguay's future lies.

#### LA LUNA SE HIZO CON AGUA

Once more Amorim uses the rural background of northern Uruguay, creating a realistic country climate filled with legend and superstition, while depicting also the political inquietude of the small towns that environ Los Pingos, the estancia of don Jerónimo.

Don Jerónimo, a leading rancher in the vicinity of Tacuaras, Uruguay, returns to his ranch after spending some time in Paris. There his daughter Silvia was born and his wife died. He returns to manage his estancia, a ranch completely inhabited by men, due to the absence of Silvia. She spends her time in town, refusing to visit the ranch over which the shadow of a horrible crime rests. The opening scene of the story depicting the crime, that of the brutal and horrible execution of Goyo Lanza's father, a baqueano, by Silvia's grandfather, achieves an intensity unequalled anywhere else in the book. Condemned to die for aiding the escape of some revolutionary forces, the baqueano is buried neck deep and trampled by a herd of horses. Don Jerónimo, a sensitive and cultivated man, also feeling guilty for the crime perpetrated by his father and the unjust treatment of the peons, nevertheless does not bother to

descend from his horse to view the squalid surroundings in which these lower-class people must live. He contents himself by being the patrón of the domador, Goyo Lanza, and treats him almost as a son. Whether this is due to a guilty feeling from his father's actions or from his disappointment in lack of a son is not clear, but his concern for les de abajo goes no farther. In this respect, the father fails to show the compassion felt by his daughter for these people and this continues to widen the gap in a relationship between father and daughter, once characterized by close companionship.

Silvia disdains the traditions and prejudices so ingrained in her father. She feels she has a mission to accomplish and seeks to find it in Leonardo Corti, a newspaper man, who is waging a political campaign for a leftist party. But Silvia never seems to understand herself completely, and her actions never rise to the level of her words. For while her fierce support and love for the idealist, Leonardo Corti, is the expression of her strength, her marriage to Raúl Riverós is the manifestation of her weakness.

Upon the death of her father, predicted by the herchicera, May Vieja, Silvia returns to the ranch without her husband. An interesting scene is presented in which a scourge of locusts, predicted by the domador, Goyo Lanza, is driven away with the help of fire, smoke, and much noise. Goyo Lanza shows Silvia the location of the gold revealed to him by May Vieja. Silvia has no desire for it from fear that it will disturb the peaceful way of life now existent on the estancia.

Silvia is a completely urbanite character and whether or not there is a real transformation in her is difficult to say, but she seems to possess vague tendencies toward regressing to her ancestral roots. At the end of the novel, she appears ready to give herself to the domador. Silvia is domineering, authoritarian, and headstrong-- characteristics common to a spoiled child. She has her faults, is not presented idealistically and therefore appears as a convincing, true-to-life person. On the other hand, Leonardo Corti with his lofty idealism fails to convince, and the reader remains with few impressions enabling the reconstruction of his physical features.

The ominous threat of the return of the revolutionaries, the gauchos, is never accomplished and the fierceness of the pampa is soon to be tamed, as also seen in El caballo y su sombra, by the division of the estancias into chacras and the intermarriage of the gauchos, immigrants, and ruling class.

This novel, La luna se hizo con agua, is a transitional step toward Amorim's later works, usually novels with a urban setting and often with a left-of-center political tendency. Amorim's attack on social injustice in his rural novels is maintained with equal vigor in those of the urban ambiente.

#### LOS MONTARACES

This novel, published in 1957, is a return to Amorim's original theme, that of the campo, which he had rarely used since 1945. Within the plot is treated another social problem: the

exploitation and misery of the downtrodden workers of Isla Mala, and their struggles to better their working conditions.

The novel begins with Cecilio, the protagonist, at home with his father, Maragato, and his newly acquired step-mother, Floriana. When the latter becomes ill, help is needed from the local curandera. To reach her, Cecilio swims across the river and back, a feat which was considered impossible. On his trip he passes near Isla Mala, an island so named because of the mystery and superstition surrounding it. Nothing is really known about Isla Mala, but fantastic tales are circulated. Sometimes the sound of wood-chopping is heard, but the people refuse to believe that any human can exist in such a forboding environment. No one has ever returned alive from the place to destroy the superstitions although many men have tried, judging from the numerous bodies found in the river, all with a mysterious bullet hole in the forehead. Because of the unexplicable happenings, a multitude of legends flow from mouth to mouth. Amorin describes the campesinos' beliefs thus:<sup>25</sup>

Pestes, arañas dañinas, insectos, duendes y aquelarres, "lobisones y aparecidos", mantenían a Isla Mala lejos de toda posibilidad. Mandinga, el Diablo, hacía inhabitable el paraje para gringos y criollos. Así como los animales salvajes la preferían, la leyenda negra la hizo habitable para hombres sobrenaturales. Nadie había regresado de Isla Mala. Nadie quería exponerse a la picadura de víboras o insectos malignos. Como era imposible remontar el río, los inaccesibles límites de Isla Mala se perdían en la imaginación de los pobladores de Las Tunas.

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<sup>25</sup> Enrique Amorin, Los montaraces, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Goyanarte, 1957), p. 19.



Cecilio returns with the medicinal herbs, but his appetite has been whetted for the adventure that awaits him on Isla Mala. Later, without notifying anyone, he swims to the island. There he makes the acquaintance of Anacleto, a woodcutter hiding from the foreman with whom he has had an argument. He informs Cecilio of the situation on the island. It is managed by a large lumber firm stationed deep in the forest, where many lumberjacks carry on the labor of cutting the trees. The work is hard, the conditions terrible. Many of the men are wanted by the law and so are not able to complain of the hardships imposed by the owners. All are in debt to the company store and with all the exits sealed, escape is impossible. To discourage investigation into the terrible conditions suffered by the workmen, it is to the advantage of the owners of the company to exploit the fear and superstition surrounding Isla Mala.

Since the foreman's temper has now cooled, Anacleto rejoins the woodcutters accompanied by Cecilio. During the days following, a plan is conceived to escape from the island, en masse, and not to return until better conditions are guaranteed. A large number of men are organized by Anacleto and Cecilio. They slip down to the river at night to make their escape by swimming the river. However, upon reaching the other side, Cecilio discovers that only five men have arrived. Fear of the non-existent piranhas, carnivorous fish, and the powerful current in the river, the Cola del Diablo, has frightened the others into remaining even under the perverse conditions.

After spending a few days with Cecilio's parents, the men decide to return in an attempt to reorganize the rest in another escape. Word arrives before leaving that the body of a man with a bullet hole in his forehead, like so many others, has been discovered in the river. Cecilio inspects the body and discovers that the wound was not caused by a bullet but by striking a rock when the man dived into the river. Thus one enigma is explained.

The men return to Isla Mala and resume their work. This time the escape is better organized. Some men cannot swim, and plans are made for them to steal a boat. One of the workmen who joins them has been in hiding. The foremen have prepared a fresh cowhide kept in salt water in which to wrap him when captured. When exposed to the sun to dry, the hide would shrink and crush him.

The men are fortunate in crossing the river except for those in the boat. They have chosen very old oars, and they break under the strain. The boat is overturned, and the men drown.

On the following morning, not a single ax-blow is to be heard. Silence reigns, for all the men have left the island. The workers split into twos and threes and make their way to Puerto Lamento where they reunite to demand a fairer contract and better working conditions. While in Puerto Lamento, Cecilio meets Aminda, a young girl who has once seen him ride a wild horse. The two fall in love and Cecilio promises not to leave her to return to Isla Mala. However, the promise of adventure is too much and he departs with the rest of the workers after receiving the new contract.

Upon arriving, Cecilio breaks the arm of one of the foremen in a fit of temper and is arrested.

The second part of the novel concerns the family Ulloa. They are the owners of the lumber company who reside on the northern part of the island, beyond the painted poles, where it is forbidden for any worker to enter. The family consists of Diógenes and Alfredo, two brothers with completely opposite personalities, and Alfredo's wife, Wanda. Alfredo is proud and resourceful while Diógenes is an intellectual type. The latter is on the island collecting legends and superstitions. While Diógenes and Alfredo do not get along well with each other, the marriage of Alfredo and Wanda is fairly compatible, marred only by the fact that the doctors have told Wanda that she is sterile and can never have children.

Alfredo goes to Puerto Lamento for several days to settle the new contract with the workers, and leaves Wanda with Diógenes. He has complete trust in the two for he considers Diógenes to lack even the barest essentials of virility. Nevertheless, the two have an affair during his absence as they fall in love with each other. Diógenes agrees to leave before Alfredo's return, having received Wanda's promise to join him after notifying Alfredo. Upon leaving, he tells her that it is really Alfredo who is sterile and that the doctors were paid to misinform her.

Upon Alfredo's return, Wanda informs him that she is pregnant. He, of course, is stunned, knowing that Diógenes alone can be responsible for her state. They argue, he denying that he is

sterile and she, holding a pistol on him to prevent any violence on his part. When she finally confesses that she is leaving him to meet Diógenes, he, in a furious rage, charges her. She fires at him but misses. He kicks the balustrade upon which she is leaning, breaking it, and she falls backward into the river.

For several days thereafter, Alfredo, feigning a grief-stricken pose, orders a search for her body. The corpse is later lodged in a pile of logs floating downstream. Her face is seen by one of the workers who refuses to believe his eyes, for this is an extremely bad omen. The body finally breaks loose and comes to rest on the rocks in the backwater.

Meanwhile, ironically enough, the only swimmer capable of retrieving her body, Cecilio Morales, sits in the jail of Puerto Lamento awaiting the arrival of Aminda, bringing him oranges and tobacco every evening. Thus the story ends, leaving the reader unaware of the fate of the characters.

Here in this novel, as in others, Amorim displays his sympathy for the oppressed workers and their struggle for better conditions. According to Amorim, the fear and superstition of the uneducated hold the responsibility for such conditions. The alleviation of the fear, accomplished by Cecilio Morales, and the unification of the workers into a single voice was the only way to combat the owners. By abolishing existent superstition and pointing out the truth, a logical way could be demonstrated to alleviate their misery.

## LA DESEMBOCADURA

This novel, published in 1958, is the last in which Amorim limits himself solely to the rural environment. A new means of narration is used by Amorim in this novel, the narration by the protagonist. This is an old technique, but used for the first time in Amorim's rural novels. It is made even more interesting because the narrator, the great-grandfather, relates the tale from the grave, telling it to the great-grandson who is visiting the desembocadura where the old man was buried.

The novel presents, through the history of a family, the development of a sector of Uruguay; the transformation of the original estancia into an agricultural area, and the urbanization and modernization that come with the passage of time.

The story opens with an explanation of the death of the protagonist by the great-grandson and then the grandfather begins the history of his family. The latter arrives at the ranch and is soon joined by his wife, Esmeralda, and her cousin, Mariquita. He is a strong man, excessively virile, for while his wife is presenting him with three sons, he takes Mariquita and a servant girl, Magdalena, as mistresses. From his union with Magdalena results another child. The fact that his wife is aware of his infidelity seems to bother him in no way. His excuse for his actions is lack of understanding: "Yo sé que su confesor reprobaba mi conducta, pero los curas de entonces no entendían a los hombres

fuertes".<sup>26</sup> Two of his legitimate sons, Anastacio and Eulogio, fight in Salto and there Anastacio is killed. Eulogio becomes a smuggler and, with the money he has gained, later becomes an important landowner. With the help of his wife, irreligious and miserly, he amasses a great amount of wealth. The children possess the same characteristics, and the family wealth increases. The arrival of many of Esmeralda's relatives from Spain allows them to maintain the family wealth by intermarriage, but only with the disadvantage of weakening the blood line.

The evolution of the Lopes is followed. These are the descendents of the great-grandfather and Magdalena. Manuel Lope, the illegitimate son of the great-grandfather, had managed to send his children to school in Montevideo. The eldest son was even sent to Rome to study medicine. The great-grandson visiting the grave is a poet, albeit not necessarily a successful one. The family is educated if not rich and makes a favorable impression when compared to the legitimate side of the family, the Montes, who are inbred and concerned with the political machinations of the large city.

With each succeeding generation, a change in the way of life on the estancia is occurring. The families of the landowning class move to the comfort of the cities, leaving the estancias in the hands of mayordomos. With the two World Wars appear the farm machinery that is to change the face of the pampas. Plowed ground

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<sup>26</sup> Enrique Amorim, La desembocadura, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1958), p. 26.

now is common where once pasture land ranged to the horizon. Wind-mills for irrigation dot the land and even sheep-shearing becomes mechanized. The English bankers dominate the city social life and, upon departing, leave not hospitals, conservatories, or even a good tavern, but only a cemetery.

Although this novel does not possess the strong central personages of El paisano Aguilar and El caballo y su sombra, there are cases of good character delineation. One might cite the example of Pedro Nazareno, one of don Anastacio's peons. He is over six feet tall and, according to local legend, has never smiled. This seriousness is due to his occupation of castrating horses and dedication that not one might die. His aspect must have possessed an element of fright for the children, for Amorim describes him thus: "La seriedad de Pedro Nazareno era famoso. Asustaban a los niños con la amenaza de llamar a Pedro Nazareno, el castrador de potros de don Anastacio" (La desembocadura, p. 64).

The great-grandfather Monte is very well described and a clear picture of him results in the mind of the reader. His wife, Esmeralda, while not so completely described in physical detail, is well delineated by actions and dialogue. In one scene an ewe is ill and dying, but is about to give birth. Esmeralda nurses the ewe until the lamb is born, even at the expense of filling the house with the highly unpleasant odor of sheep. Her actions are certainly not related to any feeling of humanity, but rather

to miserliness for, during the previous winter, a peon's child died without the least concern to Esmeralda.

Two scenes are worthy of mention for their impressionable depiction. One concerns the perverted amusements of children and also their cruelty as exemplified by their merciless stoning of a weasel. The other displays the pitiful effect of the squalid surroundings on the women of Corral Abierto. The scene ends with their violent attack upon a man, who is drawn by curiosity to determine the reason for the hysterical laughter of the women.

The book is well organized and, while not reaching the high plane of intensity of some of his earlier works, shows a more subtle approach to the problems demonstrated in his novels. While relating the history of the estancia, Amorin's solution once more is stated: the division of the large ranches into individually-owned agricultural plots.



## CHAPTER III

### NOVELS OF THE URBAN SCENE

Amorim once stated that his works were all autobiographical. If this is true, there could be expected a change, a maturation in his novels, corresponding to the increasing cosmopolitanism of the author due, no doubt, to his constant traveling and experience with Europe and North America. This does appear to be what happened. An interest was awakened in Amorim, one not only covering the social problems of his native Uruguay, and leading on to his sympathy for the Communists' attempts to rectify the grievances of the lower classes, but a concern that was to lead him to write about the problems of Europe in his later novels. Thus is evidenced a maturation in Amorim, an evolution from the provincial outlook set forth in his early novels (Tangarupá, La carreta, and El paisano Aguilar) to a more cosmopolitan viewpoint.

Amorim's novels are evenly divided in their settings between the urban and the rural, but it is noteworthy that almost all his rural novels were written before 1945 and since that time the author has become increasingly absorbed by the world scene.

### LA EDAD DESPAREJA

In 1938, with the publication of this novel, Amorim left the theme of his beloved pampas and turned to the modern city life. The action of the story evolves around the central personage,

Abelardo Sánchez. He is the spectator of all the problems besetting the urbanite and the receptor and narrator of everything that occurs in his vicinity. He enjoys the company of the intellectual Sara Dalsace and her literary gatherings. His acquaintances extend from one extreme to the other; from Raúl Diana, with his reactionary ideas, to Severo Pocardí who, in spite of his rich and influential father, plays at being a revolutionary.

It is through the women of the novel that the author's greatest insight into the problems of the social classes are displayed. Through the biography of Lidia is shown the inadaptability of the women of the middle class for any other purpose in life than matrimony. On the other hand, Alicia represents a girl who, although of humble origin and the lower social strata, is willing to struggle to better her station. There is also Dora Ruggieri, wealthy and socially prominent. Married and without children, she becomes infatuated with Abelardo Sánchez. She is jealous and deeply religious, and it is evident that nothing holds the two together except mutual boredom. In this relationship, the novel treats one of the sad and peculiar phenomena of the large city: the extreme loneliness of the individual in the midst of the multitude.

A confusion arises on one point in Amorim's delineation of the two girls, Lidia and Alicia. Lidia is characterized by pusillanimity and lack of self-confidence. She is described as sweet and beautiful, never as a strong personality. Yet Amorim calls her "la emancipada". In the scene in which she submits to a distasteful sexual experience

and then states: "Si al menos hubiera pasado 'aquello' entre pinares o en pleno campo, sobre alguna parva!",<sup>27</sup> she becomes completely unrealistic. On the other hand, Alicia, who is of the proletariat, is rebellious, anxious to improve her status and yet speaks of her class as tired, weak, and resigned. Perhaps, in both cases, Amorim is citing the exceptions but, if not, there appears a great contradiction.

Later, Abelardo Sánchez, who has appeared to the reader only as a recipient and narrator of events occurring in his environs, now places his life in danger by aiding the escape of a man whose guilt is questionable. He returns to the city. There he awaits María, his novia, who will soon join him to enjoy the inheritance of his father, whose identity has long been a mystery to Abelardo Sánchez.

In one scene, outstanding for its treatment of abnormal psychology, Amorim displays an incident occurring on an estancia. A young boy, misunderstood by his father and brother and spoiled by his mother, seeks release from his frustrations by building a small coffin in his room, filling it with women's clothes and setting fire to it.

Throughout his novels Amorim shows himself to be interested in human psychology. In his method of characterization he describes

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<sup>27</sup>Enrique Amorim, La edad desaparecida, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1938), p. 47.

the personages from the external viewpoint of the author and enables the reader to see what is occurring in the minds of the characters. This is extremely effective for, coupled with their actions and dialogue, they appear convincing and realistic. Amorim appears many times to be more interested in abnormal rather than in normal psychology. It is not difficult to find examples of this throughout his works. Correntino in La carreta, Cayetano in El paisano Aguilar and doña Micsela in El caballo y su sombra are all explicit exemplifications of this interest.

In spite of the early appearance of this novel of the urban scene, Amorim was not yet ready to discard the pampas for the setting of his novels. It was not until 1945, the end of the Second World War, that a new period in Amorim's writing was begun, for at this time was initiated a series of novels with a cosmopolitan outlook. The first of these, El asesino desvelado will be discussed later, for in spite of the fact that it is concerned with the urban ambiente, it is a detective novel and Amorim has entered an entirely new realm of fiction writing.

#### NUEVE LUNAS SOBRE NEUQUÉN

In this novel, published in 1946, Amorim sets the action in Buenos Aires. It portrays the struggles and persecutions of the Allied sympathizers during World War II. The novel begins in November, 1944. In spite of Argentina's pretensions of neutrality during the war, sympathy runs high for the Axis, and there is no

doubt that the regime in power is violently pro-Nazi. The story opens with the marriage of Dieva Burman, a working girl, to José Hernández, an electrician. At the wedding reception four members of the Party (presumably Communist) complain about the treatment given the political prisoners of Argentina. This leads to the relating of the tortures of his brother by Constantino, who is a fellow-worker and a member of the same party as José. The brother is beaten, threatened, unclothed, suffers interrogations and continual harassment. He is even shocked by the use of an electric needle, an instrument used widely by the Perón regime. During the relation of this torture, Farías, a young idealist, attempts to picture himself suffering these torments. The result fills him with fear, for a doubt exists whether he can maintain silence under the stress.

Constantino and José also doubt Farías' ability to withstand torture without revealing the names of his fellow party members. It is decided to have him leave town in order to avoid possible capture. On the way to his house to inform him of the decision, Dieva and José encounter a large crowd at the subway station. Farías, lacking confidence in his being able to withstand torture, has committed suicide by throwing himself under a train rather than take the chance of betraying his comrades.

Later, when José is delivering some proofs of an anti-Nazi newspaper, he realizes that he is being followed. He tears up the proofs, but his pursuer doggedly puts them together again and José

is arrested and convicted. After a period of torture and interrogation, in which he stubbornly refuses to submit information, he is transported to the concentration camp at Neuquén. Dieva is expecting a child and, although not informed of her pregnancy due to censorship of letters at the prison, he suspects it because of hints she has managed to enclose. José's confinement coincides with his wife's pregnancy. This, coupled with the monthly recitation by his fellow prisoner, the intellectual Calles, of the poem Lunario Santo, explains the "nueve lunas" in the title.

With the arrival of the Allied victory José rejoins his wife. The story ends in an optimistic tone, with the arrival of the party leader returning from exile.

Here again, in this novel, is seen Amorim's cosmopolitan outlook and an interest in social problems, although highly tinged with the political element. He has felt the impact of the Second World War and has turned to the urban environment to record its repercussions. Buenos Aires is no longer isolated. It is closely linked to Europe and the affairs of the whole world. And the author of El caballo y su sombra has left the Uruguayan pampas behind to paint the effects of the world scene upon his corner of the globe.

In Nueve lunas, there is evidence of a fundamental change in Amorim's style. For while both La edad despareja and Nueve lunas are concerned with the urban scene and its problems, this later work is characterized by the inclusion of a large amount of propaganda. To imbue a work with propaganda and still maintain a high

literary standard is a difficult task, and Amorim has not been completely successful. The characters maintain too high a level of tension throughout the novel. Granted that they are deeply interested in the political affairs of their country, still one would suspect that at least the wedding celebration would be a joyful occasion. Yet, on the contrary, it appears more like a Communist rally. Constantino relates the tortures of his brother while Dieva's mother curses the government regime by stating: "¡Asesinos! ...!Nada más que asesinos! ¡Traernos estas ignominias a una tierra tan limpia!"<sup>28</sup> Even when Dieva's father orders a bottle opened and suggests that everyone rejoice and forget their problems for a while, Dieva turns violently and shouts: "¡No, papá, no! ¡A olvidar, no! Recordar a cada rato, en todo momento. ¡Ese es nuestro deber!" (Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén, p. 29). This extreme intensity results in artificiality, and the author succeeds only in setting forth a political doctrine.

Although Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén cannot be classed as one of Amorim's better books, it is important for displaying his worldwide interests and his continual search for new styles. His failure, in this case, to reach a high literary level is due probably more to his lack of experience in this field rather than to any inherent fault as a novelist.

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<sup>28</sup>Enrique Amorim, Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Lautaro, 1946), p. 23.

## LA VICTORIA NO VIENE SOLA

Published in 1952, this novel follows in the footsteps of Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén in that it expresses Amorin's sympathy for the Communist party. The setting is Tacuaras, Uruguay, and the two protagonists are from opposite ends of the social ladder. Doctor Luis Vera is wealthy and well educated, born and raised in the cream of society. His compatriot and friend is Carlos Lista, a poor laborer lacking formal education. The tie that binds these two unlikely partners is the struggle to obtain signatures on a petition to outlaw the use of the atom bomb and their common sympathy for the Communist cause. Vera is censored by his social equals for his association with the Communists. This in no way destroys his zeal for his mission. Yet he is a complex personage for he also recognizes the advantages and comfort of wealth and the thought of relinquishing these is a distasteful one to him.

While Vera and Lista are attempting to obtain the signatures, the latter is arrested along with Mugallo, another party member. Lista is released soon afterward while only Mugallo is held, thus throwing suspicion upon Lista as a possible police spy. As it turns out, Mugallo is really the spy, but the damage is done and some of the party members are suspicious of Lista.

A meeting is held at Vera's house, composed of diverse types of lower-class people. Amorin's description of them is outstanding, showing his complete sympathy for their poverty and privations.



Lista decides to leave Tacuaras. He goes to a ranch where he takes up construction work while his wife serves as wet nurse to the estanciero's baby. During his stay at the ranch Lista is active in organizing the men to march in a demonstration requesting the division of the land into individual plots for the workers. The novel ends with the successful demonstration. Here again Amorim demonstrates his solution to the problems of northern Uruguay, the division of the large ranches into small individual plots.

Throughout the novel, Amorim uses the flashback technique for picturing some of Vera's early experiences. The scenes range from age three to twenty-five, and it is a very effective way of delineating character. The most impressive of these is the first, in which Tomasa, a maid in the Vera household, murders her illegitimate new-born son by hanging him in the hole of the latrine. Amorim's deep sympathy is displayed for this working girl, forced into such a tragic deed through fear of losing her job.

Numerous other cases appear in the novel which depict Amorim's pity for the lower class. One might cite the case of the school children who, because of lack of food, were given alcoholic beverages before being sent to school, resulting in turning some into clowns while simply putting others to sleep. Another instance would be the hesitation expressed by the doctor when asked to treat Lista's wound from a bull because he did not want to work on a holiday. There is also the scene in which Vera's companion on the train

throws a coin to a shabby negro and the man, poverty-stricken yet proud, throws it back.

### TODO PUEDE SUCEDER

That World War II had a profound effect upon Amorin is illustrated in his earlier novels. In Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén, the effect of the pro-Nazi regime of Argentina is treated. In El asesino desvelado is depicted the postwar atmosphere of Buenos Aires filled with intrigue and spying. Feria de farsantes concerns the aristocracy and artistic element of postwar France. And El caballo y su sombra treats a problem caused by the influx of refugees from war-stricken Europe. Todo puede suceder, published in 1955, treats of one of these refugees, Martin Durand.

Martin Durand is not the average refugee, for his family controls a large airplane line. He has escaped from Europe, however, and arrives in Montevideo as a displaced person under this assumed name. He obtains employment as a night-watchman for an architect, Marcelo Miranda. His duties involve keeping watch at night over buildings under construction. Durand is happy in his work and the peace and quiet of the long nights are soothing to him. Quite often he views a girl going and coming from the beach. He later goes to the beach and makes her acquaintance. She is Eva, the maid of Laura Ribens, the woman for whom the house under construction is intended. Upon reaching her fifteenth birthday, Eva spends the night with Durand in the house, and they celebrate her anniversary.

While there, Eva believes she sees someone spying on them, but it is only a shadow. However she suffers an attack of nerves which lasts for a short time.

In the meantime, Laura Ribens has displayed a romantic interest in Durand, one probably due to Eva's descriptions of him. Laura seems to have been unfaithful to her husband through boredom. As soon as her husband would leave for the theater, she would lift the phone to call her lover. Upon returning, her husband's habit was to undress quietly in the dark and slip into bed without disturbing Laura in the least. This particular night, Laura runs to Durand's house and relates a horrible story. Her lover has arrived as usual but has died in her bed. She has fled to Durand and now imagines her husband's actions. He is probably undressing in the dark and quietly slipping into bed beside a corpse. Perhaps he will sleep the whole time, arise and eat breakfast without ever knowing that he spent the night with a cadaver. What really happens is left to the imagination of the reader. The story ends shortly afterwards with the vacillation of Durand between two choices. The first is remaining a night watchman, and the other is assuming his real identity and taking a position on the airline owned by his relatives. As the title suggests, anything can happen.

Although only three characters appear to any extent, they are well delineated. Eva appears as an average girl of fifteen years, sweet and yet independent. Laura is the epitome of the idle, rich woman with an unloving husband. Her life is empty,

bore some, and she attempts to fill the void with lovers. Both are described through the eyes of the protagonist, Martin Durand, for the story is written in the first person. This method of revealing the protagonist's mental action by speaking through him is not common in Amorim's novels. It gives the idea that the story is autobiographical and while perhaps giving greater insight to the mind of the protagonist, it places the burden of interpretation on the reader, forcing him to reach conclusions without the objectivity of the author as guide. This results in confusion at times on the part of the reader.

In Todo puede suceder too many questions are left unanswered. The protagonist is unaware of the outcome resulting from the discovery of the body. This leaves the reader relying upon his imagination and is disappointing after such a build-up of intensity. Also the indecision on the part of Durand as to his future leads one to the conclusion that a sequel is needed, but whether or not Amorim had planned one will never be known.

## CHAPTER IV

### MYSTERY NOVELS

The mystery novel is a new genre for Latin America and Amorim has been one of the first to cultivate it. It appears that it may become more important with the succeeding years. At any rate, it certainly held an attraction for Amorim during the last few years of his life.

#### EL ASESINO DESVELADO

In 1945, with the publication of El asesino desvelado, there was initiated a new period in Amorim's writing, for it is with this book that he enters the realm of the detective novel.

In this novel, Amorim has again left the pampas and gauchos far behind as he sets his story in Buenos Aires with a highly cosmopolitan set of characters. The protagonist, Tito Hassan, although an Argentine citizen, is of Arabic ancestry. His wife is of some unknown European stock, probably German. The villain is a Nazi German, and three Greek sailors are included in the plot. The background is the Second World War with an air of intrigue that extends across the Atlantic to a supposedly neutral Argentina. Once again Amorim shows that Argentina is no longer isolated from Europe and the rest of the world. Although geographically distant from the battlegrounds of World War II, it is profoundly affected for, while officially neutral, its capital

has been infiltrated by Nazi agents who carry on their work openly and without fear.

The plot is complicated but cleverly unfolded. The protagonist, Tite, escapes from France in 1942 and reaches his native city, Buenos Aires. He has conceived a plan to murder his wife and, by means of creating a disturbance in front of a movie theater, prepares a perfect alibi. His demand for one particular seat is finally granted and he leaves shortly afterward unseen. He goes directly to the Albatross Bar where he is searching for a certain voice, an anonymous voice on various recordings sent to his wife demanding that she return to the Albatross or die. Tite sits down to listen to the voices and through a flashback, relives his ocean trip and his meeting with his wife.

Gloria Líber enters Tite's stateroom one night and requests his protection. She tells him that the captain of the ship, the Ville Fleury, has threatened to make her disembark at the next port because of irregularities in her passport. She also relates that her father, a German inventor, had solved the problem of converting noise into motive power. She had possessed the plans but had turned them over to an emissary in exchange for a ring with a carved skull, as ordered by her father. She tells him that she is going to Buenos Aires because she has funds in a bank there. Tite, struck by her beauty and mystery, offers his protection as husband and they are married. Shortly after, the captain shaves his beard and hides himself permanently. This strange action arouses Tite's suspicions.

Previously, unknown to Tito, the Ville Fleury had been named the Albatross. Gloria abandons Tito shortly after arriving in Buenos Aires. The latter is certain that his estranged wife has either duped him into bringing her into the country and is now having an affair with another man, or that he has become entangled in some international spy ring. Because of these assumptions, he is furiously bent upon revenge.

Tito has no luck in finding the voice and leaves the bar, having been a spectator of an argument among three drunken Greek sailors. He drives to Barrio Parque and enters his wife's apartment. He sees her lying on the bed and the thought of sharing her with another man arouses all his jealousy. He fires at her three times, point blank, jumps into his car and returns to the movie theater. He arrives just in time for the end of the picture and to recognize, to his astonishment, the voice on the recordings as belonging to one of the extras in the picture.

Upon returning to the car, Tito is picked up by the police. He soon learns that, instead of being questioned about the murder of his wife, he is being questioned about the body of a Greek sailor, whose body has been found in his car. He then recalls the fight of the drunken sailors in the Albatross Bar. After a long interrogation, Tito is released because another of the sailors confessed.

Tito reads of Gloria's death in the paper and decides to continue his search for the unknown voice. He goes to a newspaper, La Crónica, where his old friend, Pedro Altáves, is in charge of

the theatrical section. He receives a letter of introduction to the Delta Studio to permit him to go there and recognize the voice of the extra that he has heard. Altáves gives the letter to Tito, but Tito is afraid that Pedro is somewhat suspicious. The secretary of Altáves, Julia Bayón, joins Tito for dinner that night. During the meal, Julia receives a call from Altáves to abandon Tito as she is spoiling an investigation of him. She excuses herself and departs.

Tito is afraid the trap is closing in on him but is resolved to find the voice among the extras at the Delta Studio. In the studio, a horror picture is being filmed and a voice to give a fearful cry is needed. All the extras are to be called up one by one for testing. Suddenly Tito recognizes the voice of one of the extras as the one on the recordings and rushes up to the man, denouncing him as a spy and the author of the threatening records. The police appear suddenly and place the man under arrest. Tito has led the police to their man. He is informed that, when he shot Gloria, she was already dead from poisoning and he is now a free man. On the following day he reads that the Ville Fleury, the ex-Albatross, has sailed from Buenos Aires. Then he recognizes what the recordings meant by saying "return to the Albatross", for the movie extra and the captain of the Ville Fleury are one and the same. Thus the story ends and Tito, who has been an insomniac up to this time, is not relieved of his affliction



however. For he is now in love with Julia Bayón and is bothered at night by his promise not to inquire into her past.

Amorim's description of Buenos Aires is as vivid and realistic as his portrayal of the pampas. He pictures well known landmarks of the city, monuments, thoroughfares, buildings, and existing institutions to display an active and modern cosmopolitan center. For accuracy, the more seamy side of life is displayed also; the local bars with their brawls and murders involving the work of the police and detectives of Buenos Aires.

The sexual theme, so outstanding in Amorim's novels of the rural scene, does not enter into this novel, nor does character delineation play such an important role. On the other hand, technique and style seem to be exceedingly important. The intrinsic worth of the novel is shown by the fact that it has been included in a group of mystery stories collected by Jerge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares entitled El séptimo círculo, published by Emecé Editores, of Buenos Aires.<sup>29</sup> It has been edited and adapted for use as a classroom text and also, in one of Amorim's letters, he mentions that he had been contacted by Hollywood about the possibility of making a film based on the novel.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Herman, Brady, op. cit., p. vi.

<sup>30</sup>Enrique Amorim, Letter from Enrique Amorim to J. Chalmers Herman, June 30, 1952. (In possession of Dr. Herman who is presently at Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas)

### FERIA DE FARSANTES

With the publication of Feria de farsantes in 1952, Amorin continues in the new-found genre of the detective novel. In spite of the fact that the plot centers around a murder and the subsequent solution, and the characters are cosmopolitan as in El asesino desvelado, Amorin is not content to simply move the background from the estancia to the city. In this instance he takes his reader entirely away from the American scene and places the action in post-war France. This is due no doubt to his constant traveling in Europe and his increasing cosmopolitanism. This has led to his interest in the problems and way of life in post-war Europe and apparently he took advantage of the opportunity to combine this with another interest, the detective novel.

The action begins in the château de Hendebouville. The owners, the count and countess, having been forced by circumstances to take in roomers, have carefully chosen their guests. They form an interesting cosmopolitan group, almost all members of the artistic element residing in France. They represent countries from various parts of Europe and America. Blais Borjac is a widely-known poet. Dino Velardi is an Italian composer. Delia de Gómez is a sculptress from Argentina, and Pierre Galin is a French jeweler.

The body of the countess, murdered by strangulation, is discovered by the cook. All the guests are suspects but evidence

particularly points to Pierre Galin as the murderer, especially when his fingerprints are discovered at the scene.

The plot becomes more complicated by the arrival of Victoria, the twin sister of the countess. She is a ravishing individual who has amassed an enormous fortune in America by means of alimony from several unsuccessful marriages. Once, during a fit of anger, she states to the count that she is responsible for the death of her sister and she also becomes a suspect.

The second part of the novel opens with the arrival of the novelist, René Garnier. He is a mystery writer and becomes interested in the case as a possible base for a detective novel. There also appears at this time an unusual character named Gabriel Dubech. He has formed a group of would-be suicides whom he has talked into dying for something worthwhile. Unbeknown to Dubech, his group has been infiltrated by a policeman and this enables the police to finally solve the murder.

It is finally discovered that Dubech, a former Gestapo agent, had learned the secret of duplicating and depositing fingerprints. He had copied those of Galin and left them at the crime. The crime itself was performed by one of Dubech's "suicides". The motive was one of jealousy. Dubech had been in love with the countess. When she chose the count rather than him, he decided to take his revenge. Convinced that Galin was the countess' lover he planned to place the blame on him and take Galin's mistress, all of which worked out perfectly, until the intervention of the imaginative

mystery writer. Dubesh, upon capture, admits the crime but refuses to divulge the secret of falsifying fingerprints. The count departs for South America with Delia de Gómez. In Paris, René Garnier publishes his new novel, entitled Feria de farsantes, based upon the murder of the countess.

This is the first and only time that Amorin has entered an autobiographical element in his novels. It is interesting that he states earlier in the novel that he should have made money from El asesino desvelado but did not, and for some reason places the blame upon the editors. It is true that he had been contacted by Hollywood about making a picture based upon El asesino desvelado, but evidently nothing matured. Whether this had any influence on Amorin's feelings toward Hollywood is doubtful, but it is clear that his opinion of the American movie industry, as expressed in Feria de farsantes, is quite low. Several derogatory remarks are made in connection with the low quality of films produced in Hollywood.

As always, Amorin is a master at character delineation, and this is clearly demonstrated in the creation of Victoria, the sister of the countess. Although she plays a small part in the over-all plot, she is outstanding as a hateful, jealous woman. Her statement implicating herself in the crime is not surprising in view of the jealousy that existed between the two sisters. Victoria could not stand to have her beauty confused with that of another. Perhaps the best illustration of the hate existing between the two women

was the story, possibly true, that circulated through Paris. Victoria had conceived a plan to supplant her sister on the wedding night, locking up the countess. When Victoria left for the United States immediately thereafter, she had supposedly known a lover while the countess was still pure.

An interesting fact might be mentioned concerning Amorim's enthusiasm for the artists and intellectuals of Europe. Picasso's name is mentioned no less than five times in Feria de farsantes along with numerous other artists and writers. Other evidence displaying Amorim's interest in Picasso is contained in one of his letters asking Dr. J. Chalmers Herman to locate a book by Helen F. Mackenzie entitled Understanding Picasso. He states:<sup>31</sup> "La obra es curiosa y desearía tenerla....Hace años que lo busco y no he podido dar con él".

#### GORRAL ABIERTO

Gorral abierto, published in 1956, cannot really be included in either of the other two earlier groups, for it is a mixture of all three: city, country, and detective novel. The first part of the novel is set in a city environment, Montevideo, and the action evolves around the solving of a murder. In the second half, Amorim returns to the Uruguayan country scene, a scene he had not treated for twelve years. Yet far from writing of the romantic

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

estancia and the picturesque gauchos, he paints the squalid surroundings and the diseased and poverty-stricken people of Corral Abierto. This collection of decrepit and filthy shacks is home for the protagonist, Horacio Costa.

The story begins in Montevideo with the discovery of the body of Pace Dodera, manager of a ceramics plant, and Costa's employer. The suspicion immediately falls upon the young Costa since the murder weapon, a knife which was left in the body, is later determined to belong to the boy. He is taken into custody and placed in the care of an orphans' home after suffering interrogation and torture to make him confess. He is released much later since his alibi, that he was working far away that night, cannot be disproven. Nevertheless, the suspicion remains.

Costa becomes a carpenter and by dint of hard work manages to buy a new blue suit. He is immediately detained by a policeman and questioned as to the origin of the suit. Because of this persecution and his police record, he loses his job. With no employment available, he decides to return to his birthplace, Corral Abierto.

Rezéndez, the only police official believing in Costa's innocence, gives a beating to the officer responsible for Costa's detainment. Then he follows Costa on his trip home.

Unknown to the police officials, other than Rezéndez, there is an interesting suspect in the case. She is Gemma, an Italian Jewess and former sweetheart of Dodera. Her motive for murder would be one of revenge. One night at a gathering at his house,

Dodera took from the wall an ancient blunderbuss. In the hope of creating some excitement, he loaded it with the heads of matches. When jokingly aiming it and firing at Gemma, bits of rust, metal, dirt, and wood flew into her face leaving her terribly disfigured and permanently blinding her.

By tracing the whereabouts of Gemma, Rezéndez discovers that she has been receiving letters from Dodera for years since the accident. However, she has never opened them. In hopes of clearing Costa of suspicion, the letters are opened and a surprising discovery is made. Dodera had committed suicide.

This leaves Costa free to return to Montevideo, but he elects not to do so. He arrives at Corral Abierto and by dint of his skill at carpentering and his qualities of leadership, he soon becomes the spokesman for the settlement. After a great deal of work he organizes the people of Corral Abierto for a vast exodus from the colony. On the way they pass through Los troperos, a nearby estancia. The sight alone of the multitude is frightening. The inhabitants flee in terror. The blind children, the cancerous with their rotting flesh, those with festering pustules, and the tuberculars march into the ranch house. They are followed by the bald syphilitics, those with smallpox and other naked, bleeding, festering bodies. The infection of the ranch house is immediate. The grotesque multitude marches on toward the railroad station. There the pestiferous army boards the train and heads away from Corral Abierto. There follows a minute description of a number of

the group and the story ends thus, with their escape from the dreadful colony and their hope for a brighter future.

This novel is important for its combination of previous settings and themes. It contains elements of the city atmosphere, the modern metropolis represented by the capital of Uruguay. The rural element, demonstrated by the colony of Corral Abierto, is displayed in the sufferings of the diseased and poverty-ridden peons, while in the background runs another of Amorim's later interests, the murder mystery.

While the action of the urban atmosphere evolves mainly around the solving of the murder, the country atmosphere is a return to Amorim's old rural themes: death, sex, and the suffering of the lower classes. Death in Corral Abierto is an everyday occurrence, due either to disease or starvation. In one instance the people of the colony are temporarily well supplied with meat. A cattle drive passes through and due to the drought and scarcity of grass, large numbers of cattle die, thus furnishing meat for a time. However, this is the exception and most of the time starvation is accepted as inevitable. During the winter, large numbers die since in their weakened condition they cannot withstand the inhospitable climate.

Sex is again treated in an objective manner. There is Costa's attendance at the prostibulo, the contest between Costa and his friend Cândido as boys, each trying to prove his manly



sexual prowess, and the incestuous scene of Juan Frontera and his daughter, Felipa.

In addition to the interest displayed in sex, Amorim possesses a predilection for anything with an abnormal quality. Mental abnormality is extremely common in Amorim's works, and Corral Abierto is no exception. In one outstanding episode, there appears the school teacher of Corral Abierto. Continually harrassed by various men in the community in attempts to gain her as mistress, she manages to withstand all advances and maintain her virtue. This leads to further persecution which finally unbalances her mentally. When Costa finally enters the house, the girl is hysterical and the mother, tied in the now filthy bed for an unknown period of time by the girl, is begging to be set free. Both women are taken away, the mother to a hospital and the daughter to a mental institution. This is a case in which psychological abnormality has been carried to the extreme of actual insanity.

This predilection for abnormality, as well as death and sex, are manifested many times in his earlier novels. But it should be noted, as evidence of Amorim's maturity, that he has now combined these themes with his ciudad-campo theme and coupled them with his later attempt at diversity, the murder mystery.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Amorin's total work in the genre of the novel is difficult to evaluate. One is certainly tempted to make generalizations which would not stand up under close scrutiny of certain individual novels, and yet in view of the total output seem to be truths. It is true that Amorin sacrificed technical quality in one or two of his novels for the sake of experimentation in fields with which he was not acquainted, but rather than condemning, one would commend him for his variation and his interest in a new experiment.

The novels, taken one by one, may seem to be rather conventional yet, when viewed as a whole, one is astounded at the wide variety of plots, themes, settings, and character development. His reworking of themes demonstrates a preoccupation toward technical perfection. Many early themes used in his short stories have been later perfected and included in the novels demonstrating a more mature and sensitive expression.

As has been mentioned before, one of Amorin's strongest points is his ability at character delineation. By actions, physical description, psychological treatment, dialogue, and other methods, Amorin succeeds in inventing admirable and original personages. Only through this skill could such imaginative creations of character be displayed such as "Quemacampo", in El paisano Aguilar, whose habit was burning off all the uncultivated fields; Chiquine, in

La carreta, whose morbid revenge was feeding his murdered rival to his starving pigs; and Aguilar, in whom the struggle between country and city is so ably manifested.

In the majority of his rural novels, Amorim's treatment of nature is confined to using local color merely as a backdrop for the action. He never uses it for its own sake, a fault of which many Spanish-American authors are guilty. It is also through this use of his native landscape that his love for the rioplatense region is demonstrated. Even though in some of his later novels the setting is moved, his love for the region never diminished, for after his trips abroad he would always retire to his chalet, Las Nubes, in Salto.

Amorim's later novels are highly cosmopolitan and surprisingly so, for few good Spanish-American authors have successfully transcended their native environments. He is interested in contemporary life and the problems presented by the confused, modern age. It is in this evolution from a provincial outlook to a more cosmopolitan one where Amorim's literary evolution is most strongly displayed.

Amorim has stated that his works are autobiographical. Since he appears as a character in only one novel, it is obvious that he does not use the word "autobiographical" in the normal sense. It must be assumed, therefore, that he is referring to his interests and is implying that, through the years, his interests are evolving and that this evolution is manifested in his writings. This helps

explain the change from the early rural settings in his novels to the later urban environment.

Amorim first wrote of his native environment, the rural element of northern Uruguay. By means of his extensive travel, his outlook was broadened and his interests are reflected in his experiments in the political novel, La luna se hizo con agua and even more so in Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén. A new step was also taken in his treatment of the problems caused by the European refugees and his solution to them in El caballo y su sombra. In his later years, almost all of Amorim's writings are concerned with the city atmosphere and reflect a growing cosmopolitanism, and his entrance into the field of the mystery novel is the beginning of an entirely new genre for Spanish America.

The fact that Amorim has experienced a maturation is not necessarily to say that his later novels are better than the earlier ones. On the contrary, if one were to make a comparison between the two, the conclusion would probably be that his earlier works are the ones which will give him a permanent place in the annals of Spanish-American literature.

Amorim has excelled in his awareness of contemporary life and the problems it presents to the individual. In spite of his cosmopolitanism, he loved the American scene and its people, but unlike many other Spanish-American authors, was unafraid to widen his scope.

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