

The subsequent two essays are close readings of the most recent novels by Achebe and Oz. Achebe's work has too often been relegated to courses in anthropology or social history; Gordimer elucidates not only the complex cultural and political depths of *Anthills of the Savannah*, but underscores its literary achievement as a portrait of the intersection where character and political philosophy meet. The next essay, on Oz's *Fima*, kicks off with a quotation from one of Achebe's characters: "What must a people do to appease an embittered history?" Oz's answer in *Fima* is an exploration of one character's textured interior world as it engages with memory, family, and Israel's daily politics. *Fima's* response to the didactic certainties of his countrymen is simply to think, to mock himself with bitter humor, to fail in a society where success makes an oppressor of those who had historically been the victim. Gordimer helps us see the rightness of Oz's vision that the demands of commitment can be met by a state of mind as well as by action. In her look at this and the other two novels, she performs a task that is sadly lacking in much contemporary criticism: to make us want to read the books again, and with new eyes.

Oz's *Fima* is alienated not out of self-involvement but because it is the wise response to the dissonances in his own culture: "his place does not know him" (111). In her final chapter, Gordimer unsparingly traces her own history of coming to grips with the social milieu that she is both part of and antagonist to. Growing up in a small mining town, she looked toward Europe for enlightenment, shutting her eyes to the land she lived in. (She and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu later discover that they lived in close proximity to each other as children.) Her political consciousness burgeoned not only through her contacts with black South Africans and revolutionary activists, but also through her imaginative writing as she learned to "think outside of the way our society was ordered" (130). Writing became her essential gesture, her primary means of defiance towards South Africa's racist laws and outlook. "I had to become part of the transformation of my place," she writes, "in order for it to know me" (130).

Ricardo Güiraldes

*Don Segundo Sombra. Critical Edition*

Trans. from the Spanish by Patricia O. Steiner

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. Pp. 302. \$22.95

Reviewed by Evelio Echevarría

Güiraldes's *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), like Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), is a fictional portrayal of a world which is no more. In his novel, Wister marked the demise of the world of the North American cowboy who had been trampled under by progress: new settlers founded cities, trains reduced distances, and barbed wire transformed the free man of the open ranges into a

farm hand. The Argentinean *gaucho* met a similar fate. In *Don Segundo Sombra*, Güiraldes portrayed the passing of the virile herdsman of the pampas, and in doing so foretold the advent of the modern, faceless man of today.

Güiraldes's work is a *Bildungsroman*. It is the story of Fabio, a waif who strikes up a friendship with Don Segundo Sombra, a unique gaucho who embodies a solitary and fatalistic kind of heroism, who calls for a return to traditional values and the love for the land and for freedom. After years of apprenticeship under don Segundo, Fabio becomes an accomplished gaucho. However, by then frontier life in Argentina has come to an end. Fabio has no choice but to assimilate into modern society, an embodiment of the gaucho who has become a mere shadow of a heroic past. The novel evokes the loss of the frontier, and Güiraldes takes leave of it with the tenderness of a poet, reviewing scenes of country life one by one. His apparently loose scenes are subtly interwoven by the evolution of Fabio, the waif who turns into an idealized frontiersman.

This English version expertly translates the art of Güiraldes who, while in Paris, assimilated the polished techniques of contemporary European avant-garde writers. Güiraldes's firsthand knowledge of the pampas enabled him to authentically portray Argentinean pastoral life and folklore. The second part of this book, "Background & Criticism" (80 pages), effectively complements the novel itself, with six studies by American and Argentinean critics, that balance biography, character study, and structural analysis. There is also a Selected Bibliography of almost 280 entries.

At the time of publication of *The Virginian* and *Don Segundo Sombra*, both American and Argentinean readers were left with a feeling akin to remorse for something of value which had been lost. What was lost was the frontiersman, who represented the link between modern man and the land. Thus, both novels buried irretrievably one world and foreshadowed another, that of the alienated man of today.

Diane Roberts

*Faulkner and Southern Womanhood*

Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995. Pp. 264. \$18.00

Reviewed by Patricia Pacey Thornton

As we look back on the twentieth century, it becomes clear that the two most profound changes in America have been the growing confusion and radical redefinition, the "earthquake upheavals" (13), of gender and race. Diane Roberts's *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* is a critical examination of the