

FROM READING TO REALITY: PRINT CULTURE, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND
NATIONALISM IN URUGUAY AND ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

WILLIAM GARRETT ACREE, JR.: From Reading to Reality: Print Culture, Collective Identity, and Nationalism in Uruguay and Argentina
(Under the direction of Stuart A. Day)

Uruguay and Argentina are two of Latin America's most complete examples of how the intersection between print media and collective identities developed. Today visitors to the capital cities of Buenos Aires or Montevideo cannot help but notice the deep roots of written culture that are visible in the city centers. It is no surprise that these two countries have the highest literacy rates in Latin America, which has been the case since the late nineteenth century. The intriguing questions are these: How did literacy, written culture, and the clear public concern with writing and reading become both so widespread and integral to identity in these two nations? What makes the connection between print, the public sphere, and politics in the Río de la Plata unique? "From Reading to Reality" addresses these questions by providing a panoramic view of the development of Rioplatense print culture from the arrival of the first printing presses at the outset of the wars of independence in the early 1800s, to the first centenary celebration of independence in 1910. The chapters consider a range of print media and how they were received during the three key moments in this story, beginning with wartime newspapers and symbolic repertoires where the first attempts were made at patriotic poetry, moving to the phenomenon of popular gauchesque newspapers and verse used to politicize popular classes at mid-century (a form of popular literature not seen elsewhere), and concluding with a detailed look at lessons in patriotism and motherhood students learned in textbooks at the turn of the twentieth century. This study underscores how

print culture in the region became part of daily life for all Uruguayans and Argentines, reshaping forms of communication, and how it took root in these two countries more effectively than anywhere else in Latin America. It is a 100-year tour that enables the reader to understand a unique relationship between print, power, and the public sphere that emerged along lines where statesmen and the novels they wrote played only a marginal part.

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a regional phenomenon rather than a national one. In addition to becoming close friends of mine, these four people have made my graduate experience at UNC an outstanding one.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAL:	Academia Argentina de Letras, Buenos Aires, Argentina
BNAr:	Biblioteca Nacional de la República Argentina, Buenos Aires, Argentina
BNM:	Biblioteca Nacional de Maestros, Buenos Aires, Argentina
BNUr:	Biblioteca Nacional del Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay
BPC:	Biblioteca Pedagógica Central, Montevideo, Uruguay
CNBA:	Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
CNE:	Consejo Nacional de Educación—the National Board of Education in Argentina
DGIP:	Dirección General de Instrucción Pública—the National Board of Education in Uruguay
HA:	Colección Horacio Arredondo, Biblioteca de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay
MHN:	Museo Histórico Nacional, Montevideo, Uruguay
MyAHM:	Museo y Archivo Histórico Municipal, Montevideo, Uruguay
MPJPV:	Museo Pedagógico José Pedro Varela, Montevideo, Uruguay

INTRODUCTION

¿Sabes tú lo que es la PATRIA? Sin duda ya han recogido tus oídos esta palabra y en más de una ocasión al ver el entusiasmo que al aclamarla les producía á los hombres que en numerosa manifestación recorrían la calle, has sentido ansias de agitarte, de lanzar un grito y mezclar tu entusiasmo y tu alegría al entusiasmo y á la alegría general.¹

--From an 1895 Argentine school textbook titled *La Patria: elementos para estimular en el niño argentino el amor á la Patria y el respeto á las tradiciones nacionales*

Collective identities, nationalism, and nations are in the end about feelings and sharing these feelings with others. Shared experience allows for people to *feel* a sense of community that gives rise to collective identity. Sharing experiences, roots, and feelings, moreover, is where the process of creating meaning for community and for nation begins, and where sentiments of nationalism are fostered. In the U.S. one only needs to think of the ceremony of singing the national anthem at sporting events to appreciate the emotions at play in the collective act of praising the nation. Those who do not sing are in some way left out of the community, if not jeered. Among those who sing there is a mysterious passion—almost obligatory—compelling them to do so. This same passion obliges those singing to place hand over heart as a pledge of individual loyalty to the collective body of the nation, and leaves some with tears in their eyes after pronouncing “home of the brave.” A less passionate activity, although no less compelling, is that of singing the pledge in public schools.

In the Río de la Plata of the nineteenth century, participating in the Argentine or Uruguayan national community was a new experience rooted in the revolutionary wars for

¹ José Manuel Eizaguirre, *La Patria: elementos para estimular en el niño argentino el amor á la Patria y el respeto á las tradiciones nacionales*, 3d ed. (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía., 1895), 17.

independence.² Members of rural and urban communities and ethnic groups had harbored senses of collective identity before, throughout Latin America's long colonial period, but not with the attachments to nation (or at least the *idea* of nation) that began to take on meaning during and following the wars. Following the 1810 May Revolution in Buenos Aires that initiated the battles in the region, the rhetorical concepts of nation and republic increasingly oriented political discourse on both sides of the Plata.³ For roughly two thirds of the century, however, collective identities were born out of feelings of attachment to a place, such as Salta or Corrientes or Montevideo, and to a political party. In fact, the sense of "Spanish Americanness" and, later, affinity to a party, more than to the nation, were the predominant forms political identity would take.⁴ That said, political factions of the Plata during these years, much like today, were skilled at presenting their values and projects as national ones.

Historia patria—loosely translated as patriotic history—in both Uruguay and Argentina tells us a different story. Nations came into existence or "began" at a precise moment, as if all citizens from that date forward were part of a tightly-knit national family

² In addition to being the name of one of the largest estuaries in the world, the term *Río de la Plata* has a couple of significant meanings. During the late colonial era, it served as part of the title of the last royal administrative unit in Spanish America—the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, created in 1776. With its center in Buenos Aires, the viceroyalty encompassed a stretch of territory that included what are today Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Following the wars of independence, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay split off from the land that would become Argentina, though Uruguay would maintain close political and cultural connections to its neighbor across the river. When not speaking about the river, scholars today use *Río de la Plata* to refer to the region that includes Argentina and Uruguay in general, and, more specifically, the coastal areas and cities on both sides of the Plata river. I will be using *Rioplatense*, *Río de la Plata*, and *Plata*—its abbreviated form—in this way, in part to stress how print culture developed along the same lines in both Uruguay and Argentina, and in part to draw attention to the regional unity of concerns, questions, cultural meanings, and so on, often deemed only "national."

³ The May Revolution refers to 25 May 1810, when a local junta, or council, declared self-rule in the name of the deposed Spanish king, Ferdinand VII. It was a rhetorical and political move first carried out in print, and then later on the battle field.

⁴ José Carlos Chirramonte, "Formas de identidad en el Río de la Plata luego de 1810," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. E. Ravignani,"* 3d ser., 1 (1989): 71-92.

and identified with the nation.⁵ In the U.S. we have a set of symbolic dates that perform the same function. But in contrast to the smooth narratives of national (patriotic) history, and despite the circulation of the rhetoric of nation in the Río de la Plata during the wars of independence, the communities that form the backbone of nations in the modern sense were not united until states and state institutions became consolidated political and cultural forces in the last third of the nineteenth century.⁶ Even then the national community was a conglomerate in which multiple group identities flourished and vied for primacy. The official version of national identity promoted in public celebrations, symbolic repertoires, and schools had to contend with other forms of collective identity and loyalty to other communities. Peasants in the countryside, who were often persecuted by a corrupt system of justice, and the enormous quantity of immigrants arriving to the region, constituted two of the most important of these communities where feelings of group identity did not line up neatly with the official vision. This is why Eizaguirre and so many other textbook authors were emphatic about teaching the meaning of patria.

Eizaguirre's words in the epigraph, addressed to the "niño argentino," draw our attention to one of the crucial forces linking collective identity to nation and feeling: print. Eizaguirre promises to satisfy the young reader's curiosity about the meaning of patria. In

⁵ These dates that fix the "origins of the nation" are marked by the *fiestas patrias*, commemorating independence. In Argentina, 25 May and 9 July, when in 1816 independence was formally declared, are both celebrated as days the nation was born. While 25 May resonated for Uruguayans too, today they celebrate 19 April, when the famed 33 *Orientales* arrived from Argentina to fight for independence from Brazilian occupation, 18 July, date when the first constitution was sworn into effect, and 25 August, in reference to the declaration of independence in 1825 that took place while *La Banda Oriental*, which would become the Republic of Uruguay, was engaged in a war with Brazil.

⁶ In his introduction to *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, eds. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), John Chasteen provides a concise historical guide to the various meanings *nation* held in Latin America leading up to the wars of independence, as well as later in the nineteenth century, when states gained a foothold as political actors thanks to the growth of export-oriented economies. See x-xix.

turn, he humbly requests his audiences' attention "para que la lectura de estas páginas deje una huella duradera en [su] espíritu."⁷ Sharing a sense of national pride, he goes on to remark, was every citizen's duty, and every girl and boy should strive to understand the reasons that inspire the profound love for the patria, something everyone *of course* wanted to feel. While his words may seem simplistic to the twenty-first-century reader, he brings us back to that mysterious wellspring of collective identity, nationalism, and the nation, highlighting the role of feelings in their consolidation.

This study explores the links between print media, feelings of collective identity, and nationalism in nineteenth-century Uruguay and Argentina. It is about the special relationship that developed between print, the public sphere, and politics in this region of Latin America. Indeed, these two countries shared a common historical experience from the colonial period up to the early twentieth century, and the story of print culture in Uruguay and Argentina must be understood as a regional one. Examples and focal points of the narrative come from either side of the river, but the attachments between readers, print media, and collective identity are characteristic of the region as a whole. These connections hinged on a broad range of reading practices that gained in popularity thanks to the first printing revolution in the region during the wars of independence. This political and printing revolution ushered in the emergence of Rioplatense print culture.

Now that I have used the term print culture several times, a working definition is in order. Print culture is formed out of the bonds that connect reading publics—both literate and illiterate—to print media and texts that often go beyond the scope of the written word. More specifically, it concerns the relations between the practices of reading and writing, on the one hand, and social behaviors, individual and collective values, economic transactions, political

⁷ Eizaguirre, 14.

decisions, state institutions, and ideologies, on the other. Sociological approaches to literature and scholarship on “literature and society” of the 1970s and 80s explored some aspects of these relations, but were almost entirely centered on the written word and the diffusion of traditional “literary” texts. In contrast, the study of print culture, whose primary focus is the printed word in all its manifestations, also embraces, for example, the image that appears in a newspaper or magazine, the pasquinade or advertisement posted in the town square, the use of print and images on currencies and postal stamps, the act of reading out loud to a group of *gauchos* at the country store or to illiterate soldiers, and the embroidered slogans that decorated headbands worn by soldiers across Latin America in the 1800s. Reading and reading publics, thus, take on much deeper, more inclusive meanings. This broader understanding of what it means to read provides more appropriate tools for approaching the study of print culture in a region where listening to a text being read aloud—a collective experience in and of itself—was by far the most common form of reading up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And now going back to print culture, well, it takes root where reading practices shape reading publics. This intersection, in turn, allows print culture to play a central role in the formation of collective identity and feelings of nationalism.

Uruguay and Argentina are two of Latin America’s most complete examples of how the intersection developed. Today visitors to the capital cities of Buenos Aires or Montevideo cannot help but notice the deep roots of written culture that are visible in the city centers. Corrientes Street in Buenos Aires, one of the main thoroughfares, is lined for miles with bookstores and book stalls. On Sundays in Montevideo, where bookstores abound as well, one can visit a book market that spans more than five blocks. The connections between writing and nationalism are present, too. On a research trip to Buenos Aires in summer 2003,

I came across such connections in the streets in the form of posters advocating pride in the nation. “Argentina is a serious nation,” read one; another encouraged citizens to stand when singing the national anthem, a gesture of love for country. In both cases, print met with public policy and attempted to revive a national spirit, there before my eyes on street corners. With the value placed on the written and printed word, it is no surprise that Uruguay and Argentina have the highest literacy rates in Latin America, which has been the case since the late nineteenth century. The reach of print culture in Uruguay, more than in Argentina, is a true success story for Latin America. The intriguing questions are these: How did literacy, written culture, and the clear public concern with writing and reading become both so widespread and integral to identity in these two nations? What made Rioplatense print culture unique in the context of Latin America?⁸ In order to respond more fully, we have to look back to the first printing presses in the region, the phenomenon of gauchesque verse, political uses of print, the establishment of public school systems, and the reception of print media throughout the nineteenth century.



Between the outset of the wars of independence in the early 1800s and the first centenary celebration of independence in 1910, the new world of print became crucial to the consolidation of states and to the endeavor of winning the hearts and minds of new citizens in the Plata. Perhaps the single most important reason making this period critical to understanding the links between print, politics, and the public sphere is that these years saw the appearance of a new form of communication—print media—that around 1810 was the domain of a few, and that by 1910 was part of daily life for all social sectors. The colonial

⁸ According to the 2003 United Nations Human Development Reports on literacy rates for age fifteen and older, Uruguay ranked slightly ahead of Argentina. For measures of literacy rates in Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see chapter 3.

provinces of the Río de la Plata were sparsely populated. Buenos Aires was a backwater contraband port with a population of 20,000 at most, and Montevideo—the most densely populated place across the river—had about half this number of inhabitants. It was thus natural enough that the provinces of the Plata did not constitute a market for print media during the colonial period like the heavily populated urban centers of Lima and Mexico. The lack of a culture of print in the region during the colonial period made the arrival of printing presses and their deployment of texts all the more revolutionary during the wars of independence. From wartime newspapers and the role of print at patriotic celebrations during independence, to popular, gauchesque pamphlet literature and the written word printed in school textbooks, from newspapers with serial novels celebrating the gaucho way of life to the swirl of writing on postcards and detailed “national” images characterizing the first national currencies and postage stamps, the printed word and image grew to be part of daily life for all Uruguayans and Argentines. And it was there—in daily experiences, and in modifications to these—where printed words and images exercised their most significant changes.

From its debut, print in the Río de la Plata took on a distinctive public and political character, and through contact with popular classes the printed word and image helped shape identities. It was thanks to these attributes and the success of public primary education at the end of the century that the practices of reading and writing spread throughout Uruguay and Argentina more effectively than anywhere else in Latin America. With this in mind, “From Reading to Reality” illuminates the emergence of Rioplatense print culture and how, over the course of a century, it allowed citizens to develop attachments to group identities and participate in the collective experience of community. By 1910 print had made an indelible

mark: reading and writing were the most important components of education; literacy rates, at least in the capital cities, soared; popular novels flourished, as did magazines for the general public; paper money circulated symbolically charged images; postcards communicated complex messages about sons going off to battle or the simple note about what meal a family shared; and across the countryside and in the capital cities, circuses and theaters performed written culture for large audiences eager to follow the next gauchesque drama or immigrant story.

In short, then, “From Reading to Reality” is about connecting the experience of reading, in all possible ways, to the experiences and reality of daily life. It is about the development of a culture of print over the course of a century that saw both the arrival of the first printing presses to the region and the establishment of Latin America’s most successful systems of public primary education. And it is about a broader understanding of what it meant to read and to be a reader, and how these practices affected identity.

There are two main arguments toward which each chapter builds. First, print culture in the region took on a distinctive public and political character that, tied to the success of public education, allowed reading and writing to spread throughout Uruguay and Argentina on a scale seen nowhere else in Latin America. Second, the extent to which print allowed for the formation of identities hinged on the reach of “popular” print media, or on how people from popular classes interacted with print. Popular print media were central to negotiating the meeting of oral and written cultures. The new reading public that gradually appeared was not interested in elite compositions or translations of novels by authors like Émile Zola. Rather, they “read” anonymously written popular verse in newspapers; *folletines* by the popular gaucho novelist Eduardo Gutiérrez; the people’s bard, José Hernández; and many other

authors of pamphlets, loose-leaves, and popular literature.⁹ My hope is that each chapter will illustrate in its own way the different journeys ordinary citizens made from the individual and collective experiences of reading to the shared world of reality. It was in this shared world, or community, where attachments to group identities formed, where sentiments of nationalism were felt and expressed, and where print media and reading practices inspired behaviors, attitudes, and values that ranged from waging war to educating future citizens.

Our approach to the journey from reading to reality takes us from the printing revolution of the wars of independence up through the many years of civil war that plagued the region from the 1830s-1870s, and then to rapid rise in literacy as a result of the spread of public education at the end of the century. If writing was almost exclusively the province of lettered elites at the outset of the century, popular classes nonetheless came into contact with the printed word and image at churches, in public festivities, and in trenches. The same was true during the reign of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-1852), and the years leading up to the consolidation of state institutions around 1870. In all of these moments, print culture was key to winning the hearts, minds, and bodies of citizens, young and old, mestizo, black, white, and in between, rich and poor. Gradually, the elites of the Río de la Plata's "lettered cities" lost their monopoly on the activities of reading and writing.¹⁰ Challengers "infiltrated" lettered circles and became, in some instances, sorts of new *letrados*.¹¹ At the same time, however, lettered elites appropriated rural myths and oral traditions, taking them away from

⁹ See Jorge B. Rivera, *El escritor y la industria cultural* (Buenos Aires: Atuel, 1998), 22-27, and Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988), 13-82.

¹⁰ See Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 29-73, and Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, trans. John D. Blanco (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), also Chapter 3.

¹¹ Rama, *The Lettered City*, 52-53.

where they flourished and subjecting them to the written word as fodder for national histories and national literatures.¹² Toward the end of the century, writers such as Eduardo Gutiérrez, José Hernández, Elías Regules, Javier de Viana, Florencio Sánchez, and a host of authors who had never been part of the lettered city were gaining access to the power associated with print, celebrating rural ways of life and condemning the unfair conditions faced by the poor and the more than one million immigrants in the urban centers of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

What in large measure allowed for print culture to play such a vital role in the formation of Rioplatense communities and identities was the *affective dimension* of reading and the opportunities this dimension created for sharing.¹³ Often times feelings are stirred by identifying with ideas or principles or even feelings that are expressed in a text, be this popular verse, a play, a poster, an advertisement, or a piece of money. This is all the more the case with texts that are read aloud to a group, big or small. It is easy to imagine the ruckus priests instigated when they included in their sermons fiery passages of patriot papers during the 1810s. And in dry-goods stores dotting the countryside of Uruguay and Argentina, many a fight broke out following or, better yet, during the reading of partisan lines of popular poetry of the 1830s or 1840s, or during a *payada*, or improvised poetry contest, that got out of hand. And thanks to feelings readers or listeners experience, they can share. First they can share the feelings, and then in the nation's history or the immigrant's sufferings or the unfair treatment of a gaucho at the hands of a corrupt system of justice or commonalities that stem from supporting the same political party. Print culture enables one to share feelings with

¹² Ibid., 66-67.

¹³ Fernando Unzueta touches on the concept of the affective dimension of reading in "Scenes of Reading: Imagining Nations/Romancing History in Spanish America," in Castro-Klarén and Chasteen, 144-55.

people both inside and outside one's immediate community. If collective identity and sentiments of nationalism are indeed based on sharing and feeling, it is best when the sharing involves sentiments or when what is felt is shared, even if sharing is an act of imagination of the sort Benedict Anderson so artfully describes.¹⁴

Feelings have largely proved elusive to scholarly study. Leaving psychology and psychiatry aside, few scholars have braved the murky waters that surround the study of feelings in history, in part due to the simple fact that sources are limited. Even so, thinking about how people felt in the past is one of the most attractive and important activities for literary scholars and historians, and this is certainly an imperative task for this study. Given that feelings are hard to explain, even in the present, and since speculation has been a large part of this undertaking, the study of feelings is often considered taboo. This attitude is changing, thanks in part to innovative work. Examples can be found in Raymond Williams's elaboration of the notion of *structure of feeling*, U.S. cultural historians' and literary scholars' explorations of the *culture of sentimentality*, Anderson's accent marks on the affective dimension of nationalism and the passion that distinguishes love for country from all other types of political attachments, and Fernando Unzueta's creative approach to the affective dimension of reading.¹⁵ Exploring sources that yield insights into these sentiments of the past is valuable to understanding the concrete connections between print, readers, and

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

¹⁵ See, for example, Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 63-70, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9-36, 141-54, and Unzueta, "Scenes of Reading," 144-55. José Pedro Barrán, *Historia de la sensibilidad en el Uruguay* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, 1992) deals indirectly with feelings in his exploration of "sensibilities" in nineteenth-century Uruguay. Beatriz Sarlo undertakes a similar venture in the context of early twentieth-century Argentina in *El imperio de los sentimientos: narraciones de circulación periódica en la Argentina (1917-1927)* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos Editora, 1985; reprint, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2000).

collective identity, especially when they help to understand how feelings of community and nationalism are instilled or popularized.

While popularization of print in Uruguay and Argentina makes the nineteenth century a critical moment for understanding the formation of group identities, there are a handful of other factors that played central roles in this process, too. The first among these concerns the stability of state institutions and, consequently, consolidated states. As James Scobie, Tulio Halperín Donghi, and other Latin Americanist historians have pointed out, the political unit of Argentina did not emerge in stable form until the late 1870s, a situation that characterized Uruguay as well, if in slightly different respects.¹⁶ The wars of independence in the Plata resulted in a militarized society where *caudillos* wielded more power than any governing institution thanks to the political authority they exercised through patron-client relationships, in which political officials were important clients. While the legendary caudillo figure of Juan Manuel de Rosas brought stability to state institutions in the Plata during his reign as governor of Buenos Aires, the later Rosas years were fraught with civil wars on both sides of the river and the spread of commercial interests eager to put an end to the predominance of the port of Buenos Aires in trade with Europe and the U.S. The 1850s promised new directions in political culture for both Argentina and Uruguay, though war would again dominate the decade of 1860. Wars against the Indians, wars against the gauchos, and the

¹⁶ James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City and A Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 88-111, Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in the Revolutionary Period*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). For an excellent recent account of the development of the state in Argentina, see Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Argentine Counterpoint: Rise of the Nation, Rise of the State," in Castro-Klarén and Chasteen, 33-53. On state formation in Uruguay, see José Pedro Barrán, *Apogeo y crisis del uruguay pastoril y caudillesco*, Historia Uruguay, Tomo 4 (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1974), Ana Frega, "La virtud y el poder. La soberanía particular de los pueblos en el proyecto artiguista," in *Caudillismos rioplatenses: nuevas miradas a un viejo problema*, eds. Noemí Goldman and Ricardo Salvatore, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1998), 101-33, and John Charles Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback: A Life and Times of the Last Gaucho Caudillos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 43-59.

Paraguayan War all pushed back liberals' attempts to control the states until the 1870s.

Following the end of the Paraguayan War in 1870, liberal elites built up their solid grip on state institutions, orienting economies toward exportation of meats, leather goods, and wool, and inviting foreigners to invest in railroads, port construction, and telegraph lines. War, in a word, conditioned Rioplatense society for most of the century, and it was war that played out in newspapers, popular verse, pasquinades, and essays. Only following the consolidation of states could political elites go about the business of shaping nations out of peoples inhabiting the national territory and the immigrants who, with promises of being able to amass fortunes, were being enticed to work and make their home in the Plata. They did this through public education.

The elaboration of public primary education systems on national scales was a second development crucial to the reach of print culture, thanks in large measure to Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in Argentina and José Pedro Varela in Uruguay.¹⁷ Known as the architects of public education in their respective countries, these two men shared the same goals, and their plans bear remarkable resemblance. While public schools existed in scattered fashion throughout the Plata from the 1810s on, public education was not made a national concern until the late 1870s. The legislation of the *leyes de educación común* (1877 in Uruguay and 1884 in Argentina) was the cornerstone of the administrative project for national education and the starting point for educational policies to fan out from the capital across both countries, making literate citizens out of ruffian children of the countryside and children of the rapidly expanding immigrant population.

¹⁷ Although secondary schools were part of the initiative, they were mainly places to prepare students to enter the university. Primary schools were by far the most important component of the new national education systems, with the greatest numbers of students and a wide range of age groups in attendance.

Immigration is the last factor that needs to be stressed in understanding the importance of print culture and its relations to collective identities and nationalism. Anyone familiar with the demographics of Buenos Aires and Montevideo is aware of the fact that they are notably different from the rest of Latin America, due to the massive waves of immigration to the Río de la Plata from the 1850s up to the first World War. In Argentina, immigrants, mainly from Italy and Spain, accounted for 25 percent of the population by 1895.¹⁸ By the outset of the First World War in 1914, this portion had risen to 30 percent, more than the proportion of the population immigrants accounted for in the U.S. in the same years. Around the centenary celebration of independence in 1910, more than half the population in Buenos Aires province consisted of immigrants or children born to immigrant parents. The numbers from Uruguay evidence a similar history. Half the residents of Montevideo during the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1852) were foreigners. In contrast to Argentina, immigration to Uruguay occurred on a smaller scale and with the important difference being that immigration to the country declined after 1900.¹⁹ Explanations for this shift include the fact that Argentina's phenomenal agricultural success promised more attractive work opportunities to immigrants after the turn of the century, making Argentina a more popular destination than Uruguay, as well as the idea that Uruguay was "saturated" and could no longer absorb newcomers.²⁰ Educational bureaucrats were keenly aware of the changes set in motion by immigration and aimed to incorporate the children into the

¹⁸ The second national census was taken in 1895.

¹⁹ According to the 1900 national census, immigrants made up close to 22 percent of the population. This number dropped to slightly over 17 percent in the 1908 census. See Juan José Arteaga and Ernesto Puiggrós, "Inmigración y estadística en el Uruguay 1830-1940," in *Inmigración y estadísticas en el Cono Sur de América*, ed. Hernán Asdrúbal Silva (Montevideo: Organización de los Estados Americanos, Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1990), 268-69, 371.

²⁰ Ibid., 269.

Argentine and Uruguayan communities, both through language and civic education. Immigrants, for their part, played a vital role in reshaping Argentine and Uruguayan culture, most evident in language, food, music, dance, and demographics. They also made valuable contributions to print culture in magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and drama. The plays written by and about immigrants in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, for example, constitute a major voice for collective identities that did not share all things in common with the identities promoted by educational administrators, liberal elites, or the landed oligarchy.

War, education, and immigration, then, defined the nineteenth-century moment in the Plata and the parameters in which print media were produced, disseminated, and received. By the 1910 centenary celebration, what is clear is that print culture in the Río de la Plata was solidly engrained in the daily life of all Uruguayans and Argentines. Over the last hundred years it had revolutionized forms of communication and become part of the national experiences of Uruguay and Argentina.

The Study of Print Culture, Identity, and Nationalism in Latin America and in the Plata

Research linking print culture to collective identities and nationalism in Latin America is limited. The anthropologist Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is one of the few studies that mentions the three themes together. His argument for print capitalism contributing to a sense of community—and thus fueling the wars of independence in Latin America—is provocative, but flawed and not based on any real evidence. Creoles were no doubt integrating principles of liberalism through the things they read leading up to the wars. And to Anderson's credit, newspapers and other print media did play a significant part in garnering support for the patriot cause and stirring feelings of community, but, in contrast to

Anderson's claim, and as we will see in chapter 1, this came only during and after the wars of independence, and through a variety of ways of reading, not just the silent, individual perusal of the printed word. Despite this major detail regarding his chapter on print culture in nineteenth-century Latin America, Anderson's book is *the* most influential study on nationalism in the past twenty years. Aside from the useful terms he invents—print capitalism, print communities, and the eponymous imagined community—Anderson's emphasis on the emotive powers of nationalism has allowed his argument to stand out and have such an impact. As we take this notion of the emotive powers of nationalism back to the Río de la Plata throughout this study, we will gain a clearer understanding of the powers of the affective dimension of reading.

Rather than focusing on the intimate links between print, identity, and nationalism, the trend in different humanities disciplines has been to focus on these problems individually. Literary scholars like Doris Sommer, Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Nina Gerassi-Navarro have looked at nineteenth-century literary productions, novels in particular, as foundational stories and promoters of various authoritative discourses for Latin American nations and nationalisms. Yet they often fail to take into account questions of literacy rates, the availability of books, and who readers were. Much literary scholarship that explores national identities in Latin America falls into a similar trap, arguing for origins of this type of collective identity in elite literary works that did not reach a substantial public in which to instill notions of identity.²¹ Notions of identity were instilled far more successfully by popular print media, often overlooked by scholars studying the nexus of print and identity.²²

²¹ Illustrative of this tendency is Nina Gerassi-Navarro, *Pirate Novels: Fictions of Nation Building in Spanish America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). Gerassi-Navarro argues that the pirate stories of historical novels were critical to the creation of national myths, legends, and histories following the wars of independence. Pirates, she suggests, and the fears and hopes they inspire, somehow came to represent the

As one of the most widely read and discussed studies on Latin American literature and nation written in the last fifteen years, Sommer's *Foundational Fictions* deserves some individual attention here, although she does not focus specifically on print culture.²³ She is concerned with romance, of the sort that informed the story lines of romantic novels, and possible ways readers could identify with love stories. For Sommer the connection of romance to republic through the figure of the author-statesman allowed for the novels that statesmen wrote to become "foundational," in the sense that policy makers were expressing in novels the same ideas and principles that they injected into legislation, or the other way around, with novels informing law. While the concept of foundational fictions illustrates the nature of the relationship between writing and policy making and suggests the ways in which novels affected the foundations of states and state institutions, it is not a convincing notion for understanding the bonds between novels, or other forms of literature, and the communities of peoples that were supposed to form Latin American nations in the nineteenth century.

difficulties faced by the new citizens. This sounds good, but there is no evidence presented to back up the claim that historical pirate novels "became one of the main literary expressions through which people learned about their history and culture; thus the novel's distinctive role in the formation of national identities" (6). In fact, she recognizes that such novels were not written for or reflective of the masses (12), a point which takes away from any argument regarding their influence on national identity. Gabriela Nouzeilles makes a similar claim about novels informing nations, though in reference to the group of writers that constituted the so-called generation of 1880 in Argentina. In *Ficciones somáticas: naturalismo, nacionalismo y políticas médicas del cuerpo (Argentina 1880-1910)* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo, 2000), Nouzeilles maintains that the Argentine nation is based on "master narratives" found in the naturalist novels that presented a mix of nationalism with medical discourses meant to form citizens who would behave correctly. It is evident that such messages were at the heart of these novels, yet she does not substantiate the argument with any evidence relating to the circulation of the literary texts that were supposed to be doing the persuading and fabricating of citizens.

²² Angel Rama emphasizes this point in a collection of essays on gauchesque literature of the Plata: *Los gauchopolíticos rioplatenses*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994).

²³ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Fictions were important for statesmen who wrote them and their colleagues, but beyond the limited circles of political actors and intellectual elites, the novels Sommer studies did not reach the hands or hearts (or erotic fantasies) of most readers in the nineteenth century. In the Plata, readers were much more likely to listen to the political verses of gauchesque newspapers, read *Martín Fierro*, a novel by Eduardo Gutiérrez, or attend a play staged by the Podestá Brothers, than pick up one of the few copies of Sarmiento's *Facundo*, José Mármol's romantic *Amalia*, Eugenio Cambaceres' books, or an Eduardo Wilde novel. A few figures on book sales—by no means exhaustive—illustrate this point. Forty-eight thousand “authorized” copies were sold of Hernández's *El gaucha Martín Fierro* in the first six years after its publication in 1872.²⁴ A similar number of pirated copies were most likely sold in the same period. On the unexpected success of *Martín Fierro*, Rama remarks that “while many read the book, even more *heard* it read or recited...”²⁵ *La vuelta de Martín Fierro*, the sequel published in 1879, was successful too, with an initial print run of twenty thousand copies.²⁶ The Scotsman Robert Cunninghame Graham recorded that he came across countless people in the countryside who were illiterate but had memorized *Martín Fierro*.

Though details regarding the publication numbers of Gutiérrez's popular serial novels on gauchesque themes are scarce, Ernesto Quesada noted in 1902 that “las obras de Eduardo Gutiérrez se han vendido—y se siguen vendiendo—con tal profusión, que han dejado atrás

²⁴ Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 53.

²⁵ Rama, *The Lettered City*, 63.

²⁶ Adolfo Prieto, *Sociología del público argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Leviatán, 1956), 66. In this early work on reading publics, Prieto estimates the number of copies for the first part to be 72,000, and the number of unauthorized versions to be roughly equal (66). Even with the conservative figure of 48,000—which Hernández himself mentions in the “Cuatro palabras de conversación con los lectores” that open *La vuelta*—the success of the poem was outstanding, and even more so considering that much of it came from readers in the countryside.

los famosos 62.000 ejemplares del *Martín Fierro*.”²⁷ In contrast, Miguel Navarro Viola’s *Biblioteca Popular de Buenos Aires*—an editorial enterprise to make “amenable literature” (not popular “dreck”) available to a large public at low prices—published one volume per month in a run of 2,000 copies.²⁸ *En la sangre*, the naturalist novel by Eugenio Cambaceres, who had garnered quite a reputation in literary circles by the year of its publication in 1887, sold 2,000 copies in one week, but with its success ending shortly thereafter, it did not come close to competing with works of authors like Gutiérrez or Hernández.²⁹ Miguel Cané’s *Juvenilia*, first published in 1882, faced a similar fate, with the 1,500 copies of the first edition selling out over a period of a couple months.³⁰ While the precision of these numbers can be drawn into question, like most statistics relating to nineteenth-century Latin America, they clearly testify to what sort of “literature” was most consumed during a period in which groups were crafting collective identities that would vie for legitimacy in the national community.

The novels written by statesmen related to the foundations of the state and its institutions, but not to the formation of communities of citizens that would form nations. Sommer’s suggestions about literature shaping history are strong, and her clearly-presented interpretations of national novels deserve praise. Furthermore, there is no denying the positive impact of her work on literary studies. But she leaves out what is key to the study of

²⁷ “El ‘criollismo’ en la literatura argentina,” in Alfredo V.E. Rubione, *En torno al criollismo: Ernesto Quesada, “El criollismo en la literatura argentina” y otros textos* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1983), 137.

²⁸ Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 43.

²⁹ Sagastizábal, *La edición de libros en la Argentina*, 39.

³⁰ Ibid. An excellent source indicating titles published and, in some cases, print runs is the *Anuario bibliográfico de la República Argentina, 1879-1887* (Buenos Aires: Kraus Reprint, 1972). Reviews of publications are included, though they are heavily slanted in favor of elite literature.

writing and nation: what reading publics got their hands on these books, what types of reading they engaged in, and how such reading affected them.³¹ What is beneficial to take from her creative argument is that feelings for the nation and literature are indeed intertwined in print culture, and that research is needed to fill in the missing links between print media and their contribution to shaping social identities.

Nationalism in nineteenth-century Latin America has been a subject of many historians' research, as well as that of scholars from other fields, but the bulk of the work hinges on politics or issues of economic nationalism. This was the case until recently in the historiography on the Río de la Plata, where nationalisms and identities occupied a secondary focus up until roughly the 1980s. A few reasons explain this. First, nationalism is seen by many as a political force that emerges in the 1880s and then in the early twentieth century as a response to immigration and in opposition to cosmopolitanism of liberal intellectuals. The second reason stems from this understanding of nationalism. Many scholars define nationalism in a limited way, associating it with ideas and behaviors that stress the value of traditions, the indigenous past, the figure of the gaucho, and so on. In a word, these writers view nativism and nationalism synonymously, or consider nationalism to be an ideology wedded to the political right.

Over the past twenty years, however, studies of Latin American and Rioplatense nationalisms have turned more toward the exploration of the cultural side of nationalism, taking cues from some of the influential works in other contexts, like Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, and expanding the range of meanings of nationalism. Most notable among recent

³¹ In Latin America "domestic novels" did not serve to shape the modern political state as she would like to suggest with the comparison to English novels, again for reasons of limited numbers of readers (32-33).

work on nationalism in the Río de la Plata are the efforts of Ariel de la Fuente, Nicolas Shumway, Lilia Ana Bertoni, Hugo Achugar, and Gerardo Caetano.³² John Charles Chasteen is another scholar who has written path-breaking studies on nationalism, collective identities, and popular culture in both the Plata and other areas of Latin America. His work on the emotional bonds charismatic caudillos inspired along the Brazil-Uruguay border,³³ and his more recent *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance* on social dance, have added valuable perspectives to our understanding of how collective identities are crafted, and how popular culture was inseparable from the conception and spread of nationalisms.

With the general move toward the study of cultural history, and with literary scholars' focus on cultural studies and nation formation, there has been a growing interest in the field of print culture. Often cased within the interdisciplinary rubric of book history, but gathering momentum to become a separate field, print culture has gained much attention by scholars of Western Europe and the U.S. since the 1990s. Roger Chartier, Cathy N. Davidson, Janice Radway, and Robert Darnton are just a few of the historians and literary scholars who have been most active in the explorations of print and cultural production in the U.S. and France. Most work to date on Latin American print culture focuses on the twentieth century or the colonial printing centers of Mexico and Peru. That said, some scholars have made recent

³² See, in particular, Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency During the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Lilia Ana Bertoni, *Patriotas, cosmopolitas y nacionalistas: la construcción de la nacionalidad argentina a fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), Hugo Achugar, ed., *La fundación por la palabra: letra y nación en América Latina en el siglo XIX* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 1998), Achugar, ed. *Derechos de memoria: nación e independencia en América Latina* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2003), and Gerardo Caetano, ed., *Los uruguayos del Centenario: nación, ciudadanía, religión y educación (1910-1930)* (Montevideo: Ediciones Santillana, 2000).

³³ See Chasteen, "Fighting Words: The Discourse of Insurgency in Latin American History." *Latin American Research Review*. 28, no. 3 (1993): 83-111, and *Heroes on Horseback*.

valuable contributions to the study of print in the nineteenth century. Among these the pioneer was Angel Rama, with *La ciudad letrada*, a book that set the stage for research on Latin American print culture, and an earlier work titled *Los gauchipolíticos rioplatenses: literatura y sociedad*. Julio Ramos has also made a substantial contribution with *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. More recent scholarship includes that of literary scholars Adolfo Prieto, Beatriz Sarlo, Beatriz González-Stephan, and Fernando Unzueta, historians François-Xavier Guerra, Rebecca Earle, and Ivan Jaksic, cultural critic Jorge B. Rivera, and a handful of historians of education at the Universidad Nacional de Luján in Argentina working on various aspects of written culture in Argentina.³⁴ This last group has dealt above all with school textbooks and methods and strategies employed for teaching reading and writing in Argentina.

Unzueta is important here for his introductory discussion of the affective dimension of reading in nineteenth-century Latin American literature. He looks at this dimension by concentrating on the seductive powers of romances to appeal to a reader's sentiments, hopefully merging them with community desires for public good.³⁵ Although Unzueta's study of romantic novels takes Doris Sommer's remarks on "foundational fictions" one step further, and while his recognition of the need for research on reading practices is

³⁴ For considerations from literary scholars, see for example Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, Beatriz Sarlo, *La máquina cultural: maestras, traductores y vanguardistas*, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1998), 9-92, Beatriz González-Stephan, "Showcases of Consumption: Historical Panoramas and Universal Expositions," trans. John Charles Chasteen, in Castro-Klarén and Chasteen, 225-38, and Fernando Unzueta's "Scenes of Reading." Examples from historians include Guerra, "Forms of Communication, Political Spaces, and Cultural Identities in the Creation of Spanish American Nations," Guerra and Annick Lempérière, eds., *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica: ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX* (México, D.F.: Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos and Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), Paula Alonso, ed. *Construcciones impresas: panfletos, diarios y revistas en la formación de los estados nacionales en América Latina, 1820-1920* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), and Ivan Jaksic, ed., *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002). For a sample of the research from the scholars at the Universidad Nacional de Luján, see the essays in Cucuzza and Pineau.

³⁵ Unzueta, 147, 152-55.

praiseworthy, he does not satisfactorily link reading practices to his claims about the models these novels provide for “reading the nation.” His interpretations of some romantic novels demonstrate how “fictional representations of family and romance [could] mediate relations and establish bonds between readers and the nation,” but evidence supporting these bonds is absent from his analysis.³⁶ I will take the concept of the affective dimension of reading beyond Unzueta’s focus on traditional literary texts and textual interpretation to include other elements of print culture, as well as perspectives that are not merely suggestions in print but real feelings of readers and people interacting with print culture and taking its messages to heart in the Río de la Plata.

It is imperative to point out that in spite of the innovative work of many scholars, no substantial research has been completed on the success story of print culture in the region, or on the relations between print, collective identity, and nationalism in the two countries that shared not only newspaper, pamphlet, and magazine publications in common, but also saw citizens pass from one side of the Plata river to the other to work on public education projects, participate in literary societies, fight wars, and write books and articles for an audience composed of both Uruguayans and Argentines. This is where “From Reading to Reality” comes in.

“From Reading to Reality” seeks to fill, in part, the gap in scholarship on print culture, identity, and nationalism in the Plata by illustrating the concrete connections between readers and print media, and how these were received—the “missing link” in much scholarship. To better grasp how print media play into the configuration of identities and feelings of nationalism, textual interpretation that is the specialty of literary scholars must be combined with the historian’s attention to historical context, the forces that go into the

³⁶ Ibid., 121.

production of print media, and the sociological details of the practices of reading and writing. This means taking into account literacy rates, considering a broad range of reading practices, and working with texts that may lack “artistic merit” but that were incredibly popular. In this spirit, some of the central questions my research poses include: how were print media produced and circulated? What types of reading were commonly practiced? What kinds of books were children required to read in schools, and what were their messages? What forms of popular print media reach people of different social positions, and through what channels? How does what one reads inspire one’s behavior and desire to be part of a community?

Since the goal is to provide a panoramic view of the development of connections between reading to reality, authors do not get center-stage attention, and many, however canonical they are, are not mentioned. The payoff of this study, though, is precisely its breadth.

Marking the Path from Reading to Reality

The study of print culture is by nature interdisciplinary. It requires consideration of sources that are traditionally outside the purview of the literary scholar, such as school textbooks and notebooks, as well as ones that do not generally enter the historian’s study of culture, like popular verse and folletines. To understand the extent to which print culture touched all walks of life in the Río de la Plata between 1810 and 1910, I will look at its role in a wide range of contexts. Each of the chapters that follow will help to tell the story of how various elements of print culture enabled citizens to make the journey from reading to reality.

The first chapter, “Words, Wars, and Public Celebrations: The Emergence of Rioplatense Print Culture,” sets the scene by looking at the emerging uses of print and their connections to politics and the public sphere during the revolutionary moment, spanning

from the arrival of the first printing presses in the region to a period of short-lived peace in the early 1830s. Words printed by these first presses in revolutionary newspapers, poems, and official documents sparked a printing revolution that went hand in hand with the wars of independence. The power of the printed word and image was further elaborated at public celebrations, like the parties commemorating the May Revolution and the festivities that accompanied the inauguration of the first public libraries in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. These events helped create a new public meeting place where elites and popular classes communicated in new ways, and where print was crucial. The chapter ends with a look at the role print played in the creation and dissemination of new national symbolic repertoires, including symbolic verse, coats of arms, declarations of independence, and constitutions. From the outbreak of the wars to the signing of Uruguay's first constitution in 1830, print culture grew to be a legitimizing force for republican ideals and sparked a revolution in forms of communication.

Chapter 2 looks at lasso-like connections of print culture to cattle civilization that define the second moment in the development of our story. Around the end of the wars of independence estate owners teamed up with the proprietors of beef-jerking factories and enjoyed enormous profits from the processing and sale of animal products up through the 1860s. The prominent figures of cattle culture—the caudillos—became powerful political actors and were able to inspire attachments to their party and brand of collective identity.³⁷ This was even more the case during the civil wars that rocked the region up through the 1850s. In the Plata the one caudillo who stood out among all the others was Juan Manuel de

³⁷ Cattle culture or “cattle civilization,” as James Scobie terms it, refers to the power structures and social relations that developed around an economy based on the sale and exports of cattle products—hides, fats, and dried meat—that grew in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. This economy dominated the Río de la Plata up to the 1850s and struck fear into lettered liberal elites for its preservation of practices and characteristics of the colonial era. See Scobie, 64-87.

Rosas—icon of the Federalist party, wealthy estate owner, distinguished horseman, and popular patron. Everything written during this second moment revolved around Rosas and the politics of cattle culture. At the heart of the relationship between print, politics, and power in mid-century Uruguay and Argentina was popular verse—gauchesque verse to be exact. Nowhere else in nineteenth-century Latin America was there a similar type of literature that negotiated the meeting of oral and print cultures and that allowed for the popular consumption print media on the scale seen in the Río de la Plata. The overwhelming majority of gauchesque verse supported Rosas and the Federalist party and, following the end of the Rosas years, the gaucho way of life. Liberal elites shot back in print, but their compositions were written for members of their social class and thus unsuccessful in fostering popular opposition to the social order based on cattle. In short, gauchos and gauchesque poetry are the protagonists of this chapter and the most effective popularization of print culture in the region before the advent of public education.

The next chapter, “Sowers of Alphabets,” zooms in on the establishment of systems of public primary education and their role in opening the gateway to widespread public interaction with print. Gauchesque writing had allowed for the popularization of print around mid-century, but it was the public primary school at the end of the 1800s that really made print culture popular. It also provided the state with a whole new range of opportunities to regulate print media and messages, and for a very captive and impressionable audience. In the 1860s and 1870s Domingo Sarmiento in Argentina and José Pedro Varela in Uruguay set national, public education, on their list of things necessary for successful nations. If states were to be successful in the construction of nations, then they needed resources, and schools were key resources for instilling love of country in the youngsters and in the minds of the

numerous immigrants making their way into the region. Through textbooks, notebooks, and other forms of print media selected for use in public schools, sowers of alphabets held direct influence over the forms of collective identity these texts aimed to inspire. The combination of all these factors made public primary schools sites where print was connected to the formation of collective identities and the project of shaping citizens for a nation like never before. After all, sowing the alphabet was understood as sowing the seeds of progress.

The last chapter, “Lessons for a Nation,” looks closely at textbooks that taught young readers lessons in patriotism and lessons in motherhood or, put differently, lessons in national and gender identity. Beginning around 1880, national boards of education in Uruguay and Argentina selected official texts for use primary schools across the Plata. Hundreds of titles were published on national history and geography, moral and civic education, and, specifically for female students, hygiene and home economics. The lessons that ran through these texts were also present in titles not solely devoted to the subjects mentioned. Authors of these books, along with the bureaucrats who selected them, sought to instill love for country and patriotic spirit in their young readers; they aimed to present a shared history that readers could tap into as a source for community; and they intended to shape girls into patriotic mothers who would understand their education as a civic duty and carry the well-being of the nation in their hearts as mothers and spouses. In these lessons for a nation reading was a practice that occurred beyond the classroom. Children took books home and read them with or to their siblings and parents, and the same textbooks were often used for adults learning to read and write. In all instances the act of reading was one of national importance in which community identity and gender roles were promoted. Comments student scribbled in notebooks, exercises they completed based on the books, and

letters they crafted are strong indicators of how children took to heart the lessons they learned and link reading to citizenship. And given the numbers of students who attended primary schools by 1910 and the ways such textbooks were read in the wider community, such lessons allowed for the popular appropriation of official discourses on nationalism and gender identity.



Collective identities, nationalisms, and nations are born out of emotional bonds and shared experiences, values, and hopes. The chapters that make up “From Reading to Reality” show how print culture in the Río de la Plata evolved as a force shaping collective identities and feelings of nationalism. From the wars of independence up to the centenary celebration of 1910, the culture of print in the Plata developed a distinct public and political character that allowed for the practices of reading and writing to spread throughout the region more effectively than anywhere else in Latin America. And it was largely thanks to popular print media like gauchesque writing and the contact of popular classes with print that the printed word and image were such effective forces in the formation of group identities. By 1910, Rioplatense print culture was solidly engrained as part of daily life and had a century-long history of enabling feelings of collective identity and sentiments of nationalism to shift from the individual and collective experiences of reading to the shared world of reality.

CHAPTER 1

WORDS, WARS, AND PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS: THE EMERGENCE OF RIOPLATENSE PRINT CULTURE

By 6 December 1779 the deal had been sealed. After sitting inactive for more than a dozen years in the dark, dank basement of the University of Córdoba, the first and only printing press of the Cordoban Jesuits was unearthed, packed up, and ready to make the journey over to Buenos Aires. When the Jesuits were expelled from Spanish America in 1767, this press had only been in use for a year, producing materials for the acclaimed Colegio de Monserrat. It was disassembled and hastily stored in the basement, with no care taken to prevent moisture from penetrating the wood or to package properly the lead type blocks. Only in 1779 was new interest shown in the press, ironically by a representative of the Spanish crown—the newly appointed Viceroy of the Río de la Plata, Juan José de Vértiz y Salcedo. Vértiz, whom the historian and one-time Argentine president Bartolomé Mitre praised as the most progressive colonial official the colonies had seen, had the notion to create a Casa de *niños expósitos*, or orphanage, in Buenos Aires. After all, at the end of the eighteenth century the city's population (and number of orphans) was rapidly expanding with the growing importance of Buenos Aires as a commercial port. Vértiz recalled that there was a press in storage in Córdoba (confiscated from the “Ex-Jesuits,” as the viceroy called them), and thought that he could finance this humanitarian venture by establishing a print shop in Buenos Aires, in the same locale as the future orphanage.¹ He argued the case to Charles III,

¹ Bartolomé Mitre, *Ensayos históricos* (Buenos Aires: La Cultura Argentina, 1918), 200. José Torre Revello, *Orígenes de la imprenta en España y su desarrollo en América española* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Araújo,

though nearly a year after the press had arrived in Buenos Aires and printing activity was well underway. The king approved and, in proper formal style, dispatched a royal certificate to Vértiz in which he wrote that the press would be “muy util, y aun necesaria en esa Ciudad,” lavishing praise on him for “quanto habeis executado en este caso, dàndoos gracias por el notorio zelo con que os esmerais en el servicio de Dios, y mio.”² Neither the king nor the viceroy imagined they were laying the foundation for the print shop that would be the birthplace of revolutionary print media during the wars of independence.

In mid-September of 1779, Vértiz wrote to the rector of the Colegio Convictorio—formerly de Monserrat—in Córdoba to inquire about the condition of the press and to ask what it would be worth. The rector wrote back in humble tone, stating that Vértiz could of course have the press, pay the Colegio what suited his fancy, and that, since there was no inventory detailing the parts of the press, it was hard to tell what was missing. Its condition, however, was not beyond repair, which was what the viceroy was looking for. On 16 October Vértiz wrote back, saying he would take it, pay the Colegio what the Ex-Jesuits had spent in the early 1760s, and requested him to set things in order for the press’s voyage.³ Finally, in December the wooden boxes packed full of the press’s parts were loaded into a covered cart

1940), 214. Juan Canter, *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata, síntesis histórica* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de la Universidad, 1938), 38-39 notes that the intendant of Buenos Aires, Manuel Ignacio Fernández, had called for the creation of a press in February 1779, exclaiming that the viceroyalty could no longer solely depend on scribes. He requested the parts for the press to be imported from the peninsula. In 1782, over a year after the Cordoban press was installed in Buenos Aires, the intendant’s royal colleagues in Spain were still looking for the necessary elements to fulfill his request.

² A facsimile of this *real cédula*, dated 1782, is available in Canter, *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata*, 43.

³ Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, *Orígenes de la imprenta de Niños Expósitos*, with an introduction by Carlos Heras (La Plata: Taller de Impresiones Oficiales, 1941), 1-4.

owned by a certain Félix Juárez. Juárez directed his oxen along an old colonial commerce route, traversing the pampas, and arrived in Buenos Aires in February 1780.⁴

There, at the newly created orphanage-print shop named the Casa de Niños Expósitos, the viceroy financed the press's renovation, and not before long it was turning out publications. By 1810 over 1,200 publications had been printed, including letters, official edicts, textbooks, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, bills of sale, and the Río de la Plata's first newspaper.⁵ With the May revolution of 1810 the Niños Expósitos press became an instrument of the patriots. For the next decade it fired off thousands of circulars, poems, newspapers, official documents, letters, patriotic songs, and military reports, all aimed at waging rhetorical war on colonial power. By the early 1820s, the old press's type blocks were well-worn. It was time to move on. In 1824 Bernardino Rivadavia signed into law the new Imprenta del Estado, which would take over the work and some of the materials of the Niños Expósitos print shop. The old press at the shop was taken to Salta by the provincial commissioner Victorino Solá, who had recently celebrated a new contract with the up and coming writer Hilario Ascasubi.⁶ Up in Salta a remarkable occurrence of transubstantiation took place: in the late 1860s the lead type blocks taken by the Salta commissioner were melted into a few hundred bullets that would be used to fight off some of the last bands of

⁴ Ibid., 5-6. Mitre, *Ensayos históricos*, 201. According to Mitre (208), printing began four months after the press arrived in Buenos Aires. See also the documents in *Orígenes de la imprenta de Niños Expósitos*, some printed close to two years before the royal certificate approving the establishment of the press. Scholars like Mitre, Juan Canter, Carlos Heras, and Guillermo Furlong agree that it is difficult to date the first productions of the press.

⁵ Guillermo Furlong, *Historia y bibliografía de las primeras imprentas rioplatenses, 1700-1850*, vol. 3 (Buenos Aires: Librería del Plata, 1959), 14. See also examples in Carlos Heras, introduction to *Orígenes de la imprenta de Niños Expósitos*, xxi-xxiii, and Juan María Gutiérrez, *Origen y desarrollo de la enseñanza pública superior en Buenos Aires*, rev. ed. (Buenos Aires: La Cultura Argentina, 1915), 388-93. On the *Social Contract* that was printed in Buenos Aires "para instrucción de los jóvenes americanos. Con superior permiso," see Gutiérrez, 390.

⁶ Canter, *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata*, 67. Over the next three decades Ascasubi would become a key figure in the world of Rioplatense letters. More importantly, many of his compositions were written for readers and listeners of the countryside, not urban elites. See chapter 2.

gauchos (or Rioplatense cowboys), led by Felipe Varela, then wreaking havoc in the northwest.⁷ The historian and bibliographer Antonio Zinny lamented the trajectory—literally—of the type blocks of the old Niños Expósitos press. It began with the blocks as messengers of civilization, he wrote, and ended with them piercing the bodies of “barbarians.”⁸ How’s that for the journey from reading to reality?

The “biography” of the Niños Expósitos printing press, from the late colonial period and its vigorous days of revolutionary youth in Buenos Aires to its old age and death among gauchos in Salta, outlines the two key moments during which Rioplatense print culture emerges, namely the wars for independence and the most profitable years of cattle culture. The revolutionary moment, spanning from the English invasions of the region in 1806-1807 to a time of relative peace in the early 1830s, saw the birth of print culture in the Plata and a revolution in forms of communication. The second period lasted slightly longer, corresponding to peak years of Rioplatense cattle culture from the 1830s through the 1860s. Only around 1870, when state institutions in Argentina and Uruguay gained stability, did print culture become free from its roots in the wars for independence and the civil wars that were part and parcel of the rise and fall of cattle culture. If the second moment was one in which many different elements of print culture took root, like novel writing, the spread of theatrical performances based on written documents, humoristic newspapers, and essays and

⁷ Miguel Solá, *La imprenta en Salta: cien años de prensa (1824-1924) y bibliografía antigua de la imprenta salteña* (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. Porter Hnos, 1924), 42-45. See, also, Canter, *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata*, 67-68. Leandro de Sagastizábal, *La edición de libros en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1995), 29, suggests that the melted lead formed the bullets used to pursue the *montoneras* headed by the mythic Facundo Quiroga, but with Quiroga acting in the early 1830s, this claim does not fit well with the press’s fifty years of production in Salta.

⁸ Solá, 44.

poems used by lettered elites and their opponents, it was war for independence during the first moment that defined the emergence of Rioplatense print culture.

The emergence of Rioplatense print culture imparted enduring characteristics. First, writing was employed as a weapon of war, used with aims to convince and condemn, with words of independence driving a veritable printing revolution. Second, the newly sown emphasis on the importance of the printed word—promoted as a tangible sign of legitimacy—began opening up a new “public sphere” or meeting place that encouraged greater public interaction between the lettered classes and those (literate or not) who occupied lower positions in the social hierarchy, like freed blacks, women, and slaves. Public libraries and patriotic celebrations are examples of this new meeting place where people experienced this new form of communication. Lastly, print during the revolutionary moment was critical to the elaboration of new symbolic repertoires to accompany new republics, evident in *marchas patrióticas*, national anthems, coats of arms, and constitutions.

Throughout the wars of independence, the *letrados* were the ones setting the parameters that the budding culture of print would follow, which in large part would not change until the last third of the century. But even with the grip of lettered classes on the shape of print culture during the revolutionary moment, the *unlettered*, so to say, or those “sin letras,” interacted closely with this new form of communication by listening to public readings of wartime newspapers, participating in public celebrations where print was central, and by associating with new symbolic icons disseminated through print.

Many scholars have studied the history of printing in the Plata, from the appearance of the first presses forged by the hands of Guaraní Indians in the eighteenth century Jesuit missions, situated between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, to the proliferation of print shops

at the end of the nineteenth century.⁹ Their focus has been primarily bibliographic—that is, cataloguing publications produced by these presses. Historians of the period of independence in the Río de la Plata have taken into account the role of print media, but not in a way that places print culture at the center of their research. Recent work by François-Xavier Guerra, Rebecca Earle, Iván Jaksic, Paula Alonso, and others, suggests that print culture during the wars of independence is becoming a rich field of investigation and attracting the attention of scholars from various disciplines. Literary scholars have written many volumes on the literary production of *Mayo*—“independence” poetry—but attempts to place the written culture of this period into the larger context of Rioplatense print culture have been absent from their debates.

On the broader subject of print in Latin America, the most widely-cited figure is Benedict Anderson. Anderson’s model for understanding the connections between print media and incipient national communities during the wars of independence has been a constant point of reference for scholars dealing with this period of Latin American history. This very fact makes his argument a powerful one to overcome, but it does not take away from its fundamental flaws. In a word, he is wrong about the *when* print communities formed in Latin America, and off the mark when it comes to understanding how newspapers and other print media brought people together or pushed them apart in during the wars of independence.¹⁰ Newspapers and other print media did play a significant part in garnering

⁹ On the Guaraní presses in the *misiones*, see Mitre, *Ensayos históricos*, 181-99, Canter, *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata*, 15-26, and Torre Revello, *Orígenes de la imprenta*, 117-22.

¹⁰ He does not engage the very papers that he suggests were uniting people in print communities—or imagined ones—nor practices of reading these papers or other ways in which people interacted with print. So while interesting and often invoked, Anderson’s template for the formation of print culture is in need of revision. For recent assessments see John Charles Chasteen, introduction to *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, eds. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), ix-xxv,

support for the patriot cause and stirring feelings of community, but, in contrast to Anderson's claim, this came only during and after the wars of independence, and through a variety of ways of reading.

By looking at a sample of oral and written components of print culture during the wars of independence in the Plata, we will see that the emergence of this new form of communication is a story that begins with words and wars, is elaborated at patriotic celebrations, and is further transmitted with the creation of repertoires of national symbols spread through print. This story not only helps to understand a variety of reading practices whereby print affects behaviors and senses of identity. It also points to the beginning of a relationship between print and the public sphere in the Río de la Plata that to this day manifests itself in a uniquely clear public concern with reading and writing. If the revolutionary moment defined this emergence, the reach of the wars, the notion of "independence," and the initial efforts to create "national" and "republican" discourses were in turn indebted to the words, celebrations, and symbols that gave life to print culture in the Plata.

Words and Wars of Independence

The history of Montevideo's first printing press is not as exciting as that of the "Ex-Jesuit" press that ended up fighting gauchos, but it was a wartime press from the start. When the British invaded the Río de la Plata in 1806 and 1807, they were driven out of Buenos Aires to the surprise of all. In the rival port city of Montevideo, British soldiers did not have to worry about women pouring boiling oil on them from balconies above, as was the case in

and Claudio Lomnitz, "Nationalism as a Practical System: Benedict Anderson's Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America," in *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America*, eds. Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 329-59.

Buenos Aires, and were thus able to lend protection to the more tranquil venture of establishing a print shop. In his colorful and casual style, the contemporary observer and self-taught Uruguayan man of letters Isidoro de María relates “public opinion” toward the press in the early nineteenth century: “¡Bah! De eso [the press] no había que hablar... Para alguna cartilla o *almanaque*, bastaba y sobraba con la *fábrica* de los niños expósitos de la capital del virreinato... para enseñar el *cristo* a uno que otro muchacho...”¹¹ But things changed in 1807. “Cuadró la casualidad, o la cola del diablo,” De María tells us, referring to the establishment of the British print shop; “su primer alumbramiento fue un periodiquín titulado *The Southern Star*... El 23 de mayo de 1807 fue el del alumbramiento, pero el chico tuvo poca vida, porque espichó el 4 de junio del mismo año.”¹² The press the English brought was only active for a couple months, yet in this short stint its writers attempted to introduce a new mercantilist attitude toward commerce in the port city and discredit the Spanish crown’s capacity to rule the colonies.¹³ So effectively incendiary were the pages of the weekly *Southern Star*, published in English and Spanish, that the Audiencia of the Río de la Plata charged Mariano Moreno—one of the intellectual heroes of independence—with the task of writing a refutation of the paper’s claims. Given that he agreed with most of them, this put Moreno in a difficult position, which he got out of by advising that silence was the best way to put an end to the spread of the *Southern Star*’s propaganda.¹⁴

¹¹ Isidoro de María, *Montevideo antiguo, tradiciones y recuerdos*, vol. 2 (Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Previsión Social, 1957), 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, 61-62. *The Southern Star / La Estrella del Sur*, facsimile ed., with a prologue by Ariosto D. González (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1942).

¹³ Juan Canter, introduction to *Gazeta de Montevideo*, facsimile ed., vol. 1, Biblioteca de Impresos Raros Americanos (Montevideo: Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad de la República, 1948), XXXIX, XLIX.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, L.

The Audiencia did not leave it at that. In June 1807 it issued an edict, published of course by the Niños Expósitos press, which prohibited the sale, possession, or reading in public or private of the *Southern Star*, judged to be the most “pernicious,” “seductive,” and effective weapon for the achievement of its “evil” designs.¹⁵ Anyone who came into contact with the paper or had knowledge of others who held in possession or read the damned *Southern Star* and did not immediately report this to the proper authorities would be judged a “traydor al Rey, y al Estado, y se les impondrán irremisiblemente las penas correspondientes á este atroz delito...”¹⁶ Words of independence were not taken lightly. With the Niños Expósitos print shop doing a fair amount of business, and with its presses in need of spare type blocks, the prospect of acquiring the Southern Star press, abandoned by the British when they left the Plata, looked promising. The war between England and Spain made the shipment of new parts from Europe to the Plata impossible. Moreover, the Audiencia considered that if they could wrench the press from Montevideo, they could put an end to the threat of malicious propaganda being spread in print in the future. So in September 1807 the Southern Star press, having been disassembled and packed up, was taken by boat across the river to Buenos Aires. There it gave new life to the Niños Expósitos shop, soon to be printing revolutionary material again (not what the Real Audiencia had in mind when purchasing the press), which made its way back into the *Banda Oriental*.

The newspapers that appeared in the Río de la Plata during the wars of independence constitute our first stop. During the wars, daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers sprang up on both sides of the Plata river, and not just in the port cities of Buenos Aires or Montevideo.

¹⁵ *Bando de la Real Audiencia de Buenos-Ayres*, 12 de junio de 1807, BNAr, Sala de Tesoro, Impresos de los Niños Expósitos.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Interior provinces acquired printing presses and produced newspapers, broadsheets, poems, and so on. Rebecca Earle has recently explored the role of the press—focusing on newspapers—during independence, devoting particular attention to the cases of Mexico, New Granada, Chile, and Peru.¹⁷ Earle concludes that printing in these areas, including Mexico, where numerous printing houses were turning out publications in the first two decades of the century, only began to develop following the crisis of the Spanish crown, and thus did not play a central or causal part in the wars. The growing importance of printing, rather, was part of a larger evolution of political culture.¹⁸ In line with Earle’s argument, it would be an exaggeration and an oversimplification to claim that the Rioplatense press *caused* the May Revolution of 1810 and the wars that ensued. But in contrast to what Earle has found regarding other cases in Spanish America, the press, especially newspapers, in the Río de la Plata did indeed play the part of a main character in inciting the ill will between patriots and royalists, in shaping the outcomes of battles and the behaviors and values of Rioplatense inhabitants, and in changing the ways information was shared and spread during the period of independence.

For nearly a decade before the local Junta Provisional in Buenos Aires declared its representative authority over the provinces of the Plata in May 1810, the Niños Expósitos press had a monopoly on printing in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, publishing edicts, letters, school texts, public announcements, odes, and the region’s first newspaper, the *Telégrafo Mercantil*. With the English invasions of the Plata and the crisis of the Spanish monarchy, politically charged publications grew in number and severity. A few examples of

¹⁷ Rebecca Earle, “The Role of Print in the Spanish American Wars of Independence,” in *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. Iván Jaksic (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 2002), 9-33.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

this new political spirit of print include a “succinct memoir” of the English invasions, with attention to the “inmortales guerreros defensores de la patria,” reprints of sermons by the “Josef Bonaparte, intruso rey de España,” and poems singing praise of Ferdinand VII and hatred of France.¹⁹ It was not difficult, then, for the sole press in Buenos Aires to change from being a royal press to a wartime press and instrument for the new governing Junta. Its new role became quickly evident, publishing on 28 May 1810 the announcement of the removal of then viceroy Cisneros, along with the Junta’s first *proclama*.²⁰ A little over a week later, Mariano Moreno’s *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* entered circulation and served as the mouthpiece of the Junta. The *Gazeta* was the longest-lived paper of the revolutionary moment, lasting until September 1821, but its printed version was not very accessible to the masses it hoped to reach.²¹ As Tulio Halperín Donghi has argued, the leaders of the May revolution took their cues from an urban population in Buenos Aires that had organized itself to fight against the British a few years back. So when the *Gazeta* appeared, with aims to instill a revolutionary spirit in the denizens of Buenos Aires, it was, like the project of the intellectual heroes of the May revolution, more “imitative than creative.”²² But despite the imitative quality of the paper, its words of independence were unique insofar as the new ways of reading they inspired, bringing disparate social groups together.

For the unlettered who could not read the *Gazeta* in print, its messages were publicly pronounced in churches and squares, and often in cafes and *pulperías* (country stores), too. In

¹⁹ See Furlong, *Historia y bibliografía de las primeras imprentas rioplatenses* for a catalog of the publications produced by the Niños Expósitos shop, in particular 142-43, 141, 228-30, 216-17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 240-44, 321-25.

²¹ Tulio Halperín Donghi, “Argentine Counterpoint: Rise of the Nation, Rise of the State,” in Castro-Klarén and Chasteen, 41.

²² *Ibid.*, 40-42.

the same way citizens professed loyalty to their faith in church and learned religious doctrine, they likewise needed to learn about the Junta in order to show due reverence, or so goes the circular sent by the Junta to the provincial dioceses. Since many rural inhabitants would be unaware of the changes taking place in Buenos Aires, and since many lived in conditions that did not facilitate reading the paper, the Junta ordered that priests “en los días festivos, después de misa, convoquen la feligresía y le lean la *Gaceta de Buenos Aires*...”²³ This same vein of thought was present in Bernardo Monteagudo’s call for “funcionarios publicos, ciudadanos ilustrados, sexo delicado y americanos todos” to read the paper to workers, artisans, and soldiers. “No son las armas las que han de perfeccionar nuestra constitución,” wrote Monteagudo in the 27 December 1811 issue. All citizens, he argues, must understand their duties (to the patria) in order to know and exercise their rights, but this hope will not be possible without educating those “cuyo humillante patrimonio ha sido siempre la ignorancia. Ojalá se dedicara algún celoso patriota a formar un catecismo político para la instrucción general. Entretanto no tenemos otro recurso, que los papeles públicos.” What needs to happen, concludes Monteagudo, is for the central government to impose on local mayors “la estrecha obligación de que en los días festivos reúnan en un punto aparente a todos los artesanos y menestrales, para leerles y explicarles los papeles públicos, y que los jueces foráneos practiquen de acuerdo con los curas esta misma diligencia con los labradores y gente del campo.”²⁴ Military leaders, likewise, should take care to have papers read to soldiers wherever they are stationed. Public readings of this type were not entirely new; they had occurred during the colonial era. The newness resided in the *Gazeta*’s regularity and

²³ Narciso Binayán, ed., *Ideario de Mayo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz, 1960), 137. This volume is a compilation of documents dating from 1810-16.

²⁴ *Gaceta de Buenos Aires*, facsimile ed., vol. 3 (Buenos Aires: Compañía Sud-Americana de Billetes de Banco, 1911), 71.

duration, and, more importantly, in its revolutionary content and in the reactions it provoked, specifically in the form of print media.

One of the earliest of these reactions came from the *Gazeta de Montevideo*, started in October 1810. The royalist holdout of Montevideo had been without a print shop since the Southern Star press went over to the other side, so to say, three years earlier. Facing the growing threats of patriot forces from Buenos Aires and the cattle hands led by the caudillo José Artigas (who fought as much for independence from Napoleonic Spain as from the influence of Buenos Aires), and confronted with the propaganda filling the pages of the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* and edicts printed by the Niños Expósitos, the Cabildo of Montevideo decided that it needed a new press to combat the revolutionary words. Government leaders made a plea to the “Infanta” Carlota Joaquina, stationed in Río de Janeiro.²⁵ The *prospecto* of the paper—a common feature of many of the period’s newspaper sources, which served as a sort of introduction to the writers’ purpose—sheds light on how the deal was struck between Carlota and the Cabildo. In light of the recent “conmociones populares” across the river, one reads, the loyalty to Ferdinand VII demonstrated by Montevideo (or its residents) made it the subject of special recognition by the court of Brazil and Carlota. In order to make public the laudable character of Montevideo and Montevideanos, Carlota sent a new press, baptized ordinarily enough as “La Carlota.”²⁶ As the *prospecto* goes on to say, and as epistolary exchanges between the Infanta and the Cabildo members manifest in the 13 October 1810 edition, Carlota was “interested in

²⁵ Carlota, daughter of the Spanish king Charles IV, had been married at age ten to the Portuguese prince João, later João VI as king. With the Napoleonic invasions of the Iberian peninsula, she accompanied her husband and the rest of the royal Braganza family to Brazil. From Rio de Janeiro, she showed eagerness to participate in politics and paid extra special attention to the Río de la Plata.

²⁶ *Gazeta de Montevideo*, facsimile ed., vol. 1 (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 1948), 3 [8 October 1810].

preserving the dominions of her august brother.”²⁷ Thus, the new press was designed from its beginning to contribute to fighting the rebels in Buenos Aires and protecting the colonies for the dethroned Spanish monarch.

In this spirit, every Thursday the local government would publish the *Gazeta* with news from Spain and its kingdom, royal edicts, and “quanto pueda interesar á los verdaderos Patriotas.”²⁸ In an early appropriation of the word *patriotas*—a term that would soon become the code name for those across America opposed to the royalists—the writers of the paper hoped to convince their readers to continue supporting the crown and remain strong in the face of the changing tides coming from across the Plata. “Tal es precisamente el objeto que se propone el Gobierno en la obra que se os anuncia...,” continues the prospecto; “Reunir quanto succeda hasta el restablecimiento de la tranquilidad del Virreynato, y publicarlo sin adorno y con la sencillez que caracteriza la verdad, para que veais el retrato de vuestro verdadero Character.”²⁹ If words were capable of causing a big enough stir in Buenos Aires to jeopardize the rule of the king, then words from Montevideo should have been capable of putting out the fire.

Words, writing, and print were precisely the theme of a short essay entitled “Sobre la prensa” that appears in the 6 November 1810 issue of the *Gazeta de Montevideo*. In this piece, a certain Fileno argues in a string of syllogisms that the *word* is the greatest form of exercising moral order, that writing is a way of fixing words, and that printing is the perfection of writing. According to this logic, claims Fileno, printing is a “moral” activity,

²⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

necessary for the proper maintenance of human societies.³⁰ Given the importance of the word, writing, and print, “deduciremos, que la escritura, y la imprenta no pueden servir para la murmuración, y la calumnia” against a person’s moral character or, perhaps more urgently, one’s government. A free press should exist since it is “el movil mas activo para la ilustracion, y aun de la opinion publica,” but “la imprenta debe ser libre como necesaria para la interesante parte de nuestra civilizacion” (that is, the part opposed to the trash emanating from Buenos Aires). When the free press is employed to speak ill of people, “buenas costumbres,” or “la desencia del gobierno,” then it loses its moral character.³¹ Fileno’s words, and those of other authors of the *Gazeta de Montevideo*, were part of the project to strike back rhetorically at the news coming from Buenos Aires and other parts of America that were on the verge of declaring self-rule. The *Gazeta*, however, was not the only paper printed in Montevideo or Uruguay during the revolutionary moment.

From the establishment of the Southern Star press in 1807 to the signing of the constitution in 1830 (this year was one of short-lived peace in Uruguay), close to sixty different newspapers were published.³² Even though most of these only lasted a few months to a year, and while it was not until 1826 that printing presses produced newspapers outside of Montevideo, the proliferation of newspapers was significant for the war-torn Banda Oriental, as was the fact that by 1830 nineteen print shops had been or were still printing newspapers and other print media in Uruguay. Between 1826 and 1830, seven presses sprang up outside the city of Montevideo. The parts and type blocks for these presses, as well as for

³⁰ Ibid., 42 [6 November 1810].

³¹ Ibid., 42-45.

³² Antonio Praderio, *Indice cronológico de la prensa periódica del Uruguay, 1807-52* (Montevideo: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay, Facultad de Humanidades, 1962), 3-40.

the new ones appearing across the river, came from a complex combination of sources. Many components were inherited or bought from print shops that folded and that had acquired materials from the U.S. and, after the wars, Europe. Other parts were made from scratch by carpenters and ironworkers.

Meanwhile, back in Buenos Aires the presses were still hot, and the word *independence* was becoming more present in revolutionary rhetoric. In July 1812, the Niños Expósitos press began printing a new weekly paper—*El Grito del Sud*, or “Cry of the South.” The *Grito* was the creation of the recently-founded Sociedad Patriótica y Literaria de Buenos Aires (not an insignificant name for a group devoted to joining written culture to patriotic causes), made up of members like Félix Ignacio Frías, Bernardo Monteagudo, and Francisco José Planes, with the leadership changing each month. The paper came off the press with guns blazing, as could be read on the first page, dated “Año 1812, tercero de nuestra libertad.”³³ Opposed to every word printed in royalist papers like the “insipid rags” of the *Gazeta de Montevideo*, and without reservation to speak openly of independence, the prospecto opens bluntly: “El que piense deribar la causa de la miseria de los hombres, de otro origen que el de la esclavitud y la ignorancia, ó es un inbecil estúpido, ó un impostor impudente.”³⁴ As the prospecto continues, there is no mistaking who the target of this statement is: the Spanish crown, responsible for bringing slavery, misery, and sadness to America. “Pero ya es llegado el tiempo de que se desagравie del todo á la naturaleza oprimida,” the writer goes on, “y que entremos al goce y ejercicio de aquellos sagrados

³³ *El Grito del Sud*, facsimile ed., with a prologue by Guillermo Furlong S.J. and a preliminary study by Enrique de Gandía, *Periódicos de la Epoca de la Revolución de Mayo*, (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1961), 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47. The 27 October 1812 issue (173-80) directly addresses what was printed in “esos insulsos papelorios,” that is, in the *Gazeta de Montevideo* (173).

derechos de que nos privaron los tiranos.” In the good liberal spirit, these rights are enumerated as property, in the first place, liberty, and security. If the readers are disposed to make an effort “digno de los habitantes de la América” to maintain what was achieved on 25 May 1810, then the miserable yoke can be cast aside forever. Of course reading *El Grito* was crucial to keeping the May spirit alive (or etching its meaning into tradition) and remaining free from misery. After the scathing attack on Spain and what the colonial years have done to America, the writer concludes, “Hé aquí como sin pensar se ha bosquejado el plan de un periodico que algunos individuos de la sociedad patriótica del Río de la Plata, y sus provincias unidas han meditado dar al público, bien convencidos de que es acaso éste el medio único de propagar los conocimientos y las luces por el comun del pueblo.” The printed word again is crucial to disseminating the key themes of the *Grito*, a newspaper “of necessity”: knowledge, liberty, and a set of rights supposedly available to all inhabitants of the colonies.³⁵

The *Grito*, like the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* started by Mariano Moreno, was written by lettered elites, and lettered elites formed one of its main audiences. The epigraph in Latin that is at the head of every edition is sign enough to suggest that the paper was not for the “average” reader.³⁶ That said, the authors of the *Grito* were aware of the need to reach those who could not understand the epigraph or, in many instances, even read the paper’s contents. It was sold outside the city of Buenos Aires, which allowed for its messages to travel a certain distance in the interior provinces. Like the *Gazeta* and the decree announcing the

³⁵ Ibid., 48-50.

³⁶ The epigraph, from Tacitus’s first book of Histories, reads, “Rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire qua velis, et qua sentias, dicere licet,” or, “It is at rare moments of good fortune when one can think how one wants and say what one thinks,” an appropriate choice of words for the moment of independence.

importance of a free press, read publicly on 1 December 1811, the *Grito*, too, was read aloud to crowds in cafés and on occasion in church.³⁷ In the 21 July 1812 issue, the editors even published a patriotic song titled “*Marcha patriótica con sus notas para inteligencia de la gente vulgar*,” followed indeed by five pages of notes.³⁸ How accessible they were to “gente vulgar” is another question. If none of these measures helped the masses to absorb the *Grito*’s messages, then they could drink in the patriotic spirit with a stop at the Niños Expósitos print shop to check out a portrait of the “patriota republicano” and “magistrado sabio” Mariano Moreno that was for sale there—as advertised in the 5 January edition of 1813.³⁹ They may even catch on to the wonders of the printed word while there. But for all the hype about liberty and ending slavery, some pages of the *Grito* spoke strong contradictions. These are clearly illustrated by the following advertisements from the 27 October 1812 and 15 December 1812 issues: “Quien quisiere comprar un criado quintero, como de edad de 20 años, vease con el presbitero D. Domingo Cano Cortés;” “Se vende una negra llamada Joaquina como de 18 años con leche, en 350 ps fs, libras de escritura y alcabala...”⁴⁰ These words, too, were part of *independence*.

During 1815, a year before independence was formally declared for the provinces that would become Argentina, a handful of short-lived newspapers were started that called for independence once and for all. One of these was the appropriately titled *El Independiente*. Like the *Grito del Sud* and the *Gazeta de Montevideo*, the *Independiente* paid tribute to the

³⁷ Enrique de Gandía, preliminary study to *El Grito del Sud*, 16.

³⁸ *El Grito del Sud*, 63-68.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 255. Curiously, the patriotic exhortation that is part of the *aviso* for the portrait ends with a quote in Latin.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 180, 236.

power of the printed word in its prospecto, recognizing that the paper's value relied on "el arte divino de escribir dando un ser durable á los conocimientos humanos..."⁴¹ The prospecto, attributed to Mariano Moreno's brother Manuel, highlights history as the school from which all societies must learn in order to evolve. It is up to newspapers to record and recount history, and to disseminate "useful knowledge." By doing so, they protect citizens' rights and keep government in check. "En suma," writes Moreno, "los Periodicos han llegado á ser la piedra de toque de la instrucción nacional de un Pueblo... No há sido la distancia á que está colocada la América del centro de los conocimientos, la que há retardado su ilustración, tanto como la falta de buenos periodicos..." In addition to the paper's discursive reference points of politics, education, liberalism, constitutionalism, and hatred for Spain and Spaniards, Moreno sought to address questions "of the moment" affecting the provinces, like declaring independence. He rounds out the introduction to the paper with a final emphasis on the tasks of words as weapons: as long as Spanish tyranny plagues the provinces, he remarks, the only security lies in putting an end to the obstacles that retain the patria in the condition of slavery, and printed words of independence were paramount to this enterprise.⁴²

The *Independiente* lasted only four months, despite its editor's goal to write in a style accessible to all types of readers and claims that the paper would live as long as a free press existed.⁴³ A similar venture of the same period was the newspaper *Los Amigos de la Patria y de la Juventud*, a monthly that lasted six months. The introduction to the paper stated its main concern to be education. But the editor was more inclined to provide space for (French)

⁴¹ *El Independiente*, facsimile ed., with an introduction by Guillermo Furlong and a preliminary study by Enrique de Gandía, *Periódicos de la Epoca de la Revolución de Mayo*, 4 (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1961), 33.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 33-36, 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41.

literary selections, usually illustrative of some moral point, and for questions dealing with war, even though the paper was an advocate of peace. This presentation aimed to temper the hot attitudes coming from papers like *El Independiente*.⁴⁴ Privileged among the *Amigos*' pages were also discussions of the French army, the military wisdom of Napoleon, and the need for discipline among the soldiers (implicitly directed to the patriot troops). The short lifespan of papers like *El Independiente* and *Los Amigos de la Patria* complicates assessment of their impact on readers. Both were envisioned to reach beyond the closed circles of lettered elites, but with few issues in circulation, the *Independiente*'s epigraphs in Latin, and the *Amigos*' urban tone, it is hard to imagine their words taking hold in the countryside or among illiterate city dwellers. Further research on newspaper publications of these years could help paint a clearer picture of how they were consumed. Nevertheless, these papers, along with a host of others with similar characteristics, were central to the spread of information during the revolutionary moment. As such, they were part of print culture's first inroads to opening a new public sphere linking lettered elites to the popular classes. And in light of the claim that revolutionary elites developed a discourse that was more imitative than innovative, it is fair to say that the words of independence in their newspapers are representative of a certain spirit that permeated many strands of society in the Rioplatense provinces.

Throughout the revolutionary decade stretching from May 1810 to the defeat of the weak forces of central authority operating in Buenos Aires in 1820, more than forty newspapers (printed by the Niños Expósitos and other, new presses) appeared in the provinces that would form Argentina. In the following years leading up to the caudillo Juan

⁴⁴ Enrique de Gandía, preliminary study to *Los Amigos de la Patria y de la Juventud*, facsimile ed, with an introduction by Guillermo Furlong, *Periódicos de la Epoca de la Revolución de Mayo*, 5 (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1961) 19.

Manuel de Rosas's rise to power in 1829, almost 200 more newspapers entered the scene, eighty of which were published and circulated outside Buenos Aires.⁴⁵ Coupled with the numbers of papers, official edicts and proclamations, and broadsheets that were printed in the Banda Oriental during the revolutionary moment, these numerous periodical publications—many of which were state-sponsored—initiated a printing revolution. For lettered elites eager to spread republican values, the press became a symbol of liberal progress, with the printed word lending legitimacy to their messages, if not their endeavor. Newspapers were key messengers of words of independence and framers of Rioplatense print culture, but they were not the only ones. They had help from other elements, like new public libraries and patriotic parties where print enjoyed a privileged place.

Print Culture, Public Places, and Patriotic Parties

The creation of the Río de la Plata's first public libraries aimed to broaden the reach of print by opening a new public sphere where greater public interaction could take place between lettered culture and popular classes—the masses whom lettered elites hoped to enlist in their wars for independence. The first of these libraries to appear was the Biblioteca Pública de Buenos Aires, which became the foundation of the future national library. There is debate on whether or not Mariano Moreno deserves credit as the *founder* of the library, but something most scholars of Argentina agree on is the simple fact that setting up a public

⁴⁵ Juan Rómulo Fernández, *Historia del periodismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Librería Perlado, 1943), 219-26. Hundreds of *bandos* and *proclamas*, which Fernández considers as types of periodical publications (38), were printed during the revolutionary moment. Examples of these have been preserved in the Yale library's Latin American Pamphlet Collection, microfiches 8012007, 8012009, 8012011, 8012014, 8012015, 8012016, 8012018, 8012023, 8012024, 8012025, 8012026, 8012027, 8012049, the Sala Uruguay's bound volumes of *Documentos históricos* in Uruguay's Biblioteca Nacional, and in the BNAr, Sala de Tesoro collections of *bandos*, *proclamas*, *prospectos*, and other loose-leaf publications.

library in times of war was a significant symbolic event.⁴⁶ It is also clear that the creation of the library would not have been possible without the support of the Junta Provisional.

Fortunately for the library project, the Junta applied the same backing as it did with Moreno's *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*, one of the papers leading the rhetorical fight first against the Napoleonic invasion, and then against the crown and its royalists supporters in America.

Moreno took charge of requesting book donations for the library's collection, as well as financial contributions from those who had the money and were willing to give to this new cause of "public enlightenment." By the end of 1810, he had raised a considerable sum to pay librarians and gathered close to 4,000 books, maps, and other materials for the initial collection. Thus, while supported by the Junta and organized by its secretary Moreno, the creation of the library was in effect a public effort made possible by the donations and contributions of Rioplatense inhabitants, albeit lettered elites.⁴⁷ By buying into the public library, they took out stock in the new revolutionary culture of print that was advertised on a daily basis in the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* and other patriot papers. In this sense, and in line with Ricardo Levene's patriotic praise of Moreno, the library was indeed a symbol of the May Revolution and of the emergence of a new form of communication. It represented the effort (visible in poetry and, later, novels) to stake a claim on intellectual independence, a metaphorical imperative to accompany the political independence patriots sought.⁴⁸

After multiple changes to the date for opening the library, things were finally ready in March 1812. A week before the inaugural day, advertisements of the event were sent out in a

⁴⁶ See, for example, José Armando Seco, "Los primeros tiempos de la Biblioteca Pública," *Anuario de Historia Argentina, año 1941* (1942): 602-05 and Ricardo Levene, *El fundador de la Biblioteca Pública de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, 1938).

⁴⁷ Levene, 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 34, 64.

circular to priests, military figures, judges, the administrator of post offices, and other government officials. They were charged with notifying others and requested to attend this act, which should be celebrated with “la dignidad lucimiento y satisfaccion que corresponde a tan util establecimiento.”⁴⁹ The inauguration took place on 16 March 1812, and it was a well-attended public act, complete with a military band, lofty speeches, and the presence of the Junta’s central political figures, all welcoming the new public place where people could mingle with print. Juan Manuel Beruti, who lived through the English invasions of Buenos Aires, the wars for independence, and the Rosas years, tells us in his rare *Memorias curiosas* that “infinitos ciudadanos” were present at the opening ceremony.⁵⁰ News about the event in the *Gazeta* is more reserved. A short note that appeared on 13 March to remind readers of the upcoming celebration was the only mention made of the whole affair.⁵¹ The same brevity characterized the news of the library in the 17 March number of *El Censor*, a weekly that was an offshoot of the *Gazeta* and was considered an official publication, as well. Curiously, the note announcing the opening of the new library—an institution meant to embody the liberal spirit of May—was paired with an advertisement for the sale of a slave who knew “algo de cosina” by the secretary of the Cabildo.⁵²

The foundation of the Biblioteca Pública in Montevideo was a much more dramatic event, celebrated with more pomp and a wealth of symbolic performances, and inseparable from the 1816 *fiestas mayas* (May celebrations). These fiestas, which were also called *fiestas cívicas*, were modeled on those that first took place in Buenos Aires from 23-26 May 1813.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 115-16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 61, 114. Juan Manuel Beruti, *Memorias curiosas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2001), 210.

⁵¹ *Gaceta de Buenos Aires*, vol. 3, 146.

⁵² *El Censor*, facsimile ed., with an introduction by Guillermo Furlong S.J. and a preliminary study by Enrique de Gandía (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1961), 92.

These were declared an annual patriotic celebration at the General Assembly meetings in Buenos Aires that May. The preface to the legislation of the fiestas reveals their intended meaning: “Es un deber de los hombres libres inmortalizar el día del nacimiento de la patria, y recordar al pueblo venidero el feliz momento en que el brazo de los mas intrépidos quebró el ídolo y derribó el altar de la tiranía.”⁵³ This held true for the fiestas in Montevideo, too. They were meant to celebrate the *beginning* of the nation’s new history in the process of being defined, in part by print, and in part by ceremonies. But if similar to the fiestas of Buenos Aires celebrated in 1813, the fiestas in Montevideo from 24-26 May 1816 were nonetheless recorded with more zeal in a unique document simply titled *Descripción de las fiestas cívicas celebradas en la capital de los Pueblos Orientales*.

The anonymous author of their description claimed that they were of such a caliber that “el deseo de transmitirlos á noticia, y satisfaccion de todos los pueblos, ha inspirado el concepto de hacer de ellas un breve diseño...”⁵⁴ This document begins with the relation of the occurrences on 24 May, when patriots decorated their houses and buildings in the city with “tricolor” flags—Artiguista flags that represented Artigas and the separation of the Banda Oriental from Buenos Aires. The four corners of the *plaza principal* (what is today the Plaza Matriz) were adorned with arches made of laurel branches and flowers. Four

⁵³ *El Redactor de la Asamblea de 1813*, facsimile ed. (Buenos Aires: La Nación, 1913), 30, 35-36. School children were important participants in the fiestas, often singing or reciting patriotic verses around a pyramid and welcoming the rays of the sun—homage paid to the Incan symbol that is part of both the flags of Uruguay and Argentina, and Argentine and Uruguayan coats of arms since 1810. In 1813, during the same May meetings of the General Assembly, Vicente López y Planes’s patriotic verses were recognized as the “national anthem.” In subsequent years, the annual celebrations included many of the same acts, spanning from 23 May to 26 May: children singing patriotic lines, dances, fireworks, theatrical representations, large meals, a Te Deum, and other good civic expressions. See José Antonio Wilde, *Buenos Aires desde 70 años atrás* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1960), 196-97.

⁵⁴ *Descripción de las fiestas cívicas celebradas en Montevideo, Mayo de 1816, and Oración inaugural pronunciada por Larrañaga en la apertura de la Biblioteca Pública de Montevideo, 1816*, facsimile ed., with an introduction by Edmundo M. Narancio (Montevideo: Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad de la República, 1951), 6.

broadsheets with patriotic verses hung from these arches. The first one read: “Ciudadanos: entonad / Himno al astro memorable, / Que abrió la era saludable / De nuestra felicidad: / ... / Y renovemos la empresa / De exterminar la opresión.” The second set of verses followed in the same tone, again emphasizing the claim that “América ha postrado / Al Iberico leon.” The third and fourth broadsheets’ verses go beyond merely singing praise to the Orientales who have thrown off the colonial yoke and instead refer to the importance of inscribing the incipient collective history of the Banda Oriental. Upon reading the verses of these last two broadsheets, passersby who feel part of the “gran pueblo del Oriente / ... libre e independiente” should remember “Mayo divino” and consider the feats of the Oriental people as laudable as those of Greece and Rome, and as a beacon for fellow Americans fighting in wars for independence.⁵⁵

These publicly displayed printed verses did not go unaccompanied that day. From 7:00 A.M. to noon there was music and food, and around 8:00 A.M. school children from the Escuela de la Patria in Montevideo entered the scene, prepared to sing patriotic songs. After lunch prisoners were released from jails, and, partaking in the day’s ceremonies, “aparecieron en la plaza principal algunas danzas de negros... emulándose unos á otros en la decencia y modo de explicar su festiva gratitud al dia...”⁵⁶ Later that afternoon government officials, soldiers, and denizens attended a church ceremony, and at night watched fireworks and a good “liberal” tragedy. Printed words appeared again the next day, though engraved in a symbolic pyramid rather than impressed on broadsheets. The pyramid’s verses celebrate 25 May as the day that “shackles and tyranny disappeared.” More important than recognizing the date as the beginning of independence for the region was the notion of creating a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

common history that *started* on that day: “Himnos cantad á su eternal memoria, / Y su nombre gravad en vuestra historia.” School children encircled the pyramid at dawn. In proper patriotic spirit and saluting the sun, they intoned a song that vocalized the gist of the monument’s verses—thanks to that glorious day in May, oppression was ended for Americans, and since then birds, children, and Orientales sing praise to the great patria. Activities continued throughout the afternoon and night, with another theater performance, food, and dance into the next morning.⁵⁷

On 26 May the school children again huddled around the pyramid and chanted their patriotic songs from 10:00 A.M. until noon, at which time the Cabildo members augustly announced the inauguration of the Biblioteca Pública. The priest, political representative of Artigas, and newly appointed director of the Biblioteca Pública, Dámaso Antonio Larrañaga, gave the inaugural speech, in which he proclaimed that the doors of Minerva (the goddess of arts and crafts used by Larrañaga to represent the library) would open for all who were present: “Toda clase de personas tiene un derecho y tiene una libertad de poseer todas las ciencias por nobles que sean. Todos podrán tener acceso á este depósito augusto de ella. Venid todos, desde el Africano mas rústico hasta el mas culto Europeo.”⁵⁸ Aside from a place where citizens could “become enlightened,” the new library would serve as bedrock for republican ideals. That the library offered a new place of learning for Orientales was true, but uncertainty about attendance and the beginning of the period of Brazilian and Portuguese occupation of the Banda Oriental in 1817 suggest that this quality was more rhetorical than

⁵⁷ Ibid., 9-11, 13-14. One of the works performed at the theater was Bartolomé Hidalgo’s *Sentimientos de un patriota*.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

concrete.⁵⁹ Recent scholarship on Afro-Uruguayans and lettered culture, however, lends weight to the notion that white males were not the only ones capable of taking advantage of the library's collection.⁶⁰ Just who made use of the new institution and how often are difficult questions to answer. Even so, the foundation of the library marks a key moment in the development of print culture in the Plata because it clearly illustrates the value lettered elites placed on disseminating print. This was not the moment when crowds filled the few rooms of the library to peruse its shelves, but that time would come.

Following Larrañaga's inaugural speech, the trusty school children sang the "Himno a la apertura de la Biblioteca." With proper patriotic passion, the hymn linked May and the wars to the public good that would come out of the institution of the library. "Ya se abren las puertas / De la ilustración," sang the kids, "Del libre sistema / Fundamento estable / Será el memorable / Civil instituto, / Dó á sus tiernos hijos / La patria prepara, / De la ciencia cara / Cultivado fruto." In the afternoon small charities were distributed to those in need who had shown "amor á la causa del país," the hope being that the people would inscribe "con caracteres indelebles en el fondo de sus sensibles almas" this day commemorating 25 May.⁶¹ The night ended with fireworks and, according to the anonymous author who recorded the events, the happiness of all who shared a common passion for the patria, fit for print.

Both the description of the fiestas and Larrañaga's inaugural speech were published in 1816 and sent throughout the Banda Oriental. Artigas acknowledged receipt of copies of

⁵⁹ De María, vol. 1, 122, tells us that the library had 2,000 volumes by 1818.

⁶⁰ See *Jacinto Ventura de Molina en los orígenes de la escritura afro-latinoamericana*, ed. William Acree and Alex Borucki (Montevideo: Ediciones Linardi y Risso, forthcoming), Alejandro Gortázar, "Del aullido a la escritura: voces negras en el imaginario nacional," in *Derechos de memoria: nación e independencia en América Latina*, ed. Hugo Achugar (Montevideo: Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2003), 189-263, and Gonzalo Abella, *Mitos, leyendas y tradiciones de la Banda Oriental* (Montevideo: BetumSan Ediciones, 2001), 49-103.

⁶¹ *Descripción de las fiestas*, 15-16.

both, musing that the fiestas and the library were means to properly form men who would bring glory and happiness to the nation.⁶² The new public arena opened by print culture saw greater interaction among social classes, literate or not. Clara Paladino highlights this point, remarking that it is through the *fiesta* and the written expression of elites regarding these public gatherings that other sectors of the population can be approached. “Es en la fiesta,” she maintains, “donde se manifiestan más claramente los intentos de integración, donde pueden rastrearse las distintas voluntades e intenciones, muchas veces enfrentadas, de los distintos sectores de la población.”⁶³ First with words of war and now with words of patriotic celebrations, print was becoming an embedded social practice open to more people than its mere producers. Indeed, textual production of both the poetic and documentary sort was a key part of the fiestas, transforming the momentary celebrations into more permanent symbolic events.⁶⁴ Moreover, it is easy to picture illiterate citizens enjoying the school kids’ singing of poems and lending attention to the value of print in Larrañaga’s speech, even if they were not planning on going to the library.

Other patriotic ceremonies and celebrations organized during the revolutionary period, but not tied to the inauguration of public libraries, further illustrate the role of print in constructing a new public sphere. José Antonio Wilde provides some valuable examples from Buenos Aires. During the fiestas mayas of 1823, the Sociedad Literaria, which had been created the previous year, offered a prize for the person who could best respond *in writing* to

⁶² Ibid., 66-69 [Letters from Artigas to Dámaso Antonio Larrañaga and from Artigas to the Cabildo de Montevideo.]

⁶³ Clara Paladino, “Fiesta y contrapunto: miradas en las celebraciones de la independencia en América,” in Achugar, *Derechos de memoria*, 126.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 135.

a set of curious questions. According to Wilde's account of the competition, these included questions like:

Determinar, por los acontecimientos históricos, el número de pueblos indígenas que habitaron el territorio del Río de la Plata, al tiempo de su descubrimiento, y qué influencia tuvo este acontecimiento sobre su civilización y estado?

...

¿Podrán nuestros pueblos civilizados sacar algún partido de ellos, sea en punto a comercio, rentas o acumulación de población...?

¿Se han de tratar como naciones separadas, o han de ser reconocidos como enemigos a quienes es preciso destruir?⁶⁵

These were heavy questions for the supposedly joyful patriotic celebration. Loaded with the Society's view of indigenous groups, the questions required more than one-line answers. The compensation, however, was a mere medallion. But then again, the pride of the competition came from sharing one's ideas through writing. Public display of pride through print was also part of the festivities held in Buenos Aires two years later, following the arrival in January 1825 of news on the Battle of Ayacucho. As the printed word was deeply entrenched in the beginnings of the wars for independence, it was part of the fiestas marking their end (at least in some parts of Latin America). On the night of 22 January, a "dramatic representation" was put on in the *Teatro Argentino*, after which crowds went wild upon singing the national anthem. Then, in an act that was meant to lend legitimacy to the news, a certain Colonel Ramírez stood on one of the theater's balconies and read the official report of the battle. The crowd applauded this public reading with the same enthusiasm that filled people's hearts as they sang the national anthem.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Wilde, 212. Wilde was the uncle of the political figure and writer Eduardo Wilde, one of the members of the so-called Generation of 1880 in Argentina.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 179.

Revolutionary Symbolic Repertoires

The floundering new government institutions that replaced the control of colonial ones over provincial affairs in the United Provinces and the Banda Oriental required new symbolic representations. Revolutionary print culture—visible in the words of independence printed in newspapers and the role of print at fiestas mayas celebrated on both sides of the Plata—made possible the elaboration of symbolic repertoires. Furthermore, it was through print that these symbols reached “official” status and formed part of the *national* repertoire. In turn, they gave another dimension to Rioplatense print culture in the revolutionary moment. The words of war allowed print to take root (figuratively and literally) in the Plata. A second dimension came with the role of print in public ceremonies and institutions like libraries. Public festivities and places where print was celebrated or at least integral to the fiesta opened new spheres of interaction between lettered and unlettered classes. The elaboration of symbolic repertoires through print resulted in yet another side to print culture: they contributed a new legitimacy to print, privileging it as the premier form of communicating national iconography. These repertoires included poetic compositions and songs as well as *parnasos*, national flags and seals, and legal documents like declarations of independence and constitutions. Whether or not such symbols successfully represented “the nation” and the diverse communities that were grouped as Argentines or Uruguayans, they were widely disseminated through print and thus essential to defining components of material culture during the revolutionary moment.

Loose-leaf poems, publicly posted verses, and the thematic tomes like the *La lira argentina, o colección de las piezas poéticas dadas a luz en Buenos Aires durante la guerra de su independencia*, helped to establish a set of dates for the construction of national history

and cultivate a symbolic vocabulary to describe oppressive tyrants, valiant military heroes, and reverence for the patria. Symbolic verse—a concise term to speak about the flood of patriotic poems and songs that were printed during the wars, as well as their compilation in thematic anthologies called *parnasos*—was central to what some scholars identify as the first stage on the road to the construction of national symbols in Spanish America. From the outbreak of the May Revolution to 1830, American elites attempted to put in place a new set of symbols to replace those that accompanied colonial power.⁶⁷ Revolutionary newspapers chipped away at the old set of symbols, but their news sections, convoluted essays, and reprints of foreign newspapers did not provide the necessary material (concisely packaged) to craft new symbols. This is where the verses composed by lettered elites came into play, sometimes in the very same newspapers, sometimes as loose sheets, and sometimes as song.

Independence generated a wealth of symbolic verse that, as one scholar has argued, went hand in hand with efforts of new government institutions to develop policies on “national” culture.⁶⁸ These poetic constructions both appropriated the colonial past to craft it into a new national history, and spoke of the birth of nations during independence, each with its own *tabula rasa*. Indeed, establishing a national poetic discourse and imaginary was, for many letrados, as important as drafting laws for the new republics.⁶⁹ This was the case in Argentina, where the massive *Lira* and a constitution were published in 1824. Similarly, in Uruguay the 1830 constitution was followed by the *Parnaso Oriental* of 1835. While it is a

⁶⁷ José Emilio Burucúa and Fabián Alejandro Campagne, “Mitos y simbologías nacionales en los países del cono sur,” in *Inventando la nación*, eds. Antonio Annino y François-Xavier Guerra (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 433-74.

⁶⁸ Hugo Achugar, “Parnasos fundacionales, letra, nación y Estado en el siglo XIX,” in *La fundación por la palabra: Letra y Nación en América Latina en el Siglo XIX*, ed. Hugo Achugar (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2003), 43.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

stretch to claim that “el parnaso era la nación y la nación era el parnaso,” these compilations were clear mile markers in the foundations of both print culture and symbolic repertoires in the Plata.⁷⁰ They painted exclusive pictures of national communities in which voices of blacks, women, and indigenous people rarely appear. More than just compilations of poems written by compatriots, these collections of symbolic verse constitute an ideological and cultural referent that only the lettered elites have the power to shape.⁷¹

A case in point comes from the origins of the *Lira argentina*. In 1822 Bernardino Rivadavia, a champion of liberalism in all its manifestations and at the time minister of the nascent United Provinces government, issued a decree outlining the government’s plans to celebrate independence by publishing a volume of all the patriotic poetry written in the United Provinces since 1810—a year that, thanks to the verses, grew to mark a starting point for referring to “national” history. The goals of this initiative were clearly expressed: “El presentarlas [poetic productions] todas bajo un punto de vista, no solo contribuirá a elevar el espíritu público, sino a hacer constar el grado de buen gusto en literatura a que este país ha llegado en época tan temprana... Una colección... es sin duda un monumento de los más propios a celebrar el aniversario de la declaración de nuestra triunfante independencia...”⁷² The decree goes on to say that Rivadavia will be in charge of selecting the poems “worthy” of publication, that the collection will be printed in a distinguished volume, and that the government will foot the bill for the printing costs—a significant point for a book of poems

⁷⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁷¹ Ibid., 54.

⁷² Quoted in Pedro Luis Barcia, “Estudio preliminar,” in *La lira argentina*, ed. Pedro Luis Barcia (Buenos Aires: Academia Argentina de Letras, 1982), xii-xiii.

that pretended to be a catalogue of patriotic verse.⁷³ Rivadavia's idea did not come to fruition—he charged the Sociedad Literaria with the task of putting it together, but the group disbanded in 1824. However, his idea inspired the supposed editor of the *Lira*, Ramón Díaz.

According to the note titled “El Editor” that opens the anthology, the collection is meant to nourish public spirit with the distinguished efforts of the editor's compatriots, and “rendir el homenaje debido a la elección de un Pueblo que nunca se engañó,” in line with Rivadavia's idea.⁷⁴ The editor was serious about paying homage: some 2,000 copies of the *Lira* were printed in Paris and then shipped to Buenos Aires.⁷⁵ All of the compositions had been printed before, many in newspapers or pamphlets put out by the famous Niños Expósitos press, but their recollection in the *Lira* gave them renewed vigor and raised their status to that of official symbolic verses. Authors included Esteban de Luca, author of the popular “Canción patriótica” around 1810, Bartolomé Hidalgo, who penned the *cielitos* and *diálogos patrióticos* that introduced the voice of the gaucho, and Cayetano Rodríguez, who was involved with the creation of the public library in Buenos Aires. Also among the group was Vicente López y Planes, father of the historian and writer Vicente Fidel López, and whose “Marcha patriótica” had already become part of the national symbolic repertoire by being declared Argentina's national anthem.⁷⁶

José Antonio Wilde described the debut of the “Marcha” at the 1813 fiestas mayas, but his observations do not point out the reach of the poem's vocabulary or significance of its performance. In Susana Poch's formulation, national anthems, more than just military tunes

⁷³ Ibid., xiii.

⁷⁴ *La lira*, 7-8.

⁷⁵ Barcia, xxi.

⁷⁶ For examples of patriotic symbolic verse in the *Lira*, see 7, 11, 23, 35, 41, 45, 47, 58, 94, 131, 135.

or patriotic poems, are efforts through writing to develop a set of meanings for a community, and this was certainly true of López's "Marcha."⁷⁷ This type of writing, composed by lettered elites, was often first shared with a public in fiestas patrias, or through song in collective ceremony. Through their performance, thanks to their messages, and with the force of the law behind them, these songs became sacred, written, and sung tributes to the nation, providing emotional content for the foundation and maintenance of community. Poch rightly signals the centrality of music in the performance of these anthems, for it supported the messianic mission of military power as detailed in the poems, gave an air of melodrama, and lent emotional emphasis to passages that dealt with liberty, justice, and fighting for the patria.⁷⁸ From the first appearances (in print or in public ceremony) of the poems that grew into national anthems, their range of meanings was limited. Incipient state institutions, through efforts of letrados, were responsible for making possible only one valid interpretation of these poems, namely the patria is magnificent and it is the duty of all who encounter these words to sing her praises.

This type of interpretation was exactly what the Triumvirate ruling over Buenos Aires had in mind when it sent word to the Cabildo of the need to compose a special type of poem. The instructions asked Cayetano Rodríguez to write a poem that would contain "los resortes capaces de inflamar al pueblo [so that] ninguno viva entre nosotros sin estar resuelto a morir por la causa santa de la libertad."⁷⁹ The instructions also specified for the poem to be "intoned" at all public acts and ceremonies, and for children in primary school to sing it

⁷⁷ Susana Poch, "Himnos nacionales de América: poesía, Estado y poder en el siglo XIX," in Achugar, *Fundación por la palabra*, 79-133.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 79-80.

⁷⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 97.

every day.⁸⁰ Clouds surround how Rodríguez's assignment was retracted, but in March 1813, with the General Assembly in place of the Triumvirate, López y Planes was asked to write a new anthem.⁸¹ This poem was published as a loose-leaf by the Niños Expósitos, with a headline at the top stating it to be the *only* "Marcha Patriótica" for official use in the United Provinces. It was later performed as part of the fiestas mayas. From there, as the official anthem (of a nation that did not yet exist) the "Marcha" accompanied San Martín as his troops spread to fight royalists throughout what would become Argentina, Chile, and Peru.⁸²

1813 was a fruitful year for symbolic production in Buenos Aires, for, in addition to the "March Patriótica," the General Assembly ordered up a "national" seal or coat of arms (see figures 1.1 and 1.2). In the same month of March when they approached López y Planes to compose the anthem, they decided upon a seal, first used on official documents in place of the colonial seals, and then given a larger role as the representative emblem of the Assembly, which in turn claimed to collectively represent the nation.⁸³ This seal underwent modifications throughout the nineteenth century, but its initial symbolic character is still intact, blending European influence with reference to indigenous American societies. The pike and the Phrygian cap were part of the French revolution's symbolic repertoire. Worn by freed Roman slaves and representative of liberty, the cap was also used by Masonic lodges operating in Buenos Aires in the early nineteenth century. The laurel branches speak to victory, and the clasped hands, without definite links to established symbolic traditions, are

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 98. See note 14.

⁸² Poch, 99.

⁸³ Estanislao S. Zeballos, *El escudo y los colores nacionales* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta, Litografía y Encuadernación de J. Peuser, 1900), 10. See also Binayán, 228, and Luis Cánepa, *Historia de los símbolos nacionales* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Albatros, 1953), 129-54.

supposed to represent fraternal union between the provinces of the country—more of a hope than a reality throughout Argentine history of the nineteenth century. In contrast, the sun rising behind the laurels is suggestive of Incan mythology.⁸⁴ In Estanislao Zeballos’s friendly history of the seal, he remarks that “Los ideales que embargaban todas las mentes eran la *Libertad*, la *Igualdad*, la *Fraternidad*, inspiraron el *Himno Nacional*, y están sintéticamente expresados en el escudo...”⁸⁵ Though an exaggerated statement, he touches on the importance of liberalism as a source of inspiration for both symbolic verses and seals. And like the “Marcha,” the “Argentine” seal gained in large part its place of prominence through print and public ceremony.



Figure 1.1: The new *escudo nacional* at the head of the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*, vol. 4, 409.



Figure 1.2: 1813 Argentine coat of arms, from Zeballos, 46-47.

The new coat of arms quickly made its way from the Assembly’s printed communications to the public sphere. Beruti records that in May 1813, a “superior order” called for the removal of all the Castilian coats of arms dotting schools, forts, and government buildings. The “gran escudo de la nación de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la

⁸⁴ Burucúa and Campagne, 438.

⁸⁵ Zeballos, 13.

Plata” was supposed to go in their place.⁸⁶ The elements of the new seal were not just confined to paper, either. From the printed page the seal was brought to life, so to say, guiding people’s mode of dress at the fiestas mayas that year. During the fiestas, members of the Buenos Aires government wore red Phrygian caps, just like the one depicted in the seal. The public joined in the performance too, “igualmente con gorros por sombrero, siendo tal lo que estimuló esto a los buenos patriotas, tanto hombres como mujeres, que todos se lo pusieron y siguen con él, cuando no en la cabeza, los hombres lo llevan pendiente de la escarapela del sombrero y las señoras mujeres de las gorras o del pecho.” In July of the same year, the Assembly printed an edict announcing to the public that the seal would be disseminated through yet another medium—“national” coins. The new coins, minted in the silver town of Potosí, had the seal without the sun on the front side; the sun covered the reverse side and was encircled by the words “En unión y libertad.”⁸⁷ This so-called national currency was short-lived, but it attests to the ways in which print culture was diffused throughout the Plata. What began as a seal to be used on official documents of the General Assembly became a national coat of arms and the basis of a design for a currency that began putting symbolic content in the hands of lettered and unlettered classes.

In spite of the public promotion of the new symbolic repertoire, there was still hesitation to replace royal symbols once and for all. The royal flag, for example, was not hung at forts during the fiestas of 1813, but neither was the new sky-blue and white flag raised in its place. In November 1813, new coats of arms had to be hung again on certain government buildings, which suggests that use of royal symbols did not stop abruptly with the superior order back in May. But despite the overlap in the public display of these

⁸⁶ Beruti, 231.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 232, 234-35.

symbolic seals, that a new national escudo entered the scene points to the development of a new symbolic repertoire, and the hesitation to make use of it diminished as the wars went on. By the end of 1815, for example, less than a year before independence was officially declared in Argentina, the seal had become one of the defining characteristics of the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*. Beginning with the extraordinary number on 20 November 1815, the new coat of arms was printed at the top of the front page of every number of the *Gazeta* until its last impressions in 1821 (see figure 1.1).⁸⁸



Figure 1.3: *Escudo de armas de la Provincia Oriental*, from Lamas, 56-57.



Figure 1.4: *Escudo* of the Provincia Oriental, from *Descripción de las fiestas cívicas*, 5.

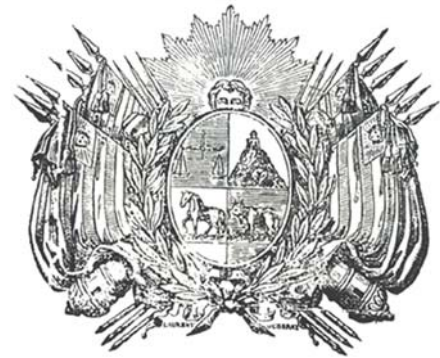


Figure 1.5: 1829 Uruguayan coat of arms, from Goldaracena, 147.

Similar to the Argentine one, the seal that appeared in the Banda Oriental during Artigas's time also portrayed the rising sun, though presiding over a scale of justice instead of a pike and Phrygian cap (see figures 1.3 and 1.4). "Provincia Oriental" is inscribed at the top, and encircling the sun and scale is the motto "Con libertad ni ofendo ni temo." Lances stick out of the top two sides, and below these on both the left and right of the seal hang two tricolor or Artiguista flags. This seal, too, was part of public ceremonies. The school children who animated with song the fiestas cívicas in 1816 carried the tricolor flag and wore tricolor

⁸⁸ See the *Gaceta*, vol. 4 (409) and after for different versions of the seal printed in the paper.

Phrygian caps.⁸⁹ According to the anonymous author of the *Descripción de las fiestas cívicas*, their last night saw the debut of “un pabellon de primer orden, y el escudo de armas de la provincia colocado sobre la fachada principal” of the Cabildo.⁹⁰ The coat of arms was also stamped on documents and circulated through print. The *Descripción* was the first printed document to display proudly the seal on its first page. It appears in like manner on the title page of Dámaso Larrañaga’s *Oración inaugural* to the Biblioteca Pública of Montevideo. Given the presence of the seal on these “official” publications, it is likely that it was also visible on the symbolic verses posted in the Plaza Matriz for the fiestas mayas of 1816.

With the Portuguese and Brazilian invasion of the Banda Oriental in 1817, this seal was suppressed, but it did not lose its symbolic value. In fact, the *escudo de armas de la Provincia Oriental* was used on and off from 1816 up to the design and implementation in 1829 of what would be, with few modifications, the current seal. During this period of close to fifteen years, the seal represented provincial independence from Buenos Aires, resistance to and independence from Portugal and Brazil, the celebrated arrival of the “Thirty-Three” Orientales to the shores of Uruguay in 1825 (more on these guys in chapter 4), and the declaration of independence in the same year. Its symbolic meaning grew as the years passed, debuting at the fiestas mayas and the ceremony inaugurating the Biblioteca Pública of Montevideo, and stamping its symbolic mark on the declaration of independence.⁹¹

⁸⁹ De María, vol. 1, 121-22.

⁹⁰ *Descripción*, 17.

⁹¹ See Andrés Lamas, *El escudo de armas de la ciudad de Montevideo* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1903), 56-58, and Ricardo Goldaracena, *El libro de los símbolos: escudos y banderas del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Arca, 1995), 69-94.

In early 1829 the General Assembly established a special commission to come up with a new seal in preparation for the upcoming events to swear in the constitution. Of those who submitted designs, it appears that the one offered by the nephew of the library director, Dámaso Larrañaga, clearly influenced the commission's final vision for the coat of arms (see figure 1.5). The sun and the notion of justice remain permanent fixtures of the new design. Novel components include the *Cerro* of Montevideo as a sign of strength (adopted from earlier seals of the city of Montevideo that portrayed the Cerro with a castle on top in reference to the king), a horse running freely as a mark of liberty, and an ox representing abundance. In a display of the spirit of Uruguay's new national symbolic repertoire, the seal was stamped on copies of the *Acta*, or declaration, of independence, distributed during an "allegorical" performance of the declaration put on during the festivities to celebrate the signing of the constitution in 1830.⁹²

Actas and constitutions (both dependant on writing and print) were central to the elaboration of symbolic repertoires, too. These types of legal documents legislated patriotic fervor expressed in symbolic verse and bound citizens to the written/printed letter of the law. The Actas are unique in this regard. They blend the patriotic spirit that infused revolutionary rhetoric and poetry with the legality of constitutions that came years after the composition of *marchas patrióticas* and the like.⁹³ The Argentine Acta, issued in July 1816, was a publishing phenomenon for declarations of independence. The congressional session that drafted the document and signed it into law ordered it to be printed in Spanish (1,500 copies), Quechua

⁹² Javier Malagón, ed., *Las Actas de independencia de América*, with a preliminary study by Charles C. Griffin (Washington, D.C.: Unión Panamericana, 1955), xv.

⁹³ Susana Poch, "Aura de inicio, trazas de escrituras: Actas de Independencia de América (1776-1903)" in *Derechos de memoria*, 77.

(1,000 copies), and Aymara (500 copies)—not a bad run for this period.⁹⁴ It is questionable how many Quechua and Aymara speakers could read the versions printed in these languages, but the congressional members were decided on the importance of consecrating and disseminating the declaration through print. “Todas y cada una de ellas [the Provinces] así lo publican, declaran y ratifican,” reads the Acta, “comprometiéndose por nuestro medio al cumplimiento y sostén de esta su voluntad bajo el seguro y garantía de sus vidas, haberes y fama. Comuníquese a quienes corresponda para su publicación, y en obsequio del respeto que se debe a las Naciones, detállense en un manifiesto los gravísimos fundamentos impulsivos de esta solemne declaración.”⁹⁵ Those who wrote the Acta were lettered elites (and not speakers of indigenous languages) with a monopoly on the printed word that made its way into the new, independent, symbolic repertoire meant to displace the old.⁹⁶

The Uruguayan Acta was also written and promulgated by creoles, but in addition to declaring independence from Portugal, Brazil, and any other tyrant, they called for the need to destroy written and printed documents that bore any mention of the occupation of the Banda Oriental from 1817-25. Given how Uruguayans abhor even the memory of the documents that correspond to that period of despotism, states the Acta, government representatives of the towns that have archives of these memories “concurrirán el primer día festivo, en unión del párroco, y vecindario, y con asistencia del escribano, secretario, o quien haga sus veces a la casa de Justicia, antecedita la lectura de este Decreto se testará y borrará desde la primera línea hasta la última firma de dichos documentos...”⁹⁷ After this ceremony

⁹⁴ Malagón, viii.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁶ Poch, “Aura,” 102.

⁹⁷ Malagón, 131. Fortunately, many documents from this period survived.

was performed, the same representatives had to send to the Gobierno de la Provincia proof (written or printed) that they had indeed destroyed the documents. That holidays were chosen for these celebrations to occur is significant, for it was then that the largest public could join the representatives, priest, and notary in the collective act of erasing traces of memories and past symbolic repertoires, preparing for a new one to accompany the independent Banda Oriental. The symbolic copying of this Acta was part of the public ceremonies organized for the 18 July 1830 signing of the constitution.

Isidoro de María, who told us about the first press in Montevideo, was present for the scene of merriment in the Plaza Matriz that July. De María, who was fifteen at the time, is openly sentimental in his recollection of the events of the day, exclaiming, “¡Ah! ¡Qué fiestas aquellas de la Jura de la Constitución, tan lindas, tan alegres, tan espléndidas y populares como jamás se habían visto iguales, en que todos los corazones palpitaban de purísimo e inefable gozo, en medio del mayor regocijo!”⁹⁸ The Plaza was well-decorated, with national flags dotting every corner. Foot soldiers and cavalymen were decked out in their color-coded (white and blue, like the flag) uniforms. Government leaders stood on the balconies of the Cabildo, and onlookers packed the Plaza, despite the chilling cold of mid-July. Religion was also part of the ceremony, with a *Te deum* sung to accompany government members as they walked toward the cathedral. After paying their religious duties, they headed back to the Cabildo to sign the constitution. The Plaza was still packed, De María reminds us, with people on every balcony, and even on most of the roof tops.⁹⁹

What followed was truly a spiritual act, blending religion with a newly established reverence for written culture as the legitimate embodiment of the infant state. After the

⁹⁸ De María, vol. 2, 342.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 343-44.

leaders of the government swore their allegiance to the constitution in the main salon of the Cabildo, soldiers were called in from the Plaza, followed by the “*soberano Pueblo*” to make their pledge to the constitution. There they stood in front of the Alcalde Ordinario, who asked them: “¿Juráis a Dios y prometéis a la Patria cumplir y hacer cumplir en cuanto de vos dependa la Constitución del Estado Oriental del Uruguay sancionada el 10 de setiembre de 1829 por los Representantes de la Nación? ¿Juráis sostener y defender la forma de Gobierno Representativo Republicano que establece la Constitución, etc.? Si así lo hicierais, Dios os ayudará, sino, Él y la Patria os lo demandará.”¹⁰⁰ The crowds of people pushed and shoved to have their turn to take this oath and pronounce the moving “yes, I swear,” some demonstrating their faith in god and patria, others probably out of fear of saying no and having god and patria “demand” from them the proper respect.

The ceremony ended with canon fire, mightily signaling the power of the printed word as rule of law. But this was not the end of the celebration. That afternoon and night were a continuous party where “no queda bicho viviente... que no concurra a la plaza a ver las lindas comparsas... que... suben alternativamente al Tablado, con sus arcos o sus bandas azul-celeste...” One of the participants read a poem by Acuña de Figueroa, the author of the future national anthem, admonishing citizens to live by their freshly sworn word to the grave. Commemorative medals were distributed, and loose leaves with patriotic poetry “se arrojaban como flores entre aquel mundo de espectadores ávidos de acapararlas.” In the San Felipe theater, which, according to De María’s description, was overflowing, two poets read patriotic verses. Thus the night, like the morning ceremony, ended with the crowd joining in

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 344-45.

the collective act of praising the written word, which in turn contributed to solidifying the foundation of print culture in Uruguay.¹⁰¹



The emergence of Rioplatense print culture dovetails with and is defined by the wars of independence. It is the story of words of independence, patriotic parties, and the creation of new symbolic repertoires. Beginning with words as weapons of war printed in revolutionary newspapers, poems, and edicts at the outset of the nineteenth century, presses like the Niños Expósitos in Buenos Aires and the Southern Star and Carlota in Montevideo sparked a printing revolution in the Plata. While these print media presented news on the developments of the wars, they also affected public sentiment (and ultimately public behaviors) by inspiring patriots and condemning royalists, when not the other way around. The press and the printed word represented liberal notions of progress and lent legitimacy to republicanism, too. Print culture was further elaborated at patriotic parties and public ceremonies, where print was central. Whether at the fiestas mayas or the opening of the library in Buenos Aires, or the signing of the constitution in Montevideo in 1830, these ceremonies, and the events and institutions they celebrated, provided a new meeting place where lettered elites communicated with unlettered classes. Print was central to the creation and spread of new symbolic repertoires, as well. Symbolic verse, such as national anthems, national symbols like the coat of arms, and legal documents like declarations of independence and constitutions, all depended on print for their messages to be successfully communicated, at least in the first instance. In sum, the birth of Rioplatense print culture was

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 345, 347-51. Acuña de Figueroa was one of these. Florencio Varela, an Argentine who spent a lot of time in Montevideo, especially while in exile during the Rosas years, was the other. Acuña de Figueroa's verses were printed in pamphlet form in the days following the signing of the constitution. See *A la Jura de la Constitución Política del Estado Oriental del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Imprenta de la Caridad, [1830]), HA Foll 4-6. Profits from sales of the pamphlets were to be used for "philanthropic" purposes (3).

defined by the revolutionary moment. But the claim is incomplete without remarking that print culture, in turn, defined the reach of the wars and the initial meanings “independence” and “nation” would take on in Argentina and the Banda Oriental. Though lettered classes had a monopoly on the shape and production of print media during this period, freed blacks, slaves, women, children, and indigenous groups began to interact with print. By 1830, words, wars, and patriotic parties had laid the foundations for print culture in the Plata. For roughly the next forty years, until state institutions became stable around 1870, Rioplatense print culture would be taken in new directions, defined by new words, new wars, and gauchos.

CHAPTER 2

WORDS, WARS, AND GAUCHOS: LASSOING PRINT CULTURE AND CATTLE CIVILIZATION

When one thinks of the connections between books and cattle, or books and gauchos in the nineteenth century, perhaps the (only) obvious thoughts that come to mind are those of leather book bindings and rowdy gatherings at country stores for the day's story read by one of the few literate people there. Readers familiar with books from the nineteenth century will be able to picture those whose spine is made of leather, with the front and back covers consisting of pressed paper and leather-covered corners. But in the cattle country of the Río de la Plata, the connections between print culture and cattle civilization go far beyond the leather binding, and the story of lead type blocks melted for use as bullets to fight gauchos is just the beginning.¹

Like a good lasso, Rioplatense print culture and cattle civilization are braided together during the second key moment in the development of this story, spanning from the end of the wars of independence around 1830 roughly up to 1870. From the 1820s through

¹ After independence, cattle civilization, on its way to its most profitable years, was inseparable from political power, and it permeated all strands of Rioplatense society, restructuring relationships between patrons and clients, city dwellers and country-folk, and liberal elites and estancia-saladero owners. For an overview of the rise and structures of cattle culture in the Plata, see James Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 64-87, Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), Silvio R. Duncan Barretta and John Markoff, "Notes on Civilization and Barbarism: Cattle Frontiers in Latin America," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 4 (1978): 590-93, John Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo: Juan Manuel de Rosas* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 7-8, 136-38, John Chasteen, "Violence for Show: Knife Dueling on a Nineteenth-Century Cattle Frontier," in *The Problem of Order in Changing Societies: Essays on Crime and Policing in Argentina and Uruguay*, ed. Lyman L. Johnson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 47-64, and Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback: The Life and Times of the Last Gaucho Caudillos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

the early 1860s, large estate owners (*estancieros*) and proprietors of beef-jerking factories (*saladeros*) teamed up and enjoyed enormous success in the processing and sale of animal products, specifically from cattle, like hides, dried meats, and fats. In a word, these years were by far their most profitable. Through their patronage relationships, the prominent figures of cattle culture—the *caudillos*, or charismatic leaders—became powerful political figures, and as such they were able to foster attachments to their brand of collective identity, most often tied to a political faction. In the Plata, the one caudillo and patron who stood out among all the others was Juan Manuel de Rosas, a towering figure in the historiography of both Uruguay and Argentina. Depending on the author (and his or her political leanings), Rosas was either a tyrannical dictator or a hero who championed all things American and stood up to the meddling Europeans with imperial designs on the material resources of Latin America. What is certain for both sides, though, is that Rosas was a product (and the principal promoter) of cattle civilization, and that most everything written between 1830 and 1870 revolved around him and the politics of cattle culture.

With Rosas's rise to the position of governor of Buenos Aires in 1829, a long war of words began to promote and combat cattle culture in all its manifestations. In the previous years, revolutionary words printed in the region's first newspapers, public ceremonies to inaugurate libraries and celebrate independence, and the elaboration of national symbolic repertoires through print media defined the emergence of a culture of print in the Plata. There was some hope for calm in the region following the liberation of the Banda Oriental from the Brazilians in 1828. But the peace was short-lived. The dust on the battlefields of Uruguay and Argentina was about to be stirred again by war, this time between gauchos and

countrymen of opposing political factions, and driven by economic and ideological interests tied to or opposing a world based on raising cattle and exploiting animal products.

Throughout the forty-year stretch of time from 1830-1870, the voices of cattle civilization appeared prominently in print media—in government documents, letters written by estancieros, in the symbols that gave vigor to public ceremonies and even dress, and in the recitation of poems at the local pulpería. The printed word was also the principal harbinger of voices of opposition to cattle culture. Liberal elites who wrote, spoke, and fought against estanciero and saladero interests penned page after page to advance their cause. After all, talking about cattle was synonymous with talking about politics, and vice versa. This group attempted to unravel the lasso and put an end to the figures of gauchos, their caudillo leaders, and the institutions of estancias and saladeros. Yet in spite of their fierce efforts, the course of print culture in Uruguay and Argentina was wedded to cattle civilization until the consolidation of liberal state institutions around 1870.

There is no denying the incredible influence of Rosas in inspiring partisans and enemies to wage their wars through the written and printed word. Anyone familiar with titles such as Esteban Echeverría's *El Matadero*, Domingo F. Sarmiento's *Facundo*, or José Mármol's *Amalia*, just to name a few, knows them to be clear examples of political literature that rails against Rosas. Literary scholars and historians of the Plata have also maintained a constant debate about writing and *Rosismo*, usually adhering to lines of political history and siding with the positive or negative vision of the *Patrón*.² But Rosas was not solely

² Lynch (77) neatly defines Rosismo as power based on the estancia, a concentration of economic resources, and the implementation of social order. For samples of outstanding scholarship on the attachments between *Rosismo* and literature, see the essays in Cristina Iglesia, ed., *Letras y divisas: ensayos sobre literatura y Rosismo*, with a prologue by Cristina Iglesia (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1998), *La lucha de los lenguajes*, ed. Julio Schwartzman, vol. 2, *Historia crítica de la literatura Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2003), Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana,

responsible for the directions print media took in this forty year period. A broader split was at the heart of the continued evolution of a culture of print in the region. On the one side were those who favored maintaining land ownership in the hands of a few, a social order not unlike that of the colonial period, and favorable conditions of trade for the province of Buenos Aires. The opposing side was made up of advocates for opening up the Río de la Plata to the modernizing powers of free trade, the cultural influences of Europe, and the political values of republicanism. At stake in the battles that were carried out by pen, lance, and rifle, were ways of life of rich landowners, gauchos, and urban liberals, the primacy of one particular vision for the nation, and the future of ideologies in the region.

The result—and the focus of this chapter—was the continued development of a special relationship between print, politics, and the public sphere in the Plata. This relationship was fueled largely by popular verse—gauchesque writing to be exact. Since its debut in the wars of independence, gauchesque writing appearing in newspapers and on loose leaves had been unique to the Plata. Nowhere else in nineteenth-century Latin America was there a similar type of literature that negotiated the meeting of oral and print cultures and that allowed for the popular consumption of print media on the scale seen in the Río de la Plata. The phenomenon of popular verse facilitated the creation of links between print and popular classes, and these links are at the heart of the connections of print to power in mid-century Uruguay and Argentina. Employees of the Rosas regime and writers who were paid on an ad hoc basis to come up with verses promoting the party line certainly embody the intimacy of the written word with spheres of political power. But what is really interesting—and unique about the relationship between print and the political in the Plata—is the role of popular print

1988), and Angel Rama's path-breaking essays in *Los gauchipolíticos rioplatenses*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994).

media, often penned by party advocates who were not functionaries, in defining the course of print culture. Put differently, gauchos were the main protagonists in our story, not elite intellectuals who wrote for a handful of friends who attended their literary clubs. Of course, lettered elites shot back with their own printed creations. As we follow the contours of the nexus between print and the political, we will see the just how such elite creations fared.

The larger framework for understanding the special relationship of Rioplatense print culture to power and the political breaks down into a handful of key scenes. The first of these corresponds to years encompassing Rosas's beginning in office, in 1829, and his return to the governorship with "supreme powers" in 1835. During this short span of time print culture became intertwined with the goals of estancieros and saladeros, on their way toward entering the high point of cattle civilization. Print media were used not only to brand property, most notably cattle and employees, but also to express political affinities and identities, and persuade others to saddle-up with the party. Rosas's second term in office, from 1835 to 1852, outlines the chronological scope of the second, distinct scene in our story. This period was rife with efforts of the opposition to unseat the patrón, and it saw much tighter control of Rioplatense social order. Both sides employed print media as weapons, resulting in the militarization of print culture where partisanship dominated and where persuasion gave way to battling the enemy. The last scene takes place following Rosas's fall from power in the early 1850s, and runs up to the acquisition of political authority and power by liberal elites around 1870. The end of the Rosas years marked the end of cattle civilization based on the model of exporting hides, dried meats, and fats. It also marked a shift in the concerns expressed through the written and printed word. Since Rosas took office in 1829, print culture had been almost exclusively partisan. Following his ouster, writers began dealing

with social concerns and toying with artistic aspirations, a turn that corresponded to readers' interests too. Liberal elites who were at the helm of the state started envisioning new functions for print media. Education would be the most important of these.

Looking at the bonds between print and the politics of cattle civilization will do much more than simply illuminate a particular moment in the evolution of Rioplatense print culture. Indeed, the study of this connection offers rich contributions to our understanding of a historical moment in the Plata, as well as of the phenomenon of caudillismo, and the evolving public use of print in Uruguay and Argentina—what makes written culture in these two countries distinct from other areas of Latin America. To put things differently and perhaps simplistically, one cannot conceive of this period in Latin American history without books like Domingo Sarmiento's *Facundo* or Manuel Herrera y Obes's *El caudillismo y la revolución americana*. Nor is it possible to read *Facundo*, Obes's book, newspapers published for Federalist/Blanco or Unitarian/Colorado partisans, or a poem like José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*, without acknowledging their roots in a world ordered by cattle culture and the political party that promoted a vision for the nation based on this order.³ While it is certainly possible to engage the evolution of cattle frontiers and the economic and social conditions that revolved around saladeros in the Plata without looking at print, the party identities that formed during the period were generated through elements of print culture—poems in papers for rural inhabitants, songs sung in pulperías or in parades, in catch words like “Federalist” that appeared in public places, and in damning slogans woven into

³ In the Río de la Plata of the mid-nineteenth century two traditional parties emerged. The Federalist (Argentina) and Blanco (Uruguay) parties were conservative and supporters of cattle civilization. Their opponents were the Unitarians (Argentina) and the Colorados (Uruguay), representatives of liberalism and admirers of all things European. Vestiges of this division are still present today in the region. In Uruguay the Colorado and Blanco parties are two of the three principal political forces and they adhere to the same image of tradition versus liberal progress.

headbands worn by partisans of every color. Likewise, the reaction to caudillismo and the efforts to put a stop to a political order based the cattle industry were made, above all, in print and cannot be engaged without taking into account print culture. With this in mind, let us now turn our attention to the roots of the special relationship between print and the political during these years.

Branding Property and Political Identity

In 1830 a Swiss printer by the name of César Hipólito Bacle made his mark in the world of printing with the publication of the monumental *Colección general de las Marcas del Ganado de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*.⁴ Bacle had set up a unique print shop in Buenos Aires back in 1828. It was unique precisely because it was the first of its kind to successfully employ lithographic printing in the Plata. Other printers had tried their hand at lithography in the mid-1820s, but Bacle's shop was by far the most respected and its productions considered to be of the best quality.⁵ For this reason his business quickly acquired the status of the Imprenta Litográfica del Estado. The *Colección* was one of Bacle's first works printed entirely in lithography. It is divided into sections that correspond to provincial jurisdictions of Buenos Aires province. Each section consists of a registry of the names of estancia managers (*hacendados*) and owners (*propietarios de la estancia*) in the given jurisdiction, when they registered with the provincial police, and then prints of brand marks. With over 9,000 *hacendados* listed and the corresponding cattle brands for their *estancias* pictured, the

⁴ *Colección general de las Marcas del Ganado de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Bacle y C.a, Impresores Litograficos del Estado, 1830).

⁵ Félix de Ugarteche, *La imprenta argentina: sus orígenes y desarrollo* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos R. Canals, 1929), 320.

work is invaluable for determining families involved in cattle culture. More to the point here is the bond between property and print.

The book is all about presenting marks of propriety, establishing in print a means of clarifying private property—in this case the cattle that belong to a given estancia and that are the source of wealth and, in some instances, political power. In addition to defining personal property, the brands created an “estancia identity” distinct from all others and recognizable in the figures seared into cattle flesh and printed by Bacle (see figure 2.1). Though there is no mention of the number of copies of the *Colección* that were circulating then in the province, it is reasonable to imagine that each jurisdiction had at least one for estancieros and hacendados to consult. Lithography was, after all, a way to facilitate larger print runs, and with over 9,000 cattle marks dotting the countryside, ranch hands, owners, and managers surely had to consult the *Colección* when they could not recall or did not know whose stamps were branded onto cattle. A look at a page of brands (see figure 2.2) from Bacle’s book is enough to give an idea of the confusion that could result from the mess of symbols. They appear to be a language of their own, with the only use being that of communicating ownership. Juan Manuel de Rosas was serious about this point when writing about the practice of branding. In his *Instrucciones a los mayordomos de las estancias*, Rosas was insistent that all cattle, donkeys, and female horses should be marked and counted during the annual branding act.⁶ Given that stealing cattle—a common practice—from someone with greater political power (like Rosas) could be dangerous, consulting the brand guide would come in handy.

⁶ Juan Manuel de Rosas, *Instrucciones a los mayordomos de estancias*, with a biography by Pedro de Angelis and a preface, notes, and commentary by Carlos Lemée (Buenos Aires: Editorial Americana, 1942), 38-40.



Figure 2.1: Scene of cattle branding. From the title page of the *Colección general de las Marcas del Ganado de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*.

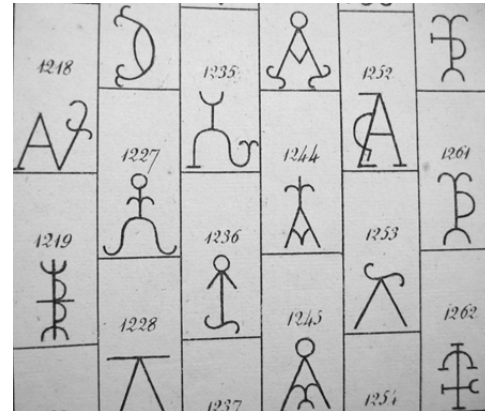


Figure 2.2: Selection from a page of brand marks in the *Colección*.

Printing cattle brands is certainly one way to begin thinking about the bonds between print and the politics of cattle culture, but it is not the only one. More than a question of the commercial value of cattle products, these bonds concern political capital (or property), party identity, and human relationships. This opening scene stages the role of print culture in branding property and political identity. From the time Rosas assumed office in December 1829 to his return in 1835, supporters of cattle culture and the Federalist party used print media to manage their property and, more importantly, to appeal to the hearts of gauchos, blacks, and lower class urban inhabitants in hopes of making them into party members willing to fight for the preservation of a Federalist social order. There was no officially orchestrated effort by Rosas to disseminate party propaganda in the newspapers, verses, and songs that circulated during these years, but the majority of these praised the patrón. A handful of examples will illustrate the early links between print and cattle civilization, and how a culture of print played into branding a party identity.

In addition to cattle brands, one of the main forms of print estancia owners used to manage property was the so-called *papeleta de conchabo*. The papeleta was literally an ID card that attested to a gaucho belonging to a certain estancia (or owner) or that explained his situation if he was not employed at the moment. Papeletas were a continuation of sorts of *pasaportes* required of citizens following the wars of independence. As Jose Antonio Wilde relates, citizens needed pasaportes in order to leave their home district, though the law came down most harshly on poor, rural inhabitants. Wealthy urban dwellers could move about more freely, and if they were caught without their pasaporte or without the approving *pase* of the local Justice of the Peace or Police chief, they could manage to escape punishment. This was much less likely to occur in the case of the poor countryman who often had to travel long distances to get the necessary permission in order to go into a neighboring town, even if the town was just a few blocks from his house.⁷ As with the pasaportes, gauchos were not the ones writing up the papeletas. Rather, their patrons composed them or had them written. And similar to the consequences of being found without a passport, those gauchos discovered without their papeleta could be imprisoned, thrown in the stocks behind the Justice of the Peace's house or office, or conscripted to fight Indians along the frontier. Writing thus bound people in more ways than one.⁸

Conscription was what Pancho Lugares—the fictitious gaucho editor of Luis Pérez's newspaper *El Gaucho*—faced for having left his papeleta at home. Throughout the paper's editions in 1830 Pancho relates a biography of Rosas, which he begins with some autobiographical notes, explaining that he learned to read at a young age, but when he turned

⁷ Jose Antonio Wilde, *Buenos Aires desde setenta años atrás (1810-1880)* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1960), 231-35.

⁸ Lynch, 50.

twelve he had to learn to tame horses in order to make a living. A few years later he joined the forces of a certain Juan Chano (surely a literary creation) in the wars of independence, and afterward looked for work on estancias. One day he came across a sergeant who asked him for his papeleta. Like many people in the countryside, Pancho did not catch on to how powerful the little printed card could be and the real consequences that were doled out for not carrying it on person. State officials were aware of this fact, and they capitalized on it. Pancho pleaded to the sergeant, “¡POR CRISTO! / Que en casa se me ha quedado, / Traslomemos esta loma / Que aquí no más la he dejado.”⁹ To the sergeant this meant little. Pancho was taken to the city, locked up with other gauchos the military had rounded up from his neighborhood, and then sent to the frontlines to fight. Fortunately for other gauchos who thought about leaving home without their papeleta, Pancho lived to tell his tale in print.

Aside from serving as a means for estancia owners to brand their workers and to provide a way for recruiting forced labor for work on the estate or soldiers for the army, papeletas were part of the estanciero class’s antivagrancy legislation meant to cement law and order in the countryside.¹⁰ When Rosas joined the Federalist party in the late 1820s he did so in order to advance his class’s control on land resources and to maintain a traditional economy, where wealth remained in Buenos Aires, and where he could continue building on his land assets and his riches from the sale of cattle products.¹¹ Order was critical to these goals. While papeletas helped to bring about some sort of order through the harsh consequences that one suffered if found without the proper written or printed document,

⁹ *El Gaucho* (Buenos Aires), no. 1, 31 July 1830, 1-2, BNAr, Sala de Tesoro. See also Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, ed., *Luis Pérez y la biografía de Rosas escrita en verso en 1830* (Buenos Aires: Clio, 1957).

¹⁰ Lynch, 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

estancieros and the Federalist party that represented their interests owed a great deal more to the popular newspapers and verses that inspired affinity with the party line.

Between 1830 and 1835 many “periódicos de lucha” or gauchesque newspapers appeared and disappeared, some lasting longer than others, but most of them not very well-known today.¹² Among the many authors of these print media, including Juan Gualberto Godoy with *El Corazero*, and Hilario Ascasubi, author of *El Arriero Argentino* and two other gauchesque papers published in Montevideo, Luis Pérez was by far the most active, penning more than thirty gauchesque papers between 1830 and 1834, in addition to loose-leaf verses, in support of the Federalists.¹³ There is little evidence on Pérez’s background. He served as a patriot soldier during the wars of independence, and he was known for hanging out in pulperías and even garnered a reputation for mixing with mischievous lower-class citizens and criminals. His real fame began in 1830 when he started writing papers under names of characters from the countryside. The look of the papers, with sketches of gauchos, horses, and other country adornments on the covers, made them appealing to rural inhabitants, and the language Pérez employed was *their* language (see figures 2.3-2.4). They were sold in public places, like pulperías and markets, where hard-working gauchos, “blacks

¹² Rodríguez Molas, *Luis Pérez*, 3. That most of these papers are not known today stems largely from their being fragile texts and not ones that many readers or listeners would have preserved. This sort of popular literature was exactly that—popular, meant to be enjoyed and then passed on to the next person or group, which resulted in great wear and tear of the documents. Other factors contributing to their lack of recognition include their anonymous authorship, as well as the fact that they have for the most part been ignored and or written off by literary scholars and historians.

¹³ See Julio Schvartzman, *Microcrítica: lecturas argentinas (cuestiones de detalle)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1996), 117-33, and Nicolás Lucero, “La guerra gauchopolítica,” in Schvartzman, *La lucha de los lenguajes*, 17-38.

always ready for candombe,” and the simple vagrant who spent hours on end at country stores attentively listened to readings of their contents (see figure 2.5).¹⁴



Figure 2.3: Wood cut of gaucho with pen and paper in hand (presumably the editor, Pancho Lugares) that appeared on the front pages of *El Gaucho*. Note the *rebenque* at his feet. This particular printing was part of the *prospejo*. BNAr, Sala de Tesoro.



Figure 2.4: Wood cut of *La Gaucha*, Pancho's wife, surrounded by different breeds of cattle and dogs, at the top of a loose-leaf sheet of gauchesque verse titled "Jaleo a los hombres." She, too, has pen and paper in hand. 25 May 1830. BNAr, Sala de Tesoro.

¹⁴ Rodríguez Molas, *Luis Pérez*, 6.



Figure 2.5: “Interior de una pulpería, Buenos Aires.”
Watercolor from León Palliere, *Diario de viaje por la América del Sud* (1856-1866) (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Peuser, 1945), 179.

Aside from the importance of such writing being deeply tied to cattle culture—after all, its characters and proclaimed audience were ranch hands—it inspired rural inhabitants to try their hand at letter writing, too. In Pérez’s *El Gaucho*, *El Toro de Once*, *La Gaucha*, *El Torito de los Muchachos*, and other papers and loose-leaf sheets, the act of placing a gaucho in the position of editor who solicited contributions from fellow gauchos “activa un agitado tráfico de cartas enviadas desde el campo y de gacetas celebradas en los ranchos.”¹⁵ In *El Gaucho*, *La Negrita*, and *El Negrito*, blacks and women also acquired a voice, provided that their words supported Rosas and the Federalists. Indeed, with Rosas at the head of the party, he inspired a wealth of poetic production, from letrados as well as iletrados, in print and in song. As one scholar of these rich sources puts it, the Restorer of Laws counted followers

¹⁵ Lucero, 19.

“entre la gente de pluma y gabinete, y los contó entre los versificadores populares que la mayoría de las veces no llevan al papel sus producciones...”¹⁶

It is unclear whether the poems and letters that appeared in papers and pasquinades of the day were truly written by blacks, mestizos, and mulattos. But there is no doubt that such print media were widely consumed and reached large audiences. The anonymous authorship of hundreds of loose-leaf poems, many of which model verses printed in papers and take on the same themes, lends to the popular character of gauchesque writing of this period.¹⁷ Even if whites like Luis Pérez were the authors behind all the words that appeared in gauchesque papers, they gathered much inspiration for their material from time spent among gauchos and blacks, and Pérez and similar writers put to paper songs and improvised poetry they heard among rowdy crowds. That such print media were so popular made them particularly well-suited to branding political identity.

Pérez’s papers offer great insight into the communities of gauchos, the role of the author as a mediator between masses and those with political power, and how print media aimed to inspire party affiliation. To begin, the papers circulated in the city of Buenos Aires and the countryside. Pérez employed special postal services to make sure they made their way to readers in the country, and his efforts paid off with the papers reaching widespread popularity.¹⁸ Of course, Pérez’s gauchesque productions did not appear out of thin air. They drew heavily on the *cielitos* and *diálogos* of the revolutionary poet Bartolomé Hidalgo and on

¹⁶ Luis Soler Cañas, ed., *Negros, gauchos y compadres en el cancionero de la federación* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Juan Manuel de Rosas, [1958]), 10.

¹⁷ See Lauro Ayestarán, *La primitiva poesía gauchesca en el Uruguay*, vol. 1 (Montevideo: Imprenta “El Siglo Ilustrado,” 1950), 25-28.

¹⁸ Soler Cañas, 54-57.

the journalism of the anti-Artigas author and priest Francisco de Paula Castañeda.¹⁹ And they were crucial to demarcating what Angel Rama has identified as a second major trend in Rioplatense gauchesque writing. The first trend in this type of writing developed during the wars of independence with the works of Hidalgo, compositions of soldiers, popular dance and song, and the incorporation of language of the countryside into the formal system of writing. Wars between political factions set the parameters for new directions in gauchesque writing where “los poetas entran al servicio de los partidos y cumplen una función mediadora entre dirigentes y masas analfabetas.”²⁰ Though Pérez was not employed in Rosas’s service, his compositions (or those his gaucho gazetteers published) certainly brought together illiterate masses and ruling estancieros, most commonly around opposition to the Unitarian party and praise of Rosas.

This position is clearly outlined in the *prospejo* of the 1830 paper *El Gaucho*. Pancho Lugares, who told us earlier about his troubles with the papeleta, states here that “D. JUAN MANUEL es el hombre, / Que nos manda por la ley / La última gota de sangre / Es preciso dar por él.”²¹ The tone of the paper took a rougher shape in the 7 August 1830 edition. There a friend of Pancho composed a *cielito* that was clear on party affiliation: “Cielito, cielo del alma, / Cielito del rebencazo; / Tocaes, Pancho, el violin, / Mientras yo preparo el lazo.”²²

¹⁹ Julio Schvartzman, “A quién cornea *El Torito*: notas sobre el gauchipolítico Luis Pérez,” in *Letras y divisas: ensayos sobre literatura y Rosismo*, with a prologue by Cristina Iglesia, ed. Cristina Iglesia (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1998), 14-15. On the connections between *cielito*, *pericón*, and *media caña* (similar song / dance forms), dance, and their political force, see John Charles Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 149-54. The widespread readership of popular (Federalist) verse was reinforced, if not guaranteed, by their ties to popular dance forms. As Chasteen puts it, “because everyone knew *cielito* melodies, topical *cielito* lyrics could easily be transmitted, remembered, and launched at their targets like musical missiles” (150).

²⁰ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos rioplatenses*, vol. 1, 61-63.

²¹ *El Gaucho*, *Prospejo*, July 1830, 2, BNAr, Sala de Tesoro.

²² *Ibid.*, 7 August 1830, 3.

The poem uses vocabulary of the countryside, full of references to tools that were part of cattle culture, like the *rebenque*—a riding crop, often doubling as a weapon—and the *lazo*. The *rebencazo* the author speaks of was a lash with the rebenque, in this case against Unitarians who would be tied up with Pancho's lasso, like cattle prepared for branding. Playing the violin was also a way of referring to the common practice of cutting a throat from one side to the other, something every gaucho was accustomed to doing with cattle and which later became a form of killing one's enemy. The discourse of violence that appears in this and Pérez's other papers held a certain attraction for his reading public who lived and worked daily with violence.

Less violent in nature was a *cielito* printed in another of Pérez's papers, the comically titled *El Torito de los Muchachos* on 22 August 1830. The author makes a moral argument about Federalists being true *gente decente*, rather than those urbanites who claim to hold a monopoly on the status. The humble store owner or the estate owner deserve the title of decent people, for, in the eyes of the poet, they are honorable (and good Federalists). "El que llevase este nombre [gente decente] / Debe ser hombre cabal." On the flip side, Unitarians in their frock coats pretend to be noble, honorable folk, but they always have dirty tricks up their sleeve. The author concludes on a humorous note by claiming that his horse—a gaucho's best friend—knows more about moral righteousness than those Unitarians who always go around preaching civilization.²³ Like violence, Pérez employed humor to reach his readers. Humor was especially important in the group contexts in which the papers were read: collective laughter connected those who were present, for if everybody was laughing, one did not want to miss the joke.

²³ *El Torito de los Muchachos*, facsimile ed., with a preliminary study by Olga Fernández Latour de Botas (Buenos Aires: Instituto Bibliográfico 'Antonio Zinny,' 1978), 8.

Branding political identity or party affiliation certainly meant the use of particular vocabulary and discursive modes like violence and humor. It implied a focus on the activities of daily life for rural inhabitants or urbanites who hoped to ignore these, and praise or dislike for Rosas and Federalism. Political identity also showed in one's manner of dress, above all with the color red, either in garments or *divisas* (ribbons) attached to hats, lapels, or worn as arm bands. The *divisa punzó* became an obligatory ornament in 1832, but even during the first years of Rosas's governorship there is evidence of the color red taking hold as a form of expression of one's affinity for Federalism. This comes out clear in the "Postdata de una carta de Pancho Lugares a su Chanonga" that appeared in the 2 October 1830 issue of *El Gaucho*. In this letter, Pancho tells his wife Chanonga that he is sending her some red ribbon. "Te lo has de poner," he instructs her, "Sobre el corazon, / Por que es la divisa / De FEDERACION." Covering her heart was not enough, though. The head had to be included, too. "Te mando tambien / De cinta una pieza, / Para que hagais otro [moño] / Para la cabeza." After all, one had to devote both head and heart to the Federalist cause. Pancho was also going to send her enough ribbon to distribute to her female friends. He himself was already proudly wearing the divisa with the attitude that "esto se llama / Tener opinion / Y á quien no le agrada / Que vaya al ponton."²⁴

The emphasis on the meaning of the color red is taken to another level by a water-seller in Buenos Aires. Though poor, his exposition from 6 October 1830 relates, he is a good *federal* whose cart is pulled by "Bueyes *colorados*" and decorated with "dos banderitas / Que traigo á los lados." He was also confident in the communicative power of the printed word. Each ox wore a head ornament "Con letras doradas / Que las lee cualquiera. / En ellas publico / Cual es mi opinion; / Pues no dicen mas / Que FEDERACION." Even illiterates

²⁴ *El Gaucho*, no. 19, 2 October 1830, 2-4.

could probably recognize the meaning of the golden word. Combined with the red-colored oxen, it may have even convinced some doubters who saw the water man (whose outfit incorporated the enthusiasm for *lo colorado*) pass or who purchased from him to side with the Federalists. His strategy for selling water was designed for this purpose, too: “A real el barril / Doy á FEDERALES, / Y á los *unitarios* / Les cobro dos reales.”²⁵ The water-man’s exposition highlights the importance of class (or classlessness) for Rosismo and the successful branding of political identity.

Rosas’s rule and his attempt to establish a social order in the Plata that was favorable to landowners’ interests depended on popular support, especially his relationship to the poor, which in large part meant his relationship with gauchos and blacks. In the 20 December 1831 edition of *La Gaucha*, the companion paper to Pancho Lugares’s *El Gaucho*, the female editor Chanonga (Pancho’s literary wife) waxes on how well *El Viejo*—one of Rosas’s many nicknames—treats the poor. He is equally attentive to all citizens, she claims, unlike those rich “marqueses” who keep those from the lower classes waiting for hours for an audience. And if we are to put stock in her words, they testify to Rosas as the consummate patron: “No hay naides que no lo quiera.”²⁶

Blacks constituted a large base of support for Rosas, and both his wife and his daughter Manuelita doled out gifts to blacks, received them at their home, and attended candombe gatherings on Sundays, sometimes with *El Viejo* himself. Pérez took care to include words of blacks in his papers, too. Expressed in letters to the editor or to fellow “morenos,” authorship of the voices of blacks—like those of gauchos—is uncertain. It is probable that Pérez penned the poems. But he may have also collected loose-leaf

²⁵ Ibid., no 20, 6 October 1830, 3.

²⁶ *La Gaucha* (Buenos Aires), no. 19, 20 December 1831, BNAr, Sala de Tesoro, 2.

compositions of blacks to include as letters in his papers, or even written down poetic verses he heard recited among blacks in Buenos Aires. In either case, the voices of the blacks in a paper like *El Gaucho* still give insight into the connections between print media and efforts to brand a political identity in certain sectors of the population. A letter from “La morena Catalina” to Pancho Lugares is a case in point. Catalina apologizes for her rough written Spanish, and tells Lugares that her husband wants to learn to write. He does not know Spanish very well either, but “El es... negro felelá / Y agradecido a la Patria / Que le dió la libetá. / Esi negro cara noche / Sueña con don JUA MANUE; / y luego de mañanita / Otra vesi hablando del.”²⁷ Writing and Rosas go hand in hand. Catalina’s husband may not know Spanish, but he is always thinking of Rosas, which should be reason enough for him to learn to write—one more person to pen praising words of the Viejo.

Juana Peña’s introduction to the paper *La Negrita*, written for blacks in Buenos Aires beginning in July 1833, also illustrates well the communication of party identity through print to a popular audience. The voice of the black female author is unique—like that of Chanonga Lugares—if not for being the real voice of such a woman, then for claiming such an identity to reach a given community. “Yo por desgracia,” she tells us, “no tengo / Hijos, padre, ni marido, / A quien poderles decir, / Que sigan este partido. / Pero tengo mis paisanos, / *Los negritos Defensores*, / Que **escucharán** con cuidado / Estas fundadas razones... / Patriotas son y de fibra, / De entusiasmo y de valor, / *Defensores de las Leyes / Y de su Restaurador*.”²⁸ Of course Rosas did not befriend blacks so he could get invitations to candombes on Sunday. His relationship with lower classes was one of patronage: they were

²⁷ *El Gaucho*, no. 8, 25 August 1830, 4. See Horacio Jorge Becco, ed., *Negros y morenos en el cancionero rioplatense* (n.p.: Sociedad Argentina de Americanistas, 1953).

²⁸ *La Negrita* (Buenos Aires), no. 1, 21 July 1833, BNAr, Sala de Tesoro, 1-2. Bold emphasis mine.

provided protection and certain benefits, and he in turn received their support and did not have to fear popular insubordination. Although he was able to talk like or perform the most amazing feats on a horse like the best of gauchos, Rosas did not represent the lower classes. As John Lynch makes clear, he manipulated them in order to best serve his power and the position of the estanciero class.²⁹ Nevertheless, Rosas kept up the proper appearance and rode the wave of popular support for as long as he could.

Pancho dwells on the nature of popular support and the imaginary lack of class divisions among Federalists in a couple issues of *El Gaucho* that tell of the festivities marking the anniversary of Rosas's start as governor of Buenos Aires province. On 8 December 1831 the gazetteer represents the joyful atmosphere of the celebrations welcoming Rosas, elevating the level of praise of the patrón: "Ya gracias á Dios llegó / Nuestro adorado Patron, / El deseado de este Pueblo, / El genio de la Nacion." The great patron of estancias, Rosas had now become the great patron of the party, and his supporters, as well as he and his governing partners, were apt to capitalize on the persuasive and inclusive (but not uniting) force of print, like *El Gaucho* and the officialist paper, *La Gaceta Mercantil*. Pancho points to this inclusion in this edition of *El Gaucho*. "El público regocijo," he writes, "Que el gran Pueblo le ha mostrao, / Es el mejor testimonio / Del afeuto mas sagrao. / Dende el mais grande al mais chico, / Toitos por un igual, / Han salio á recibirle / A tan digno General." Women cast flowers from balconies, while "Otras echaban esquelas / Con versitos imprentaos." Pancho wasn't just any bystander taking notes, though. He, too, was infused with the Federal spirit, playing his violin, and "gritando siempre al Pueblo / Viva ROSAS,

²⁹ Lynch, 76-77.

nuestro pagre, viva.”³⁰ If we are to take to heart Pancho’s description of these magnificent festivities, Rosas’s conversion to the grand patron of the pueblo was not the only one that was taking hold. He was also becoming known as the great representative of republicanism, quick to stomp out disorder and “restore law.” This was the idea behind the crowd’s chanting at a theater performance on the second night of the celebrations. While Pancho’s description of the theater event is interesting, what is of real importance is that the night was recorded for those who were not present, enabling them to share in the event through the paper.

The high-point of the fiestas for Pancho came with the exchange of words with Rosas when he saw the Viejo pass by his place in the crowd. From a distance Pancho yelled he was a faithful Federal servant. Rosas’s response was tailored for Pancho, emphasizing that they were both *criollos federales*, and neither differences of class or wealth could compete with such an identity. “No se quede tan atras,” Rosas told him. “No se acorte por ser pobre, / Mire que esto no es deshonra: / Usté es hombre de trabajo / Y esto para mi me sobra. / Nosotros los federales, / El orgullo lo fundamos / En que la patria y las leyes / No la insulten los tiranos.” Like a grateful client, Pancho takes the patron’s words to heart, stating as much to end the letter in which he tells Chanonga and the readers of *El Gaucho* of the day’s events.³¹

What stands out here is the emphasis on elements that attract one to a political identity—words from a leader like Rosas or the chance to share some intimate moment with him, participation in a community of followers who share a similar reverence for a unique symbolic code, and forms of preserving the experiences of feelings attached to events that foster the branding of political identity. The gazetteer Pancho chose writing as his medium; others chose song, performed in pulperías, and others a host of other manners to remember

³⁰ *El Gaucho*, no. 16, 8 December 1831, 1-2.

³¹ *El Gaucho*, no. 17, 12 December 1831, 2.

those “glory” moments of feeling connected to the cause. Among the range of these ways to preserve and disseminate the moment, writing and print were among the most effective. But for those who took to writing in the name of Rosismo, caution became more necessary as the years passed, for Rosas and his secretaries had their eyes on what other people were printing.

With Rosas out of office for a brief stint in 1833 and 1834, the fervor of his supporters grew braver, and the branding iron hotter. Verses were posted on city walls in Buenos Aires, celebrating Rosas’s efforts in wars against Indians along the southern frontier. But some of the most loyal Federalists became the focus of scrutiny, especially following the return of El Viejo in April 1835 with the “suma del poder público.” Back in 1831 Luis Pérez had been imprisoned for some apparently “offensive” passages in *El Toro de Once*.³² Rosas ordered his release shortly thereafter, and Pérez continued publishing his verses. In 1834, however, he ran into problems with Pedro de Angelis—soon to be Rosas’s right hand man for controlling the press—and then with the Sala de Representantes. The Sala declared that politics could only be treated seriously, which meant not the subject of jokes or of verses like those of Pérez. In April the gazetteer was imprisoned again. Nothing is known of what happened to him afterward. Ironically, Rosas locked up one of his most faithful and talented soldiers of the pen.³³

César Hipólito Bacle—the state lithographer—also faced an unhappy end. In February 1832 (the same month that he made the divisa punzó an obligatory garment), Rosas had signed a decree that cracked down on the freedom of the press and on what printers

³² Pérez’s plight is recorded in the pages of *El Clasificador ó El Nuevo Tribuno*, 11 January-3 March 1831, AAL.

³³ Rodríguez Molas, *Luis Pérez*, 10-14.

could safely produce.³⁴ The new resolutions regarding printing and printers did not sit well with Bacle, who asked for them not to apply to his business. After all, his print shop was the Imprenta Litográfica del Estado. The response of the state to his request was the beginning of the case against Bacle, which ultimately ended with his death in 1838. After multiple letters from the printer attempting to clarify if lithographs were included in the decree since it appeared (in Bacle's eyes) to deal with newspapers above all, he got a definitive answer from Rosas's Minister of War: "Guárdese lo mandado," began the note, in reference to Bacle's last petition. "No se admita escrito ni presentación sobre la materia, y hágase saber por la escribanía mayor de gobierno, en donde se archivará la presente solicitud."³⁵ The Swiss printer had tried to negotiate. In the end, Bacle would accept the new rules, and his press would publish multiple official newspapers throughout the 1830s (*Boletín del Comercio*, *Diario de Anuncios y Publicaciones Oficiales de Buenos Aires*, *Museo Americano*, and *El Recopilador*).

But the cordial business relationship with the Rosas regime did not save Bacle from perils of a shaky political one. Success came to an end when he challenged Rosas's rules again by taking a trip to Chile to help out with the establishment of a state lithography and printing shop. Rosas was suspicious of the possible collaboration from the beginning, considering it dangerous that Bacle could be mingling with or even helping exiled Argentines in Chile, like Sarmiento. Rosas's suspicion led to the imprisonment of Bacle for six months upon his return to Buenos Aires. Throughout his stay in jail, the printer professed his innocence. His trip was, in fact, approved by a few of Rosas's ministers. However,

³⁴ See Ugarteche 322-24 for the articles of the decree, published in the *Registro Oficial* and for details on the consequences of transgressing the points laid out by Rosas.

³⁵ Quoted in Ugarteche, 328.

collaborating with the enemy—whether true or a mere impression—could not be left unpunished, especially if the printed word, capable of being distributed and with a certain permanence, were involved. In 1838 Bacle died of tuberculosis shortly after being released from his dark and damp cell, emphasizing to the last moment that he was innocent.³⁶ Such actions against printers and writers were part of Rosas's second term in office. On both sides of the Plata river they provoked a militarization of print culture and an even starker political divide. If persuasion had been the key to linking print to the political in the first stage, the second scene would revolve around defining one's position in order to fight the enemy—in print as well as on the battle field.

**¡Viva la Confederación Argentina! ¡Viva Nuestro Ilustre Restaurador de las Leyes!
¡Mueran los Salvajes, Asquerosos Unitarios!**

So goes the *lema* or slogan of Rosas and his supporters, required on official documents and all correspondence with the government after his return to the governorship in 1835. Across the river Rosas's ally Manuel Oribe (leader of the faction that would soon become the Blanco party) adopted a variation on the lema, reading “¡Oribe, Leyes o Muerte!” and “death to the savage Unitarians” (soon to be the Colorado party in Uruguay). With Rosas back in office, now with supreme powers, print became much more a weapon to be deployed by parties that vehemently and violently opposed each other. As during the years of the wars of independence, print culture from the mid 1830s to the fall of Rosas in 1852 was entrenched on the front lines of rhetorical and civil wars that engulfed the Plata. Rosas and his supporters were by far more successful than their declared enemies at getting out the message, as was evident in the rise of nativist sentiment. Whether or not this nativism qualifies as nationalism is a current debate, but there is no doubting the link between Rosista

³⁶ Martiniano Leguizamón, *Papeles de Rosas* (Buenos Aires: J. Peuser, 1935), 26-27.

discourse and ideas of the Argentine and Uruguayan nations. Opponents to the patrón's regime, so active in the press during these years, failed to motivate popular resistance. However weak the opposition was to Rosas and the popular support he garnered, it was clear by the time he left office that print culture in the Plata had become militarized and that writing was a partisan activity more than anything else.

It was largely through print that the codes of behavior that fed popular support or the Cult of Rosas, as John Lynch calls it, were constructed. The standard federal lema was more than a few words decorating the tops of pages. It was part of a symbolic system that "was a form of coercion and conformity." Lynch argues that following such codes of behavior forced people to stop thinking for themselves, for their thoughts were occupied by the color red, whether or not they had on the proper dress, and use of the appropriate official language, especially in written documents and public places. "To adopt the federal look and the federal language took the place of security checks and oaths of allegiance."³⁷ How far Rosas's rule penetrated people's lives is hard to gauge and depends on which group of followers one observes. More thoughtful Federalist supporters questioned the propaganda machine, while lower-class admirers of Rosas took up the Rosista messages and modes of behavior with enthusiasm.³⁸ Even the Unitarian and Colorado opponents, constantly critical of the total control Rosas had over articulating messages, were in daily dialogue with Rosas's total government, especially in their written condemnations.

There was no escaping the lema. In 1840 an employee in Rosas's service by the name of Casto Caceres forgot (perhaps on purpose) to include the catch phrase "Salvajes Unitarios" among the other eulogizing ones that began a decree he drafted. He subsequently

³⁷ Lynch, 83.

³⁸ Ibid., 84.

wrote a drawn-out letter to Rosas begging forgiveness and attempting to prove that the mistake was not committed by choice. Caceres claimed to be a most faithful admirer of the patrón “en publico y en privado, de palabra y por escrito...”³⁹ It is not clear if Rosas responded kindly to the note of apology, but the mere fact that such things were written reinforced the relationship between print and the political. Indeed, the consistent use of such leading words was serious business. Jose Antonio Wilde tells readers of his memoirs of a school teacher who had to petition Rosas for permission to continue working in the *colegio*. In 1844 the teacher had been accused of not showing enough faith in the Federation, the Federalist party, or in El Viejo. Wilde reproduces the petition, showing the numerous signatures and written declarations of the teacher’s loyalty to Rosas required for him to continue teaching. The episode is curious in itself; what is important is that the process had to take place through writing. That is, the state required the teacher to make his case in writing, and it was in writing that judgments about it were given. Sure enough, the teacher’s petition begins with the Federal lema.⁴⁰

Dress codes, along with and through writing, contributed to shaping codes of uniform behavior and support for the regime (see figures 2.6-2.8). During Rosas’s second term use of the red ribbon and the like were no longer simple expressions of opinion, as the water seller or the editor of *El Gaucho* called it. In a circular from 1837, a bishop by the name of Mariano advises a priest in Santos Lugares, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, to predicate to women and children the use of the divisa punzó, “haciéndolo presente que llevando la divisa Federal hacen un servicio singular a la Patria, a sus familias y a sí mismos...” Those who did not take care to wear properly the red ribbon should, after multiple warnings, be prohibited

³⁹ Leguizamón, 33.

⁴⁰ Wilde, 205-09.

from entering the church. The circular concludes on an authoritative note: “Espero... que usted, cuyos sentimientos patrióticos son bien notorios al Público, cumplirá con lo que ordenamos.”⁴¹ The lema and required use of personal adornments, as Jorge Myers argues, were methods for facilitating identification with the regime and pointing out its opponents.⁴² Political affiliation had to be visible, as did opposition to the enemy. Even documents to foreign dignitaries bore the slogan pronouncing death to the opposition party members, which left more than one diplomat wondering about the violence expressed in the header.



Figure 2.6: Woman's glove with a detailed portrait of Rosas. Complejo Museográfico “Enrique Udaondo,” Sala Federal, Luján, Argentina



Figure 2.7: *Divisas* with the profile of Rosas and the Federalist slogan: “F o M [Federación o Muerte] Vivan los Federales. Mueran los salvajes inmundos traidores Unitarios.” These were usually worn on hats or pinned to lapels. Complejo Museográfico “Enrique Udaondo,” Sala Federal, Luján, Argentina



Figure 2.8: Hand fan with a portrait of Rosas. To the left is a hankie embroidered with “Mueran los salvajes unitarios.” Complejo Museográfico “Enrique Udaondo,” Sala Federal, Luján, Argentina

⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 210-11.

⁴² Jorge Myers, *Orden y virtud: el discurso republicano en el régimen rosista* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1995), 82. In addition to personal adornments, other materials like paintings, flags and banners from black “naciones” and other Federalist supporters, and knife cases conveyed political messages. For more on these, see Juan A. Pradere, *Juan Manuel de Rosas, su iconografía* (Buenos Aires: J. Mendesk y hijo, 1914) and the items for sale in the *Catálogo descriptivo. Colección época de Rosas*. En venta: Casa Pardo (Buenos Aires: Ferrari Hermanos, n.d.), HA Foll 109.

Official documents from the Rosas government led the charge in the militarization of print, employing variations on the slogan. The majority of this process, however, took place through other forms of print media. These were often connected indirectly to the Rosas regime or his Uruguayan counterpart and driven by popular literature, much of which was written anonymously. Anonymity was important to the regime, especially in newspapers, pamphlets, and loose-leaf publications ordered or appropriated by the government. Most of the anonymous compositions, whether cheering for El Viejo and condemning Unitarians, or pulling for Oribe and damning the Colorados, promote a limited set of themes: patriotism, criminal opponents, cowardice, bravery, loyalty, triumph in battle, and party values as patriotic and national ones. Some examples are in order here.

Federalist poets, for instance, paint Unitarians as—to put it nicely—selfish, lazy, and unpatriotic criminals. Poem after poem siding with Rosas and the Federalists (without making a distinction between Rosismo and Federalism) describe their opponents as vain and bloodthirsty savages not worthy of being considered compatriots. The umbrella of Rosismo was large and inclusive, but the varied group of opponents to the regime—that fell under the identifier “Unitarian”—was excluded totally from Rosas’s and his followers’ idea of a national community. There was no room for rhetorical reconciliation, either. According to one unknown writer, women who did not wear correctly the red hair-bun appeared to favor the Unitarians and should to be “punished” for such a lack of respect.⁴³ Voices in the officialist paper *La Gaceta Mercantil* called for “venganza eterna, sin piedad, venganza, / Guerra de muerte al unitario infame.”⁴⁴ Writers for the regime, often under the guise of

⁴³ Héctor Pedro Blomberg, ed. *Cancionero Federal*, with notes by Héctor Pedro Blomberg, (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Anaconda, n.d.), 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

anonymity, followed orders and shot back at Unitarians in prose and verse, belittling especially those in exile as vile traitors. An example comes from a “Letrilla Federal” responding to a “Letrilla Unitaria” published in December 1839 in Montevideo. “Quien quiera leer falsedades,” begins the response, “Y acostumbrarse a mentir; / El que quisiere vivir / De un tejido de maldades / Y en Religion ser ateo, / Vaya hoy a Montevideo.” Another letrilla summed up the notion of Unitarians having to be defeated in print (or in battle), for the continued independence of the patria.⁴⁵

The militarization of print culture also revolved around the question of race, though not understood in the traditional sense of ethnicity. A racial divide occurred along party lines, where racial identity was conflated with the enemy. The by-product was the rhetorical creation of a race of party loyalists that had nothing whatsoever to do with ethnic make-up. Unitarians and Colorados were described as a vile race that had to be eliminated, not only from cities and the countryside, but also from memory. Verses in one *cielito*, written by a “campesino Federal” read: “Cielito, cielo que sí, / Cielito de la victoria, / No ha de quedar de esa raza / Ni siquiera la memoria.”⁴⁶ Fructuoso Rivera—the Colorado leader (and president for a short time) in Uruguay who sided with the Unitarians—was a constant target of Federalist verse, mainly because he was on the “wrong” side. Writers gave him the title of cowardly “pardo,” “pardejón” and “mulato,” used not as ethnic descriptions but as depreciative racial slurs applied because of the party he represented.⁴⁷ Making sense of this reference to racial difference is difficult due to the simple fact that Rosas’s support base included many blacks and that official discourse advertised their support as an example of the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 78, 87-88.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁷ For examples of such use of these terms see *ibid.* 90, 93, 96, 98, 100.

regime's success in connecting to "the people." There were many black bards who sang the praises of Rosas. And a poem like the "Himno a Da. Manuela Rosas, cantado por las negras el día de sus fiestas," preserved by the Viejo's daughter herself, shows that the regime had no problem at all with blacks.⁴⁸ Further research is needed to explore the complex relation of the regime to race—understood as ethnicity. For now, it appears that as long as blacks, mulatos, and gauchos (who were often of mixed-racial descent) supported the regime, they were seen without discrimination.

If anonymity allowed for writers to get away with outright threats of violence and create new races, it also gave them the chance to take on the voice of the enemy in order to carry out a sort of self-slander. This was the case with a curious letter, supposedly from Rivera to his Argentine Unitarian companion and Federalist nuisance Juan Lavalle, printed in the Uruguayan paper *El Republicano* on 17 August 1836. The anonymous author claims that he found it among some of Rivera's papers. In what is a clear effort to defame Rivera, the author cleverly employs the unseated president's voice to damn Uruguayans and Montevideo. "¿Querrás creer mi buen amigo, / Que casi no hay un sujeto / En él [Montevideo], que no me maldiga / Con mas ladridos que un perro?... Y todo por qué?" The answers are forthcoming and lend strong support to the Blanco party. A tired Rivera tells Lavalle that he wanted to retire to simple country life where he could brand his newborn cattle (and those stolen from other owners), but now Oribe has managed to gather public support to start a revolution. The letter concludes with Rivera forecasting his own downfall

⁴⁸ Rodolfo Trostiné, ed., *Cancionero de Manuelita Rosas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1942), 35-38.

and how he and Lavalle should continue to rob from others in order to deal with their sad situation.⁴⁹

The militarization of print culture also had its positive, less explicitly violent side, evident in publications glorifying military and political victories of the patrón and his partisan supporters. One of these was a collection of documents regarding Rosas and his relations with the Argentine Sala de Representantes and fellow citizens. The collection carried the lengthy title of *Rasgos de la vida pública de S.E. el Sr. Brigadier General D. Juan Manuel de Rosas, Ilustre Restaurador de las Leyes, Héroe del Desierto, Defensor Heroico de la Independencia Americana, Gobernador y Capitan General de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, appropriate for its emphasis on Rosas as a heroic figure battling forces to preserve the independence of America.⁵⁰ Representative of the spirit of the collection is a document that relates the desire of some citizens from both the city and the countryside to make Rosas's birthday a national holiday. The document lists the number of citizens who "subscribed" to this idea. In the city 3,032 people, according to parish records, were in favor of the plan. In the rest of Buenos Aires province, some 5,777 people signed on to petitions sent to the Sala. These figures were relatively small in terms of the total population of the city and province, but the Sala took the numbers seriously, anyway, as signs of deeper popular support. On 23 March 1841 ("el mes de Rosas"), representatives called for a law declaring 30 March a holiday. The numbers were a clear indicator of fervent patriotism, wrote members of the Sala, and a law was redacted.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ayestarán, 223-25. For other examples of anonymously authored verses in Uruguay, see 219-40.

⁵⁰ *Rasgos de la vida pública de S.E. el Sr. Brigadier General D. Juan Manuel de Rosas, Ilustre Restaurador de las Leyes, Héroe del Desierto, Defensor Heroico de la Independencia Americana, Gobernador y Capitan General de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta del Estado, 1842).

⁵¹ Ibid., 211-14.

Rosas, however, was less inclined to support the project. In a note to the members, he modestly and skillfully requested them to archive the petitions. His love of republicanism and his faith in his fellow citizens would not allow him to have such a noble day, implying inequality between Rosas and the plebe. The Sala responded to the note on 4 November 1841, claiming that they clearly understood Rosas's reasons for not wanting to accept the grand birthday honor and would duly archive the petitions. But since they still thought it appropriate to recognize the vote of confidence of the public (even if it was a product of force or if the consequences for not supporting the measure were not positive ones), the Sala proposed the compilation and publication of documents that illustrated the "honores y distinciones acordados para V.E. y sus beneméritos hijos, en remuneracion de sus inmensos servicios... como un modelo de sublime patriotismo y amor á la libertad..." The publication the resulted was the very *Rasgos de la Vida Pública*, distributed by Justices of the Peace in Buenos Aires province and the interior.⁵²

A similar work of positive propaganda was *La rosa de marzo*, published by the Imprenta del Estado in 1843.⁵³ Little is known about this curious book, aside from the fact that some copies were printed on pink or rose colored paper and that it was one of a limited number of bound book volumes published during the Rosas years. It was not Federalist red, but the symbolism was still clearly present in the lighter shade of the pages. The number of copies printed remains a mystery, but the book was devised for a "popular" audience, rather than published for a small circle of Rosas's confidants. This is most evident in the way the text is organized—in vignettes composed by "ciudadanos federales." According to Victoriano Aguilar, the editor of the book (or notebook, as he calls it), Rosas's birthday party

⁵² Ibid., 221-22.

⁵³ *La rosa de marzo*, facsimilie ed., with a prologue by Juan Canter (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Augusta, 1941).

in 1843 was the source of inspiration for the civic compositions. These flow chronologically and are reader friendly, and they correspond to a month and a year when Rosas performed some valiant act of manliness or made a significant political decision. What makes them particularly well-suited for the larger reading public—of literates and illiterates—is their attempt to narrate a history of El Viejo that caters to notions of a shared past for all (Federalist) citizens of Argentina. This common history was supposed to “trasmitir á las generaciones venideras, y en sus mas brillantes páginas, el nombre ilustre del Defensor Heroico de la Independencia Americana.”⁵⁴

Of particular importance was getting across the notion of Rosas as the champion of America, always ready to fight for independence (although he had opposed independence) and defend Americans from imperial foreigners whom the Unitarians represented. Or so goes the logic of *La rosa*. A handful of compositions as well as the “Canción al triunfo de las armas federales sobre las hordas del inmundo salvaje unitario incendiario pardejón Rivera, en las puntas del Arroyo Grande” deal with the connections between Rosas and Uruguay, specifically the partnership forged with the Blanco party to triumph over the Colorado-Unitarian union. There are a number of other songs, music included, in *La rosa de marzo* for the avid Federalist who wanted to express party sentiment with a tune. And like official documents and all other publications siding with Rosas, the lines “¡Viva Nuestro Ilustre Restaurador de las Leyes! ¡Mueran los Salvajes Unitarios!” are prominent on the title page.

While these two books help understand the positive propaganda that constituted one dimension of the militarization of print during the Rosas years, they were an exceptional type of publication. Newspapers, loose-leaf sheets, broadsheets, and pasquinades were by far the

⁵⁴ This notion comes from the editor’s introduction. There are no page numbers in the book, or notebook. Perhaps the idea was for readers to read Rosas’s story in one fell swoop, without becoming distracted by page numbers.

most prominent forms of print media during this period, and really up to the late 1870s. Newspapers were particularly well-suited to partisan warfare in print, in part because they were fairly easy to start, provided one had the financial resources to do so, in part because they were more easily controlled or censored than other types of print media, and in part because they had potentially large readerships.⁵⁵ Under Rosas's second term control of the press in Argentina was tight. Strict regulations and censorship over what was published were the norm. There were, however, different degrees of restriction from the time Rosas stepped into the position of governor.

From 1829 to roughly 1835, the Buenos Aires government only allowed the publication of those papers that did not to publish in favor of Unitarian policies. Unitarian authors had to operate in exile, primarily in Montevideo and Santiago, which explains the large quantity of publications in Buenos Aires supporting Rosas and Federalism. Federalist enthusiasts were not altogether free, though. Those who exercised their supposed right to opine on political questions in a way that was not favorable to Rosismo were dealt with appropriately, usually by seeing their paper shut down or by facing time in prison, as did Luis Pérez. On the whole, though, the press functioned at a high level of production during Rosas's first term in office. Over 100 different newspapers were printed throughout

⁵⁵ A handful of older works study the newspaper press in the Plata. For a narrative account, see Juan Rómulo Fernández, *Historia del periodismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Librería Perlado Editores, 1943), 57-95. A more detailed look at different papers can be found in Oscar R. Beltrán, *Historia del periodismo argentino: pensamiento y obra de los forjadores de la patria* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sopena Argentina, 1943), 161-255. Félix Weinberg, ed. *Florencio Varela y el 'Comercio del Plata'* (Bahía Blanca: Instituto de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 1970) is a more detailed study of one paper from Montevideo and the intellectual climate of the late 1840s. Lastly, indispensable are Antonio Zinny's bibliographical studies, Antonio Praderio, *Índice cronológico de la prensa periódica del Uruguay, 1807-1852* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, 1962), and Dardo Estrada, *Historia y bibliografía de la imprenta en Montevideo, 1810-1865* (Montevideo: Librería Cervantes, 1912). The newspaper press during the Rosas years is carefully studied in Félix Weinberg, "El periodismo en la época de Rosas," *Revista de Historia* 2 (1957): 81-100.

Argentina. Curiously, the year El Viejo was out of office—1833—saw the greatest number of papers published.⁵⁶

Harsher treatment of newspapers (and their authors) was implemented in the late 1830s, above all following the beginning of the French Blockade of the Plata in 1838. After Rosas's return in 1835, Argentine papers were required to carry the Rosista lema, and Federalist authors had to take care to express points of view that were in line with the official discourse. Three officialist papers—*La Gaceta Mercantil*, *El Diario de la Tarde*, and *El Archivo Americano*—became the big guns of the press, and they were made available for free by the Buenos Aires provincial treasury.⁵⁷ Rosas's confidants managed the propaganda machine, though in the case of *El Archivo Americano*, whose chief editor was the Italian immigrant and one of Rosas's right-hand men Pedro de Angelis, Rosas took a hands-on approach, organizing the subjects for the paper into folders that passed between his house and that of de Angelis, and editing articles.⁵⁸ It was in these three papers, and in ones like *El Republicano* and *El Defensor de las Leyes* across the river in Montevideo, where much Federalist-Blanco verse was printed or reprinted. Public readings of the papers and, more importantly, the widespread distribution of print media like pasquinades and loose-leaves that were not put out by the government but supported the great caudillo played right into Rosista discourse.⁵⁹ Publications that did not serve to disseminate Rosista propaganda were short-

⁵⁶ See Fernández, 226-29.

⁵⁷ Virginia Boullosa, Rosa del Carmen Bruno, and Mélide Cantarelli, "La cultura rioplatense entre 1845 y 1848," in Florencio Varela y 'El Comercio del Plata', 268-69.

⁵⁸ Adriana Amante, "Género epistolar y política durante el rosismo," in Schwartzman, *La lucha de los lenguajes*, 487-525.

⁵⁹ Myers, *Orden y virtud*, 29-35. Myers divides gazetteers who supported Rosas into three groups: 1) permanent or semi-permanent collaborators who elaborated official ideology, 2) "popular" newspaper writers who, while constant supporters of rosismo, wrote for a public less intellectually engaged than that of readers of the official

lived if they even saw light to begin with. The numbers are telling. From 1836-1851, a period lasting three times as long as Rosas's first term, only around sixty different papers were published in all of Argentina.⁶⁰ In contrast, the liberal holdout of Montevideo escaped the crackdown on the press during the Rosas years. Over 100 publications were printed in Uruguay during Rosas's second term, most of these in Montevideo.⁶¹

But the militarization of print was not confined to newspapers and broadsheets. Private correspondence was of utmost importance to this process. In fact, it is fair to say that widespread letter writing (whether between officials of the regime and their counterparts in Uruguay, opponents and their supporters for the overthrow of Rosas and Oribe, or among "ordinary" citizens) had its beginning during these years. Granted, the epistolary exchange was minimal compared to the level it would reach by the end of the century, but it was a start.⁶² And much like patriots from both sides of the Plata who used print in celebrations during the wars of independence, Rosas considered print media critical to public ceremonies. The activities of April 1836, marking a year since El Viejo had returned to power, bear this out.

On the edge of Buenos Aires city limits, where pulperías flourished, gauchos—black, white, and mestizo—sang their written and improvised compositions in honor of Rosas. Back in the city center, pasquinades and announcements were posted in the main square, along house walls, and throughout the streets. One of these was pinned to the wall of the San

newspapers, and 3) those writers who occasionally offered compositions that praised El Viejo. See 35-44 for a detailed look at these groups, rosista writers, and the press.

⁶⁰ Fernández, 229-31.

⁶¹ Praderio, 59-114.

⁶² Rosas and de Angelis made it a common practice to publish intercepted Unitarian letters in *El Archivo Americano*.

Ignacio church in Potosí street and surrounded by Federalist flags. It read: “El valiente Rosas en la hoguera / Del patrio fuego que en su pecho encierra / Al unitario bando en un momento / Convierte en humo que disipa el viento. / ¡Mueran los Unitarios!” Another set of verses could be read near the university. They, too, spoke of a patriotic Rosas putting an end to tyranny. The words of a popular song for the celebration also spoke of the patria being saved from tyrants, thanks to the Federalists. And with lines like “Mueran los que no lo son [Federalists],” the song helped to remind those who thought twice about party identity to shape up.⁶³

Similar public parties took place in October of the same year, this time celebrating the anniversary of the beginning of Rosas’s political career. Portraits of Rosas and his wife decorated the city center. Most of these were accompanied by verses that damned Unitarians and praised the historic day the patrón took over the reins of the country. Anything less than admiration for the pictures and printed words equaled a lack of patriotism, exemplified by those “unpatriotic” citizens who fled to live in exile. Anonymous authors contributed their poetry to the festive spirit. At least one of these authors penned a poem to the “Heroína del Desierto,” Rosas’s wife, who, as a beacon of pure patriotism went the poem, deserved to be as much the center of attention as the patrón himself.⁶⁴ As a good politician, Rosas maintained that such symbols were “el resultado de una libre expresión del sentimiento popular.”⁶⁵ Opposition to Rosas and Federalism was not just opposition to the party and the patrón; it was construed as opposition to the very notion of the republic.⁶⁶

⁶³ Blomberg, 28-29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 32-33.

⁶⁵ Myers, *Orden y virtud*, 100.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 104.

This, of course, did not keep Unitarians and Colorados from contesting the social order backed by Rosas and the estanciero class. But despite the enormous quantity of writing these opponents produced, they could not rival the success of Federalist writers. Quite simply, the Unitarian and Colorado parties failed to inspire popular support through print. The strongest band of Unitarian opponents came together in meetings at the last bookstore of Marcos Sastre, an Uruguayan who immigrated to Buenos Aires in 1833.⁶⁷ From the time he arrived to 1837 Sastre had owned and operated numerous bookstores, and each had provided a reading room of sorts, loaned out books to subscribed members, and served as a gathering place for intellectuals. He opened his last store in 1837, and it was here that the *salón literario* and the so-called generation of 1837 formed. Participation in the salón, however, was not as flexible as joining the previous *gabinetes de lectura*. Interested participants had to subscribe for the period of one year, which cost sixty pesos—an amount that limited access to the group. Members could bring a guest on occasion, but the agreement was set up to preserve the boundaries of the salón.⁶⁸ This was an exclusive club where members like Domingo F. Sarmiento, Juan María Gutiérrez, Vicente López y Planes, Esteban Echeverría, and Juan Bautista Alberdi, were bound together by liberalism, class, and, most importantly, opposition to Federalists and Blancos.

It was the group's focus on political questions that led to its downfall. Some claim that Echeverría's readings, concerned with the road Argentina was going down with Rosas, sparked official opposition. Perhaps it was the emphasis the salón placed on works by French

⁶⁷ Sastre was one of the great Rioplatense pedagogues of the nineteenth century, and he authored a few of the best-selling textbooks in all of Latin America: the *Anagnosia* series for learning to read and write, used prevalently in the Rio de la Plata through the 1920s, and *El tempe argentino*.

⁶⁸ For an overview of Sastre's bookstores and the salón literario, see Félix Weinberg, ed., *El Salón Literario*, with a preliminary study by Félix Weinberg (Buenos Aires: Librería Hachette, 1958).

authors—in particular those who dealt with republicanism and equality—and how such writings were in line with the political objectives of the members. The end result was that the young intellectuals fell out of favor with Rosas, which made subsequent relationships between the salón and government difficult and dangerous, and led to divisions among these intellectuals. In January of 1838 Sastre published a note in the *Diario de la Tarde* announcing that it was necessary to stop the salón's activities. A few weeks later he began auctioning off books, and by May the bookstore had closed.⁶⁹

Members went their various ways—Echeverría to Montevideo, Sarmiento to Santiago, and so on—and they continued waging their war against cattle civilization through print. Juan María Gutiérrez called for the creation of a “national” literary tradition that could respond to events of the day and be wielded in political battles.⁷⁰ Echeverría would go on to write his now canonical story *El Matadero* (not published until 1871) describing the events at a Buenos Aires slaughterhouse to criticize the power of estancieros. And Sarmiento would author what has become the definitive contemporary critique of cattle culture—*Facundo*. But these authors wrote for a small reading public to which they belonged in hopes of expanding that group to include “others.” Indeed, Unitarians in exile were constant contributors and chief editors of newspapers from the time Rosas took office to 1852, but these papers did not compete with the popular reception of Federalist papers. What they shared in common with Federalist authors was the partisan motivation of almost every word written and printed. Artistic aspirations took a back seat to political concerns. Unitarian and Colorado partisans

⁶⁹ Ibid., 95-98.

⁷⁰ See Jorge Myers, “‘Aquí nadie vive de las bellas letras’: literatura e ideas desde el Salón Literario a la Organización Nacional,” in Schwartzman, *La lucha de los lenguajes*, 310.

wrote for their social class, and it was their social class they envisioned as leading the fight against estancieros and constructing a republic founded on liberal principles.

One of the most notable efforts of liberal intellectuals was the daily *El Comercio del Plata*, printed in Montevideo from 1845 to 1852. This newspaper—designed from its inception to combat Rosas and Rosismo—had average print runs of over 400 copies a day, distributed mainly to lettered elites who held subscriptions.⁷¹ But its intellectual tone limited its accessibility and did not make it popular outside small circles. The paper's founder, Florencio Varela, recognized this and the importance of gauchesque papers that would be of greater interest and availability to rural inhabitants. On 16 November 1846 he recommended to readers the work of the Argentine Hilario Ascasubi and commented in *El Comercio del Plata* that “si la prensa ha de tener influencia sobre nuestros campesinos, ha de ser solamente bajo esas formas pintorescas y animadas puestas a su alcance por el lenguaje, por los caracteres y por esa clase de versos que les hace reir y que luego se complacen en cantar al son de su guitarra en las pulperías y en los fogones.”⁷² Writing for gauchos was precisely what Ascasubi had been doing since the early 1830s.

Exiled in Montevideo from the early 1830s to the end of the Rosas years, Ascasubi was the only writer on the side of the Unitarians and Colorados who enjoyed veritable success in the venture to wage war through print *and* to reach a large public. Ascasubi was a rival of the Federalist gazetteer Luis Pérez.⁷³ Like Pérez, Ascasubi drafted gauchesque verses and dialogues that appeared as loose-leaves and in newspapers. Like Pérez, he wrote for his party, though he collected sums for the things he produced from leaders like Rivera and the

⁷¹ Boullosa, del Carmen Bruno, and Cantarelli, 265, 267.

⁷² Quoted in *ibid.*, 274.

⁷³ See Pablo Ansolabehere, “Ascasubi y el mal argentino,” in Schwartzman, *La lucha de los lenguajes*, 39-58.

Entre Ríos caudillo Justo José de Urquiza. And like Pérez, Ascasubi was a soldier-poet. In contrast to Pérez, he created the characters of liberal gauchos to edit his popular papers *El Arriero Argentino* (1830), *El Gaucho en Campaña* (1839), and *El Gaucho Jacinto Cielo* (1843), all published in Montevideo (see figure 2.9).⁷⁴ He collected his loose publications in a volume titled *Paulino* and dedicated to Urquiza. The definitive version of this collection was published in 1872 with the revealing title of: *Paulino Lucero, ó Los gauchos del Rio de la Plata. Cantando y combatiendo contra los tiranos de las republicas Argentina y Oriental de Uruguay (1839 a 1851)*.



Figure 2.9: The liberal gaucho Jacinto Cielo whirls his *boleadoras* on the front pages of Ascasubi's *El Gaucho Jacinto Cielo*. Ascasubi's verses harkened back to those of Bartolomé Hidalgo. Even the names of some of the paper's main characters—Jacinto and Chano—were references to characters in Hidalgo's poems. In this sense, Ascasubi, Pérez, and other authors of gauchesque verse tapped into a common set of popular cultural referents rooted in Hidalgo's verses. No. 9, 11 August 1843. CNBA, Colección Juan Canter.

⁷⁴ For a facsimilar edition and study of the four gauchesque papers published in Montevideo during the Rosas years, including these three by Ascasubi and Isidoro de María's *El Gaucho Oriental*, see William Acree, *Literatura Popular y Prensa Militante en Montevideo Durante la Epoca de Rosas*, manuscript in preparation.

In *Paulino Lucero*, as in his gauchesque papers, his war against Rosas and Oribe is waged by a liberal gaucho that hoped to appropriate some of the nativist attraction of the figure of the gaucho to change the minds of rural and urban followers of Rosas. The compositions are as much about strategy as they are about entertaining rural readers. Take for example the poem “El Truquiflor,” supposedly from a soldier under Rivera’s command, that appeared in the paper *El Gaucho en Campaña* in late 1839. At the head of the poem is an introductory note to the editor of the paper where the author (Ascasubi) tells how he will relate the valiant resistance of the Uruguayan troops to Rosas’s invaders. In what comes close to mirroring the language used by Federalist supporters to talk about Unitarians and Colorados, the author speaks of Rosas as a coward, thief, and traitor: “Ese Rosas—¡á malalla / se viniera!... si es tan VILOTE: / aunque hemos de ir á buscarlo / hasta allá por Güenos Aires / y hemos de dar trabajo / á ese gaucho quebrallón.” The heated words continue, rounding off the poem with the idea of relaxing on Rosas’s estancias and roasting up a fine asado (from among Rosas’s cattle) with General Rivera.⁷⁵

Ascasubi was a master at composing cielitos narrating battles won against Rosas and Oribe, creating letters from frightened Federalist generals to El Viejo, imitating language used by Federalist supporters, and giving comical voices to some of the leading figures of the Rosas regime, including Rosas himself. One of these inventions consists of a summary of military action from the general Pascual Echagüe to Rosas, which Ascasubi claims to have been found in a trunk that the general lost in Entre Ríos after having been defeated in the battle of Cagancha in 1839. As can be expected, the defeated general laments his loss in the Banda Oriental, but advises Rosas that if he plans on sending him to fight again, then it will

⁷⁵ Hilario Ascasubi, *Paulino Lucero*, with a prologue by Manuel Mujica Lainez (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Estrada, 1945), 45-49, and *El Gaucho en Campaña*, no. 4, 26 October 1839, 2. BNUr, Materiales Especiales.

take resources beyond their reach to stand a chance. Rosas's reply—also invented by Ascasubi—is a furious one, but no less comical than the blunders of battle Echagüe confesses. In writing for both, Ascasubi skillfully depicts them as representatives of a group lacking cohesion and eager to praise Uruguayans for their valor and skill in battle.⁷⁶

Like many of the Federalist poets, and modeling works of the revolutionary writer Bartolomé Hidalgo who put words of gauchos in print, Ascasubi wrote lively dialogues between *paisanos*. One of these was a conversation held by Norberto Flores and Ramón Guevara, two gauchos orientales, who discussed the invasion of the Banda Oriental and how it was necessary to join the ranks of those fighting to preserve the patria. At the high point of the chat the two men speak of Rosas ordering people around in Uruguay, which would equal a total loss of independence. Flores asks Guevara what he thinks about the dark prospect. He responds in a way that sheds light on how party affiliation casually became imbedded in one's identity. Guevara cannot contemplate not taking sides, which is the very idea Ascasubi hoped to get across to his readers—they had to take sides. Of course, the only viable option was to oppose Rosas. “Dejuramente,” Guevara concludes, “es preciso / forcejear en la ocasión, / porque peligrá la patria, / y debemos en unión / defenderla a toda costa.” Those Orientales who did not see things in the same light would have to face Guevara's *facón*. He hoped this idea would be clearly expressed by the words embroidered on the headband he asked Flores to buy: “¡Viva la Custitución / y los orientales libres! / ¡Muera Echagua [Echagüe] el invasor!”⁷⁷ Illiterate companions of the countryside would have been able to read these few words on the headband. From there party lines would blend with patriotic sentiment, with the result being a few more opponents of Rosas and his band of enemies.

⁷⁶ Ascasubi, 63-80.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 49-62.

Driving the militarization of print culture were ideological forces corresponding to political factions and interests. A definite rural-urban divide was becoming more pronounced during the Rosas years, and it fueled the distance between parties and became associated with party identity. It was also ripe material for writers. Each camp catered to what they envisioned as “their” demographic base, which in turn was meant to help create this base, at least along party lines. The militarization of print culture was about fighting the enemy and defining one’s own position. It was almost never about persuasion, which made this second stage sharply distinct from the partisan efforts in print to gain followers during Rosas’s first term. Linked to the rural-urban divide were nativism and liberalism. When it came to the effectiveness of print, nativism and Rosas’s particular brand of nationalism—often referred to as the “sistema americano”—came out on top, evident in the popular support he received during his years in office.⁷⁸ The connection of nativism to the rural, patriotic, and anticosmopolitan image of the regime came about with the hope of defining a party identity that could at the same time be transferred to the republic, or even the nation. Ironically the Rosas years were brought to an end by the rival estanciero Justo José de Urquiza. The end result was the unraveling of the lasso that bound print to the politics of cattle civilization.

Untying the Lasso: A Culture of Print at the Crossroads

The end of the Rosas years essentially marked the end of cattle civilization, at least as it had functioned up to 1850. His exile (1852) also had a major impact on the goals of authors, the functions and types of print media, and the make-up of reading publics. Rioplatense print culture was at a crossroads. In this last scene, liberal elites were cultivating a coherent program for the future, and the social order that was part and parcel of cattle

⁷⁸ See Myers, *Orden y virtud*, 52-72 for a thorough and illuminating analysis of nativism during the Rosas years and the sistema americano.

culture was not in their plans. Between 1852 and 1870 they would take over state administration in Uruguay and Argentina, finally acquiring political authority and political power, which had eluded them for half a century. Throughout this short period, there was a gradual unraveling of the connections between the printed word and a world that revolved around cattle. Print culture began as a political force, tied to the wars of independence. During the Rosas years it maintained its political character, first to persuade, and then to combat the enemy. By 1870, though, this character had shifted in orientation, turning toward social concerns—often consequences of political action, like the decimation of indigenous populations and the attempts to rid the countryside of gauchos. The social twist of the last period was still a political statement. What vanished was partisan coloring.

Liberal elites and their opponents sought exploit print for purposes that went beyond inspiring loyalty to their own faction and sowing hatred for that of the enemy. One of the most complex of these was turning attraction to a party into a sense of a greater community identity inclusive enough to appeal to those who held no affinity for the party to begin with—a process that would be most significantly affected by the establishment of public education toward the end of the century. The challenge of making party identity into something greater was confronted by liberals and those opposing them. An opening for both groups to engage this challenge in print—and thus untie the lasso—came with the shift from a partisan bent pervading all things written to a broader range of concerns making their way into newspapers, essays, and, of course, popular poetry that dealt with gaucho ways of life, albeit now under a whole new light.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ From 1852 to 1872, the year Antonio Lussich published *Los tres gauchos orientales* and José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* was first printed, 380 newspapers alone—a formidable number—appeared throughout Argentina. In 1852, year of the defeat of Rosas, 30 papers were started or restarted. See Fernández, 231-43. Montevideo was a ripe center for an expanding printing industry, too. According to Dardo Estrada—the author of the most

Gauchesque writing changed significantly in the second half of the century, above all because of the changes in the ways of life of the gauchos who were its characters. With Rosas out of power and with rapid changes in agricultural practices and cattle raising in the Plata, gauchesque authors turned their attention and the focus of their writing away from partisan warfare and toward social conditions, almost with an eye toward the past, looking nostalgically at the days of old, or searching for ways to bring gauchos of the countryside and urban dwellers closer together.⁸⁰ This is what the Argentine writer and Unitarian politician Estanislao del Campo had in mind with his verses. Del Campo began his writing career as an admirer of Hilario Ascasubi. Where he differed was in his loyalty to an ideology rather than a particular party. Del Campo was a supporter of *mitrismo*—the spirit of liberalism promoted by Bartolomé Mitre, president of Argentina in the 1860s. In the end, mitrismo was very much in line with the Unitarian party, but del Campo's alliance with the ideology meant that he addressed an elite urban audience as well as a rural one, which was Ascasubi's prime readership. This difference came out clearly in del Campo's *Fausto: impresiones del gaucho Anastasio el Pollo en la representación de esta ópera* of 1866.

Fausto is a landmark publication, in part because of its success, and in part because of the portrait it paints of gauchos. After its first publication in the newspaper *Correo del Domingo* in September 1866, *Fausto* was reprinted in a number of forms. The popular paper *La Tribuna* published it in October of the same year. In November it was put out as a *folleto*, or pamphlet, with the revenue from sales collected for the wounded in the war of the Triple

complete account of publications printed in the Uruguayan port city—444 catechisms for children, letters, newspapers, novels, works of theater, textbooks, and, among others, administrative documents were printed between 1852 and 1865 (the last year that factors into Estrada's study). The year of 1852 saw eighteen publications of all types of print media. See Estrada, 183-311. The point here is that the printing industry in the Plata picked up steam following the Rosas years, and the partisan thread was not the only one that made it into print media.

⁸⁰ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos*, vol. 1, 59.

Alliance, and with commentaries by a few members of Buenos Aires's literary elite.⁸¹ And in 1870 del Campo published the poem again, this time in book form with other verses.⁸² The newspaper *El Pueblo* commented on the new pamphlet version the day it hit the streets: "Su autor ha de expender muchos ejemplares, especialmente en la campaña, donde ha hecho furor."⁸³ In the following day's issue, dated 9 November 1866, the same paper announced that many requests for the folleto had come from the countryside and that copies of it would be distributed that night in Buenos Aires at the operatic representation of *Fausto*. The folleto came with a detailed lithographic image of Anastasio relating the story of the opera to his paisano Laguna, on the banks of the Río de la Plata. The image was a portrait of sorts of del Campo and one of his close friends, but rural inhabitants could nevertheless identify with the scene of the two gauchos conversing there and connect it to the printed pamphlet. The success of the poem aside, the characters del Campo masterfully depicts are unarmed gauchos. They make no mention of savage Unitarians or Federalists. Rather, their jovial nature makes it easy for the rebellious character of the gaucho to be absent from the scene.⁸⁴ Indeed, one of the new goals of del Campo was to incorporate the gaucho into the ways of urban liberals, a notion closely related to del Campo's audience.

The nature of the audience or "reading public" was, along with changing motivations for writing, a key factor in placing the culture of print at a crossroads. After the Rosas years

⁸¹ Raúl Quintana, prologue to *Fausto: impresiones del gaucho Anastasio el Pollo en la representación de esta ópera*, facsimilar ed., by Estanislao del Campo, with a preliminary study by Ernesto Mario Barreda (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de la Biblioteca Nacional, 1940), xii. See also Claudia A. Román, "La vida color rosao: el *Fausto* de Estanislao del Campo," in *La lucha de los lenguajes*, 59-81.

⁸² Angel J. Battistessa, preliminary study to *Fausto: su prefiguración periodística*, by Estanislao del Campo, ed Angel J. Battistessa (Buenos Aires: Academia Argentina de Letras, 1989), 27. The book contained a prologue by José Mármol.

⁸³ Quoted in Quintana, viii.

⁸⁴ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos*, vol. 1, 95.

liberal writers became gradually more concerned with a reading public that wanted texts that aspired to be “literary” as well as political. This change was evident in the foundation of literary societies that often brought political enemies together with the common goal of forging a national literary project and a community of writers. Women were becoming increasingly a part of this new reading public, and it was women, thought many of these writers, who could help shift literature away from rough partisan discourse.⁸⁵ But with the exception of del Campo’s *Fausto*, liberal print media struggled to gain a substantial readership. The most significant audience for print media during these years continued following popular verse, a phenomenon that can be attributed both to the primarily rural demographic character of the Río de la Plata, as well as to the ways such verse tapped into the hearts of those associated with a dying cattle culture and suffering the accompanying vicissitudes.

Formed by rural inhabitants of the Plata, one of if not *the* most important characteristics of this new community of readers is that it did not exist before the appearance of the gauchesque genre. While the people who were doing the reading or, as more often was the case, were being read to, were of course around, it was thanks to the works of authors like Bartolomé Hidalgo, Pérez, Ascasubi, and Del Campo that a new popular readership came into existence. What’s more, Angel Rama has pointed out, is that “se tratará del más nutrido público de la literatura en todo el siglo XIX, muy por encima del que conquistaron los sectores cultos del mismo período.”⁸⁶ The best-selling works of the close friends Antonio

⁸⁵ Myers, ““Aquí nadie vive de las bellas letras,”” 321-23.

⁸⁶ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos*, vol. 2, 165-66. Rama suggests that fostering the development of this reading public was closely connected to the emergence of writing as a professional practice.

Lussich and José Hernández bear witness to the size of this readership as well as the new issues on the table in popular poetry.

Considered one of Uruguay's great gauchesque writers, Lussich wrote *Los tres gauchos orientales*, a dialogue that chronicles the battle lead by the Blanco general Timoteo Aparicio against the Colorado president Lorenzo Batlle. The poem was extremely well-received upon its publication in 1872. A second edition came out a year later, a third in 1877, and then a fourth edition in 1883. In a letter he directed to the publisher of the fourth edition, Lussich remarked on the social concern at the heart of the book. "Es en verdad halagadora para mí la acogida que ha merecido este libro, en el cual, he procurado pintar tipos de una raza que podría llamarse legendaria, y, que por la ley dominadora del progreso, tiende a desaparecer, dejando empero como herencia para las generaciones venideras, el recuerdo de su virilidad, inteligencia y patriótica abnegación."⁸⁷ In contrast to the Federalists papers and the early writings of Ascasubi where gauchos write to wage a war between supporters and opponents of cattle culture, Lussich's gauchos aim to draw attention to a sector of Rioplatense society that was in danger of disappearing. To put it simply, social justice has replaced flag waving for a party as a matter of national importance.

The fourth edition of *Los tres gauchos* brought the total number of official copies in circulation to at least 16,000. While the editorial success was a source of pride for Lussich, he was most proud of his effort to defend "a esos desgraciados parias, víctimas del abandono en que viven, despojados de todas las garantías a que tienen derecho como ciudadanos de un pueblo libre."⁸⁸ These desgraciados were gauchos that had so inspired Lussich as a soldier

⁸⁷ Antonio D. Lussich, *Los tres gauchos orientales*, with a prologue by Eneida Sansone de Martínez, (Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Previsión Social, 1964), 3.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

with General Aparicio. For him they were the most sincere patriots, always the first to defend the notion of liberty, and eager to sacrifice everything to preserve the *patria*. This was reason enough to put into print for posterity the ways of a lifestyle that was on the verge of disappearing.

This was the point expressed by Luciano Santos, the scribe of sorts of the conversation held by the three gauchos. Santos overheard the three from behind a patch of bushes and decided to record what they said as a “cuento nacional.” This national story, or one aspect of it, tells of the war. The characters Julián and Baliente lament that war has shut the doors of the patria to patriots of the countryside, doors only held open by the revolution they fought alongside General Aparicio. There is talk about emigrating, and both recall all the things they once had but have since lost: flocks of sheep, a small estate, horses, a house, and a beloved *prenda* that has either died of sorrow or joined hands with another man. This is the luck of the draw, notes Julián.⁸⁹ The real story comes with Santos’s closing words about a remedy for the degenerating social situation of gauchos. “El hijo de su pátria fiel,” writes Santos, “Aprenderá educación.” Indeed, he goes on, gauchos may be ignorant, but they are still vessels where knowledge may accumulate; wise people are just vessels with a fine finish. “Hasta el gaucho más cruel / Será útil ciudadano... Pongan de balde la escuela / En vez de comprar tanta arma, / Que solo sirve pa alarma... Y de redondo, en doctor / El gaúcho se volverá...” While not many gauchos earned the formal title of “doctor,” education was the remedy in Santos’s (and Lussich’s) eyes.⁹⁰

Education was a motivating factor behind José Hernández’s now legendary gauchesque poem *Martín Fierro*, appearing also in 1872. By the mid-1870s the publishing

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14-17.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 99-100.

success of Hernández's poem had overshadowed that of *Los tres gauchos orientales*, del Campo's *Fausto*, and many other liberal writers' works combined. This did not stop Sarmiento's liberal government from chasing after Hernández to the point of forcing him into exile. This experience, however, surely reinforced his perspective on the sad situation of rural inhabitants. In the revealing "Cuatro palabras de conversación con los lectores" that opens *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* in 1879, Hernández comments on the success of the poem and offers a few words on the act of reading and how the language of the poem imitates the language of so many who have not read before. The goal is that "el libro se identifique con ellos de una manera tan estrecha e íntima, que su lectura no sea sino una continuacion natural de su existencia. Sólo así pasan sin violencia del trabajo al libro; y sólo así, esa lectura puede serles amena, interesante y útil."⁹¹ He goes on to say that if a book could teach readers how to live upright lives, be noble and productive citizens, to respect their parents and fellow paisanos, to foment love among spouses, and, among other things, to love freedom while respecting law, then it would be a good book, notwithstanding the spelling errors contained within. *La vuelta* is such a book, he argues, and many more need to take up where it leaves off, teaching lessons in a way that is barely or not at all perceptible so that they can be absorbed without confusion.⁹²

Hernández's educational project was not meant to be carried out in the classroom. It aimed to help gauchos deal with the problems they faced, like conscription, the constant search for work that took them away from home, an unfair legal system that stripped them of property and dignity, and political retribution for any number of reasons. And it aimed to draw attention to the gaucho in hopes of inspiring social reform. In the end, though, the class

⁹¹ José Hernández, *Martín Fierro*, ed. Carlos Alberto Leumann (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía, 1945), 268.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 269.

gauchos formed in Rioplatense society was transformed from a group of actors to one of spectators, under attack from and loosing out to wealthier urban liberals.⁹³ In the scheme of the changing character of print culture, *Martín Fierro* was a leading example of the turn toward social concerns. Though the poem was all about gauchos, its publication, like that of Lussich's *Los tres gauchos orientales*, came at the end of the lasso, with threads that once bound print culture to cattle culture now going in different directions.



The lasso-like connections between print media and cattle civilization were much deeper than leather book bindings. From 1830 to 1870 an evolving culture of print in the Plata was braided to an economy based on exploiting cattle products and the politics of estancieros and saladeros. Almost everything written during these years engaged this reality in one way or another. The rule of the great patron and estate-owner Juan Manuel de Rosas corresponded to the most profitable years of cattle civilization. During his first term in office, print media branded political property and party identity. Most illustrative of this stage were the widely-read gauchesque newspapers written by Luis Pérez. In a second distinct stage, print culture was militarized by factions competing for party loyalty and attempting to assert or unseat a view of the road the Uruguayan and Argentine nations should follow. As a component of the civil wars being fought in the region, gauchesque verse, printed in Federalist and Blanco papers and loose-leaves, and posted in public spaces, lead a rhetorical war against a “savage” enemy and aimed to instill codes of behavior that would guarantee allegiance. In spite of the many fronts from which the Unitarian/Colorado duo challenged gauchesque writing and the politics of cattle culture, they paled in comparison to their opponents when it came to garnering popular support. After all, siding with El Viejo was a

⁹³ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos*, vol. 2, 80.

much more emotionally satisfying position than lining up with a group of elites who were fans of the foreign. The end of the Rosas years marked the beginning of the end for cattle civilization. Fighting to promote party affiliation and identity through print was gradually replaced with a broader range of concerns, like those dealing with esthetic aspirations and social conditions.

Focusing on words, wars, and gauchos allows us to draw some important conclusions regarding print culture in the Río de la Plata. Gauchesque poetry and papers were a phenomenon of the Plata. Unlike anywhere else in nineteenth-century Latin America, this popular literature negotiated the meeting of oral and print cultures and allowed for the large-scale consumption of print media. The continued development of the unique relationship between print, the political, and the public sphere in the Plata depended on the appeal of the printed word and image to popular classes, often in the form of popular print media. These connections conditioned the broader relation of print to power from 1830 to 70. Popular consumption of gauchesque writing made it a conduit through which political identity was disseminated in print. Insofar as Federalist authors made use of this conduit, they were able to wed print to power. That Rosas was a good gaucho himself made state appropriation of popular discourse seem completely natural. The state and its functionaries, however, did not have a monopoly on the written word. The foot soldier of the press Luis Pérez was an ardent Federalist whose papers were all the rage, but he was not on Rosas's payroll. And when the opposition author Ascasubi tapped into the power of gauchesque writing, he was sure to have a substantial readership. The very popular quality that made gauchesque writing such an effective form of inspiring or reaffirming affinity for a political party thus limited the ways in which print was tied to power. In sum, the formation of political (or party) identity through

print relied on the ability to engage popular sentiment in order to get the message—Federalist or Unitarian, Blanco or Colorado—across. This was a lesson learned the hard way by Unitarians and Colorados who cared nothing about writing things that could be read, discussed, and sung at the local pulpería or around the campfire at night. This did not stop such writers from engaging the political debate in print. It just meant that their words were ineffective.

By the 1870s the ties between print and cattle cultures were unraveling. With a trajectory that, simplistically put, started as revolutionary, turned partisan, and now was enveloped in social issues, print in the Plata was at a crossroads. How to integrate those gauchos and their descendants who once survived off a society built on cattle turned into a priority for not only sympathizers with the disappearing way of life, but also liberal elites. The key for both groups resided in education. And with the first big waves of immigrants settling in the port cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, it was education liberal style that would now play a prominent role in orienting Rioplatense print culture.

CHAPTER 3

SOWERS OF ALPHABETS

Para colmarme la vida
para llenarme de luz
imitando a mi bandera
me voy a la escuela de blanco y azul.

Siempre me dice el maestro
con dulce dejo de amor
el fundador de tu escuela
se llama Varela, quiere quiereló.

Estrillo

Sembrador de abecedario
líder del verbo Oriental
Don José Pedro Varela
pastor de mi escuela jamás morirá.

Gracias señor Don Varela
gracias señor Don José
Don Pedro fiel de los niños
que cantan la letra que les dio su ser.

Cuando me voy a la escuela
Don José Pedro que bien
si viera Usted que contento
me vuela por dentro pensando en Usted.

Rubén Lena, "Sembrador de abecedario"

José Pedro Varela passed away on 24 October 1879, at the young age of thirty-four, though as the lyrics of Lena's song tell us, the sower of alphabets will never die.¹ Indeed, Varela's passing occurred at the beginning of the long life (or immortality) of his ideas—still thriving today. These ideas constituted the *Reforma Vareliana* and would serve as the foundation of the public education system in Uruguay, whose success the reformer himself would not see before that last spring day in 1879. Almost all Uruguayan newspapers lamented the passing of the young director of schools. One of his biographers wrote that the

¹ Varela's family ties ran the political spectrum of Colorados and Blancos, but there was no doubt that he came from a long line of *letrados*. His father fought against the English invasion of Buenos Aires at the beginning of the century, and during the Rosas years he took the family to Montevideo. His uncles were Florencio Varela—the editor of *El Comercio del Plata* and firm believer in the need to appeal to the hearts of *gauchos* in order to win them over to the cause of liberalism—and the poet Juan Cruz Varela. José Pedro was also a relative twice removed of Dámaso A. Larrañaga, head of the first public library in Montevideo. His mother's side of the family connected Varela to the Blanco president of Uruguay in the early 1860s, Bernardo Berro.

news resounded in the soul of the republic.² On 25 October the government issued a call for Varela to be honored as one of the great citizens of the nation. The sad day in October took place, wrote the Uruguayan president Lorenzo Latorre, “cuando las semillas que arrojara en el suelo de la Patria... empezaban recién á asomar frutos.” According to a decree issued on the same date, all government offices would be closed the day of Varela’s interment in honor of the great reformer.³

Varela’s burial was accompanied by widespread public recognition. His contemporary and fellow champion of education Orestes Araújo tells us that no less than 20,000 people showed up for the burial services on 28 October.⁴ The paper *La France* remarked on this day that Montevideo had never before seen such an outpouring of public sentiment. “Una multitud inmensa,” noted the paper, “en la que se confundían todas las clases sociales, todas las nacionalidades y todas las edades, jóvenes, niños, viejos, formaban una multitud, una ola humana que iba creciendo en cada esquina. Puede decirse que la ciudad entera estuvo de pie para seguir el cortejo... de ese gran nombre de aquí en adelante inmortal.”⁵ *El Siglo* described the day’s events with similar awe, highlighting the huge turnout to pay respect to Varela. The ornaments that accompany the burial of national heroes were not lacking, either. “El Gobierno había cumplido su deber,” stated *El Siglo*.

“Retumbaba el cañón en señal de duelo; el pabellón nacional ondeaba como los días en que

² Orestes Araújo, *Historia de la escuela uruguaya*, with a prologue by Abel J. Pérez (Montevideo: Imp. “El Siglo Ilustrado” de Gregorio V. Mariño, 1911), 462. Though dated, Araújo’s history of education in Uruguay remains the most complete and definitive interpretation.

³ Ibid., 470, 463.

⁴ Ibid., 463.

⁵ Quoted in Jaime Monestier, *El combate laico: bajo relieve de la Reforma Vareliana* (Montevideo: Ediciones “El Galeón,” 1992), 3. Monestier’s is one of the most recent accounts of the birth of public education in Uruguay. The study is full of excerpts from the periodical press of the time.

la Patria se viste de luto; la fuerza pública hacía los honores á los restos de Varela... Todos estaban allí. Todos lamentaban la pérdida que ha sufrido la Patria. Todos lloraban y glorificaban á Varela.”⁶ The coffin was adorned with flowers and placed in a chariot pulled by six horses, fanned by the highest government officials. Throughout the day politicians spoke, as did colleagues from the Society of Friends of Education and the administrative body of public education (the *Dirección General de Instrucción Pública*, or DGIP). Notably absent from the apotheosizing event were clergymen, church officials, and advocates of preserving the teaching of catholicism in the classroom—Varela’s enemies.

The following years saw commemorations that contributed to solidifying the legend of Varela, concretely illustrated by a portrait of him that began to appear in classrooms across the country. In 1880 the DGIP declared that from then on schools would be closed on 24 October to pay tribute to Varela. In 1881 the anniversary of the reformer’s death was an even bigger event. Perhaps because of its popularity it also generated some controversy. Varela’s connection to president (and military strongman) Lorenzo Latorre sparked a divide among members of *El Ateneo*, a group of intellectuals who contributed to public debate in newspapers and political circles. The row got started when followers of Varela planned to hold a literary gathering in order to commemorate his work on the second anniversary of his death. Other Ateneo members were strongly opposed, claiming that Varela had made the wrong move by collaborating with Latorre, enemy of liberalism, and that he deserved no such recognition. Volleys were exchanged in the press in July 1881. One author defended Varela by touching on what Rubén Lena (school teacher, poet, and musician) would later put into his “Sembrador de abecedario,” made popular by the folk duo Los Olimareños. He wrote: “La obra de Varela es imperecedera... sembró la semilla que ha de producir más tarde

⁶ Quoted in Araújo, 464.

ciudadanos celosos del cumplimiento de sus deberes, ciudadanos que comprendan sus derechos, mientras que... la dictadura de Latorre habría necesariamente de desaparecer...”⁷

The bond between sower and seeds was growing stronger.

After months of ongoing debates in the press, the literary gathering happened in Montevideo’s premier theater—the Teatro Solís. More people turned out for this day, in fact, than for his burial two years before. School children were not absent from the ceremony. After lofty speeches by lettered elites, young students passed by Varela’s grave, leaving flowers and other adornments that ended up covering the tomb.⁸ Seven years later, free from the strong-arm rule of Latorre’s successor Máximo Santos, the dispute over Varela had cooled. In fact, there was a certain unified voice that praised him for fighting the “dictator” from within. The manifesto of the *Liga Patriótica de la Enseñanza*, formed in 1888, summed up the new reverence for the reformer: “De una sociedad despreocupada , indiferente en materia de educación, desquiciada y anarquizada por los odios, los rencores partidistas y preocupaciones doctrinarias, sojuzgada por una dictadura militar, hizo en breve un pueblo enamorado hasta el entusiasmo de la causa de la enseñanza...” In the spirit of unity behind education, some of those who had opposed recognizing Varela in 1881 now signed onto the Liga’s words of praise.⁹

By the turn of the century, Varela had a sure place in the national pantheon, and his myth was becoming more and more engrained, thanks largely to the thousands of children who were attending public schools and learning to love the *fundador de la escuela*. In December 1918 politicians and school teachers inaugurated the Plaza José Pedro Varela with

⁷ Quoted in Monestier, 23-24.

⁸ Ibid., 37-39. See Araújo, 465.

⁹ Quoted in Monestier, 40.

a sculpture monument to the reformer. In the same spirit of Rubén Lena's lyrics noted above, the hymn composed for the event spoke of harboring for eternity the memory of Varela. Fit for the day's proceedings, the hymn sang of Varela as a national hero to be considered alongside José Artigas and ended with a line admonishing Uruguayans to cherish the fruits of education and proclaim them in order to keep the spirit of Varela's reform alive. The sculpture depicts school children circled around a seated Varela who, not by chance, holds a book in hand.

Since this inaugural event Varela has continued to represent something unique about what it means to be Uruguayan. This idea is visible on Uruguayan paper currency where his image, as well as that of his Plaza, has appeared since 1975. A stamp issued in 1995 to mark his 150th birthday conveys a similar meaning. A more moving example of the importance of Varela to Uruguayan identity was expressed by the writer and musician Alfredo Zitarrosa upon returning from exile to Uruguay in March 1984. Zitarrosa commented to the thousands who gathered to receive him that "Los uruguayos somos básicamente artiguistas, varelianos, así como somos profundamente humanistas, así como auténticamente demócratas."¹⁰ Today songs to Varela are still sung in schools, and his portrait presides over young students in the classroom. The Colegio José Pedro Varela, a landmark on the Avenida 18 de Julio in the center of Montevideo, is passed by thousands every day. And the Museo Pedagógico José Pedro Varela, also in the heart of the city, pays homage to him, introducing visitors to the world of education in the late nineteenth century. In short, his status as a national hero is still alive and well.

Varela's plans for reforming the system of public education in Uruguay consisted of a handful of basic, though significant changes spanning from making primary education

¹⁰ Audio clip of Zitarrosa's arrival at the airport in Montevideo. <http://www.fundacionzitarrosa.org>.

compulsory and free to opening coeducational schools, establishing Normal schools, and building an administrative bureaucracy to oversee all aspects of public education. He lived to see these backed by law, but his plans began bearing their fruit after he died. The same can be said of a man he admired and who was his counterpart across the Río de la Plata:

Domingo F. Sarmiento. While he was no longer a key player on the educational scene in his older years, Sarmiento was (and is) considered the architect of Argentine public education. Though he lived much longer than Varela, he, like the younger Uruguayan, passed away just as public primary education was gathering steam. Since his death in 1888, Sarmiento has been apotheosized, although his legacy has been much more polemical than Varela's, a veritable unifying force. Aside from the belief in education as the key to national prosperity, what these two men seem to share most in common is the fact that only after they died did their plans for education begin to show signs of success. What is it that made them the stuff of legend or myth? What is it that led Zitarrosa to proclaim that all Uruguayans are *Varelianos*? Put differently, what makes Varela and Sarmiento national heroes? The answer lies in their being sowers of alphabets.

The success of education and of the alphabets that sprouted up had radical consequences in store for Rioplatense print culture. In the previous chapters we saw the formation of links between print media, politics, and the public sphere. Print culture in the region emerged during the wars of independence and in their immediate aftermath, with incipient states using print to establish legitimacy. New citizens—literate or not—mingled with print at public ceremonies, and national symbolic repertoires were disseminated primarily through the printed word and image. Print culture reached a new level of popularity during the Rosas years, thanks to gauchesque writing. Gauchesque gazetteers wrote papers

and loose leaves that inspired rural and lower-class urban inhabitants of the Plata to develop affinities for the Federalist and Blanco parties. The appeal of such writing was strong—so strong that the European-admiring Unitarians and Colorados conceded that if they were to have any success at instilling their brand of political identity, then it would have to be through material that was readable around the campfire or that could, at least, be enjoyed by popular classes. Beginning in the 1850s the partisan spirit of print culture gave way to artistic aspirations and social concerns. From the wars of independence up to the 1870s, then, we can sum up by saying that from its debut, print took on a public and political character, with state influence fluctuating between direct and indirect. The relationship between print and politics, mediated through the public sphere, is what makes Rioplatense print culture unique. With the advent of public primary education around 1880, the relationship between print, the state, and the public sphere would change entirely.

Education opened the gateway to much greater public interaction with print culture. After all, primary education, by far more important than secondary education, was now *compulsory*, and the numbers of students attending schools rose quickly.¹¹ One of the results was a rapid rise in literacy rates. Though attempts were made to promote public education in places like Chile and Mexico, it was in Uruguay and Argentina where the first national systems of public primary education were established. And it was in the Río de la Plata where education was most successful, which solidified the unique relationship between print and the public in the region. Gauchesque writing allowed for the limited popularization of print culture around mid century, but it was the public primary school at the end of the 1800s

¹¹ Children ages five-fifteen attended primary schools. While some public secondary schools opened their doors in the 1880s and 1890s, they were institutions meant to prepare elite children to enter the university. Students older than fifteen who had not been to primary school could attend night schools for adults, where immigrants and rural workers constituted the majority of the student body. Normal schools were an exception to this scheme, serving as both a primary and secondary school where students trained to become future teachers.

that really made print culture popular. In a word, the establishment of public education systems in the Río de la Plata between 1880 and 1910 was the keystone to converting print culture into a public concern.¹² Education allowed written culture to spread throughout these two countries unlike anywhere else in Latin America. It also provided the state with a whole new range of opportunities to regulate print media and messages, and for a very captive and impressionable audience. Through textbooks, notebooks, and other forms of print media selected for use in public schools, lettered functionaries held direct influence over the forms of collective identity these texts aimed to inspire. The combination of all these factors made public primary schools sites where print was connected to the formation of collective identities and the project of shaping citizens for a nation like never before.

Both José Pedro Varela and Domingo Sarmiento considered education necessary for the formation of well-behaved, hard-working, and loyal citizens, and for future national prosperity. Moreover, for both men, as well as for the bureaucrats who carried out their educational programs, reading and writing were *the* most important tools for making education effective. Our tour of the sowers of alphabets whose educational systems reconfigured the landscape of Rioplatense print culture will assess how effective education was, but the first stop is a look at the motivations behind the creation of public education systems at the end of the nineteenth century. After considering education as a solution to a

¹² The periodization of the foundation of public education in the Río de la Plata varies slightly according to different scholars. Some highlight the passage of the 1875 law of public education in Buenos Aires province as a logical “starting” point; others suggest that the early 1880s are more appropriate given the 1882 International Pedagogical conference held in Buenos Aires and the 1884 Argentine law of public education. 1910, year of the centenary celebration of independence, and 1914 are common end points, by which time public education was solidly established in the region. See, for example, Adriana Puiggrós, *Sujetos, disciplina y curriculum en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1990) and Puiggrós, ed., *Sociedad civil y Estado en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1991). The periodization in focus in this chapter—1880-1910—is more of a framework for understanding a significant block of time when the major initiatives establishing public education were carried out, not as specific years marking a beginning and an end.

moment of social crisis, we will move on to the bureaucratic framework of learning the ABCs, focusing on textbook selection committees and time allotted to reading and writing in the classroom. Lastly, we will see some forms of print media used by students—the very seeds cast by sowers of alphabets.

Education, Social Crisis, and the Need for Literate Citizens

Following the end of the *Guerra Grande* in the 1850s, lettered elites of the Plata such as Varela and Sarmiento proclaimed that they and their fellow citizens were suffering from a period of social crisis.¹³ In their eyes, “lawless” gauchos continued to control the sparsely populated countryside. In Uruguay rural inhabitants launched a string of civil wars with government troops and got into trouble on a regular basis, as good gauchos do, in *pulperías*. One of the greatest fears expressed by those who thought it imperative to tame the Rioplatense countryside was that children of the ruffian gauchos would follow in their footsteps, perpetuating the cycle of violence and prolonging the social crisis. On the Argentine Pampa there was the additional element of Indians that raided settlements and contributed to urbanites’ heightened sense of the necessity to instill order. The Argentine government experimented with the temporary and tragic solution of war to exterminate gauchos and Indians in the 1860s and 70s. José Hernández tells of this persecution in *Martín Fierro*. What he also remarks, as we saw in the last chapter, is the need for education to help rural inhabitants avoid being targets of the national army. Ultimately, though, war waged by state armies in Uruguay and Argentina did not end social crisis. Indeed, it was education of a different sort than that conceived by Hernández that became lauded as a cure for social problems.

¹³ For a concise overview of this debate in Argentina, see Juan Carlos Tedesco, *Educación y sociedad en la Argentina (1880-1945)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Solar, 1986), 25-35.

Putting an end to crime in the cities and sowing order in the countryside began with the establishment of strong systems of public primary education that would spread alphabets. Another solution promoted concurrently with the foundation of public schools was immigration. Hard-working Europeans, went the argument, would help cement Progress in the region. It was only a matter of replacing the dark stock of gauchos and Indians with the lighter-toned Europeans. Immigrants, though, would soon become viewed as part of the problem. The arrival massive waves of immigrants from the 1870s on into the second decade of the twentieth century inspired a surge in nationalist sentiment. If gauchos were one sector of Rioplatense society targeted by the revolution of education, Italian and Spanish immigrants and their children were another. Immigrants formed their own communities, spoke their own language, and harbored patriotic feelings for their former homelands. Newcomers and, more importantly, their children had to be integrated and “nationalized.” The public primary school was a perfect place to start this endeavor.¹⁴

The letrados who were forming the educational bureaucracies thought literate citizens would be citizens who knew how to behave well and harbor the correct patriotic sentiments. Such ideas had been floating around since the Rosas years, but they gained in popularity in the 1860s and 1870s. In the late 1860s for example, after returning from a tour of Europe and the U.S., Varela wrote that “la gran misión de la escuela común es levantar el populacho al nivel del pueblo; es hacer de ese elemento de desorden y de exterminio un elemento de orden y progreso.”¹⁵ His words echoed a previous analysis, published by the Uruguayan José

¹⁴ Tedesco’s main argument regarding public education in Argentina from 1880-1910 is that it fulfilled a political function more than an economic one. It was political insofar as it aimed to contribute to political stability and form citizens capable of taking on political obligations, one of which was being productive (64-65). There is a fine line, however, between the political and economic functions of the school given that producing industrious and loyal workers and citizens was both a political and an economic aim.

¹⁵ Quoted in Monestier, 55.

Palomeque in his 1855 report on the state of education. Palomeque decried facts like only thirty schools for a country of 129,000 citizens, and he told of young boys becoming gauchos instead of educated gentlemen. “Doloroso es el espectáculo de uno de nuestros pueblos de campaña: el niño, desde la edad de *cinco* años, ya monta á caballo y se le ve en éstos, en la puerta de un café, en la de una pulpería, *en una reunión de carreras*, en el lugar en que se degüella y deposita una res... Es allí, donde los vicios más dominantes de nuestro país se adquieren...”¹⁶ Palomeque called for a series of reforms in order to create a viable public education system. These were not heeded, but they served as the base for Varela’s reform in the late 1870s. This sense of urgency was shared by the Argentine sower of alphabets Onésimo Leguizamón. In official memoirs Leguizamón stated boldly that “La instrucción gratuita y obligatoria es simplemente cuestión de defensa nacional.” Those unwilling to require parents to send their children to school, he continued, should be ready to see jails fill up. And there was more. “La ausencia de educación no es un hecho inocente. Engendra peligros sociales... la ignorancia del pueblo *es el más grande de los peligros nacionales*.”¹⁷ Like Varela with the Palomeque report, Leguizamón found inspiration in the earlier writings of a fellow educator: Sarmiento.

Sarmiento’s interests in education stretch back to his years as a primary school student in San Juan, and they would pervade his writing until his last day. His experiences with the rewards of reading as a young boy (his reading skills won him the respect of adults, and he was paraded around town as an exemplary student) shaped his understanding of reading as a tool to help citizens move from the uneducated countryside to the enlightened

¹⁶ Quoted in Araújo, 324.

¹⁷ Quoted in Puiggrós, *Sujetos, disciplina y curriculum*, 157.

realm of letters.¹⁸ His career as an educator began while in exile in Chile in the 1840s. The Chilean minister of education sent him on a tour of Europe and the U.S. to explore educational systems. Upon his return, he published *Educación popular*, the first of two book-length studies on education, based on his observations while traveling. This book was complemented by *Educación común*, published in 1856. In both works he makes the case for why education is needed in Latin America and argues for the values and social change it will inspire. He marshaled these arguments repeatedly throughout his life, in hundreds of newspaper articles, and as an educator in various administrative positions. In addition to being named the first director of the Comisión Nacional de Educación, created in 1875, he served as the director of schools in Buenos Aires province in the late 1870s, advocating the creation of schools for adults, too.¹⁹ These schools were mainly night schools, with schedules to accommodate the work day of adults.

Night schools (for those generally older than fifteen) and military schools were considered imperative to reducing illiteracy in the Río de la Plata. In Argentina José Ramos Mejía, one of Sarmiento's successors, was one of the strongest supporters of these types of schools, and they certainly received attention by the highest-level educational bureaucrats at the turn of the century. Military schools in Argentina—or those set up for conscripted soldiers and immigrants—doubled in number in 1908, for example, as did their numbers of students, reaching close to five thousand this year. These schools were designed to be on the front lines of nationalizing the immigrant population. Interestingly, the curriculum was

¹⁸ Adriana de Miguel, “Escenas de lectura escolar: la intervención normalista en la formación de la cultura letrada moderna,” in *Para una historia de la enseñanza de la lectura y escritura en Argentina: del catecismo colonial a ‘La Razón de mi Vida’*, ed. Héctor Rubén Cucuzza and Pablo Pineau (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2002), 107-48.

¹⁹ Lidia Rodríguez, “La educación de adultos en la Argentina,” in *Sociedad civil y Estado*, 177-223.

similar to that of primary schools, and the textbooks used were primary school textbooks that appeared in the 1880s, 1890s, and the first decade of the twentieth century. Daily conferences were held in military schools where eager adult learners could find additional practice in subjects ranging from history to reading and writing. Soldiers who aspired to move up in rank were required to attend the extracurricular conferences.²⁰ While Sarmiento's influence on adult education was strong, his greatest impact was felt in primary education.

The names making up the Argentine educational bureaucracy changed from 1880 to 1910, but the overall policies determining the course of education remained constant. The driving force behind these was Sarmiento's vision of public education. One historian of education sums up this point: "Todos los político educadores argentinos de fines del siglo XIX y comienzos del XX fueron herederos del discurso sarmientino sobre el sujeto pedagógico."²¹ The main idea was that new pedagogical and political subjects could end social crisis. Sarmiento's pervasiveness stemmed from more than just his overpowering personality and flood of writings. He founded the first Normal School in Argentina in 1870, and from there generations of teachers would "normalize" his teachings in the classroom, where young Argentines and immigrants would deal with them in their daily lessons. Sarmiento also had bearing on the shape of Uruguayan public education, though indirectly, being a source of inspiration for José Pedro Varela and his fellow pedagogues.

Varela met Sarmiento in the U.S., where the much older Argentine took him under his wing, and where both had been in conversation with the educator Horace Mann from Massachusetts. Varela admired Sarmiento's educational ideas, and upon returning to Montevideo he began elaborating on them in newspaper articles and speeches. In 1868 he

²⁰ Ibid., 206-09.

²¹ Puiggrós, *Sujetos, disciplina y curriculum*, 77.

and fellow advocates for public education founded the *Sociedad de Amigos de la Educación Popular*. The Society established a school named after the group's first president, Elbio Fernández, created public libraries, and started the publication titled *La Educación Popular*.²² In 1870 Varela began writing regular editorial pieces in the newspaper *La Paz*. The general idea of these was to promote the exchange of the sharp point of a lance for the poignant skills of a teacher. In the following years he wrote editorials against caudillismo, which would ultimately form the basis of one of his two lengthy studies on education—*La legislación escolar*.²³

A glance at the chapter titles and subtitles of these studies gives the reader a clear sense of the value the reformer saw in education. His massive *La educación del pueblo*, published by the Society in 1874, was the first of these large-scale approaches to public education.²⁴ In a section on the benefits and goals of public schools, Varela deals with questions like “education augments fortune” and “education lessens crime and vice.” Another major section of the work is dedicated to the connections between democracy and education. In times of social crisis, Varela and many others in both Uruguay and Argentina considered the classroom's power to impart orderly behavior a key to establishing stable democracies. This thread of thought was further elaborated in *La legislación escolar*, published in 1876. Like the first work, this one begins with an assessment of the current state of education in

²² The Elbio Fernández school created by the Society is still operating today. One of the public libraries was the library of the Society. Its doors were open for anyone who wanted to consult its more than 5,000 volumes, but only members (that is, those who paid dues) were allowed to borrow books. The collection consisted of novels, poetic and dramatic works, miscellaneous books, philosophy texts, legislation, travel books, and works on politics and agriculture. There was also a substantial number of books in French. For a list of titles, see *Biblioteca de la Sociedad de Amigos de la Educación Popular, Catálogo* (Montevideo: Tipografía Liberal, 1889), MPJPV.

²³ José Pedro Varela, *Obras pedagógicas: La legislación escolar*, 2 vols. (Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Previsión Social, 1964).

²⁴ Varela, *Obras pedagógicas: La educación del pueblo*, 2 vols., with a prologue by Arturo Ardao (Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Previsión Social, 1964).

Uruguay and what the problems are that pose hurdles for a better future. Varela maps the principles of a public primary education system, and details how it should work, from inspections on the departmental level to the number of students that should attend each school and what school houses should cost. *La educación del pueblo* and *La legislación escolar* constituted the underpinning of the new legal framework for public education in Uruguay and would have a lasting imprint on the shape education would take in the country.

But it was not so much what Sarmiento and Varela wrote that had such a mythical impact. Rather, this came from what they inspired with their passion for and dedication to the cause of education. Of course fellow letrados read their books and debated them in the meetings of the Society of Friends of Education and other literary societies. Yet such works were not widely disseminated or read, at least not directly. Where their fruits really came to harvest was at public debates on the curriculum, the system of school inspections, and the overall general workings of public primary education that took place after both Varela and Sarmiento had died. It was through such debates, the force of legislation behind public education, and practices in the classroom, where the sowers of alphabets met their compatriots and the children who were the targets of their plans for moving the nation toward prosperity.

Official state backing of projects for public education in Uruguay and Argentina came with the *leyes de educación común*, or laws of public education. The first of these was passed in Uruguay in 1877. Varela's *Legislación escolar* served as the blueprint for the new law, synonymous with the reform, and he led the effort to get it passed. Heading up the law was the stipulation that public primary education would be compulsory and free. Varela's hope that it would be secular, too, was slightly modified. The final version of the law promoted the

teaching of Catholicism in schools, but it made clear that no student was required to attend classes or conferences on religion. It was not until 1909 that the proposal to make schools secular became law.²⁵ Parents who did not make sure their children attended school (public or private) would be fined. Immigrants who allowed their children to miss class on a regular basis risked having their Uruguayan citizenship suspended. Article 15 mandated that at least one primary school should exist in every part of the republic where there are fifty or more children to attend classes. Two other salient Articles, 20 and 45, stipulated that public education was mandatory in barracks, jails, and hospices, and that school libraries would double as public libraries.²⁶

The passing of the law marked the beginning of state support for the *Reforma Vareliana*, as well as recognition of the need for literate citizens. Moreover, it would put the state in control over a wealth of print media, as we will see shortly. Of course, there were opponents of the reform. Administrators of interior and rural departments protested the centralization of school administration in Montevideo. Teachers who disagreed with components of the new curriculum disregarded them in their classes. And a number of liberals in the capital criticized Varela for what they viewed as his collaboration with and support for Latorre. However, even Varela's enemies who pushed for public education to have a more Catholic or less positivist tint to it, to remain sexually segregated, and to have a different curriculum, shared the belief that education was necessary to bring order to the countryside. This common understanding of the role of education derived in large measure from what Monestier claims were principles of "el sentir colectivo" of Uruguayans that had

²⁵ Araújo, 522.

²⁶ See "Ley de educación común" in *Centenario de la Ley de Educación Común*, ed. Juan Pimienta, with a prologue by Rubén A. Bulla (Montevideo: Palacio Legislativo, 1977), 141-54.

roots in Artigas's struggle during the wars of independence. Varela gave the educational reform a moral character that linked it to Artigas and the realization of the republic, which in turn allowed citizens to identify with the educational program as “una reafirmación y una reiteración, enraizando aún más en nuestro sentir y nuestro ser cultural.” If it were not for Varela and the public support he inspired for the development of national education, Monestier argues, José Battle y Ordóñez would not have been able to carry out the program that turned Uruguay into the “model country” at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁷

The Uruguayan law of public education and Varela's reform fueled debates at the 1882 Pedagogical Congress, held in Buenos Aires as part of the Continental Exposition. It was at the Congress where debate over how to best implement a program of civic education resulted in the proposal of the so-called *currículum ciudadano*. This program would consist of (Spanish) language, national history and geography, and civics. The main mode of engaging these subjects was through reading, specifically through the *libro de lectura*—a form of textbook organized as a narrative or series of narratives meant to entertain in order to disseminate a particular message.²⁸ Libros de lectura became best sellers from the late 1880s on. Delegates at the Congress reinforced their belief in reading and writing in one of the sessions, making the practices conditions of citizenship. Nicanor Larrain, School Inspector for Buenos Aires province, and the Paraguayan Adolfo Decoud went as far as to state that “*Saber leer y escribir es una condición indispensable para el ejercicio del sufragio...*”²⁹ The Argentine law of public education was passed two years later, in 1884. It reiterated much of

²⁷ Monestier, 515.

²⁸ Roberto Bottarini, “Leer, escribir, votar: la conflictiva definición del currículum ciudadano,” in *Para una historia*, 77-79.

²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 97.

the Uruguayan law and the final resolutions of the Congreso.³⁰ As was the case in Uruguay, much of the debate around the law concerned the role of religion in the public school, though the secular component remained part of the legislation. And like the Uruguayan law, it resulted in an immediate reorientation of course content across the board, with lessons on reading and writing serving as the keys to other subjects of the curriculum: national history and geography, calligraphy, morals, civics, and, especially for girls, hygiene and home economics.³¹

In sum, the motivations for establishing public systems of education on national scales in Uruguay and Argentina were rooted in putting an end to a period of social crisis. Between 1880 and 1910 the foundations of the public education systems were laid on both sides of the Plata, and these foundations would orient education in both countries throughout the twentieth century. During these years rituals were formulated, the curriculum was refined, and the administrative structure for this new state institution was put into place. If public education was a site where knowledge was carefully managed, the primary school was not meant to maintain class distinction. The greater concerns were establishing order, instilling sentiments for nation, and inspiring citizens to consider education a matter of public concern.³² Schools were a workshop for building social skills that children would later put into practice outside the classroom. Therefore it was important that students left their social backgrounds at the door, so to speak, in order to effectively feel part of a community.

³⁰ See Hugo E. Biagini, *Educación y progreso: primero Congreso Pedagógico Interamericano* (Buenos Aires: Docencia, Centro de Estudios Filosóficos, 1983), 94-101.

³¹ See Tedesco, 98-139.

³² Tedesco makes the claim that schools fed *distinction*, understood along the lines of Bourdieu's notion of distinction being a class structure whereby elites create a system of cultural codes and meanings that preserves their status as elites. This may very well have been the case at elite Colegios Nacionales and at secondary schools at the outset of the twentieth century, where students went to prepare for the university. But the public primary school was not a conducive place to the development of Bourdieu's distinction.

Educational architects and administrators—sowers of alphabets—argued that what students read was critical to the effectiveness of education in the Plata, whether this meant nationalizing children of immigrants or instilling codes of behavior in rural children or city dwellers. Schools and the print media used in them were also pivotal points of contact between print and the public sphere. Children, their families, and the state interacted in reading activities in the home and in public space of the school. We will see this in more detail below, but now let us turn our attention to the bureaucratic framework of public education and to those who decided what print media school children should get their hands on.

The Bureaucratic Framework of Education and the ABCs

The laws of public education also sanctioned the creation of central administrative bodies or national school boards to oversee the educational endeavor. In Uruguay the directing body was the DGIP, and the law centralized its operations in Montevideo. Provincial school commissions had to report back to the DGIP. These *Comisiones departamentales*, as they were called, carried out the work of the DGIP in the interior and were crucial to the success of education in Uruguay, as well as to the authority maintained by the national school board.³³ Members of the DGIP held weekly meetings and had their work cut out for them. According to the 1877 law, their tasks included—to name just a few—overseeing public education throughout the republic, hiring and firing teachers, administering the Escuela Normal del Estado that trained teachers, selecting books to be used uniformly throughout the nation, selecting the books that would make up the collections in school and

³³ For more on the Comisión departamental in Uruguay, see articles 29-36 of the Ley de Educación Común.

public libraries, redacting a periodical dedicated to educational issues, and awarding diplomas to students who passed exams and moved on to the next grade.

The DGIP's counterpart in Argentina was the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* (CNE). Created in 1881, the CNE was a massive bureaucratic agency in comparison to its Uruguayan relative, and it stood as the staunchest advocate of the 1884 law of public education.³⁴ Like the DGIP, the CNE allocated funds from its seat in Buenos Aires to provincial school districts, deployed inspectors to observe how their mandates were being carried out, developed the curricula of primary and secondary schools, and organized committees to review and select textbooks for use in schools. Just about everything that had to do with public education on the primary and secondary level passed through or was generated in the CNE. There were also provincial boards of education in Argentina, known as *Consejos Escolares de Distrito*. They were in charge of holding schools up to expected standards of hygiene, discipline, and moral codes. They encouraged kids to go to class, developed courses for adults, and promoted the creation of public libraries. In a word, these provincial boards carried out the work of the CNE on the regional level, and they had to report back to the boss in Buenos Aires.³⁵

For both boards textbooks were among the first order of business. Indeed, one of the first measures carried out by the CNE following the passage of the law of public education in Argentina was to ensure the free distribution of textbooks and other print media and necessary school materials to students whose families could certify that purchasing these

³⁴ In Argentina and in studies on the history of Argentine education, this law is commonly referred to as Ley 1420.

³⁵ See Alejandro de Luca, "Consejos Escolares de Distrito: subordinación o participación popular," in *Sociedad civil y Estado*, 47-69.

things was beyond their means.³⁶ If the CNE wanted to produce literate citizens, then it had to take the lead in providing students with the *right* texts. The idea was that school was a microcosm of society where reading was an important practice shaping interactions. Codes of behavior students learned in this microcosm and through their reading lessons would contribute to their becoming good citizens. In Uruguay, the DGIP was even more progressive about the distribution of textbooks, supplying them free of charge to all public schools. It was up to departmental administrators on both sides of the Plata to guarantee that only official texts were being used in the classroom. Determining which textbooks would receive official endorsement, however, was the work of textbook selection committees based in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Textbook selection committees had the most authority over the books that received the CNE's or DGIP's stamp of approval, and they allowed the state to regulate the content of print media for a reading public (constituted by school children and adults learning to read and write) like never before. The informal roots of such committees can be found in the administrative bodies that preceded the national boards of education in Uruguay and Argentina, like the *Junta Económica Administrativa de Montevideo* and the *Comisión Nacional de Educación* in Argentina. The first sets of formal rules regarding textbooks, though, come with the laws of public education. Original members of the Uruguayan DGIP composed the first list of recommended texts for use on a national scale in the late 1870s.³⁷ As the educational bureaucracy added more sowers of alphabets, this task would gradually be taken over by a commission within the national board. In Argentina, the formal beginnings of

³⁶ Roberto Marengo, "Estructuración y consolidación del poder normalizador: el Consejo Nacional de Educación," in *Sociedad civil y Estado*, 79, 87.

³⁷ See José Pedro's and Jacobo Varela's *Memorias* as Inspector Nacional de Instrucción Primaria corresponding to years 1877-1880.

the rules for deciding on textbooks came in 1887, when the CNE held the first textbook competition.³⁸ Like the CNE, the selection committee that grew out of this event and that would organize future annual competitions was a large administrative affair, not least because it was pulling the strings of the materials from which children would learn their ABCs

The way textbook competitions worked in Buenos Aires was straightforward. Authors had to submit copies of their texts to the textbook selection committee—the members changed from year to year, but they were publicly named and almost always connected to the bureaucratic framework—which in turn directed texts to be reviewed by a given division corresponding to classroom subjects. There were several “staple” divisions: reading and writing, civic and moral instruction, grammar and foreign languages, history and geography, mathematics, natural sciences, and drawing and music. Once the list of approved texts was published, teachers could choose the most appropriate from those named for each subject.³⁹ Through the implementation of rules that resulted in discarding some texts and praising certain qualities of others, the selection competition slowly defined a new type of genre—the textbook, ranging from books on national history or hygiene to the *libro de lectura*.⁴⁰

Lettered functionaries of the educational bureaucracy formed these committees in both Uruguay and Argentina, and they held direct influence over the messages textbooks aimed to convey, giving some books the official stamp of approval while casting others

³⁸ Roberta Paula Spregelburd, “¿Qué se puede leer en la escuela? El control estatal del texto escolar (1880-1916),” in *Para una historia de la enseñanza*, 154.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 154-55.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 162. Spregelburd’s point about this new genre is limited to the *libro de lectura*. However, all sorts of books that were normalized through the competitions and that became “regulars” in the curriculum constituted the new form of print that was the textbook.

aside. In principle, committee members were supposed to be teachers or connected to the administration of public education. In many instances, authors of textbooks (many of whom were teachers, like Isidoro de María in Uruguay and Joaquín González in Argentina), sat on the selection committees. State approval of textbooks demonstrated support for the formation of certain forms of collective identity, which we will see up close in the next chapter. The stamp of the DGIP or the CNE also guaranteed the commercial success of texts, for those that made the official list would sell thousands of copies to the school boards, as well as to libraries, and individual readers and students. Not surprisingly, intimate connections developed between the boards and the publishing industry. The relationship was symbiotic: publishers whose works were approved made out like bandits, gaining access for three years to a large market of readers, while educational administrators could control content and lock in good prices for the books they purchased and were asking families to buy.⁴¹

Argentina's CNE offers a good example of how the relationship between the board and the publishing industry functioned. Publishers were occasionally tapped to serve in administrative positions or on textbook selection committees. This was the case of Jacobo Peuser, who was a member of a Consejo Escolar de Distrito in Buenos Aires, and one of Argentina's most successful publishers at the turn of the century.⁴² The same was true of Angel Estrada, a friend of Sarmiento, founder of the publishing company that took the original name "Angel Estrada y Compañía," and one of the founding partners of the Fundición Nacional de Tipos de Imprenta. Estrada was a businessman, selling imported wines and papers, but he later went on to make education his business. His press became one

⁴¹ Ibid., 164-66.

⁴² Marengo, 103.

of the largest producers of school textbooks.⁴³ Of course, Estrada's relationship with Sarmiento did not hurt in acquiring textbook contracts, but this connection was not the only one. Estrada himself was a member of various provincial boards of education in Buenos Aires in the 1870s, which placed him at the center of the state initiative to expand public education, and he maintained close relationships with authors who wrote texts and were functionaries in the new educational bureaucracy. His brother José Manuel served as a high-ranking administrator of public education and, not surprisingly, often recommended textbooks that were published by Angel Estrada y Cía.⁴⁴ There were similar tightly-knit contacts between Uruguay's DGIP and the publisher A. Barreiro y Ramos. From the 1890s on, Barreiro y Ramos enjoyed contracts to print notebooks, textbooks, lists of approved texts, and memoirs of national and departmental inspectors.⁴⁵

All of this publishing corresponded to—and in part facilitated—a new stage in the popularization of Rioplatense print culture. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, and up through the 1910 centenary celebration there was an enormous upswing in readership in the Plata. This began with the initial steps toward the creation of public education systems. Throughout the 1870s the number of public libraries and so-called circulating libraries grew in Uruguay thanks to the efforts of the Society of Friends, led by Varela. Learning the ABCs, after all, was becoming a serious matter. The increase in the amount of print media available

⁴³ Among the most successful of Estrada's publications was Andrés Ferrerya's *El Nene* series. Ferreyra penned many textbooks, but none had the commercial appeal of *El Nene*. It went through 120 editions from its debut in 1895 to the publication of the last edition in 1959. Needless to say, the book was highly profitable for the publisher. See María Cristina Linares, "Nacimiento y trayectoria de una nueva generación de libros de lectura escolar: 'El Nene' (1895-1959)," in *Para una historia de la enseñanza*, 177-212.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 188-90.

⁴⁵ In addition to the lucrative sales of textbooks and notebooks, printing the memoirs made good economic sense, too. In 1903, for instance, the DGIP paid A. Barreiro y Ramos to publish 1,800 copies of the Inspector Nacional's memoir, distributed to educational administrators in Montevideo and the interior. See Abel J. Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1902-1903* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1904), 645.

and the numbers of readers getting their hands on a host of different types of texts ruffled the feathers of some at the beginning—most notably the clergy.⁴⁶ Public and circulating libraries in Argentina had similar support, in the figure of Sarmiento, and opposition, in the members of the clergy, during the 1870s. But the real explosion in readership came with the expansion of primary education, for there was no stopping the influence of education on the public's understanding of the importance of reading. Methods for teaching reading and writing were a constant thread running through the pages of the Argentine board's publication *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, and they were discussed regularly at pedagogical conferences. The letrados of the educational bureaucracy presented papers with titles like "Necesidad de fundar bibliotecas cosmopolitas circulantes" and "Texto Nacional de Lectura," and the guiding themes of the 1900 pedagogical conference included "Educación literaria" and "Textos."⁴⁷

The multiple target audiences of textbooks were also connected to the rise in readership. Authors of books for primary school children dedicated the texts to the young students, but they often addressed parents in prefaces, proclaiming that the whole family could benefit from reading the lessons, together or individually. The Inspector Nacional of public education in Uruguay highlighted these audiences in a circular letter he sent out in March 1901. Given that books evoked ideas of patria, the home, hard work, and values, he wrote, and in light of print being the most fecund messenger of progress in young nations aspiring to educate their citizens, the DGIP needed to promote wide support for school

⁴⁶ In 1874, for example, the Bishop Jacinto Vera came out swinging against "seditious texts" promoted by Varela and the Society. In a *pastoral* dated 18 February of that year, he wrote: "Es un deber de todo cristiano abstenerse de cualquier lectura [de esos escritos sediciosos] que pueda inspirar máximas opuestas a nuestra santa religión, a las buenas costumbres y al orden público, sino también impedir su propaganda por cuantos medios legítimos estén a su alcance." Quoted in Monestier, 260-61.

⁴⁷ Marengo, 123-27.

libraries. More than repositories of materials for teachers, school libraries would “proporcionar estímulos á los alumnos que se distinguen en la semana por su aplicación ó su conducta moral, quienes podrán llevar esos libros á sus casas... [y] provocar una corriente educativa é instructiva en nuestros hogares rurales por medio de los alumnos de las escuelas públicas.”⁴⁸ As noted before, the same books were regularly used in classes for adults. With these multiple readers in mind, it is no surprise that sales of textbooks skyrocketed in the Río de la Plata. What is surprising is that, by one tally, at the end of the century the textbook market accounted for more than fifty percent of all book sales in Argentina.⁴⁹

Of course, the sowers of alphabets faced an uphill battle, winning the hearts of children in the countryside and “nationalizing” the children of immigrants flooding into the Río de la Plata at the turn of the century. The selection and effectiveness of textbooks was critical to achieving these goals and thus making the educational endeavor a success. In both Montevideo and Buenos Aires, educational administrators focused on the deployment of a unified vision of the nation in order to help shape a sense of national identity in school children. Content was at the top of their list in determining the value of a text since it was content that informed the curriculum. History texts were considered particularly well-suited to the task of shaping identity, for not only could they impart an idea of collective values, but they also created a story of the origins of the nation. The need for “national” texts led bureaucrats and publishers to support a national textbook industry, replacing translated works or ones used in Spain with books written about Uruguay and Argentina, by Uruguayans and

⁴⁸ Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación escolar vigente*, tomo 5, 1898-1903 (Montevideo: Talleres A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1904), 88-90, BPC.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, “El libro en la Argentina. Lo que se compra y lo que se desdeña,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 4 January 1898, quoted in Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988) 49.

Argentines. This new appreciation for home-grown authors was clearly illustrated in the criteria used by the division of Moral and Civic instruction to evaluate textbooks submitted to the CNE's 1902 competition. Texts worthy of the official stamp of approval should "imprimir en el niño, por medio de la observación de los hechos reales y un método científico y claro, lo que es y debe ser la conducta del hombre, en el hogar, en la sociedad, en la patria."⁵⁰

The same spirit infused the development of schools along the Uruguay-Brazil border and the creation of Normal schools in Uruguay and Argentina. Some of the first schools along the border were put up in the early 1890s. The contemporary Orestes Araújo, himself a prolific author of textbooks, tells us that these schools were destined to "contener el avance de la influencia brasileña en el lenguaje y las costumbres nacionales, idea tan patriótica como irrealizable."⁵¹ Children who attended these schools, then as well as today, would speak Spanish and Portuguese, and they would share much in common with residents on the other side of the line. Loyalties to the patria, however, still ran deep in the borderland, sometimes dividing families, thanks in part to the new schools. Normal schools played their part, too, in spreading a uniform program of education and in sowing the seeds that would grow into loyalty to the nation.

Normal schools were designed as training grounds for future teachers. They attracted, by far, more female students than male. Bureaucrats believed women were much more naturally inclined to be teachers and that their soothing voices and motherly appearance would maintain order in the classroom. In fact, this belief was so strong that by 1910 women

⁵⁰ Quoted in Spregelburd, 163. See also Linares, 180-87.

⁵¹ Araújo, 493.

made up 85 percent of teachers in Argentina.⁵² Like their models in the U.S., Normal schools put into practice a scientific discourse that outlined teaching methods considered “objective” and thus measurable in concrete terms. This objective character of normalist pedagogy extended to the practice of reading, as well. Strict application of a method of reading in the classroom, went the idea, would help quell whatever forms of resistance to reading the instructor faced and inspire children to pursue reading activities outside the school, in the home.⁵³

The story of one Normal school student in Buenos Aires at the turn of the century gives a sense of how effective this pedagogical discourse was in transforming a young girl who did not care much for reading into a sower of alphabets bent on teaching her students to read and write, if nothing else.⁵⁴ Rosita del Río, as the student was named, was not sure if she liked all the reading she had to do in the Normal school. “Más me gustaba coser y dibujar, creo que tenía mejor mano para esas dos cosas.” Little, by little, though, Rosita grew fonder of reading. After she started attending Normal school, she recited poems at home to her brothers and sisters, not for their meaning (which she claims she did not much understand), but for how they sounded. Reciting poetry was a sort of game. As a teacher, though, she had a different opinion of reading. “Siempre creí que teníamos que lograr, aunque sólo fuera eso,

⁵² For a detailed look at women in education and their “natural” teaching abilities, see Graciela Morgade, comp. *Mujeres en la educación. Género y docencia en Argentina: 1870-1930* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 1997), in particular Morgade’s chapter “La docencia para las mujeres: una alternativa contradictoria en el camino hacia los saberes ‘legítimos’” (67-114).

⁵³ The Normalist tradition has often been associated with the project of disciplining young citizens. On schools as a place for disciplining the minds and bodies of children, and on the science and politics of discipline behind curricular decisions, see Puiggrós, *Sujetos, disciplina y currículum*, 115-65, De Miguel, 107-48, and Tedesco, 149-57. For a look at writing as a form of disciplining children, see Edgardo O. Ossanna, “El problema de la letra en la escritura: la escuela entrerriana a comienzos del siglo XX,” in *Para una historia de la enseñanza*, 213-28.

⁵⁴ Beatriz Sarlo, *La máquina cultural: maestras, traductores y vanguardistas* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1998), 9-92.

chicos que pudieran leer bien.”⁵⁵ In short, Normal schools were a sort of factory of sowers of alphabets, but their work would not have been valuable if it were not complimented by rural schools and, of course, teachers willing to make their life along the border, in the countryside, or among the “riff-raff” children of urban slums.



Figure 3.1: Female students reading in the Galería de Lectura y Descanso, Internato Normal de Señoritas, Montevideo. 1893. Photography Collection, MPJPV.

Despite the spread of Normal schools in the 1890s and 1900s, teachers still had a certain amount of room to select from the list of official textbooks ones they felt were most appropriate for their students. The 1902 Uruguayan list, for example, named multiple possible texts that could be used for lessons on geography and national history with a note specifying that teachers could “use one of the above.” A note at the end of the list, though, qualified the uses of textbooks: “La determinación de texto en una materia, no significa obligar al Maestro á emplear texto en ella, sino que, si en esa materia se usa texto, debe

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25-26, 28.

usarse únicamente el designado.”⁵⁶ The same options and restrictions appear throughout the decade in the lists of officially approved textbooks for Uruguayan schools. Teachers, however, used some books that had not been approved at all, in spite of the directive stated in the lists.⁵⁷ The same held true for the ways teachers used textbooks in Argentina, though in both countries there were incentives to use the official texts. On the one hand, they were inexpensive, if not free, for instructors and students. On the other, school inspectors in the cities and in the countryside cracked down on the use of “unofficial” books in the classroom.

This task factored into the greater charge of school inspectors, outlined in the Uruguayan law of public education to be that of using “todos los medios a su alcance a estimular en el Departamento el celo del pueblo por el mejoramiento y difusión de la educación común.”⁵⁸ Inspections were rigorously carried out, manifest in the sheer numbers of visits and hours inspectors put in each year observing classes and school buildings.⁵⁹ Inspections were performed in Argentina in a similar, though less effective way.

In the end, the bureaucratic framework of teaching the ABCs was on its way to carrying out educational reform in a uniform way in schools throughout the region.

⁵⁶ Dirección General de Instrucción Primaria, *Lista de los libros de texto adoptados para uso de los alumnos de las Escuelas Primarias durante el año 1902* (Montevideo: Editorial “El Siglo Ilustrado,” 1902), 9, BNUr, Sala Uruguay. Also available in the Sala Uruguay are lists published in pamphlet form from 1901, 1904, 1907, 1908, and 1910. These lists were distributed to all public primary school teachers. See also, for example, Circular Núm. 17 in Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación escolar vigente*, tomo 5, 1898-1903, 178.

⁵⁷ This practice led the inspector Abel Pérez to issue a circular in June 1901 reiterating that only official texts should be used in the classroom. See *Legislación vigente escolar*, tomo 5, 1898-1903, 133-34.

⁵⁸ Art. 34 of the Uruguayan “Ley de Educación Común,” 151-52. Departmental school inspectors also had to review the hygienic condition of school houses, monitor the availability of materials, and keep a record or archive of all documents, including textbooks, related to educational administration in their department. See also de Luca.

⁵⁹ See for example Urbano Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente á los años 1890 y 1891* (Montevideo: Imprenta ‘La Nación,’ 1892), anexo 27, Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1895* (Montevideo: Imprenta ‘La Nación,’ 1896), anexo 19, Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1896* (Montevideo: Imprenta ‘La Nación,’ 1897), anexo 19, Abel J. Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1900* (Montevideo: Imp. “El Siglo Ilustrado,” 1901), cuadro 19, Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1902-1903*, cuadro 19, BPC.

Centralized administration, the same pedagogical methods, and similar, if not the same, textbooks used in urban and rural schools, contributed to providing students with a shared understanding of the nation. Jaime Monestier sums up this point for the case of Uruguay. “La reforma contribuyó así en buena medida,” he writes, “a que los alumnos, y más tarde una parte importante de la población compartiera una visión común y solidaria de sus derechos y deberes ciudadanos.”⁶⁰ Indeed, once the CNE and DGIP began dealing in textbooks, a whole new market niche was opened up for printers in the Plata, stimulating the practices of reading and writing in the classroom and beyond, which in turn had their impact on the level of public concern shown for education as well as on the importance of education to what it meant to be Uruguayan or Argentine.

Reading and Writing in the Classroom and Beyond

Teaching the ABCs was no simple matter. Sowers of alphabets were aware that the success of education depended in large measure on the quality and quantity of the seeds they cast, and they believed in the need for ample time to be spent in the classroom on learning to read and write. That the number of students attending Uruguayan and Argentine public schools rose each year certainly gave educators plentiful fertile ground to cultivate, but making sure every student had access to materials to learn the ABCs meant that books were supplemented by a range of other types of print media, such as reading charts and, more importantly, *cuadernos*, or notebooks. After all, reading and writing were the heart of education, necessary to study all other subjects. It was natural, then, that students’ performance in classes on just about every subject were rewarded with printed prizes, or prizes that required some reading. What children were reading and writing in the classroom

⁶⁰ Monestier, 517.

and beyond was crucial to education's role in the popularization of print. Though by no means exhaustive, a look at some of the seeds and sprouts of the ABCs particularly in Uruguay will make this point clear.

Children got started with reading and writing exercises at a young age—in kindergarten, to be precise. There they followed a neatly defined set of lessons elaborated by Enriqueta Compte y Riqué, one of the first and most celebrated Uruguayan female educators who introduced students to the alphabet, as well as other subjects.⁶¹ The time students devoted to these exercises gradually increased from one grade level to the next, and in each successive grade the reading level of materials and assignments grew progressively more complex. Following the 1877 law, the typical day of class included one and a half to two hours focused exclusively on reading and writing exercises. Other areas of study, like morals and religion, geography and history, and grammar, were reading and writing intensive. In fact, reading and writing were practiced in almost every subject, including math and lessons on objects.⁶² The division of class time was modified through the 1890s and early 1900s in order to be in line with the latest pedagogical strategies, but if anything, more time was devoted to the practices of reading and writing.

In public schools of both Uruguay and Argentina reading and writing were diverse activities. “Reading” involved reading aloud syllables, words, phrases, and paragraphs, as well as repetition of what a teacher read and moments of reading in silence. There were various types of reading aloud, too. One was reading aloud as a class a passage chosen by the

⁶¹ On the organization of Compte y Riqué's kindergarten classes, see *Personalidades que han contribuido a la consolidación de la cultura y las estructuras educacionales*, edited and with a prologue and notes by Agapo Luis Palomeque, vol. 1 (Montevideo: Cámara de Representantes, 1992) 57-71.

⁶² An example of the division of class time in Uruguayan schools following the reform can be found Jacobo A. Varela, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1879 y 1880*, vol. 1 (Montevideo: Imp. de LA IDEA, 1881), 605-616.

teacher that had first been read individually in silence. Another allowed a student to select the passage he or she wanted to read to the others. A third type was known as “improvised reading,” where the teacher would select a passage to read aloud that students had not seen before. These different types were meant to make reading fun and to help students improve their skills and confidence. “Writing” was also a varied practice, ranging from drawing letters for students in kindergarten or first grade to jotting down words and phrases a teacher dictated and learning how to write properly in cursive and compose meaningful paragraphs (see figures 3.2 and 3.3). They did this occasionally on loose-leaf sheets, but by far the most common media used for writing practice were personal chalkboards (tens of thousands of these were distributed free of charge to Uruguayan students each year), and notebooks, which were used even more than chalkboards.



Figure 3.2: Detail of a photo of male students at the Escuela de Artes y Oficios in Montevideo painting the Argentine coat of arms and preparing chalkboards with alphabets for use in schools. Circa 1895. ABN 1817, BNUr, Materiales Especiales.



Figure 3.3: Detail of August 1912 photo of students at School 34 in Peñarol (outside Montevideo) learning to write in cursive with fountain pens. Photography Collection, MJPV.

Numerous series of notebooks were used systematically in Uruguayan and Argentine schools, and they were printed in such large quantities that each student usually was given two or three per year. This may not seem like a lot, but it was a fair amount considering the complementary practice of writing on chalkboards. The most widely used notebooks were

printed by the presses that published school textbooks, and many notebook series boasted of following a certain methodology for learning to write, when not claiming that a well-known teacher and textbook author had “written” the notebook, too. What is most interesting to note about these harbingers of student writing is that they convey complex moral and civic messages similar to those learned in books. From those whose cover displays a detailed lesson about a national hero or a historic event to others whose pages share simple guidelines and phrases to trace in order to perfect writing technique, notebooks of all sorts served as a direct link between students and sowers of alphabets and their messages.

Take for example the Vázquez Cores series, or practical and theoretical writing course, as they were titled, which consisted of twenty-one different notebooks. Teachers could find all of these available for free at the bookstore/print shop of Vázquez Cores in the heart of Montevideo. Of course the free notebooks were a way of enticing teachers to consider purchasing other materials at the bookstore where, as advertised on the covers, one could “stock an entire school in 24 hours.”⁶³ Author of numerous geography books, Vázquez Cores designed his notebooks around the fairly straightforward principle of tracing over sample sentences at the top of the pages and then rewriting these between the lines below, or crafting new sentences with the letters and words the student learned to write. The *Letra Inglesa* series is the largest set of notebooks and the one with the most obvious messages. At the bottom of most pages Vázquez Cores has noted that students will be engaging in writing exercises that literally trace the general outlines of Uruguayan history. Notebooks six and seven of the series have particularly concentrated lessons on “historia patria” to 1830, where students have to rewrite sentences like “El 25 de agosto de 1825 la Banda Oriental proclamó

⁶³ Francisco Vázquez Cores, *Cuadernos Vázquez Cores: curso práctico y teórico de escritura inglesa, redonda, gótico-alemana y gótico-inglesa* (Montevideo: Librería-Imprenta Vázquez Cores y Montes, n.d.). MJPV.

en la Florida su independencia del Brasil,” “Montevideo es una hermosa ciudad...” and “¡Vuelvo a verte, patria mía!”—this last sentence to practice exclamation marks.⁶⁴

Other important notebooks in Uruguay include the Barreiro y Ramos series, the set produced by the DGIP and its successor in the 1900s, the Consejo Nacional de Instrucción Primaria y Normal, and the Cuadernos Nacionales group of notebooks, a particularly patriotic set that we will see more of in the next chapter.⁶⁵ The Barreiro y Ramos notebooks follow the same method as those of Vázquez Cores, though the sentences students were to rewrite have a stronger moral and political imprint. In notebook six, for example, the student was faced with expressions like “En boca cerrada no entran moscas,” “No es oro todo lo que brilla,” and “Artigas fue el fundador de la República Oriental.”⁶⁶ Barreiro y Ramos did not miss out on the opportunity to advertise the textbooks he published, either, printing on the back covers of the notebooks a list of recent officially approved textbooks for sale at his bookstore. The DGIP notebooks were slightly more discreet in their presentation of symbolic content. Their pages are blank, with only lines for writing. It is on the covers where students met messages. Some covers have drawings of historic figures—Artigas, Fructuoso Rivera (whom we met in chapter 2), and, of course, Varela—and others go into more detail, with the drawing of the figure on the front cover and a biography on the back cover. This format with drawings on the front and text on the back is what characterized the Cuadernos Nacionales series. The popular notebooks in Argentina were designed in the same way as the Uruguayan

⁶⁴ Vázquez Cores, *Cuadernos Vázquez Cores, Letra Inglesa*, cuaderno 7, 10, and cuaderno 8, 1, 7.

⁶⁵ The MPJPV has a substantial number of these notebooks. Almost all of them are without writing and probably ended up in the Museum’s library as leftovers from shipments to schools around the country.

⁶⁶ *Método Barreiro y Ramos: curso graduado de escritura inglesa compuesto de 8 cuadernos*, cuaderno 6 (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1893), 4, 7, and cuaderno 8, 10. MPJPV.

ones, they were meant to function in the same way, and many were printed by the savvy textbook publisher Angel Estrada (see figure 3.5).



Figure 3.4: The poetic cover of a notebook belonging to Raudelinda Pereda, from Tacuarembó, Uruguay. 1898. MPJPV.



Figure 3.5: The cover of notebook one of five in J.V. Olivera's *Método de Caligrafía* (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía, n.d.). MPJPV.

Notebooks were useful tools for students to acquire and practice reading and writing skills, and they were used to deploy both subtle and not so subtle moral and civic ideas. The numbers of notebooks that were distributed to students on a yearly basis following the Reforma Vareliana made them particularly well-suited to this purpose. In 1879, some 51,500 notebooks were sent out to less than half as many enrolled students. By 1887 this number had risen to over 80,000 for a school population of just over 30,000, and by 1895 close to 170,000 notebooks were distributed to 50,000 students.⁶⁷ This trend would continue into the 1900s and solidify the importance of notebooks not only as a key link connecting students to state-regulated texts, but also as print media at the core of the popularization of print culture.

⁶⁷ Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1879 y 1880*, 18, 100; Jacobo A. Varela, *Informe correspondiente al año 1887* (Montevideo: Imprenta "El Siglo Ilustrado," 1887), cuadros 13 and 16; Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1895*, cuadros 11 and 14.

Of course school notebooks went hand in hand with textbooks. And it was in textbooks, too, where students and their families had crucial contact with the ABCs—libros de lectura, progressive readers, and more content-based texts, to be exact, which had taken over the realm of the reading poster.⁶⁸

Many titles vied for a spot in the new textbook market in the Plata, but a handful were selected to serve as official texts and thus saw astounding print runs and made lasting impressions in the region.⁶⁹ Like the notebooks, the lessons in books designed to help students learn to read and write were full of moral, patriotic, civic messages. In Uruguay, pedagogues like A. Vásquez Acevedo, Julián Miranda, Francisco Berra (who was very active in Buenos Aires, too), and Orestes Araújo became successful authors whose works were continually selected as official texts. Throughout the 1890s and 1900s tens of thousands of copies of their books were purchased from publishers by the DGIP, housed at the board's depot, and then sent out to departmental school administrators around the country. A few numbers give an idea of the volume of texts in question: in 1890 over 2,100 copies of Araújo's *Lecturas ejemplares* were distributed; 5,000 copies of Vásquez Acevedo's first volume of *Libros de lectura* were sent out in 1896; and some 4,700 of Araújo's *Perfiles*

⁶⁸ Up to now there has been no systematic study of textbooks. With titles numbering in the hundreds, it is a daunting task. Most scholarship on these texts has focused on history books. See chapter 4 for a closer look at this debate.

⁶⁹ Some of the other important books for learning to read, published in a smaller number of editions, but still with significant content messages, include José Abelardo Nuñez, *El lector americano: nuevo curso gradual de lecturas* (Buenos Aires, n.d.), Trinidad S. Osuna, *El nuevo Mandévil* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1880), used in both Uruguay and Argentina, J.B. Igón, *El mosaico argentino: lecciones útiles de diversos caracteres de letra manuscrita*, rev. ed. (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía., 1905), Ana Imbert de Moles, *El lector del Plata, primer libro* (Montevideo: Imprenta a vapor de "El Siglo," 1894), F.A. Berra, *Ejercicios de lectura (curso progresivo), primera parte*, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía., 1894), Berra, *Ejercicios de lectura (curso progresivo), segunda parte*, (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía., 1890), Julián O. Miranda, *El lector infantil, libro de lectura elemental* (Montevideo: Librería Nacional de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1898), Serafín Ledesma, *Mi primer libro* (Montevideo: E. Lagomarsino e Hijo, n.d.), BNM and MPJPV.

biográficos were supplied to schools from 1900 to 1903.⁷⁰ The DGIP's goal, after all, was to provide every student with a copy of the necessary textbooks for the school year.⁷¹ Students did not own the copies, but they were certainly encouraged to take them home and work on their reading lessons with family members. By comparing numbers of textbooks distributed in a given year with numbers of students who attended school on a regular basis in the same year, it is clear that, in contrast to what we saw with the notebooks, not every student had his or her own copy of a textbook. The ratio was closer to one book for every two or three students. However, those who wanted to take a book home could check out a classroom text or library copy, provided it was available. This is exactly what authors and teachers encouraged students to do.

School libraries and books were key points of contact between sowers of alphabets (representatives of the state) and families. The DGIP considered libraries with the appropriate collection of texts to be “un elemento indispensable á la escuela primaria, pues ellas completan la instrucción del niño y llevan al seno del hogar la benéfica influencia de las sanas lecturas.”⁷² Indeed, school libraries that doubled as public libraries in both Uruguay and Argentina were seen as a sign of progress linking knowledge through reading to notions of hard work, success in life, and a brighter future for the country. This logic was in part behind the desire of so many authors for their textbooks to be read at home. Of course there were other important reasons, aside from pure economic gain associated with large print runs, that accompanied the goal to address students and their parents, beginning with the fact

⁷⁰ Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente á los años 1890 y 1891*, cuadro 16, Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1896*, cuadro 14, and Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1902-1903*, 644.

⁷¹ Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación escolar vigente*, tomo 6, 1904-1905 (Montevideo: Talleres Tipográficos de “La Prensa,” 1906), 130, BPC.

⁷² Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación escolar vigente*, tomo 5, 1898-1903, 88-89.

that many family members would be introduced to reading first by the children who were acquiring the skill at school (see figures 3.6-3.8). Those parents who knew how to read were asked to play a role in the educational process by reading textbook lessons with their children. This is the idea summed up by the Argentine educator Pablo Pizzurno in the note to teachers and parents that opens his *El libro del escolar*, and in the first lesson.⁷³ Here we meet the young student Federico who reads to his younger sisters and parents (see figures 3.7 and 3.8). After Federico finishes, the parents ask their daughters to recount what they heard, making the lesson truly a family affair. A similar example comes from the preface of Amelia Palma's *El hogar modelo*, a textbook on home economics used in Argentine schools. The author of the preface writes that this new interesting book responds to the necessities of both the family and the school, and thus requests "madres" and "maestras" to put it in the hands of their daughters and students "en la seguridad de que pronto tendrán la satisfacción de recoger los más preciados frutos."⁷⁴ Other authors addressed their multiple reading audiences in a slightly different way, knowing their books would be used in adult schools and sold to a general public. The Uruguayan writer Orestes Araújo, for instance, spoke to the readers of his best-selling *Episodios históricos* as "la juventud," or students, and "las clases populares," or a wider reading public.⁷⁵

⁷³ Pablo A. Pizzurno, *El libro del escolar, primer libro*, 15th ed. (Buenos Aires: Aquilino Fernández, n.d.), iv-vi, BNM.

⁷⁴ Amelia Palma, *El hogar modelo: curso completo de economía doméstica*, with a preface by Cecilia Grierson (Buenos Aires: Imprenta, Litog. y Enc. de Jacobo Peuser, 1902), viii, BNM.

⁷⁵ Orestes Araújo, *Episodios históricos*, 5th ed. (Montevideo: Dornaleche Hnos., n.d.), v, MPJPV.



Figure 3.6: Cover of Emma Catalá de Princivalle, *Ejercicios progresivos de lectura, ortología y ortografía, primer libro*, 2nd ed. (Montevideo: Imp. “El Siglo Ilustrado,” 1915), MPJPV.



Figure 3.7: Federico reading to his younger sisters. From Pizzurno, *El libro del escolar*, 1.



Figure 3.8: Scene of reading in the home. From A. Vázquez Acevedo, *Serie graduada de libros de lectura, libro primero*, 3rd ed. (Montevideo: Galli y Cia. Editores, 1888), 109. MPJPV.

The state, the school, and the larger public also intersected during the end of the year exam period and the periodic distribution of prizes to students who had performed particularly well in a subject.⁷⁶ Exams were public events where, in some instances, community members participated on examination committees.⁷⁷ And they were events to which parents were invited by teachers and students. This was the case with exams in 1891 in

⁷⁶ Like exams, the distribution of prizes was a public event, usually led by the national inspector of public education and held in a premier location, like a theater. Up to the mid-1870s students were rewarded with medals. In the 1880s and 1890s little cards replaced medals, partly because they were more economical for boards of education to purchase, and largely because prizes were awarded to more and more students in order to encourage hard work and dedication. Rewards were divided by subject: grammar, writing, reading, home economics, merit, and a few others. On prizes in Uruguay see Araújo, *Historia de la escuela uruguaya*, 307-09, 379. Just to give an idea of the quantity awarded, in 1887 in Montevideo alone 12,000 cards were doled out. See Varela, *Informe correspondiente al año 1887*, relación de cuadro 16. The MPJPV has a good collection of prizes.

⁷⁷ See Comisión Departamental de Instrucción Pública, *Exámenes generales de las escuelas públicas del departamento de Rocha correspondientes al año 1895* (Rocha: Imp. La Democracia, 1895), BNUr, Sala Uruguay.

Cerro Largo, along the Uruguay-Brazil border.⁷⁸ The neighbors at the exams drew attention to the school and helped to both publicize its mission, as well as to make the school a public space, with parents partaking in the year end's recognition of students' advancements. It is critical that parents were invited into the classroom, for it was a way to allow them to feel proud of their children and at the same time exercise their parental influence, all while celebrating the youth's achievements. Exams also gave teachers and parents the chance to meet each other and discuss students' progress. Many parents were also introduced to reading and writing this way, and to the benefits of public school. This was not a matter of little importance, either, especially in the countryside where children—especially boys—were needed to work to contribute to supporting the family, and where many parents did not see much value in the school.⁷⁹

In class, at libraries, during exams, and in the home, students and their family members definitely spent a lot of time with the work of by far the best selling author of textbooks in Uruguay: José H. Figueira. He penned a set of five books that were selected as official texts when they were first published in the 1890s and then reedited and used consistently in primary schools up through the 1950s—a phenomenon similar to that of *El Nene* in Argentina. The titles of the texts—*¿Quieres leer?*, *¡Adelante!*, *Un buen amigo*, *Trabajo*, and *Vida*—reveal the intimate connection between reading and reality, or learning to read, the influence of reading over one's work, and reading as an integral component of a rewarding life, a progression envisioned by both Figueira and educational administrators.

⁷⁸ Comisión Departamental de Instrucción Primaria, *Exámenes generales de las escuelas públicas del departamento de Cerro Largo correspondientes al año escolar de 1891* (Melo: Tip. y Enc. de El Deber Cívico, 1891), 43, BNUr, Sala Uruguay.

⁷⁹ In a class notebooks from 1908 and 1909 Carmen Biasotti writes about parents at the school during exam days. Her notebooks can be found at the MPJPV.

The different editions have slight modifications (perhaps most notably the covers), but the emphasis on specific values, modes of behavior, beliefs, and the importance of reading remained intact throughout the years.⁸⁰ This continuity guaranteed Figueira praise from the DGIP, as well as a lucrative business deal. In 1901 the national inspector Abel Pérez wrote that Figueira's texts were largely responsible for the advances made in the teaching of reading, writing, and grammar. They had also succeeded in capturing young readers' attention—an honorable feat for any writer.⁸¹ It is no surprise, then, that his five-volume set was purchased in large quantities for distribution to Uruguayan students. In 1895 3,500 copies of *¿Quieres leer?* were supplied to schools, and this was just the beginning. Five years later, the DGIP sent students 5,632 copies of the same book, 5,373 of *¡Adelante!*, and 3,590 copies of *Trabajo*. As the numbers of enrolled students rose, so did the volume of sales of Figueira's texts. In 1901, over 13,000 copies of *¿Quieres leer?*, to name just one of the books, were purchased and distributed among yearning readers.⁸² Interestingly, in the early editions of the books a note was included after the title page stating that all copies not bearing the author's signature would be deemed pirated, which suggests that there was a market of "unofficial" versions of the books, too.⁸³

So what was it that made Figueira's books so popular? First, in the eyes of the DGIP and teachers, they were a group of books written on a sound methodology, well-balanced in

⁸⁰ The covers of textbooks from the Plata, as well as from other parts of Latin America, vary widely in their symbolic imagery and offer a rich source for understanding book content and summations of messages that publishers and the boards of education aimed to communicate.

⁸¹ Abel J. Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1901* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1902), 48.

⁸² Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1900*, cuadro 14bis, and Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1901*, 270.

⁸³ See, for example, José H. Figueira, *¿Quieres leer?*, rev. ed. (Montevideo, 1908), 4.

the subjects of lessons covered, and full of helpful advice for teachers for every lesson.⁸⁴

They connected learning the ABCs to powerful moral lessons and to principles of patriotism and work ethic. In a word, Figueira's was the best series of texts the textbook commission had seen, and it was not until 1904 that the commission began to conditionally recommend another similar progressive series of books—what would become a six-volume set by Emma Catalá de Princivalle.⁸⁵ Though the DGIP certainly played a part in the success of these books, credit goes to the author for their design. Second, the Figueira series had attractive images and narratives that distinguished the books from other libros de lectura whose narratives were not as exciting and that did not have images integrated into the reading lessons. This may sound like a trivial point to us now, but for new readers at the turn of the twentieth century, these aspects of Figueira's books contributed to making them revolutionary among school texts and other books published around the same period. Lastly, the five texts were right in step with the pace of students as they moved from one year to the next. Moreover, all the books, including the most elementary *¿Quieres leer?*, were suitable for use in classes for adults and for reading at home with parents.

⁸⁴ Dirección General de Instrucción Primaria, *Lista de los libros de texto adoptados para uso de los alumnos de las escuelas primarias durante el año 1904* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1904), 5, BNUr, Sala Uruguay.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5-6, 11-16.



Figure 3.9: The cover of Figueira's *¿Quieres leer?*, 4th rev. ed. (Montevideo: Dornaleche y Reyes, 1897).



Figure 3.10: Cover of another “new” edition of *¿Quieres leer?* (Montevideo, 1908).

Print media for learning the ABCs, with short narratives that contained moral lessons, were not the only ones making their ways into the hands of school children. Texts devoted to lessons in patriotism and books written exclusively for female students were among the most widely distributed reading materials in the Río de la Plata, and, as we will see in the next chapter, they were some of the most effective at instilling in young readers a sense of group identity. While most of the examples of reading materials in this section have come from the educational success story of Uruguay, they shed light on the relationship between students, parents, and the state in Argentina, too. The same types and numbers of texts were used in Argentina, and these were vetted through the same bureaucratic process. Likewise, reading materials were made available to departmental school districts in a similar way. And most significantly, the interaction of students and parents with seeds sown by the state was the

same. This is evident in the numbers of schools and students attending schools on both sides of the Plata, as well as in the rise in literacy rates.

Just how effective was the new school system in the region? Though not an exhaustive statistical portrait, a look at the numbers of schools and enrolled students over the period 1880-1910 illustrates the expansion of the public primary school system and provides a first index to measure the effectiveness of the school.⁸⁶ In Uruguay, 24,785 students were enrolled in 310 public schools throughout the country in 1880. By 1890 the number of public schools had risen to 470, and enrollment to 38,747, and in 1900 571 schools served 52,474 students. Finally, in 1910 there were close to 75,000 children attending almost 800 public primary schools.⁸⁷ An estimated 40 percent of school age children still did not attend any sort of school—public or private—or receive instruction at the home in 1910, but this was the lowest percentage for all of Latin America, and a drastic improvement from the days when the reform was being implemented. In 1878, for instance, over 80 percent of the school age population did not yet attend schools.⁸⁸ Noteworthy, too, about the statistics on schools in Uruguay is that the majority of public schools were in the countryside, opposite the case with schools in Argentina where the majority were concentrated in Buenos Aires and the province of Buenos Aires. In Argentina in 1890, there were roughly 2,400 schools throughout the republic and an enrollment of some 203,700 students in public schools. By 1900 there were

⁸⁶ The numbers of schools noted in this section only refer to public schools. Private schools functioned during the same period in both countries, but they were by far fewer in number than public ones and their enrollment steadily decreased. Enrollment in public schools indicates the number of students officially registered for the year. The “asistencia media,” or average attendance (not missing class more than three times per month), was usually around a third lower than the total enrollment for the year.

⁸⁷ Varela, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1879 y 1880*, 18, 31; Chucarro, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1890 y 1891*, cuadros 1, 11, and 15; Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1900*, 65, 77, 78; Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1909 y 1910* (Montevideo: Talleres Gráficos A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1911), 117, 120, 125, cuadro 3. Statistics on “asistencia media” are available in these same sources.

⁸⁸ José Pedro Varela, *Memoria correspondiente al período transcurrido desde el 24 de agosto de 1877 hasta el 31 de diciembre de 1878*, tomo 1 (Montevideo: Imprenta a vapor de LA TRIBUNA, 1879), LXXXVI, MPJPV.

800 new schools operating, and the number of students had risen to close to 369,000, largely as a result of the arrival of massive numbers of immigrants. And in 1910 over 600,000 students were registered to attend around 5,400 public schools.⁸⁹ Approximately half of school age children, however, did not attend schools in this same year, but like Uruguay, this figure had decreased notably since the passage of the 1884 law of public education. These numbers are not meant to be precise measurements; rather, they help us to see the broader picture of how public education successfully spread across the Río de la Plata, which in turn sheds light on the popularization of print during these years.

It was thanks to schools and sowers of alphabets that literacy rates among Uruguayans and Argentines rose, too. Measures of literacy in Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are often part of census reports. These, however, must be considered with caution. First, the numbers were compiled by government agencies that may have been inclined to shape them in a way that corresponded to their interests. Second, significant sectors of a nation's population were, in some cases, not factored into the census report. That said, some numbers can give us a sense of literacy rates. In Argentina, for example, the percentage of *analfabetos* among those age fourteen and above throughout the country went from 78 in 1869 to 54 in 1895, and then to 35 in 1914. The figures vary widely when broken down according to province and the city of Buenos Aires. To take just one year, 1914, illiteracy in the capital measured 9 percent, compared with 27 percent for the province of Buenos Aires and 64 percent for the remote northwestern province of Jujuy.⁹⁰ Literacy in

⁸⁹ Alberto Gandulfo, "Expansión del sistema escolar argentino: informe estadístico," in *Sociedad civil y estado*, 314, 316, 323-25.

⁹⁰ See Consejo Nacional de Educación, *El analfabetismo en la Argentina: estudio comparativo desde 1869-1943* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1944), 9. For a look at how these statistics were compiled, see Ernesto Nelson, *El analfabetismo en la República Argentina: interpretación de sus estadísticas* (Santa Fe: Instituto Social de la Universidad del Litoral, 1939), 5-43.

Uruguay followed a similar pattern, with rates much higher in Montevideo than in other areas. In 1900 just over 50 percent of the country's 755 thousand people older than age six were literate. Literacy for the same age group in Montevideo, meanwhile, measured 66 percent, in contrast to 38 percent for the interior departments of Artigas and Tacuarembó.⁹¹ The figures steadily rose, though, thanks to public schools. According to the 1908 national census, 58 percent of people age five and older were literate, and the literacy rate for the same age group in Montevideo measured 75 percent.⁹²

Other indicators of literacy can be found in student compositions. These are much more fragile than statistics given that they were often written in notebooks that were not kept or that have not survived well the passage of time, but a few examples make the point. Nine-year-old students of Enriqueta Comte y Riqué's kindergarten class wrote glowing letters (probably with the help of the teacher) of a visit they made to the Museo José Pedro Varela in November 1901. Students claimed that the experience at this institution paying tribute to the public education system was "unforgettable" and an excellent way for them to end the school year.⁹³ Another example comes from the notebook of a student in Tacuarembó in 1898. Raudelinda Pereda, as she signed her compositions, crafted one praising the school. "¿Habrá algún ser racional tan desdichado que ignore lo que es y cuánto vale la escuela?... Es la escuela ese sentro sublime de educación en el que con facilidad se instruyen las personas,"

⁹¹ *Anuario estadístico de la República O. del Uruguay, años 1902 y 1903*, tomo 1 (Montevideo: Dornaleche y Reyes, 1905), 110-12, cuadro 15. The majority of departments reported a slightly greater number of literate men than literate women for the population older than fourteen. Interestingly, for ages 6-14 the opposite was the case, with most departments reporting higher literacy rates among females. See *Anuario estadístico de la República Oriental del Uruguay, años 1904 a 1906*, tomo 1 (Montevideo: Dornaleche y Reyes, 1907), 55.

⁹² See Juan Rial, ed., *Estadísticas históricas de Uruguay, 1850-1930* (Montevideo: Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay, 1980), 147.

⁹³ Delia Beramendi to A. Gómez Ruano, 23 November 1901; Oscar Laporiti to A. Gómez Ruano, 23 November 1901, Caja 19, MPJPV.

she writes. “Es en ella donde con alegría se estudia, donde se encuentra un amable maestro que hace empeño por la educación de los niños, es en fin donde se pasan las mejores horas de la infancia.” She ends her tribute by saying that it is the school that “instills respect and affection in the tender hearts of children.”⁹⁴ It is clear that the school inspired affection and respect in Raudelinda’s heart. It may have been the case that students were instructed to write a positive composition about the benefits of the school, but the composition is not so polished that she could not have written the words on her own. The point is that the practices of reading and writing were taking hold, and with them came the messages sowers of alphabets hoped to instill in young hearts.



The advent of public primary education in the Río de la Plata put in process a cultural revolution whose results, like the presence of Varela and Sarmiento, are still palpable today. Between 1880 and 1910 schools were established throughout Uruguay and Argentina, enrollments and literacy rates rapidly rose, and the state began to regulate print media like never before. This period also marked a new scene in the development of Rioplatense print culture where the relationship between print, the public, and politics was solidified, and where print media really became “popular.” The future would now be based on generations who learned to read and write, thanks to sowers of alphabets.

Being the sowers of alphabets and architects of the public school systems in the Plata certainly guaranteed Varela and Sarmiento privileged places in the history of the region. Both dreamed of a success story for education, but neither could have imagined that the system of public education in the Río de la Plata would become the most successful and effective in all of Latin America. Nor could they have imagined that in the short span of thirty years—from

⁹⁴ Raudelinda Pereda, *Cuaderno de escritura*, 1898, MPJPV.

the time of the Uruguayan law of public education up to the first centenary celebration of independence in 1910—Uruguayans and Argentines would have become the most literate Latin Americans. What really solidified their entrance into the pantheon of national heroes, though, was their vision of and contribution to shaping citizens for the new national community through lessons rich in civic and moral content. These lessons for a nation are what immortalized the sowers of alphabets and, as we will see in the next chapter, the ones that were most deeply felt by young students.

CHAPTER 4

LESSONS FOR A NATION

In the early 1870s naturalist W.H. Hudson's self-styled character Richard Lamb traversed the rural interior of Uruguay. One of the many adventures Lamb experiences in *The Purple Land* finds him resting in a wooded area one afternoon before continuing his journey on horseback toward Montevideo. His peaceful nap is startled by the horrific spectacle of young boys engaged in what appears to be partisan warfare. They lined up, red *divisas* facing whites, drew their knives, and charged each other. Only three from the Colorado side were left standing. When one of the slain Blancos musters the energy to make one last attack on the victors, Lamb rushes toward the boys to protect the lone Blanco, whom the other three are about finish off. With the exception of this boy, all the others, including those on the ground, run off into the woods. Only then does Lamb realize that they were playing at Reds and Whites, "a mimic war... manoeuvres, surprises, skirmishes, throat-cutting, and all."¹

Deep signs of party affiliation were still starkly visible some thirty years later to the Uruguayan journalist José Virginio Díaz as he traveled throughout the countryside. One female teacher from the department of Durazno lamented the political affinities of the children who divided themselves up into Blancos and Colorados, according to the partisan colors of their parents. She complained to Díaz that during recess these kids "pull out their knives and turn the playground into a battle ground. They only cut each other's clothes—their *bombachas* and coats—but any day now they'll get fired up and stab each

¹ W.H. Hudson, *The Purple Land*, with an introduction by William McFee (New York: The Modern Library, 1926), 125-31.

other.”² This teacher went on to say that she had to get out of the little town and that she couldn’t deal with the situation anymore. Later, the *maestro* who took her place also grumbled about the playground partisan battles. Where things really got out of hand was when the parents got involved. The children are “devils” and pass their time in shenanigans, he huffed, and “if you reprimand them or give them a whipping with the ruler, then the whole family shows up, *faca* or pistol in hand.” He went on to tell Díaz, “it’s wonderful to be a *maestro* in the pastoral Uruguayan countryside!”³

Children in other schools behaved differently, although there was no getting around the fact that large portions of Uruguay’s rural citizens, young and old, already held some party affiliation. Turning this party identity into a more inclusive national one where partisan conflict could be less explosive (or at least not result in knife fights and ruined clothes at recess) was one of public education’s goals and most difficult challenges. According to Díaz and the teachers, what was needed was national unity, a spirit of national community that transcended party divisions and offered a sense of collective identity that both Reds and Whites could share. This was exactly what inspired Uruguay’s best-selling author of books on national history to write textbooks with lessons for a nation.⁴

Across the Río de la Plata in Argentina, there were no Blancos and Colorados engaging in civil war, but similar political feuds between liberals and conservatives were stewing during these years, as well. Immigration fueled the debate, and, as we saw in the last

² José Virginio Díaz, *Viaje por la campaña oriental*, with an introduction by Oscar Padrón Favre (Montevideo: Ediciones El Galeón; Durazno: Tierra Adentro Ediciones, 2005), 34-35.

³ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁴ This is what state officials were advocating, too. See for example circular no. 19, titled “Manifestaciones partidistas. Su prohibición a los funcionarios escolares y a los educandos” and circular 18 prohibiting students to wear any emblems symbolizing party affiliation in Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación Escolar Vigente*, tomo 5, 1898-1903 (Montevideo: Talleres A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1904), 13-16.

chapter, set educational bureaucrats on the road to developing a national public education system with the aim of shaping future citizens who would make for a more unified nation. On both sides of the river, the end of the Paraguayan War in 1870 meant the beginning of the process of consolidating state institutions. In Uruguay this process was plagued by tensions between Blancos and Colorados that simmered in some moments, and during others boiled over into full-scale civil war up to the early 1900s. The school and its lessons for a nation were going to be the way forward.

From the time Lamb crisscrossed Uruguay in the 1870s to the centenary celebration of the May Revolution, held shortly after Díaz's encounters with teachers, literary production in the Río de la Plata skyrocketed, driving a second printing revolution in the region. These were years that saw the rise of writers like Eugenio Cambaceres, whose naturalist novels and stories about dandies have made their way onto "official" lists of Argentine literature, and the Uruguayan Eduardo Acevedo Díaz, whose historical novels helped solidify José Artigas's status as Uruguay's first national hero. The literary historian Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez, both from Argentina, appeared on the scene around 1900, as did the highly successful Uruguayan playwright Florencio Sánchez. This period also framed the *modernismo* movement in the Plata, with an active Rubén Darío in Buenos Aires during the 1890s, and José Enrique Rodó, whose anti-materialist treatise *Ariel* was published in 1900, across the river in Montevideo.

The turn of the century was also a moment when access to the limited world of writing began to open up, and when being an author began its transformation to a viable profession. Eduardo Gutiérrez's immensely popular gauchesque novels were a prime example of the changing position of the author. Characterized as "the most pernicious and

unhealthy literature ever produced in Argentina,” Gutiérrez’s mythic *Juan Moreira* and similar novels sold enough for him to make a living solely off writing.⁵ Other authors who challenged lettered elites’ stronghold on print media during these years included José Hernández, whose *Martín Fierro* was being memorized across the countryside, Julio Figueroa, a name behind carnival songs and gauchesque pamphlets in Uruguay, and people like Elías Regules and Abdón Arostegui who composed *dramas criollos* for circus performances that captivated Uruguayan and Argentine audiences.

These various groups of writers combined with new, professional journalists who produced a flood of newspaper and magazine publications to play a major part in this second printing revolution. There is much more to the story, though. Certainly it was a moment when the outlines of “national” literatures started defining themselves more clearly, and these became gradually more tinged with nationalist sentiment toward 1910. After all, anniversaries, especially centenaries, are always good times to sound the nationalist note. But when it came down to print media affecting the formation of collective identities in this stage of the development of Rioplatense print culture, all of this new literary production was overshadowed by school textbooks that presented young readers and future citizens with lessons in patriotism and lessons in motherhood.

My argument in this chapter is that textbooks on national history and books written expressly for female students were some of the most powerful texts affecting the formation of national and gender identities in the Río de la Plata. In both Uruguay and Argentina school textbooks with lessons for a nation allowed for the popular appropriation of official discourses on nationalism and gender identity. These lessons were on the leading edge of a

⁵ Alberto Navarro Viola, *Anuario bibliográfico de la República Argentina, año II—1880* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1970), 286-87. See also the *Anuario bibliográfico de la República Argentina, año III—1881* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1972), 399-400.

culture of print that was rapidly spreading throughout Rioplatense society, and they fundamentally altered how cultural codes and codes of behavior were transmitted. Whereas gauchos were the protagonists in the development of print culture at mid-century, children had taken over this responsibility at the end of the century. This is what allowed for textbooks to play such a prominent role in the popular dissemination and appropriation of nationalist sentiments.

As we covered in chapter 3, textbooks were the closest link between print, power, and collective identity during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Toward 1910 these forms of print media were rivaled in quantity by newspapers and forms of literature like the middle-class magazine *Caras y Caretas* and gauchesque poetry sold in pamphlets. The official visions for national and gender identity textbooks advocated were also challenged as the centenary celebration approached, by *Caras y Caretas*, popular plays written by and for immigrants and migrants, and the very real task of integrating millions of newcomers into the national social fabric. Some immigrant communities even set up private schools where Spanish was not the language of choice, and where patria referred to the place children's parents had left behind. But overall, the public school, the home, and lessons for a nation were extremely effective in instilling affect for the national community and specific gender roles within this community—a result sowers of alphabets had dreamed of.

Textbooks on national history and women's social roles were not unique to the Plata. From the 1850s on, similar works were published in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Chile, although the real publishing push of textbooks in these other countries did not take place until the early twentieth century, mainly after 1910.⁶ Likewise, in both the Plata and

⁶ See *Latinoamérica: enseñanza de la historia, libros de texto y conciencia histórica*, ed. Michael Riekenberg (Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial, FLACSO, 1991) for an introduction to history textbooks in Latin America.

other regions of Latin America, lessons students learned in schools, as Adolfo Prieto points out, created a reading public and fit right into the larger process of modernization that was being carried out around the turn of the century.⁷ What stands out about the case of the Río de la Plata, aside from the unmatched quantity of textbooks published and when they appeared, is how widespread these texts were and how deep they reached into not only the minds and hearts of young students but also Rioplatense society at large.

Some readers may doubt the “literary” quality of textbooks or consider them to be material better left to the historian of education or more appropriate as supporting documents for a cultural history. Though understandable, these objections could not be farther from the truth. These books were indeed very literary, often including passages from canonical authors, telling stories with young protagonists and strong moral messages, and, in some cases, written entirely in verse. And the fact that they were among the most widely-read texts at the end of the nineteenth century makes them representative of a strain of popular literature that deserves a main part in our story.

Lessons in Patriotism

Patriotism and how to love the *patria* are the backbone of texts on national history and civics, and are themes that run through textbooks on subjects ranging from calligraphy to home economics.⁸ What lessons in patriotism aim to do is create an *emotional bond* with young readers, be it in the specialized books on national history and geography or those that

⁷ Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988), 13.

⁸ Among the limited scholarship on textbooks from these years, good overviews include Esteban Fontana, “Los primeros textos escolares de historia argentina a nivel primario, 1860-1890: primera parte,” *Investigaciones y Ensayos* 47 (1997): 361-384, Fontana, “Los primeros textos escolares de historia argentina a nivel primario, 1860-1890: segunda parte,” *Investigaciones y Ensayos* 48 (1997): 267-98, and Verónica Leone, “Manuales escolares e imaginario social en el Uruguay del Centenario,” in *Los uruguayos del Centenario: nación, ciudadanía, religión y educación (1910-1930)*, comp. Gerardo Caetano (Montevideo: Taurus, 2000), 139-215.

incorporate the patria into other subjects. Patriotic spirit, identification with the idea of nation, and nationalism, after all, are rooted in feelings, and it is through a look at how lessons interacted with feelings that we will better understand the role of textbooks in instilling affect for the nation. Love of the patria was conveyed with characteristics of both familial and romantic love. It was familial in that it was unconditional and cast in the light of parents loving their children, and vice versa. The romantic side of love for the nation came with the passion patria was supposed to inspire. In both instances, this love was supposed to trump other affiliations. The main goal of print media with lessons in patriotism was to inculcate these feelings and foster a sense of belonging to the national community.

While educational administrators and textbook authors attempted to rise above partisan divisions, lessons were not neutral. A good test of this is simply looking at how Juan Manuel de Rosas is mentioned in history books, if at all. Book after book leaves him out of both the Uruguayan and Argentine collective past. When he receives mention, it is negative: Rosas the tyrant, the years of tyranny, a period of violence and shame. Periodization of historical moments and treatment of blacks and indigenous groups in the Plata are other good indexes for approaching official historiographical perspectives.⁹ That said, the presentation of liberal elites' understanding of history did manage to leave out petty partisan politics, at least from the narratives, in hopes of constructing a unified story line.¹⁰

⁹ The majority of history books on both sides of the river date the beginning of national history with the May Revolution of 1810. Colonial history appears in some texts. Indians are presented as savages. Blacks get better ratings, with some stories lamenting slavery, and others praising the loyalty of black soldiers during independence.

¹⁰ Cecilia Braslavsky, "Los usos de la historia en la educación argentina: con especial referencia a los libros de texto para las escuelas primarias 1853-1916" (Buenos Aires: FLACSO, UBA, 1992), 41-45, makes the argument that textbooks carried diverse messages on patriotism. While some variations are no doubt present in texts, and although some authors, for example, have conflicting ideas about the immigrant population in Argentina, the hundreds of titles with patriotic lessons do indeed rally around the formation of a national community based on a shared past and a common set of heroes.

Crafting *national* histories—albeit without Rosas—was clearly the goal. Achieving this goal depended in large measure on the creation of a pantheon of heroes who would fit into a common shared past and act as tour guides and role models for those learning the story. Figures who acquired mythic status in lessons include José de San Martín, Manuel Belgrano, Mariano Moreno, and the polarizing figure of Sarmiento, in the case of Argentina, and José Artigas, Fructuoso Rivera, Dámaso Larrañaga, and Juan Antonio Lavalleja, leader of a group of Uruguayans who led the charge to liberate the Banda Oriental from Brazilian occupation in the mid 1820s. This group is known as the Thirty-Three Orientales, and they get plenty of patriotic mention in textbooks, although they were in reality more than thirty-three. Some of these men even saw their status rise to that of national hero largely as a result of textbooks. What was necessary was to fulfill some standard characteristics: inspire national unity, represent a valiant past and hope for a bright future, and serve as a model citizen.¹¹ This was the case of Artigas. As the names illustrate, new heroes tended to come from the moment of independence, rather than from more contemporary political actors. Independence and its actors were safer bets for rallying people of divergent political colors around the nation.

A good illustration of this point comes from Petronila Wagner Sosa's *Patria, hogar y fraternidad*, where a lesson presents a young boy who collects stamps with images of national heroes. What is interesting in this story that may otherwise seem hard to swallow is that the boy did not tolerate that any of his friends joked about the heroes represented. His little sister Luisita often pulled his leg, but she was also “filled with the love that her brother felt for these heroes and she always enjoyed listening to her brother recount the feats of these

¹¹ Bolívar fulfilled these in Venezuelan books. See Nikolaus Werz, “Reflexiones sobre la imagen de Bolívar y la enseñanza de la historia en Venezuela,” in *Latinoamérica: enseñanza de la historia*, 103-21.

men...” Patriotism was contagious. Then something tragic happened. Luisita unintentionally tore the corner of a stamp bearing San Martín’s portrait, which led her brother Pepito to lament that his stamp collection was no longer complete and that somehow the character of San Martín has been disrespected. Luisita then decided to purchase a nice new stamp of San Martín for Pepito. The moral of the story, as it is summed up at the end, is that love for the patria is unconditional and contagious, and that those who harbor this feeling deserve to be held in high esteem by their compatriots.¹²

Independence heroes played a foundational role in lessons in patriotism for another reason, too: educational administrators considered public education a continuation of the work of independence and the heroes of independence. In their time they fought to liberate the country from colonial power. The school’s patriotic task was to educate youth, carrying out Artigas’s dream (and often quoted statement) of Uruguayans being “as educated as they were brave.” This is how Varela understood the role of the school, and it was an argument bureaucrats used to persuade parents and rural inhabitants who questioned the new institution of the school.¹³

Even if the military and political figures who were the subjects of so many lessons in patriotism did not reach the status of “hero” in the eyes of the student, these characters had nevertheless become *cultural referents*. If all a young student learned was to associate the name Rosas with the idea of “tyranny,” as so many textbooks present, and the names of Belgrano, Moreno, and Artigas with independence, then opposite or different interpretations would have been much more difficult for the student to ponder. Simply put, lessons in

¹² Petronila Wagner Sosa, *Patria, hogar y fraternidad* (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía, 1910), 16-19.

¹³ See, for example, *Liga Patriótica de Enseñanza a los habitantes de la campaña* (Montevideo: Imprenta a vapor de LA NACION, 1896, BNUr, Sala Uruguay).

patriotism had a type of fail-safe guarantee. If they did not inspire students to become proud patriots, then at least they could fall back on the backdoor method and become the culture referents for future generations, which in itself was half the battle.

A last general consideration must be taken into account before we look at some concrete examples. Lessons in patriotism were distinctly connected to the home and fostered the idea of the school as a public home, or as a public extension of the private world of the home. How children behaved at home, the values they learned there, and exercises that required students to think ahead to when they would be homemakers themselves, were all subjects taken up by textbooks. The idea was that what youngsters learned at home could be carried on in school, and what was learned at school could be taken back to the family abode. That lessons students learned were taken home and shared with parents and siblings meant that the stories and morals studied in textbooks mixed with oral culture, especially when parents or brothers and sisters were illiterate. As was the case with popular gauchesque literature, this meeting ground of oral and print cultures is critical to understanding how messages state officials promoted in schools were taken up by popular classes. Of course how good a read the book was also influenced its success in reaching large reading publics.

Among the hundreds of titles containing lessons in patriotism published between 1880 and 1910 were civics books and civic catechisms. Textbooks on civics aimed to educate students in the art of government, usually by going through the definitions of nation, and then explaining the branches of government and the general principles of the constitution.¹⁴ A

¹⁴ See Clodomiro Quiroga, *Manual del ciudadano argentino, o sea instrucción cívica para uso de las escuelas seguido de la constitución nacional*, 6th ed. (Buenos Aires: Librería La Anticuaria, 1899), Isidoro de María, *Catecismo constitucional de la República Oriental del Uruguay*, 10th ed. (Montevideo: Imprenta 'El Siglo Ilustrado,' 1894), Enrique Ortega, *Compendio de instrucción cívica para uso de las escuelas* (Buenos Aires: Pedro Igón y Cía., 1897), and Julián O. Miranda, *Educación cívica: obra destinada a la enseñanza de la constitución* (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1906).

copy of the constitution was normally a standard feature, too. As this simplified description may suggest, these texts were not the most engaging, despite many of them being on official lists of textbooks year after year, especially when compared to a book on national history where the narrator was a young boy or girl, just like the young reader. However, these books still dealt in love for the patria, some more effectively than others. Julián Miranda's best-selling *Educación cívica*, for example, consistently employs the first person plural to get across the notion of community connecting him to his readers, readers to each other, and readers to the daily reality of other Uruguayans. He hoped to encourage children readers to love the patria, its history, and its symbols like they loved their home. "The well-being of our patria," wrote Miranda, "is our own well-being."¹⁵

Many general histories were produced, as well. While their narrative techniques are often of a comparably poor quality to civics texts, general national histories do layout periodizations for history and often present a catalog of historical heroes, or figures children would come to know as heroes.¹⁶ Some textbooks were like *La patria en la escuela*, used in Uruguayan schools to introduce national symbols. The author argued that communication of patriotic symbols through verse made the idea of the patria tangible, which would help root a feeling of affect for the nation in young readers' hearts.¹⁷ One set of three history books saw above-normal success and multiple editions: Orestes Araujo's *Perfiles biográficos, Episodios*

¹⁵ Miranda, *Educación cívica*, 33-35.

¹⁶ Examples of rather dry histories include Oscar L. Peacan, *La historia patria explicada a los niños* (Buenos Aires: Cabaut y Cía., 1903), Benigno T. Martínez, *Curso elemental de historia argentina*, 7th ed. (Buenos Aires: Pedro Igón y Cía., 1896), and Enrique M. Antuña, *Lecciones de historia nacional: Artigas y la insurrección, segundo curso*, 3rd ed. (Montevideo: El Ateneo, 1901). Antuña's books sold well, in bookstores in Montevideo and in post offices in the interior.

¹⁷ Manuel Bernárdez, *La patria en la escuela. Cuaderno I: los atributos* (Montevideo: Imprenta Artística y Librería de Dornaleche y Reyes, 1894).

históricos, and *Lecturas ejemplares*.¹⁸ All three were repeatedly selected as official texts for use across Uruguay, due in part to some innovations he introduced (his position in the educational bureaucracy probably did not hurt, either). *Perfiles biográficos* was one of the first books with illustrations. Each of the lessons is headed by a portrait of the figure or hero in focus. Presenting biographies was also a departure from dull narrative; these biographical profiles were profiles in civic education and were meant to serve as models to follow.

Episodios históricos follows the same format, although people are replaced by events and the ways many of the figures in *Perfiles biográficos* behaved. The goals of these texts were noble: helping students acquire the building blocks for thinking of a collective past.

Moreover, they were on the leading edge of the campaign to consolidate a group of national heroes in Uruguayan history. But there were books with other lessons in patriotism that were a lot more fun and engaging than could be found in civics texts or general histories.

One of these was José Manuel Eizaguirre's revealingly titled *La Patria: elementos para estimular en el niño argentino el amor a la patria y el respeto a las tradiciones nacionales*, approved by the Argentine board of education three years in a row. It begins with a note to teachers and parents where Eizaguirre explains that he put together a group of readings to serve multiple audiences: "school children, parents lacking a complete education, workers, and the overwhelming majority of citizens that, even knowing how to read and write, do not understand the idea of *Patria* nor know their own *Patria*." And with the changes immigrants are bringing, he writes, it is imperative that children and their parents learn about what the patria means. Eizaguirre also includes a note to "el niño argentino," where he asks his readers—boys *and* girls—to lend him their undivided attention so that the

¹⁸ *Perfiles biográficos trazados para la niñez*, with a prologue by José H. Figueira (Montevideo: Dornaleche y Reyes, 1892), *Lecturas ejemplares*, 6th ed. (Montevideo: A. Soury y Cía., 1908), *Episodios históricos*, 5th ed. (Montevideo: Dornaleche Hnos. Editores, n.d.).

pages of *La Patria* leave an indelible mark on their souls. The logic was simple: “today you are just a child, but think about tomorrow when you will be a grown man. If from childhood you begin learning about the patria, then you will grow from being a good son or brother today, to a good parent tomorrow, and always a good ARGENTINE.”¹⁹ What Eizaguirre was referring to was the journey from reading to reality.

La Patria is divided into two parts. Book one presents short chapters on the meaning of patria and the importance of venerating its values, with lessons moving from association in the home as the root of the national community to associating in town, then to association in the department, next in the province, and finally to association in the patria—the national community. Book two deals with national history and geography in lessons addressed to “my compatriot,” one of Eizaguirre’s narrative strategies for maintaining a constant dialogue with the reader throughout the text. At the end of the book there is also a manual of suggestions for teachers and parents for getting the best results from the reading. He was serious about young readers experimenting emotion when reading about the patria. Instructions for reading book one include this suggestion: “Following the reading, students should think about personal experiences of holidays, focusing on that first sensation of joy and enthusiasm felt on great patriotic days when citizens parade with soldiers to the sound of regal music, waving proudly the flag. Questions should be directed to this end.” Similar approaches were advocated to get students to realize the connection of the home to the patria.²⁰

What comes out clearly in the book is the idea of a shared national history that *enables* and *inspires* the reader to participate in the national community. Patria functions as a

¹⁹ José Manuel Eizaguirre, *La Patria. Elementos para estimular en el niño argentino el amor á la patria y el respeto á las tradiciones nacionales* (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía, 1895), 7, 8-10, 14-15.

²⁰ Ibid., 117-18.

big family of families connected by affection and love, and by the supposed desire of a better life. Life outside this family is impossible, a notion Eizaguirre compares to a child trying to survive separated from his or her parents.²¹ In short, patria is about feeling; it is something the reader was to make into a reality, thanks to the passages of the book, for they introduced the reader—child, parent, worker, or immigrant—to what the nation meant and to Argentines' shared past, and in the process sought to bridge the individual experience of reading with the collective experience of community.

This was exactly what H.D.'s, or Hermano Damasceno, books accomplished. H.D. authored by far the best-selling and most widely-read textbooks on national history in Uruguay. Ironically, his books were never selected as official textbooks, in large part due to the fact that he was a professor at the religious Colegio Sagrada Familia. The battle between liberal statesmen and educational bureaucrats and church authorities led him to sign his books with his initials.²² Nevertheless, from the moment the first editions of his *Ensayo de historia patria* and the two-volumes of his *Curso de historia patria* appeared in 1900 and 1903, they would be adopted in public and private schools across Uruguay for the next half century. Future editions of these books also sold like hot cakes to the general public, for they combined concise, synthetic explanations of Uruguayan history with a reader-friendly layout and images—just the type of book on national history a growing middle class wanted to have in the personal library.

Even today, most Uruguayans born before the 1980s are familiar with H.D.'s books; many have an old copy at home; and older generations still talk about using his books in

²¹ Ibid., 20-21.

²² Néstor Achigar, Hugo Varela Brown, and María Beatriz Eguren, *Hermano Damasceno: un aporte a la cultura uruguaya* (Montevideo: Colegio Sagrada Familia, 2003), 155-56.

school some fifty years ago. His popularity and the use of his “unofficial” history books in public schools earned him a bad name with educational administrators. His religious affiliation did not help in this respect, especially given that the DGIP had barred all teaching or mention of religion in public schools in 1909.²³ In the end, though, H.D.’s reputation remained intact, thanks to the lessons in patriotism contained in his histories.

Good examples come from H.D.’s first book of the *Curso de historia patria*. In the book’s dedication to young readers the author explains that kids suffer from a lack of texts on national history written for beginners. They have the same right—and need—to learn to love the patria as older citizens, and they should study the book’s lessons well, for “You are the future hope of the patria: be good and virtuous, and one day you will be the source of her glory.” The book for you, he writes, is this *Curso de historia patria*. “What do you think? Look at the beautiful prints! See how short and easy the lessons are?” In this presentation, the author also announces to his readers that they will learn about a man who deeply loved his country—Artigas—and patriots who fought for the nation’s independence—the Thirty-Three Orientales.²⁴

The preface addressed to teachers and older readers echoes the dedication and adds that H.D. believes teaching national history is the best way to help students understand moral and patriotic values. Key to achieving this is for the readings to “connect to both the imagination and the hearts of young students.”²⁵ Brevity of lessons was one of the author’s strategies for keeping readers hooked. Bold text and flagged vocabulary were used to this

²³ Ibid., 170-83. Beginning around 1915 debates on HD’s books became heated, and attempts were made to discredit them based on historical methodology.

²⁴ H.D., *Curso de historia patria, libro primero*, 3rd ed. (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1914), 6.

²⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

end, as well. Take lesson 1, for instance, on the “discovery” of Uruguay. The first lines read: **“We are Uruguayans.** Our patria* is the República Oriental del Uruguay, the country that we love the most.”²⁶ Patria, and other vocabulary with asterisks, figure in a list with definitions at the back of the book—the key words to remember. This same technique is used throughout the book. So in the lesson on the May revolution, 25 May 1810—the date to remember—appears in bold, and in the chapter on the Thirty-Three, 19 April 1825, the name Juan Antonio Lavalleja, and thirty-three are in bold print. Words like *strident*, referring to Uruguayan patriots fighting against Brazilian soldiers, and *overthrow*, in reference to the old viceroy of the Plata, are flagged. Each lesson is followed, too, by short exercises that sum up the main points of the reading.

The important thing, then, about teaching the patria is to make the lessons interesting, which, in addition to the narrative strategies mentioned, meant including images (even in color) alongside text, for H.D. thought they often do more to help kids learn than extensive descriptions (see figures 4.1-4.3). Like other books on national history and civics, the *Curso de historia patria* includes the national anthem at the end for his multiple reading publics, aiming to provide a total package of lessons in patriotism.

²⁶ Ibid., 13. Bold and asterisk appear in the original.



Figure 4.1: Cover of *Curso de historia patria, libro primero*. A heroic gaicho rides across the grasslands of Uruguay bearing a flag with the slogan “Libertad o Muerte.” This flag is known as the flag of the Thirty-Three Orientales.



Figure 4.2: Juan Manuel Blanes’s representation of what José Artigas looked like on the eve of independence. This copy comes from *Curso de historia patria*, between 76-77.



Figure 4.3: Lesson with a print of the “Landing of the Thirty-Three Orientales” on Uruguayan shores by Blanes. From *Curso de historia patria*, 124. The state commissioned Blanes to complete a set of historical paintings, including this one.



Figure 4.4: Patriotic cover of J.B. Igón, *El mosaico argentino*, rev. ed. (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía, 1905).

Other authors offered animated textbooks with dialogues between friends or parents and their children, skits, and short theatrical scenes. Some called for students to be creative and act out lessons they were learning. This was the case of the Spanish immigrant Ricardo Monner Sans' *Teatro infantil*, a collection of plays for school children to act out in order to learn what it means to be "good Argentines." The prologue highlights the importance of creativity and suggests some general rules for reading aloud the plays that constitute the book's lessons: "Recitation consists in conducting oneself with careful art, according to the situation that is at hand, in *feeling* what one pronounces and in making others *feel* it too, thus giving fiction the appearance of reality."²⁷ The importance of feeling is definitely part of the book's short play creatively titled "La patria," a dialogue between mother and son, in which a female student plays the person of the mother.

The play begins with the two listening to the sounds of the national anthem. The son asks his mother what all the noise is. She responds, correcting him by explaining that it is the soul of the nation that he hears. Naturally, he follows up, inquiring what patria means. Like Eizaguirre, the mother launches into an elaborate description of the qualities of the patria and concludes by admonishing her son to love the nation with all his heart. The boy agrees, but only if she teaches him how. She speaks again, telling him "there is no word in the world as beautiful as *PATRIA*. But to love her means to serve her loyally, to work day and night with hopes of augmenting her glory." These words ignite the national spirit in the son: "today I'm going to dedicate my time to my studies so I can be a good citizen tomorrow." As the play draws to a close, the mother shows pride in her son, tells him to think of the independence hero Manuel Belgrano when the going gets tough, and then ends the dialogue in a way that

²⁷ Ricardo Monner Sans, *Teatro infantil: monólogos, diálogos y comedias*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Cabaut, 1913), 14-15). Emphasis mine.

sums up the lesson and links the home to the school and the nation. “Don’t ever forget, my son, these words that my father once uttered: ‘He who learns to be a good son and a good student will not fail, when he becomes a man, and he will always deserve the embrace of the patria.’”²⁸

A similar creative spirit infuses a book of lessons in patriotism published for the centenary celebration in Buenos Aires: *El niño y la patria: poesías, monólogos, diálogos y escenas patriótico-infantiles ofrecidas por su autor a los niños argentinos en el primer centenario de la patria*.²⁹ Publishing this collection of lessons in the year of the Centenary was not just a rhetorical tool. Students were encouraged to recite passages from the book during the activities commemorating the May Revolution and Latin American independence. Again, the affective dimension of reading is where the texts would be most effective. And as the author states in his note to readers at the beginning of the book, “I will be content if I am able to instill true love for the patria in your tender hearts.”³⁰

Titles of a few of the poems and songs reveal the nature of the book’s content and how the author sought to touch his readers’ hearts: “Mi tierra,” “A mi bandera,” “¡Patria!,” “¡Viva la patria!,” and “A los muertos por la patria.” For good measure, the national anthem was included, too. Where the narrative strategy really came to life was in the various scenes and dialogues, ideally performed by students. One of these was titled “Los soldados,” narrated by a mother and her five year-old son, Ricardito.

²⁸ Ibid., 53-55.

²⁹ Alexis, *El niño y la patria: poesías, monólogos, diálogos y escenas patriótico-infantiles ofrecidas por su autor a los niños argentinos en el primer centenario de la patria, 1810-1910* (La Plata: Talleres Gráficos de J. Sesé, 1910).

³⁰ Ibid., 1.

The scene begins with Ricardito on the balcony shouting to his mother that a group of soldiers is marching in the street. She leaves her sewing project (“faena propia de su condición”) and heads to the balcony, where her son poses a series of questions: what do soldiers do?, who are our enemies?, is the cloth of the flag so expensive that it has to be defended with arms? The mother of course has all the right answers for Ricardito. Soldiers defend the patria against those bad people who want to rob our houses and resources, and the flag is the portrait of the patria, even though it is just a piece of cloth. She then asks Ricardito what he would do if somebody tried to steal a portrait of Grandpa hanging in the living room. Ricardito cries and says he would go after the thief. Well, responds his mother, that is what soldiers do—protect the flag and the patria, just like Ricardito would do with the family portrait. The scene ends with the mother defining patria and Ricardito proclaiming that when he is a bit older he wants to become a soldier.³¹

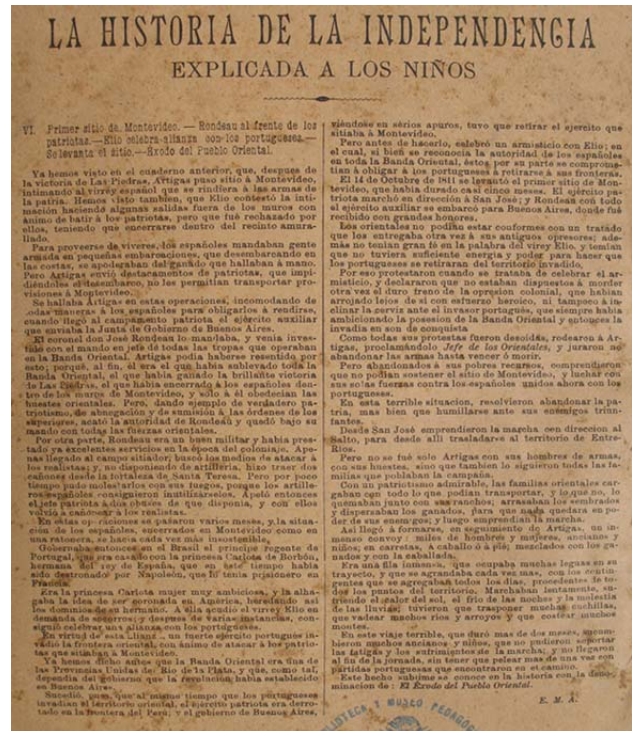
These examples of textbooks with lessons in patriotism offer us just a glimpse of what was an immense, state-driven publishing effort in the 1890s and 1900s to produce books that would shape future citizens. Books were not the only types of print media that were employed for this purpose, either. Student notebooks were more numerous, as we saw in the last chapter, and many of them carried powerful patriotic messages. As the reader will remember, the Vázquez Cores series of notebooks had writing exercises where students traced over printed words and sentences on the pages. The sentences students traced told of turning moments in Uruguayan history. In Argentina titles of some popular notebooks include Cuadernos Zorrilla, Belgrano, San Martín, Rivadavia, and Alvear, all appropriately patriotic. And then there was the Uruguayan series of *Cuadernos Nacionales*, whose covers boasted of having sold over a million copies. Divided into a historical set, a biographical set,

³¹ Ibid., 19-23.

a descriptive set, and a set of notebooks on monuments, the *Cuadernos Nacionales* presented images of historical scenes, portraits, or important places in Montevideo and the interior on front covers. The back covers consisted of narratives for children about the image on the front (see figures 4.5 and 4.6).



4.5: Front cover of a *Cuadernos Nacionales* notebook VI from the historical series. The scene portrays the “Exodo del pueblo oriental”—Artigas and his followers leaving Uruguay in 1811. Circa 1900. MPJPV.



4.6: Back cover of same notebook, with a lesson in patriotism for young readers. MPJPV.

Editors of this series of notebooks, which sold by the hundred and by the thousand, were certain of their success and proudly expressed one of their goals to be that of augmenting civic pride in readers.³² Images were commissioned with this goal in mind, for

³² *Cuadernos históricos de episodios de la Independencia pintados por Diógenes Héquet* (Montevideo: Sierra y Antuña Editores, 1896), 4-7.

they were supposed to pique the curiosity of the student in matters of the patria.³³ Editors wrote that the student sees “a group of gauchos with lances raised, or a battle scene. The caption indicates what the image depicts, but it is not enough. The student wants more explanations.” They continue, pointing out that the reader knows the explanations can be found on the back cover of the notebook, “and the student reads; and by reading, the student learns, without realizing it. Then conversations follow on the theme the child has read about. ‘Look,’ the student will say to a friend, ‘those gauchos were raring to fight,’ or ‘look what Artigas did,’ or ‘during the moment of independence people traveled in wagons pulled by oxen through the countryside.’”³⁴ While the editors’ words may sound exaggerated here, they were right in line with the reading of notebooks and textbooks and fused with reality.

As illustrated in writing assignments on patriotic themes and in student notebooks, kids took such lessons in patriotism to heart. Writing about the Argentine flag in 1890, the sixth-grader María Balech finished up her short composition with the following words of praise: “You remind us of our heroes, and when torments arise you give valor to your children... My beloved flag! Preserve your purity forever, and grant protection to your daughters, who gratefully salute you and send words impregnated with love and admiration.”³⁵ Mariano Olaciregui, a fifth grader, took this reverence to another level: “Today, 9 July 1890, marks the seventy-fourth anniversary of the Independence of my patria.

³³ For some of the scenes in the images, the painter, Héquet, and the editors made trips to the scene of the battle to study the land and look for vestiges of what took place. This was true of the painting of *La batalla de las Piedras*. The paintings that spearheaded the *Cuadernos Nacionales* were another state-funded effort to create a national imaginary. Some fifteen years earlier Juan Manuel Blanes had been commissioned to carry out a series of historical paintings that had similar goals. His paintings were the ones that lived longer, so to say, for they are still a vibrant part of the Uruguayan national imaginary and reproductions can be found at just about any street fair or store selling souvenirs. That said, around 1900 his paintings did not see the same massive distribution as the scenes of *Cuadernos Nacionales*.

³⁴ Ibid., 47-49.

³⁵ María Balech, in Consejo Nacional de Educación, *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, no. 185 (1890): 346.

As one of her true sons, I consecrate myself to defend her, willing to take up arms and die on the battle field for her. I have a special place in my heart for the heroes of Independence.”³⁶

Similar words of praise can be found in pamphlets of speeches and compositions students gave on exam days.³⁷ In one of these compositions titled “Lejos de mi patria,” a young girl wrote about the moment when sailors motioned to her that it was time to cross the river from Montevideo to Buenos Aires. She vowed she would never forget her patria.

More authentic student perspectives—or ones at least that teachers did not polish or correct for publication of some type—come from student notebooks. In August 1908 Carmen Biasotti, a second grader in a rural school outside Montevideo, offers a summary of the codes of behavior befitting citizens. Titled simply “Consejos,” the summary reads:

Love your parents, brothers, and sisters.
Be good, obedient, and kind.
Do not get angry.
Do not scream or respond in an unbecoming way.
Always keep your face and hands clean, and your hair brushed.
Do not put your fingers in your nose.
Do not play with needles, knives, or scissors.

These codes are complemented by other exercises throughout her notebooks where, for example, Carmen relates how after dinner her father quizzes her on what she learned in school that day and then looks over her notebooks with her, or in a writing exercise equating those who do not work with thieves. Praise of sowers of alphabets was also part of such lessons.

³⁶ Mariano Olaciregui, in *Ibid.*, 377. Other illustrative examples may be found in this volume of *El Monitor*. See in particular pp. 343, 373, 374, 376.

³⁷ See *Discursos del profesor Don Cayetano Centorami recitados en el día de los exámenes finales por los alumnos del Colegio de 2o grado, no. 1* (Montevideo: Imprenta y Litografía ‘La Razón,’ 1897, and *Composiciones presentadas por las alumnas en los exámenes del año 1893, Colegio San José* (Montevideo: Imprenta y Librería Vázquez Cores y Montes, 1893), BNUr, Sala Uruguay.

Picking your nose or keeping a good temper may seem far removed from hoisting the national flag and singing the national anthem, but they were intimately related, for all these activities had to do with the making of good future citizens. Biasotti also crafted compositions on the meaning of independence day and who national heroes were. The affective dimension of the lesson in patriotism was evident in simpler exercises, too. On 25 August 1908, for example, she wrote praisingly of this date celebrating Uruguayan independence and of the meaning of patria in one of her class notebooks. In a writing exercise allowing students to elaborate creatively on the word patria, she tells us:

Patria

We should respect the flag, because it reminds us of the patria.

Patria

The patria is the country where we were born.

Patria

August 25 is a patriotic holiday because it commemorates the day when the famous Thirty-Three Orientales gathered in the department of Florida to declare our patria independent.

Patria

We should love our patria and do all that is in our power for her exaltation.

Patria.

In another type of writing assignment she had to repeat phrases like “Artigas was the first leader of Uruguayans” and “My country’s coat of arms is beautiful.”³⁸ The Uruguayan student from the rural town of San Fructuoso (today Tacuarembó) Raudelinda Pereda wrote similar, though more elaborated, eulogies of national symbols in one of her notebooks, too.³⁹ It was these types expressions that led one national inspector of the school system in

³⁸ Carmen Biasotti, *Planas*, 1908, MPJPV.

³⁹ Raudelinda Pereda, *Cuaderno de escritura*, 1898, MPJPV.

Uruguay to proclaim that whenever students are asked something about national history, “they respond with vibrant and deeply felt patriotism.”⁴⁰

Lessons in patriotism were reinforced by *fiestas de fin de año*. These events accompanied end of the year exams and were real community celebrations oriented around students’ work and expressions of patriotism. Such gatherings gave students the chance to perform the lessons they learned for teachers, parents, and neighbors, leading to feelings of collective pride in the school and its contribution to the patria. This was the explicit rationale behind the participation of school children in fiestas cívicas, be these on 25 May or 9 July in Argentina, on 18 July or 25 August in Uruguay, showing off how children indeed were learning to become citizens.⁴¹

A secondary motive was present, too. If learning lessons in patriotism in books proved difficult or ineffective for some students, then taking part in these sorts of events would help fill in the gaps, so to say. School children always enjoy days when they do not have to engage in normal class work, and field trips, even if it is to the town square a couple blocks away, are always welcomed. When organized around national holidays and patriotic content, these activities were sure to inspire the boy or girl who did not follow the lesson in the textbook. Singing the national anthem and engaging in practices like raising the flag every morning were group activities that by their very nature (and by the mirror system in the brain) bound children together and to lessons in patriotism. Singing the national anthem,

⁴⁰ Abel J. Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente al año 1901* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1902), 51-52.

⁴¹ For more on patriotic celebrations and the school, see Braslavsky and Abel J. Pérez, *Memoria correspondiente a los años 1902-1903* (Montevideo: Talleres de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1904). On the “mission of the teacher on patriotic holidays,” see Dirección General de Instrucción Pública, *Legislación escolar vigente*, tomo VI, 1904-1905 (Montevideo: Talleres Tipográficos de ‘La Prensa,’ 1906), 137-38.

especially during holidays, was not something a student could or would want to opt out of. In a word, there was something to be said for repetitive physical action and singing in a group.⁴²

In sum, then, what are the lessons in patriotism? One of them teaches students about a group of historical figures who are presented and learned as national heroes. Another relates the meaning of patria and of national symbols. Like national heroes, these meanings are meant to be cultural referents for readers. Other lessons touch on morals and codes of behavior fitting of patriotic citizens. As we learned in chapter 3, there were many reasons that made reading part of this code. Reading also led to economic gain and progress. A farmer's son who goes to school and is able to read about crop protection and market prices of grains can make all the difference in the world for the success of the family farm.⁴³ Lessons in patriotism were about respecting parents and elders and not playing hooky. They were about being studious and generous, and about growing in ways that would prepare readers to be good citizens and parents who could, in turn, help shape patriots. Another lesson highlights the role of the family and its connection to the school.

Ultimately, lessons in patriotism were about looking toward the future and transforming the experience of reading into the reality of life as a good citizen. All together, these were lessons that communicated highly charged symbolic messages that allowed readers to claim "I am Uruguayan" or "I am Argentine" at the end of the day. They reached a

⁴² Recent research on mirror neuron theory and social interaction suggests new ways for understanding the power of collective sentiment and the formation of identities. The claim is that neurons in the brain fire in the same way when one experiences stimuli or sees or hears someone else experience stimuli, hence the name of "mirror system" for these neurons. So when one is in the middle of a patriotic crowd that sings praises to the nation, the person who is not initially drawn into the fray can count on his or her mirror system to respond, perhaps leading him or her to join the crowd. See Arthur M. Glenberg, "Naturalizing Cognition: The Integration of Cognitive Science and Biology," and Valeria Gazzola et. al, "Empathy and the Somatotopic Auditory Mirror System in Humans," *Current Biology* 16, no. 18 (2006): 802-04, 1824-29, and Andrew Elfenbein, "Cognitive Science and the History of Reading," *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006): 484-502.

⁴³ A. Vásquez Acevedo, *Serie graduada de libros de lectura, libro tercero*, 2nd ed. (Montevideo: Galli y Cía. Editores, 1887), 222-26.

wide reading public composed of young students, parents and working adults, thus promoting and permitting the popular appropriation of an official brand of nationalism (see figures 4.7 and 4.8).



4.7: Postcard of male students marching through downtown Montevideo. That postcards were made of the event suggests the activity was popular and worth remembering. Circa 1900. MPJPV Photo Collection, 1694 R.A.



4.8: Postcard of female students marching through downtown Montevideo. Circa 1900. MPJPV Photo Collection, 1712 R.A.

Production of books on national history and civic and moral education did not slow down after the 1910 centenary celebration, nor did lessons in patriotism stop appearing in textbooks. If anything, they grew more ardently nationalist, as one can read in Felisa

Latallada's *Hogar y patria* (see figure 4.9).⁴⁴ By 1910, though, lessons in patriotism had made their mark, instilling a sense of national identity and pride in the patria in several generations. Of course their success depended on a constant link of the home to the patria and the national community, as well as on the young women who were growing up to be future mothers.



Figure 4.9: “Visión de la Patria.” 1923 *Fiesta de promoción*, or end of the year party at the Escuela de 2do grado, Rivera, Uruguay, celebrating the advancement of students to the next grade level. In addition to the patriotic costumes students are wearing here, the stage is full of symbols, including portraits of José Enrique Rodó (left), José Artigas (center), and José Pedro Varela (right). MPJPV Photo Collection.

Lessons in Motherhood

The second group of textbooks with lessons for a nation were written expressly for female students, with the intent being the formation of morally upright, patriotic mothers who would understand their education as a civic duty and carry the well-being of the nation

⁴⁴ See for example Felisa A. Latallada, *Hogar y patria: libro de lectura para grados elementales y superiores* (Buenos Aires: Editor Alberto Vidueiro, 1916), 38-41.

in their hearts as mothers and spouses. They provided young girls with lessons in motherhood, designed to shape them as future ladies exuding national pride and eager to do their share to raise good citizens, especially ones who would identify more with the nation than with a political party.

Books with lessons in patriotism were more numerous, but during the 1890s and early 1900s male and female authors on both sides of the Río de la Plata penned dozens of texts for girls in grades three to seven, ranging in age from ten to sixteen. Titles saw multiple editions and were popular sellers. Primarily the work of women, this group of texts breaks down into a few distinguishable categories: home economics and hygiene, libros de lectura that use creative narrative to advise young women along their path to motherhood, and those books explicitly linking school—and the reading of such texts—to home and the patria. Differences in content between the books of these three groups, however, are nuanced, often more identifiable in the title than anywhere else. The main distinctions appear in narrative strategy and how reader-friendly lessons were.

Studied together, textbooks for young girls yield a handful of common messages relating to the social role of the mother, codes of behavior that are gender specific, social practices and appropriate work for women, and education as a family affair and, ultimately, a national priority dependent on women being good mothers. The point about education being a family affair was reinforced by mothers reading the lessons with their daughters, and, as in the case with lessons in patriotism, by parents attending schools on exam days and for awards ceremonies. These messages reveal what constitutes lessons in motherhood, as well as ways in which print media contributed to the formation of female or motherly identity. The best-crafted of these messages manage to tie what girls learn in school to motherly love they

experience at home and to an idealized vision of their future lives as loving mothers. Put differently, a good reading on how to properly hold a needle, the importance of cleaning the house frequently, or the correct number of months to breast feed the children you *will* have, goes a long way toward defining motherhood and raising the female gender role to a position of national importance.

A look at some examples will make these points clear, though a note of clarification regarding the meaning of home economics is in order. Books on *economía doméstica*, or home economics, deal with activities that fit under the rubric of home economics as we understand it today: cooking, sewing, cleaning, and proper etiquette for hosting guests in the home. But the teaching of home economics at the turn of the century was more expansive. It was a whole philosophy toward life in this most private space. Home economics was the domain of women; it was a holistic approach to maintaining order, raising a family, and caring for a spouse. Even though the philosophy of home economics pertained to the private realm of the home, there was an ever-present link to the public sphere, understood as an extension of the home, or as the conglomerate community of homes, hence the need to teach it in public schools.

In Uruguay textbooks for girls had been a concern since the early 1880s. One author and pedagogue even argued that public education's success, and that of all of civilization, depended on mothers and on educating girls to become good mothers.⁴⁵ By the turn of the century, a flood of these texts had appeared in the Plata, including Emma Catalá de Princivalle's three volume series simply titled *Lecciones de economía doméstica*, which received the official stamp of approval for use in Uruguayan public schools. The books were

⁴⁵ Jaime Roldós y Pons, *La madre y la escuela en sus relaciones con la educación popular* (Montevideo: Librería Argentina de H. Ibarra, 1880), 14, 20-21, 129.

dedicated to the memory of Catalá's aunt, Martina Gadea de Moreira (unfortunately—for the sake of our story—not related to Juan Moreira), who belonged to a generation of patriotic heroes “whose only goal was independence.” Martina was one of the women who “turned every home into a temple of virtue and sacrifice.”

So from the outset, the book praises the wife and the mother who can make a house a home and who contribute to building a better nation. This idea is expressed explicitly in the note to teachers preceding the lessons. “Home economics,” writes Catalá, “is for young women what civic education is for young men. One can go as far as to argue that forming good mothers and spouses should be a greater concern for educators than the formation of good citizens, for mothers exercise a fundamental influence over the development of her children's character, as well as their feelings and habits.” The idea was that “frivolous” women would raise improper citizens, and while the school could go along way toward putting children on the right road, it would be difficult to compete against bad lessons learned at home. “If civic education is indispensable for shaping citizens conscious of their rights and duties,” continued the note, “then home economics is indispensable for shaping the mothers who would exercise direct influence over what those citizens learned in the home.”⁴⁶

Titles of a few lessons illustrate the nature of the book's content: “Substances for removing stains and how to properly use them;” “Ironing light-colored clothes;” “Ironing sheets;” “Advice and hygienic concepts regarding the importance of frequent changes of underwear;” and “The corset” (see figure 4.10). Female students were encouraged to practice in the home the lessons learned in school. Thus, assignments included making breakfast, cooking up a steak, serving coffee to dad, and, among others, ironing. Teachers, for their

⁴⁶ Emma Catalá de Princivalle, *Lecciones de economía doméstica, primer libro*. (Montevideo: Imp. ‘El Siglo Ilustrado,’ 1905), 3-5.

part, were supposed to discuss with students how their practice exercises went and, more importantly, be in direct contact with students' mothers. This sort of contact was yet another means of facilitating the popular appropriation of lessons for a nation.⁴⁷



Figure 4.10: "Lesson on Hygiene: The Corset," Escuela de aplicación para señoritas, Montevideo, August 1912. The sketches on the chalkboard illustrate the natural position of the organs (right), and their position when a corset is worn too tightly (left). Note the portrait of Varela on the back wall. MPJPV Photo Collection.

⁴⁷ There is little evidence that sheds light on teacher-mother relations around 1900, aside from mothers attending the school during exams or for special events. Today in the U.S. there is a paper trail of teacher-parent conferences, but casual phone calls or conversations between teachers and parents when they run into each other at the grocery store are not recorded with such formality. In the small towns and rural interior of Uruguay and Argentina, proximity of teachers and parents was close, so it is easy to imagine a street corner discussion of a student's performance between a teacher and a mother. Anonymity was greater in the capital cities, but such communication would still have been easy to realize.

There are plenty of practical exercises in the book, and the narrative is clear.⁴⁸ The same goes for books two and three of the series. The main drawback of these books was that they were not all that engaging, and there is no young narrator who invites readers to follow along. That said, they were replete with advice, which helped keep them on the official list of books year after year. Book two, for example, focuses on running a household, with particular emphasis on cleanliness. In addition to the regular pointers for keeping the kitchen, bathrooms, and bedrooms clean, some lessons included some out of the way advice. Take this one: in houses with rats, roaches, ants, and other pests, students could read that the way to protect the family food supply was by moving furniture and cupboards away from the wall and placing the legs in cans full of kerosene. This was called an “indispensable precaution, not only for preserving food from the invasion of ants and the like, but also for its effectiveness in ridding the house of such pests by starving them and pursuing them tenaciously.”⁴⁹

Designed as a review of books one and two, the third book in Catalá’s series on home economics spells out even more clearly the main features of the state-supported gender identity for women. Many are summed up in the bolded divisions of the first lesson: “women are in charge of the inside of the home; a home without cleanliness, order, and economy, [proper management of the domestic environment] is not one where happiness can exist; young girls should learn to consider domestic chores as pleasant and honorable work; all

⁴⁸ Ibid., 41. One of these exercises detailed how girls should open all the windows, shake their mattresses, and dust their rooms when they wake up in the morning. Another focused on experience in removing stains from clothing. “When a girl stains her clothing at school, most likely with ink, make her clean the stain herself. Accustom them to removing any stain that appears due to their carelessness or lack of attention. The oldest students should clean the hats and sweaters of their siblings. Girls who are in mourning should clean the stains from their black dresses and iron them if they are wrinkled. Those girls whose mothers or sisters use gloves should try to wash these and take them to school so the teacher could see and comment on the work.”

⁴⁹ *Lecciones de economía doméstica, segundo libro* (Montevideo: Imp. ‘El Siglo Ilustrado,’ 1906), 24.

young girls should take part in household chores in order to help their mothers as much as possible.” In addition to the constant mentions of cleanliness throughout the text, in the first lesson students read that from the youngest age possible, women must grow to understand their role in the home as a noble one.⁵⁰ This may sound like a strange statement coming from a female author, especially if we read it from our perspective on women in the home today, but Catalá was not by any means alone in thinking of women’s social role in this light.

Similar in narrative style and structure were Cipriano Torrejón’s *Lectura de economía doméstica* and a reference book of sorts called *El vadmecum del hogar*, which included 400 illustrations and some sixty pages of recipes.⁵¹ Mention of gender roles in these and Catalá’s textbooks overwhelmingly dealt with the work of women. Occasionally the role of men were brought into the discussion for comparative purposes: the man was supposed to make money outside the house. When men ended up staying in the house, it was a sort of aberration. Torrejón went as far as to claim that such men “should be considered intruders or queers, never as men.”⁵² This is an exaggerated take on gender divisions, but it goes to show that stereotypes of gender cut both ways. Males, by nature, went the thought, were destined to work outside the home and fight for the patria.

Educators were successful in instilling official visions of these gender roles, though that did not mean that men and women did not challenge them from within. But even with modifications made to gender-specific codes of behavior over time, the lessons for a nation that gender roles fed into remained strong. Imagining the future was a key part of lessons in

⁵⁰ *Lecciones de economía doméstica, tercer libro* (Montevideo: Imp. ‘El Siglo Ilustrado,’ 1906), 7-10.

⁵¹ Cipriano Torrejón, with the collaboration of Lucía Aín de Torrejón, *Lectura de economía doméstica*, 7th ed. (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cía. Editores, n.d.), Aurora Stella del Castaño, *El vadmecum del hogar: tratado práctico de economía doméstica y labores, ilustrado con 400 grabados conteniendo además recetas útiles y variadas* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Juan E. Barra, 1903).

⁵² Torrejón, 24.

motherhood, and it was also crucial to their success. What was most important was getting students to look forward to their lives as mothers, which in turn would hopefully make them enthusiastic about learning lessons in motherhood. Of course, a good read went a long way toward turning readers' attention toward the future in the first place.

This is exactly what a large group of books with lessons in motherhood did. The tone and narrative style of these, similar to some of the textbooks with lessons in patriotism that we covered, were more friendly and animated than Catalá de Princivalle's series of books. One example comes from an anonymously written textbook titled *Economía doméstica al alcance de las niñas*. The author of this little book addressed directly young female readers as intimate friends, though always referencing young readers' future. "Today's girl, my little friends, is the woman of tomorrow who will share with her spouse and children the pleasures and pains of life, the one who will educate her children so that they will benefit society and honor the nation." The narrative strategy included short stories with morals on motherhood, as well as engaging exercises, like one to create a "museum for teaching home economics," where students would make small exhibits with dolls, cloth, and drawings, to demonstrate key practices in the home. There is also an interesting lesson on reading. Reading together as a family following a meal is praised as activity that yields countless fruits.⁵³

This type of reading was at the heart of *Consejos a mi hija*, written by the prolific Argentine Amelia Palma.⁵⁴ The first of a four volume series titled "Practical Life," this

⁵³ *Economía doméstica al alcance de las niñas*, 4th ed. (Buenos Aires: Cabaut y Cía. Editores, 1914), 3, 23, 57-58. Such readings "open the minds of children; they teach them to think critically and prepare them for lively discussions... and rouse in the young hearts the most noble sentiments, which in turn leads parents to exude pride" (58). Anyone could read, although ideally at least one parent would be literate and could oversee the selection of books or newspapers to read.

⁵⁴ *Consejos a mi hija: lecturas de propaganda moral* (Buenos Aires: Casa Editora de Jacobo Peuser, 1903). The subtitle is a little misleading, for in English today propaganda has negative overtones. In Spanish propaganda

textbook received the CNE's stamp of approval, as well as that of the educational boards of the provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba. Its status as an official textbook did not hurt sales; the first edition, as noted on the cover, had already sold seven thousand copies (see figure 4.11). As the title suggests, the book is all about advice for a young girl on her path toward becoming a wife and a mother. One of the praising letters to the author that open the book qualifies it as a literary work fit "in the hands of the young woman who is starting out in life, as well as in those of the teacher or the mother who should accompany her in this venture..." Another letter came from the Argentine poet Carlos Guido y Spano. He concluded his eulogy by declaring Palma's hands "blessed" for keeping the lamp of home economics shining bright. The director of public schools in Mendoza offered equal words of support, stating that he was going to request the CNE send copies of the *Consejos* to all the schools in the province.⁵⁵

Praise aside, what was innovative about this first book was the conversation-like quality (albeit one-sided) of a mother relating her life experiences *through writing* to her fourteen year-old daughter, Laura. Since her mother was "on the downhill slope of life's mountain," she wanted to leave her words of wisdom for when Laura learns about marriage and what to look for in a husband. And of course Laura is told all about the basics of home economics. The second book of the series continues the conversation between Laura and her mother.⁵⁶ Like the first one, it was geared for use in the classroom and envisioned as a textbook whose contents daughters could discuss, if not read, with their mothers. The

has its negative political meaning, but it also refers to common publicity, which is general understood in a positive light. It is this second, positive propaganda referred to in the subtitle.

⁵⁵ Ibid., iv-v.

⁵⁶ Amelia Palma, *El hogar modelo* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta, Litog. y Enc. de Jacobo Peuser, 1902). Palma also wrote *Veladas del hogar: lecturas auxiliares de moral e instrucción cívica* (Buenos Aires, 1907) for male and female readers.

mother-daughter link of these and all lessons in motherhood not only led to their reinforcement, but also gave them unmatched credibility as harbingers of a gender specific identity. Calling Palma's textbooks works of literature was a generous characterization, but not exactly a misnomer.

The same can be argued for several other books that presented lessons in motherhood in even more creative ways, employing narrative techniques meant to engage the reader. Take, for example, *El primer libro de las niñas*, one of the earliest books of this type in Argentina.⁵⁷ Of the sort meant to share advice, this book consists of fifty lessons on topics ranging from love of god to love of the national flag. What was new about this book, and what made it so attractive, was that girls are the protagonists of lessons that address readers in a friendly tone. The goal was to enable the reader to see herself in the stories, following the advice. The idea is clearly stated in an introductory note to readers: "Caring and hard-working girls, respectful and obedient ones, they are angels from heaven who were born and live on the earth."⁵⁸

In order for readers to achieve this angel-status, each reading is followed by a series of questions designed to summarize the selection and drive home the proper interpretation, a sort of modified catechism. In lesson three, for instance, called "Un padre dichoso," a young girl arrives home from school and conveys to her father that the teacher told her that good daughters should help their parents rest and make them happy. This means helping mom out with chores around the house so she can take care of other motherly duties. When the father hears his daughter's new resolution to behave in this way, he weeps with joy. The follow-up

⁵⁷ José M.B. Mareca, *El primer libro de las niñas: lecturas morales e instructivas* (Buenos Aires: Pedro Igón y Cía., Editores, 1897).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

questions include lines like: “What are the responsibilities of “good girls”? How will Amalia behave from now on? What happiness will this kind girl find in her change of behavior?”⁵⁹

Subsequent readings presented their points in even more forceful questions. One lesson on personal hygiene was followed by these provocative questions: “When is a young girl repugnant and unattractive? What effect do filthy girls produce? What does their appearance inspire? What is personal hygiene? What sensation does the body feel when it is accustomed to cleanliness?” A later lesson stages love for the patria with a mother expressing sadness over her son’s departure to become a soldier. Her husband grows angry seeing her in this state, and claims that it’s a young man’s duty to serve his country and fellow citizens. Of course the mother quickly acknowledges her husband to be right. When the son’s first letter arrives home, the mom cries, but this time out of pride in her patriotic offspring rather than out of sadness.⁶⁰ The examples abound, and there is no need to share more here. Suffice it to say that after covering lessons and questions like these, what young girl would not aspire to be that angel spoken of at the beginning of the book? With all the “wisdom” presented in the vignettes, capped with the last two lessons on the flag and the nation, young readers are now prepared to become good Argentine matrons and are sent off contemplating their duties.

Similar in format were the three volumes of *La niña argentina*. In the prologue to book one, the author flatly states his goal to be that of writing books that will prepare and instruct the future matrons of Argentine society (*damas argentinas*).⁶¹ The first couple readings are enough to let readers know what they are in for. Lesson one presents young Ernestina, the narrator throughout the book, who is awed by the quality of her citizenship:

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12-14.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 31-32, 74-77.

⁶¹ Rafael Fragueiro, *La niña argentina, serie primera* (Buenos Aires: Cabaut y Cía. Editores, 1902), 7-8.

“I’m Argentine. I’m Argentine because I was born in the Republic of Argentina. What a beautiful name! Argentina!” In lesson two Ernestina offers thanks to her mother for teaching her to love god, sew, have good manners, and that the patria was born in 1810. And in lesson four, the narrator speaks with her grandmother about portraits of family members who fought for the patria, including a brother who died shouting “¡Viva la patria!”⁶² There are other lessons that deal with home economics, but lessons in patriotism were never far off (see figure 4.13).

Across the river another book on home economics was growing in popularity and earning its authors handsome profits: *Lecturas sobre moral, higiene y economía doméstica*, authored by Alejandro and Elvira Lamas.⁶³ Alejandro had penned a previous book with lessons in motherhood, tellingly titled *Maternología*, used in Uruguay’s Normal Schools and promoted as a book for all current and future mothers.⁶⁴ The *Lecturas* was for a different audience, namely girls in public schools, and it was written in a different way, beginning with the type of intimate connection the authors aimed to establish with readers. This was manifest in a note admonishing girls to “love this book and consult it frequently. When you leave school, take it with you, and take good care of it. This textbook is a loyal friend.” As quoted on the cover, the authors’ intent was “to create habits of thinking, feeling, and behaving, for these are the essence of education” (see figure. 4.12), a goal that informed the narrative strategy. And in the note to teachers, the authors write: “we have tried to reach the emotions of our readers and stir profoundly their interest in the book, which explains why we

⁶² Ibid., 9-15.

⁶³ Alejandro Lamas and Elvira Lamas, *Lecturas sobre moral, higiene y economía doméstica*, 2nd enl. ed. (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1909).

⁶⁴ Alejandro Lamas, *Maternología: estudio de la crianza, higiene y educación de los niños* (Montevideo: Librería Nacional de A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1899).

have broken with the old mold for writing textbooks.”⁶⁵ As in *La niña argentina* and *El primer libro de las niñas*, lessons were narrated by young girls, specifically in the form of letters sent by Blanca to her younger sister Sofia, in which she explains all the nuts and bolts of womanhood and how to prepare for her future.

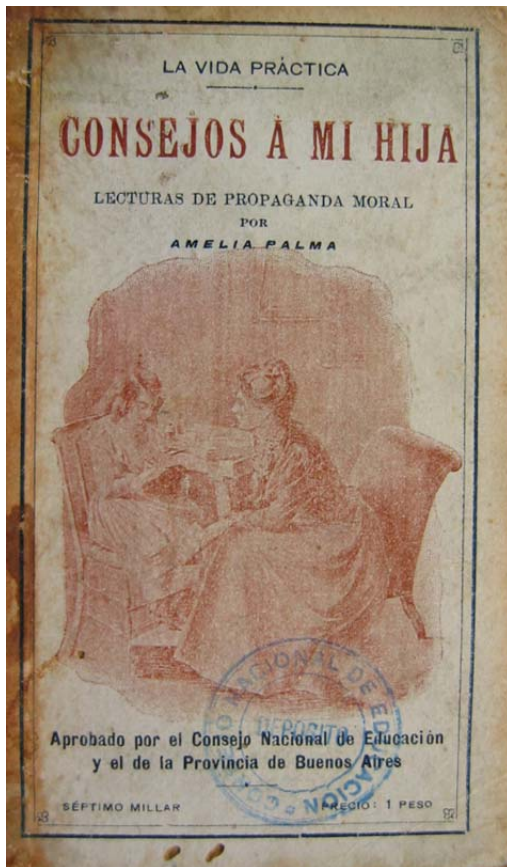


Figure 4.11: A daughter reading to her mother on the cover of *Consejos a mi hija*.



Figure 4.12: The lady of the house arranges the table on the cover of *Lecturas sobre moral, higiene y economía doméstica*.

⁶⁵ Lamas, *Lecturas*, 9.

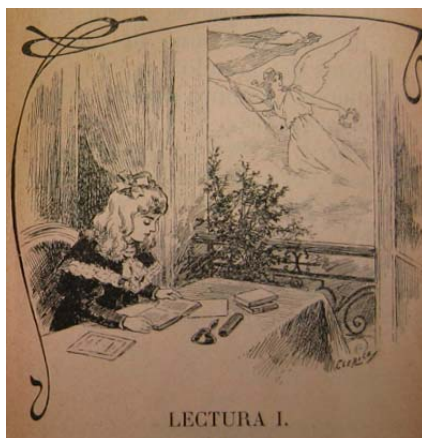


Figure 4.13: Image accompanying lesson 1 of *La niña argentina*, 9. Notice the presence of “la patria” in the window as the student studies her lessons.

Lecturas sobre moral, higiene y economía touches on all the themes we have seen mentioned in other books up to this point. And like the most successful texts with lessons in motherhood, it was written in a way to allow readers to see themselves in the narrative—the voices of Blanca and Sofía impart nuggets of gender identity that readers could swallow. Its simplicity and format, with the epistolary conversations and informative lessons, are complemented by pages with short moral statements and proverbs. We read the first one, about taking care of the book. The last one deals with nothing less than life itself: “life is a continuous battle,” it explains to readers, “and it is imperative to prepare for it at school and at home, first by being good students and daughters, and then later affectionate spouses and loving mothers.”⁶⁶ Once again, then, we meet here the emphasis placed on the future that is at the core of the *Lecturas* and other books with lessons in motherhood. Succinctly put, the lessons were about making the journey from reading to reality.

To recognize the production of textbooks and messages for young girls aimed at crafting a female identity is one important activity for understanding the dynamics of this moment in the development of Rioplatense print culture. An equally important task is to look

⁶⁶ Ibid., 193.

at how readers received and were affected by such print media. Though much more complicated due to the nature of limited sources and the difficulty of approaching how people in the past felt about or absorbed what they read, a few examples, like those we saw regarding the reception of lessons in patriotism, take us from the books and their messages to the world of the young female reader.

Photographs from the period show female students diligently reading in school, engaging in activities like weaving and sewing, and in classes on subjects ranging from music to hygiene (see figures 4.14-4.17).



Figure 4.14: Young students learning to weave at the Internato Normal de Señoritas in Montevideo. Circa 1893. MPJPV Photo Collection.



Figure 4.15: Students in a music class at the Escuela de aplicación in Montevideo. They are singing the national anthem, written on the board. 1893. MPJPV Photo Collection.



Figure 4.16: Detail of a photo from a lesson on “Work at the sewing machine,” Escuela de aplicación in Montevideo. Circa 1912. MPJPV Photo Collection.



Figure 4.17: Reading lesson at the Escuela “José P. Varela” 3er grado No. 2 in Montevideo. While this was a prepared photo, it is worth pointing out that every student in the room has her own copy of the day’s book. August 1912. MPJPV Photo Collection.

Words from students also serve well to illustrate how readers literally put into practice the words they read and studied. Raudelinda Pereda, whom we have met before, penned a sentimental letter to her mother in one of her notebooks, praising her for the example she sets, and hoping that she will recognize her daughter’s hard work and tenderness.⁶⁷ Thirteen-year-old María Zapater wrote a similar composition about the home and her mother’s sacrifice to care for her children.⁶⁸ The class notebooks of Carmen Biasotti help us here, too. They are filled with pages that hint at how she interacted with lessons in motherhood. In one instance, she composed sentences using the verb “to iron”—definitely not an innocent verb for young women to work with. And in exercises where sentences are repeated twenty or thirty times, she writes: “Your mother is your best friend;” “Be good,

⁶⁷ Raudelinda Pereda to her mother, 16 November 1898. MPJPV.

⁶⁸ *Composiciones presentadas por las alumnas*, 25-26.

friendly, and obedient;” “Good girls work hard;” and “What is the best ornament of a young girl? Education.”⁶⁹

Lastly, a description of the activities on the third annual awards day at a girls’ school in Mercedes, Uruguay highlights the presence of parents in a context where young girls were being recognized for their advancements along the path toward motherhood. Significantly, two “Uruguayan mothers” wrote the description. They explain that a Sunday was chosen for awards day—the day when most family members could attend, and in fact did. “There was not a single person who was not present at the church that day,” write the women.⁷⁰ The national anthem initiated the ceremony, mixing patriotic sentiment with prizes for reading, writing, sewing, math, and embroidery. Although the ceremony took place at a church (the biggest building in town), it was the school and its lessons that were on display, aiming to show residents of Mercedes what a national asset education was. The link between female students, the school, and the patria informed the praise of one of the school’s teachers, as well. She was a “compatriot” who understood the value of an education and who taught lessons for a nation.

By now it should be abundantly clear that cultivating modes of behavior and social graces befitting of proper ladies was part and parcel of lessons in motherhood. These lessons did not stop appearing, either, after 1910.⁷¹ In all of the textbooks mentioned in this section, and in others that we have not seen in detail, like the prolific Isidoro de María’s *El Libro de*

⁶⁹ Carmen Biasotti, *Planas*, 1906-1908. MPJPV.

⁷⁰ *Premios a la escuela de niñas, dotada por el superior gobierno en Mercedes* (Montevideo: Imprenta del Estandarte, 1885), 4. During the 1890s and 1900s coeducational schools rapidly replaced separate schools for girls and boys.

⁷¹ Latallada, *Hogar y patria*, 281-83, issues a call for young women who have learned well their lessons in motherhood to serve the patria. According to this call that ends the textbook, the nation will continually search for this type of woman in all Argentine schools and homes.

las niñas (we met de María in chapter 1 in his writings about *The Southern Star* and the swearing of the Uruguayan constitution) and the more explicitly titled *Urbanidad y cortesía*, instructions for how to behave in different social situations constitute key lessons, regardless of what social class the reader was from.⁷² Again, the mother was the model to follow, and the codes of behavior fit into the larger picture of women being a linchpin in the formation of upright citizens and thus a healthy national community.

Engineering motherhood in the ways we have seen in these lessons most likely seems unsettling to us today. Some of the lessons are downright startling for their direct statements for women to be subordinate to their husbands and to occupy themselves with chores in the home. Others may come across as exaggerations or sarcastic and humorous bits of advice. But to condemn lessons in motherhood as mere efforts to prolong traditional gender roles would be both anachronistic and shortsighted. These lessons were serious, and they were for a rapidly growing school population. By 1910, females accounted for nearly half the total number of students in both Uruguay and Argentina. Many of these would go on to become teachers. In fact, in Argentina women made up eighty-five percent of the teaching force by 1910.⁷³ My point here is that education, including lessons in motherhood, was an empowering, *new* experience, illustrated best by women who joined the work force as teachers, but also by the more subtle fact that new mothers were now educated ones.

⁷² *El Libro de las niñas, compuesto expresamente para lectura de las uruguayas* (Montevideo: Imprenta 'El Siglo Ilustrado,' 1891), Justino Pulido, *Urbanidad y cortesía* (Buenos Aires: Cabaut y Cía. Editores, 1902).

⁷³ Graciela Morgade, "La docencia para las mujeres: una alternativa contradictoria en el camino hacia los saberes 'legítimos,'" in *Mujeres en la educación: género y docencia en Argentina: 1870-1930*, ed. Graciela Morgade, with a prologue by Tomaz Tadeu Da Silva (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores, 1997), 68.

The claim is that educated women who stayed at home or who joined the work force enjoyed a better social status precisely because of their education.⁷⁴ Education certainly led some to improve their social standing and others to subvert assigned gender roles, despite being the homemaker, and despite advice not to go against these established social norms. What is sure is that lessons in motherhood were intimately connected to lessons in patriotism. Through education and the role of mothers in the education of their children, women were becoming key players (in some instances, they were considered the most important players) in the formation of not only new citizens, but also national communities.⁷⁵ Put differently, lessons for female students institutionalized motherhood and made it a matter of national importance, which in turn led to greater numbers of girls attending schools.



From the first large-scale creation of public schools in the region around 1880 to the one-hundredth anniversary of the May Revolution in 1910, inhabitants of the Río de la Plata experienced a second printing revolution consisting of drastic increases in literary production by lettered and non-lettered authors, a flood of newspaper and magazine publications, and much greater interaction between popular classes and print media. These years also saw a rapid rise in literacy rates, thanks to the success of public schools. Textbooks constituted a major force behind this cultural revolution, and they, along with types of print media that saw

⁷⁴ This idea was expressed by some teachers and educational bureaucrats. See Laura Palumbo, *Educación especial que debe recibir la mujer* (Montevideo: Imprenta 'Rural,' 1901). For critical perspectives on this question and gender roles in schools, see the essays in Morgade, ed., *Mujeres en la educación*.

⁷⁵ This point is made in one lesson of Wagner Sosa's *Patria, hogar y fraternidad*, 25-29. In a lesson titled "Sara's unhappiness," the protagonist Sara puts down the book on national history she is reading and exclaims "how sad it is to be a woman!" (25). Her friend Teresa asks why Sara thinks this way and states that women have a beautiful mission to undertake. Sara does not follow, which leads Teresa to explain that it is up to women to form future citizens. When Sara does not buy the argument, her friend then tells her about the moral influence women have in the world, thanks to their roles in the home and as mothers. By the end of the lesson, Teresa has convinced Sara of the importance of women in the making of a successful nation.

massive distribution, like new, symbolically charged national currencies and cigarette boxes with stories of national history, were by far the most influential texts in the formation of national and gender identities at the turn of the century. But the ramifications of these changes did not stop with mere statistical jumps in literacy or lucrative contracts for textbook authors.

Lessons in patriotism are at the heart of hundreds of titles on national history and geography, and they appear prevalently in books that are not solely devoted to these subjects. These lessons instilled a sense of family and a passion for the notion of a unified nation in young readers' hearts. Such lessons dealt in sentiments, attempting to link a "common" or shared history to the pride of feeling part of a national community. Female students had their special set of books, too, providing lessons in motherhood that prepared young readers to become model mothers, and that influenced the formation of one type of collective identity—that related to gender. These lessons in patriotism and motherhood—lessons for a nation—offered a sense of collective identity that children *and* parents of different political stripes could share. They promised a path toward a more cohesive national unity, lacking on both sides of the river at the end of the nineteenth century.

While some readers remained untouched by what they read, and though some surely rejected the concisely packaged role of mother they were presented or the attempts to establish a national history that any citizen could tap into to, many children indeed took these lessons in patriotism and motherhood to heart. The formation of national identities was a process that took shape through many practices and in many venues. But when it comes down to the connections between print culture and collective identity, few people, publications, or institutions could rival the school and the home and their lessons for a nation.

Taking stock of this last moment in the development of Rioplatense print culture, then, means recognizing that lessons for a nation were critical in solidifying the reach of print in these countries. Public schools were sites where young citizens became captive readers and where official messages were instilled. They and the textbooks we have seen in this chapter were a launching ground of sorts that allowed for the popular appropriation of official visions for the national community and for the work of mothers in realizing this community. Students took their textbooks and notebooks home and read with family members; they talked about the day's lessons in the home; and they took these conversations back to the school, giving life to a mode of transmitting the lessons that was similar to the way popular gauchesque literature traversed the oral and print divide. Of course there were differences between the school and the pulpería, but the messages were in constant motion, moving from page to reader, from reader to family conversation, and back to the page in the school. And similar to gauchesque literature, the messages of textbooks were extremely effective—perhaps too effective.

For the 1910 centenary celebration some two hundred thousand copies of the special edition of *Caras y Caretas* were published and distributed in Buenos Aires and the interior. The issue is full of advertisements for the nation, from centenary cigarettes to *El Abuelo* alcohol—drink it, and you, too, will live to be 100 like the patria. This was no joke; it was the heart of the ad. But for all the lessons in patriotism that Argentine students had learned during the previous twenty years, a strong nativist reaction to immigrants, cosmopolitanism, and the nation as it was developing, was emerging. Perhaps it was the result of “too much” patriotic content, or the emphasis on an Argentine race that appears in some textbooks, or the idea children learned that every American nation owed something to Argentina and the

heroes of the May Revolution.⁷⁶ Nativist sentiment developed in Uruguay, too, specifically in Montevideo, but it was much more benign. What is for sure is that by and up until 1910 lessons for a nation provided that unifying national spirit that subsumed other forms of collective identity. The question after the centenary celebration was to what end nationalism would be directed.

All told, lessons for a nation were the main factor in the formation of a new reading public that began growing around 1900, and they guaranteed during this last stage of our story the unique relationship between print, politics, and the public sphere that makes Rioplatense print culture stand out in Latin America.

⁷⁶ See Carlos Escudé, *El fracaso del proyecto argentino: educación e ideología* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Torcuato di Tella, 1990).

CONCLUSIONS

Our 100-year tour has taken us through the three moments in the development of print culture in the Río de la Plata: the revolutionary moment, the high-point of cattle culture, and the establishment and expansion of national public primary schools. During the revolutionary moment the region's first printing presses gave way to the first printing revolution that went hand in hand with the wars of independence. Following the May Revolution of 1810, revolutionary newspapers, public ceremonies, and symbolic repertoires fashioned the first attempts at patriotic poetry and the elaboration of national symbols for new republics. The second scene in our story encompasses the period spanning from the moment Juan Manuel de Rosas became governor of Buenos Aires, in 1829, up to the end of the 1870s, when fragile state institutions began to consolidate themselves. These were years of civil war that saw a war of words between supporters of a colonial-style social order and its liberal opponents. They also witnessed the popularization of print through the phenomenon of gauchesque verse in newspapers, pamphlets, and loose-leaves—a form of popular literature not seen elsewhere. The last defining moment in the development of Rioplatense print culture is that of the establishment of public primary schools across Uruguay and Argentina. In the last quarter of the century sowers of alphabets not only built the foundation for Latin America's most successful public education systems, but also participated in the region's second printing revolution with textbooks with lessons for a nation. The results were abundantly clear: literacy rates became the highest in Latin America, a new reading public was formed, and children as well as adults appropriated official discourses of national and gender identities.

By 1910, then, print culture had reshaped forms of communication in Uruguay and Argentina. And with national currencies entering circulation in the 1880s, images of national symbols and stories of national history decorating cigarette and match boxes and told on the series of *figuritas*, or cards, that were included in these boxes, and the newfangled way of communicating with friends and family through postcards, print media were part of daily life for all Uruguayans and Argentines—even illiterate ones. The first conclusion we can draw, then, is that over the course of the nineteenth century, print negotiated oral and written cultures and revolutionized modes of shaping group identities. In 1810, when the fight for independence broke out in the Plata, print was entirely new. One hundred years later it shaped everyday reality and had reconfigured forms of communication.

Our panoramic approach has not allowed for the in-depth look at *all* texts that were part of Rioplatense print culture. During the revolutionary moment, there were newspaper and loose-leaf publications that did not get mentioned in chapter 1. Likewise, at the height of cattle civilization, canonical and anonymous authors produced literary compositions that do not figure in the study of the lasso-like connections between print and cattle culture that is chapter 2. And absent from the focus on the last moment in the story—the spread of public schools and textbooks for captive young readers—are the hundreds of newspaper and magazine publications by anarchist groups, workers unions, and immigrant communities that appeared during the 1890s and 1900s. That said, these publications had readers thanks to the public schools. Schools, too, produced readers of papers with romantic installments printed in the hundreds of thousands in 1920s Buenos Aires, and generations of readers who fueled a printing industry on both sides of the river throughout the twentieth century. Types of print media that saw massive distribution beginning around 1890, like postcards and national

currencies, are not part of the discussion of the last moment in the story, either. But the framework for understanding these and other types of print media not mentioned here is what this study provides.

Put differently, “From Reading to Reality” is a broad vision of the emergence and consolidation of print culture, its connections to collective identity, and the development of forms of reading. We have covered the journey from reading to reality in different moments and seen how print media shaped daily life experiences and realities in distinct contexts. The very breadth of this study gives it strength and allows for detailed pieces of the puzzle, so to say, to be placed where they are missing.

What is it that makes print culture in the region unique, or why does the connection between print, the public sphere, and politics in the Río de la Plata stand out in the context of Latin America? How did Uruguay and Argentina become the most literate countries in Latin America? These were questions posed at the beginning of our story. As we have seen, the answers to these questions come from a better understanding of popular print media and the interaction of popular classes with print, first, and, second, the success of public education in the Plata.

Revolutionary newspapers and symbolic repertoires elaborated during the wars of independence were political initiatives and intimately related to the public sphere through public readings and public displays. This is where the special relationship began. Of course other regions in Latin America could count similar revolutionary print media. Venezuela had its *La Gaceta de Caracas* (a paper that repeatedly went from the patriot side to that of the royalists, and back), and Mexico and Chile had theirs, too. The volume of this type of print media in the Plata made it stand out. But where the relationship between print and politics

really gained traction was in popular gauchesque verse. Nowhere else in Latin America was there a similar type of literary production that reached—and created—such a large reading public. The popular newspapers of Luis Pérez, Hilario Ascasubi, and other anonymous writers politicized popular classes. The ways these text were read, and the effects they had, continued up to the 1870s, illustrated clearly by the popular reception and transmission of Antonio Lussich's *Los tres gauchos orientales* and José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*. What the phenomenon of gauchesque literature did for the relationship between print, identity, and politics was further consolidated by the school and through textbooks with lessons in patriotism and motherhood. This last moment solidified not only the uniqueness of the relationship, but also guaranteed the spread of print culture throughout these two countries in ways not seen elsewhere in Latin America.

With all this in mind, what can we take from this study of print culture in the Plata to better understand how print affects identity in other Latin American contexts? First, the methodological approach to the study of print culture that I have followed could prove useful for looking at the connections between print, politics, and public sphere—or between print media and collective identity—in other areas. That is, using some of the same types of sources, exploring how they were read, and asking similar questions of them to see what conclusions can be drawn in a different set of conditions could help understand distinct ways the printed word and image have been used and received.

Secondly, when and how it is that print affects the formation of identities hinges largely on popular print media and on the contact of popular classes with print, whether this is through public ceremony, private reading, group reading, or in the setting of the school. This argument will hopefully be put to task in other contexts, and it will surely be modified

for these. Collective identities and especially national identity are fractured, along partisan lines, along ethnic divides, and along gender and economic ones. How to address the common points that make possible the formation of collective identities that somehow span these divisions is a challenge, as is finding where print media come into play here. My hope is that the way I have gone about it in this study will offer some guidance along an ever-winding road.

Lastly, what I hope will be gathered from this study that will be useful in other contexts, Latin American or otherwise, is that print culture is about something much larger than just printed words. Printed images are included in my understanding of the term, but so are oral improvisations that come from or make their way into print, etchings on walls or monuments, embroidered words on articles of clothing, stamps and their imagery, and so on. It is only through this more inclusive understanding of print culture and ways of reading that we will be able to push the edge to expand knowledge of forms of communication and their interplay with collective identities.

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