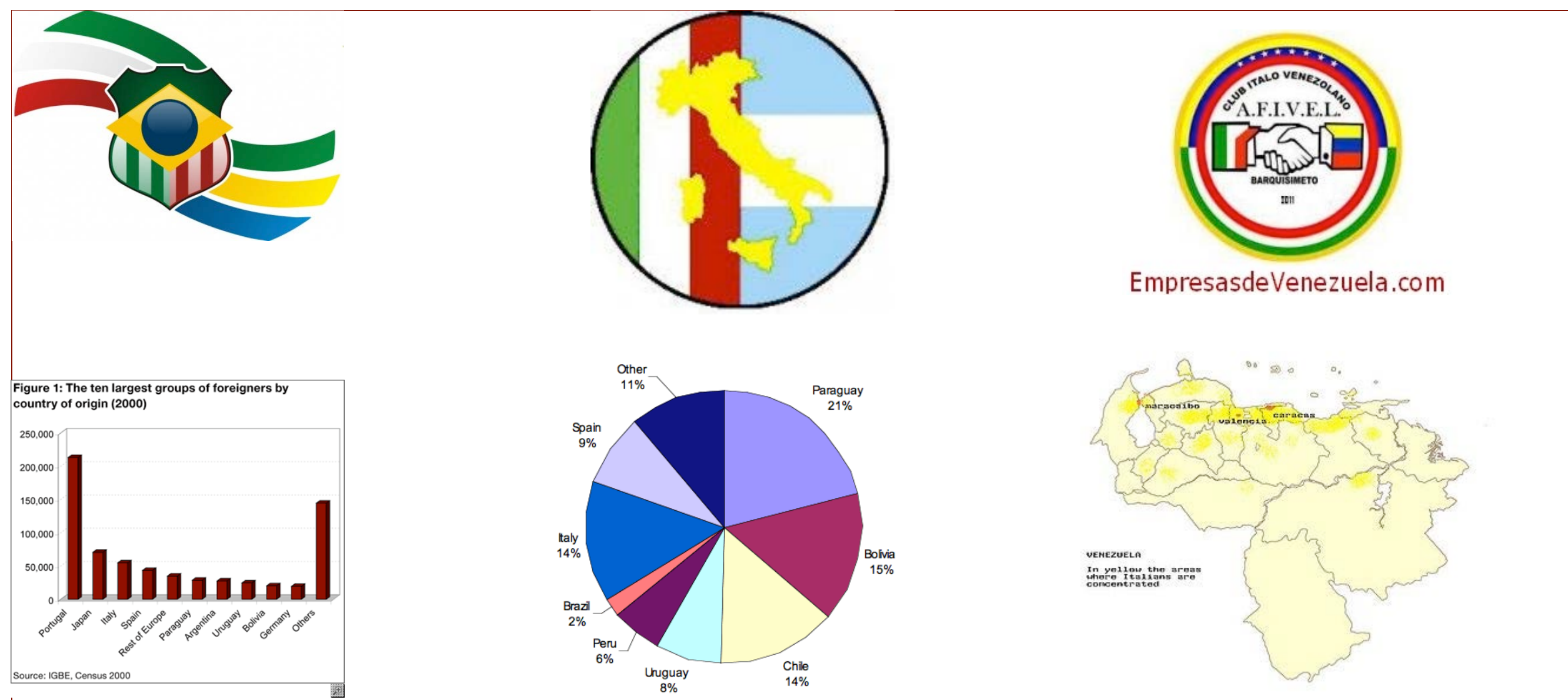


# Diasporic Italian Poetry in Latin America

Rosa Javier

Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ, 07430



## Roots

No Greater sorrow  
Than to scatter  
One's own ashes throughout the world  
If the world is not the imperceptible  
Twitch of the grass that grows  
With the sweet rustle of childhood  
To abandon  
A certain manner of living and dying  
Carrying the features of each  
Through places where the features  
Have no mirror in which to reflect themselves  
And go muted  
Lost like lambs that can't find their mothers  
And they are brought up only on the cracks  
Amid the bitter grass of solitude.

No greater sorrow  
Than to grow without knowing  
The initial, lonely and disconsolate root.  
By the two shores  
By now the way back is closed off  
The dead young boy weeps in the coffin  
The old man caresses him from afar:  
But the encounter will not take place  
It's the time of ignominy  
The sea is a mockery of hope.  
Meanwhile one and the other  
Look to each other and say:  
"And I love you, I love you," and they despair.  
The blood  
My blood  
I abandoned it one day  
In a street in the South  
Behind the gate.  
In the other South of the world  
I can hear it badmouthing me.

And it's right,  
By now it's distrustful,  
Argentine poet  
I never abandoned Sicily:  
One day "they brought me away by the hand,"  
Never having sought adventure  
I wanted to stay with the stones of my neighborhood  
In the little villa  
That taught us to heckle  
The works of the greatest creators.  
That was my tree.  
Instead I became an Argentine poet.  
But no one believes it.  
My roots have remained in the sea:  
They shall stay there shipwrecked  
In destructive waters with no peace.  
-Antonio Aliberti



-Vittorio Fioravanti

## Ghime!

The part of  
A part  
Into many  
Is divided  
Just as  
The lingering

Rays  
Of the setting sun  
And likewise  
The pain you feel

Is merely  
A part

Of the part  
Of another illness

Just as worthy  
As yours

The pain of  
Your brother

Just as worthy  
As another

The suffering  
Afflicting God  
(face of embryonic  
suffering)

And thus  
You know  
No more limits  
-Marco Lucchesi

## A Man Alone

Here next to me  
A man alone  
With a dark beer in front of him  
Standing like a horse  
The felt to stop what is inside  
Thoughts and cries

We speak with divisive gestures  
From the barrier of the bar  
Among smiles and handshakes  
And the ashes of two cigarettes  
Indicating things with a finger  
With spare words and verbs  
Expressed in the infinitive

This solitary man,  
All his Saturday nights  
Fits accustomed to contact  
With frost and quicklime  
Dreams broken, shattered into bits  
Two cracks full of rainbows  
Rendered dark in the shadows  
Smoldering under the round sun  
Of a land left behind.

He speaks to me of the sea  
Of its reefs and of its spray  
Of its orange groves and its spread  
nets  
Of white sails and tapering  
Boats  
As the slender hips  
Under the black dresses  
Of the women of his island

He has a hoarse voice,  
A broken sound that evokes  
The twisted bark  
Of an olive tree  
Flourishing out of a well  
Full of nostalgia  
He has a gaze that opens itself  
With closed eyes onto far-off  
horizons  
That cover the expense of the sea  
Like a blind seagull

So I know  
This Mediterranean man  
On a Saturday night  
Of his mundane existence  
The goat-sash at his throat  
And the fleeting vision  
Beyond the foamy tankard  
Beyond the belching, the smoke and  
the faces  
Beyond Stuttgart and the confines  
Rocky alps and vast plains  
That have separated him for too long  
From the collapsed wall  
Around the unkempt garden of his  
house.  
-Vittorio Fioravanti

-Vittorio Fioravanti

The people that left Italy after both World Wars were missing part of their identity and those who wrote about their experiences were forever looking for it. Their identity was left somewhere in between the oceans of the two hemispheres, for there we no longer completely Italian, nor were they completely part of any other culture. Those that came at an older age, noticed as their identity was slowly leaving their bodies, for when they were on the boats and the waves moved at a slow pace and were able to say goodbye to the land, the air and the atmosphere. Although they would be able to remember Italy forever, the land might change when they are away, the people will change, and so will their families, so their Italian identity will be part of the past and almost never evolving. Those who left Italy at a young age will be even more confused than those who left older. They knew that their family did not really belong to the land's identity, their language was different than those who had lived there for generations, they understood that at some time during their lifetime they lived in a land that matched who they were inside. However, they know that they will probably will not feel completely part of the Italian culture if they were moved to Italy again, for nature versus nurture becomes a serious topic in their writing. Their nature to write in a certain Italian dialect to be able to accurately express themselves, and the nurture of adjusting to a new land and people and not being able to part from it. The identity of Italians in South America became multifarious, for although they might not identify completely with either cultures, they will identify with multiple aspects of both of them. The anthology "Poets of the Italian Diaspora", edited by Luigi Bonaffini and Joseph Perricone includes poems and poetries from three Latin American countries: Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina. It is important to point out that each country has different identities, therefore although the identity crisis was similar, they were not exactly the same. All the poets came from different parts of Italy, and spoke different dialects. Some of the poets were more comfortable writing in their dialect, others wanted to write in both, while others decide to write in Spanish or Portuguese. One main similarity that all of the Italians that did go to South America instead of North America was that they thought that it was going to be an easy way of making money. However, very soon they were met with a harsh reality. One of the poets, Dino Campana, wrote that he was welcomed by having oranges being thrown at him while he was still on the boat by other Italians. After they had settled in, finding the ideal job was not as easy either, although some did managed to find some. Many worked in mines, flower shops, and rail diggers. Those that managed to work in an ideal jobs worked as writers in newspapers, authors, poet, but mostly as professors. Poets like Severino di Giovanni tried to challenge the government in Argentina after he was exiled from Italy by Mussolini. He believed in Communism and wrote about his ideas in several newspapers, however, his revolt against the government turned violent as he thought that was the only way of gaining world peace. He was executed at the age of 31 by the Argentinian government. Others were like Alfredo Bufano, an Italian man born in the region of Apulia (Puglia), however tried most of his life to hide the fact that he was Italian in his writings. He wanted the country and world to identify him as an Argentinian man. Bufano even made up stories to tell people that he was born in a small town in Argentina, however, he could not lie to himself that he was Italian, for several of his works he wrote about Italy in Italian, and those works were later published. The children of Italian speaking immigrants (including Swiss) wanted to leave Latin America and get to know Italy, and many left the Americas for Europe and like J. Rodolfo Wilcock whom wrote poetry about his experience. Argentinian-Italians like Antonio Aliberti wrote about belonging to the "two Souths" and his love for his quasi double identity. He left Italy at age at a young age, and years after arriving in Argentina he started to read Italian literature and fell in love with it, he later would become a professor and Spanish-Italian (and vice versa) translator. Poets like Ermanno Minuto decided to start writing about his experience outside of Italy during their old age and after retirement. People like him felt more comfortable to write about his experiences of both cultures in the dialect of the town he was born in (Savona). At the end of each of these poets' career there is this search of longing and belonging in whatever environment they live in, something that can be hard for those that are already included in the society, can be twice as hard for those that feel like outsiders. Even when they return to Italy, the poets cannot forget South America. Many became professors and teach Portuguese or Spanish in Italy, as well as enter poetry competitions to explain their struggle as an expatriate immigrant. Poetry that contain the themes of journey, heritage, identity, and the differences of cultural impact depending on age.

## Dino Campana (1885-1932)

He was born in Marradi (Florence, Italy) on August 20, 1885. He died in a mental institution of Castel Pulci in Scandicci (Florence) after 14 years of confinement on March 1, 1932. In 1907 he went to Argentina because like many others he thought that it was an easier way to make a living. He took with him a book by Whitman and a gun. When he was arriving to Rio de la Plata he could see some other Italians throwing orange "Buenos Aires Style". While there he worked as a railway digger "with 'Orphic' visions that 'sunny happiness' had pointed out to him in 'Mediterranean'". "across the paths of the sky I followed mankind's adventurous journey toward happiness through the centuries".



## Alfredo Bufano (1895-1950)

Born in Apulia on August 21, 1895 and died in San Rafael in the province of Mendoza (at the foot of the Andes) on October 31, 1950. He did not want to reveal the place of his birthplace because he wanted to be seen as Argentine poet. (He claimed to have been born in Guaymallén, in Mendoza, and only in a few poems does he reveal that he was born elsewhere). Nevertheless, he wrote pieces referring to his Italian origins including "Misticos Italianos de la Edad Media" (Italian Mystics of the Middle Ages), he also translated into Spanish Italian works such as "Lauda donna del paradiso o Pianto della Madonna" by Jacopone da Todi. "For ten years he wore Franciscan habit (his mother vowed to have him wear it because he survive a severe illness)" He worked as a shoeshine boy, then in a bookstore in Buenos Aires, (during his time he discovered his love for writing poetry) he published his first book "El viajero indolente" in 1917. He was a contributor of a well-known journals: Caras y Caretas and Mundo Argentino. (He married Ada Giusti and had five children)

His poetic and literary production is in some 30 books. His tomb has written on it "Poet sowe, and settler"

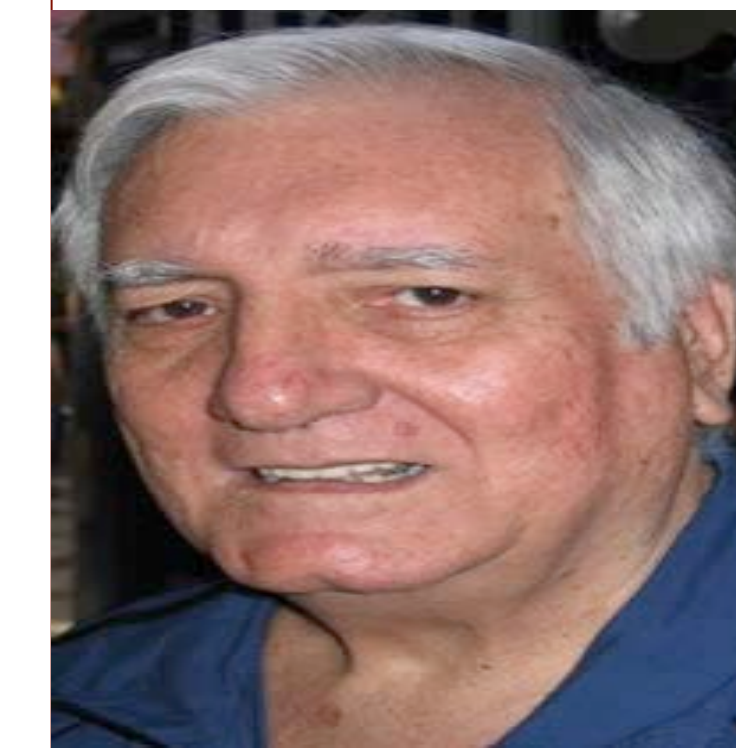


## Vera Lucia de Oliveira (b 1958)

Born in Candido Mota in 1958. She is a professor of Portuguese and Brazilian literature in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Lecce. She is a published writer and has also been a professor in Brazil. She has received two important national awards for poetry—The Spiaggia di Velluto prize and the Gino Perrone prize. She has also won the Osilo Literary Prize (Mediterranean section, Sassari, 2000) for her poetry in Portuguese.



Desembarque de imigrantes no Porto de Santos (SP), 1907.



## Vittorio Fioravanti (b.1936)

Born in Taranto on April 13, 1936 (his father was Remo Fioravanti, an officer in the Italian air force, and Clara Grasso Fioravanti, a school teacher). (His wife Marlene Muller Velasquez Fioravanti, is Venezuelan). He moved to Venezuela in 1966. He is a promoter of Italo-Venezuelan sport centers, "Founder of the Apulian Association in Caracas, and representative to the Italian information agency in Sao Paulo, Barzil. He is also the recipient of several honorary prizes, including first place in Nuestra Libertia in Valenci in 1986 and first place in the international competition of Italian Mia, medals such as Cavaliere dell Ordine della Repubblica Italiana.



## Marco Lucchesi (b1963)

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1963 and is a professor at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. History Professor. He has published his poetry collection called Sphera in 2004. Books include: "Luca dentro: poesia" and a volume of collected poems.

## The Traveler

Dove son? Dove fui? Che m'addolora?  
Dove son? E dove fui? The traveler asks himself,  
From what worlds have I come, and to which worlds do I go?  
A voice replies to him: continue along your path,  
pilgrim - continue on, tomorrow is the same as today!  
Dove son? Dove fui? Repeats the traveler His glance captivated by the pallid blue:  
Another voice in the distance: may the traveler meditate,  
Without posing the same questions as the Hebrew Saul.  
The paths open up like silver serpents  
Faintly lit by a scarlet sunrise  
And the traveler repeats his tenacious obsession:  
Dove son? Dove fui? Between heroic and submissive,  
And the voices answer the indecisive traveler  
Like a sinister echo: Dove fui! Dove son!  
-Alfredo Bufano (1895-1950)

## 19th Century Immigrants vs. Descendents



## Pieces

I am in shatters  
From my mouth silences escape  
Tenuous  
I had been tracing  
Words  
I lost the way of rousing myself  
I'm in so many pieces  
It seems almost infinite.  
-Vera Lucia de Oliveira (b. 1958)

## Hymn to Dynamite

Gino Lucetti, flag name, agitated torch, inciting heroism, soul of rebellion , soul of dynamite, soul of ours, anarchist soul!...  
Ours, ours, ours!  
You gave us everything, life, fever, action, dynamite!  
Life, because that's how it has to be, enjoyed, inhaled, drunk until bitter, in sips of hemlock and bile, in sips of hatred and love; hatred  
To liberticide and love to liberty, Liberty, which is life itself.  
Fever, fever and delirium, madness, provided it smashes the idol!  
Fever and spasm, ferocity, provided annihilates the beast! Fever of Exaltation, of destruction, provided it saves the human species! The Species of rebellious humans!  
Action that makes one fear, turn pale, tremble, become frightened, flee  
From panic, but that like lightning reaches out, annihilates! Action, Masculine poetry, feminine fruit, supreme divination of man.  
Action: rebellion!  
Dynamite, power of the deprived, power of misery, power of hunger,  
Power of torment, Dynamite, pallor of the tyrant! Dynamite, Slayeur of  
Filled vamps! Dynamite our weapon, anarchic weapon, strong voice  
That lacerates the most shriveled eardrums!  
You deserve our most blossomed thought, you deserve to be placed in  
A garden of spiritual elevation as a bud left to open like a rose in the Heart of tyranny.

## Politics

Born in Chieti on March 17, 1901 and died by firing squad in Buenos Aires on January 31, 1931. He wanted to become a schoolteacher. However, he was unable to finish his studies. He was able to teach while living in Italy until the fascist movement forced him to immigrate out of Italy to Argentina in 1932. While there he worked selling flowers in Buzangó which is a town in Buenos Aires. In Argentina he remained and had four children and worked as a typewriter for Moron. He read many great philosophers including Nietzsche and other who advocated for freedom, socialist or anarchists like Proudhon, Bakunin, Rodus, Kropotkin etc. He wrote about his beliefs in his journal Cuernme which was a "read on struggle against fascism". He worked to free Sacco and Vanzetti who were two anarchists. He wrote for several newspapers about his beliefs: Anarcha, Avvenire, La Protesta della Forza, Federación Obrera de la Republica Argentina. These papers alerts the Argentinian police, Italian embassy, as well as the US embassy in Buenos Aires. He attempted several robberies and killings-which made him one of the most wanted anarchist in Argentina.

