Continuity and Change: National Identity in Twenty-First-Century Argentine Culture

By

Steven Benjamin Wenz

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Spanish and Portuguese

August, 2016

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Earl E. Fitz, Ph. D.

Edward H. Friedman, Ph. D.

Ruth Hill, Ph. D.

Jane Landers, Ph. D.

To my grandmothers, Beatrice and Dorothy, for their encouragement and love

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The most rewarding aspect of completing a dissertation is the opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who made this project possible and who supported me along the way.

My parents, Dale and Sandra, and my grandmothers, Beatrice and Dorothy, guided me from the very beginning. I am also profoundly grateful to my professors at Case Western Reserve University, whose generosity and dedication led me to pursue a graduate degree. I owe special thanks to Florin Berindeanu, Gabriela Copertari, Linda Ehrlich, Christopher Flint, Jorge Marturano, and Heather Meakin. At Vanderbilt, the entire faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese helped me to grow as a scholar. I would like to thank in particular Christina Karageorgou, who recruited me to the doctoral program, and Cathy Jrade, whose courses helped me to refine my ideas into what would become this dissertation. My greatest debt is to the members of my committee, not only for their time and expertise, but also for having taken such a personal interest in my endeavors. "Coach" Earl Fitz is a world-class mentor and a dear friend, without whose guidance this project would have stalled at numerous points. I also wish to thank Julianne Fitz for her valuable advice on writing a dissertation and on the academic world in general. I am equally fortunate to have worked with Edward Friedman, whom, without any doubt, literary theorists ought to have in mind whenever they speak of the "ideal reader." Ruth Hill inspired me to approach my topic from new perspectives, and I thank her also for her generous feedback at various stages of the process. Jane Landers helped me to remove my most egregious historiographical errors and was a constant source of wisdom and kindness. Any remaining errors in the pages that follow are, of course, mine alone.

This dissertation would likewise have been impossible without the administrative and financial support that I received from Vanderbilt University. A Summer Research Award from the College of Arts and Science allowed me to travel to Argentina and conduct the fieldwork that would lead to Chapter 5. The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities named me the Joe and Mary Harper Dissertation Fellow in my final year, providing me with the opportunity to learn from scholars in a variety of disciplines. I am grateful to Mona Frederick, Joy Ramirez, and Terry Tripp for all of their support during my time as a fellow. The Vanderbilt Center for Second Language Studies also played a crucial role in my academic development, and I would like to thank Todd Hughes, Virginia Scott, and Felekech Tigabu for their friendship over the years. I also wish to thank the staff of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, the backbone of scholarship at our University, in particular Clifford Anderson and Paula Covington.

In Argentina, Susana Otero welcomed me into her home and encouraged my interest in national literature and history. The Calpanchay and Salva families shared their love of the Northwest, its people, and its culture. I am particularly indebted to Azucena Salva and Leopoldo Salva, without whom Chapter 5 would not exist. I also owe thanks to the staff of the Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno in Buenos Aires, where several pages of this project took shape. Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Sonia Vanesa Calpanchay, my favorite Argentine historian, for her patience and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
Introduction: Change and Continuity	1
Chapter	
I. National Identity in Argentina: A Historical Overview	18
II. The "Long Argentine Crisis": Continuity with the Past in Two Recent Novels	74
The "Long Argentine Crisis": 1976 as a Key to the Present	
No Antidote for the Crisis: Veneno and the Impossibility of Redemption	
El Espíritu: From Oblivion to Four Decades of Resistance	
Final Comparisons	117
III. The Nation Takes the Field: Soccer and Argentine National Identity	125
Soccer and National Identity	127
Soccer and Argentine National Identity	
"Argentinos": A Middle-Class Perspective on Soccer and the Nation	
La pareja del Mundial: Middle-Class Idealism and Nostalgia	
Conclusion	
Conclusion	1//
IV. Africa, Latin America, and Beyond: Argentine National Identity in Two Works by Washington Cucurto	179
"No mos" in Amounting, Dogt and Descent	100
"Negros" in Argentina: Past and Present	
Washington Cucurto: Self-Projection and Critical Reception	
1810: The Reinvention of National Identity	
The National Community Expands: Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis	227
V. The Ambiguous Place of Indigenous Peoples in Argentine National Identity: the Case of Salta Province	242
The Northwest, the Indigenous in Argentine National Identity, and the Place of Salta National and Provincial Government Tourism Publications: Continuity and Change in the Portrayal of the Indigenous	245
Portrayals of Salta Province in a Government-Sponsored Literary Anthology	
Conclusions	
CUIICIUSIUIIS	

Conclusion: Re-founding the Nation	
C	
REFERENCES	

INTRODUCTION: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

This dissertation studies the representation of national identity in twenty-firstcentury Argentine culture. I examine how and to what extent the 2001 economic and political crisis, often understood as a turning point in the country's history, has affected discussions of Argentina's role in the world and of what it means to be Argentine. Through a study of texts produced during the period from 2003 to 2014, I argue that both change and continuity have characterized the representation of national identity over the last decade. New interpretations of the country's identity, which flourished in the climate of self-reflection that followed the crisis, exist alongside conceptions of the nation that have their roots in the nineteenth century. My analysis centers on socioeconomic and "racial" identification. I contend that, although the 2001 collapse undermined the notion of Argentina as "Europe in South America," highlighting the country's structural and cultural connections with the rest of the subcontinent, the long-standing notion of a stable, middle-class Argentina retains its symbolic power. In similar fashion, I find that, although the events of 2001 opened up a space for historically marginalized groups, such as Afro-Argentines and indigenous peoples, to demand increased visibility in the national imagined community, the Eurocentric view of Argentina remains prevalent. I reach these conclusions by examining multiple forms of media and different spheres of society: novels and short stories by the contemporary authors Ariel Bermani, Patricio Pron, and Washington Cucurto; television commercials and promotional videos for the Argentine national soccer team; and tourist industry materials and a literary anthology from the Northwest region of Argentina, strongly associated with indigenous heritage.

It may seem misguided or anachronistic, in 2016, to dedicate a study to the question of national identity, particularly when that study attempts to justify, rather than to deconstruct, the nation-state as a category of analysis. After all, in nearly every forum of discussion--from everyday conversation, to the mass media, to scholarly publications--globalization has reached the status of a truism. The common assumption is that, through the increased mobility of people, information, and capital as a result of technological development, the national boundaries that took shape over the past few centuries are disappearing. The argument follows that, given the diminishing importance of the nation as a political and economic unit, cultural affiliation with any single nation-state likewise decreases. Just as one speaks of a global economy and a world political system, so should one speak of culture beyond national borders, in terms either of globalized homogeneity or of new hybrid forms that cross traditional frontiers.

There is indeed a vast literature, spanning several academic disciplines, in support of that interpretation. Saskia Sassen, in works such as *Losing Control*?, has argued that globalization "has entailed a partial denationalizing of national territory and a partial shift of some components of state sovereignty to other institutions, from supranational entities to the global capital market" (*Losing* xii). Her work reveals how electronic financial networks, international legal frameworks, and the global human rights effort have eroded notions of citizenship based on the nation. Along similar lines, Yasemin Soysal, through a study of late-twentieth-century Europe, reaches the conclusion that "[a] new and more universal concept of citizenship has unfolded in the post-war era, one whose organizing principles are based on universal personhood rather than national belonging" (1). For Soysal, "[t]o an increasing extent, rights and privileges once reserved for citizens of a

nation are codified and expanded as personal rights, undermining the national order of citizenship" (1). Arjun Appadurai, in turn, has focused on the cultural dimensions of globalization, and his work shows how the mass media can produce sodalities that "are often transnational, even postnational," which "frequently operate beyond the boundaries of the nation" (8). As a result of these collective sources of entertainment, "diverse local experiences of taste, pleasure, and politics can crisscross with one another, thus creating the possibility of convergences in translocal social action that would otherwise be hard to imagine" (8). Finally, within the discipline of Latin American Studies, the work of Néstor García Canclini has called attention to the role of diasporic communities in the contemporary cultural landscape. A poignant example of the erosion of national boundaries appears in Canclini's La globalización imaginada. The author calls attention to a 1994 work of art by Yukinori Yanagi, which featured thirty-six national flags made by pouring colored sand into plastic boxes. These boxes were linked by tubes so that ants could move among them, displacing the grains and blurring the designs (38-39). The message is clear: in an increasingly mobile world, the old notions of community and identity are fading away.

Nonetheless, despite the undeniable effects of globalization, scholars have begun to correct the most far-reaching assumptions of the late twentieth century, pointing out the many areas in which nations continue to be relevant. The contributors to the 2003 volume *The Nation-State in Question* argue that the state remains an important actor in social and economic relations. Many of the essays focus on how national governments retain control over traditional functions such as industrial policy, taxation, and security, and they emphasize the varying responses among nations to the spread of neoliberal thought. A guiding idea in the collection is that no other organizational unit has come to perform the essential tasks of the nation-state, and the contributors believe that this will remain true in the near future. As G. John Ikenberry explains, "[d]espite the rapidity of contemporary global economic and technological change, states and nation-states remain stubbornly anchored within the global political order" (371). Ikenberry observes that, because states are flexible entities, they have always adapted to new circumstances. As their power declines in some areas, it has grown in others (371).

A similar idea comes across in the more recent work of Saskia Sassen, whose Territory, Authority, Rights (2006) continues her previous focus on globalization but also insists on the survival of the nation-state. Sassen argues that "[i]t is not simply a zero sum where either the national loses at the hands of the global or vice versa, nor is it simply a question of direct power. The matter cannot be reduced to the victimhood of the national at the hands of a powerful and invasive global" (380-81). This approach highlights interdependence and mixture, revealing the ways in which local conditions help to constitute a global system. According to Sassen, "[m]uch of the scholarship on economic globalization has confined its conceptualization to cross-border trade and capital flows, thereby denuding the global of much of its social thickness and its specific spatiotemporal orders" (382). This "social thickness" appears even in sectors that are usually assumed to function automatically. For example, Sassen studies the "cultures of interpretation" of financial centers, in which local traditions shape assessments of risk in global investment (356-65). If the specificities of national histories and cultures play a role in some of the most technical spheres of contemporary society, one can easily imagine their significance in the everyday negotiation of meaning within and across

communities, where ambiguity abounds and social thickness is not a mere theoretical label but the very fabric of life.

Many of the chapters in this dissertation make frequent reference to politics and the economy, but my primary understanding of the nation-state is cultural. I follow the definition of Bernard Yack, for whom "[a] nation ... is best understood as an intergenerational community bound by an imagined heritage of cultural symbols and memories associated with a particular territory or territories" (43). This definition owes much to Eric Hobsbawm's idea of "invented traditions," "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values or norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1). In the rise of the nation, Hobsbawm suggests, "[t]he crucial element seems to have been the invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statutes and objects of the club. Their significance lay precisely in their undefined universality" (11). National flags, anthems, and emblems were three of the most important signs of membership and producers of solidarity (11), and competing interpretations of their meaning often go hand in hand with competing interpretations of the country as a whole.

Equally important to my analysis of national identity is Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities." For Anderson, who focuses on the cultural roots of nationhood, nations are mental constructs that posit a "deep, horizontal comradeship" among their members, even amid relations of inequality and exploitation (7). Anderson links the rise of national consciousness in Spanish America, which emerged prior to similar developments in Europe, to the disparity in status between creoles and Spaniards.

He argues that, virtually identical to their peers in the metropolis, yet generally excluded from administrative positions, Spanish American officials acquired the shared sense of destiny that would give rise to independence movements (56). It is true that Anderson's descriptions of Spanish American history differ from the current historiographical consensus. François-Xavier Guerra, for example, in his contribution to the 2003 volume *Beyond Imagined Communities*, points out Anderson's factual errors regarding the role of print capitalism during the colonial period (5). Nonetheless, John Chasteen's introduction to the same work explains that, although historians have rejected Anderson's conclusions, scholars of Latin American literature have benefitted from his theories on the power of imagination, emotion, and the circulation of texts in the construction of national identities (x), and it is this component of Anderson's work upon which I draw in my readings.

In discussing the character and the limits of the national community, then, I find it useful to think in terms of what I will call "national identity narratives." I understand national communities as having a political, economic, and legal existence but also as products of discourse and the imagination, undergoing constant revision as the circumstances change. The "factual" bases of national sentiment hold great importance but guarantee nothing at the subjective level: as I discuss in chapter two, it is possible to hold citizenship but to disavow any affiliation with the corresponding national community, while marginalized populations may find themselves excluded by their "fellow" citizens. I speak of "narratives" because conceptions of national identity imply a beginning, a middle, and an end: the identification of a source or origin, an interpretation of the present, and speculation toward the future. From this point of view, national identity is a story that consists of a series of questions: Where did we come from? What

are we today? Where are we headed? The answers vary across time and with each person, and the referent of "we" is equally unstable.

My use of terms such as "imagination" and "story" may give the impression that national identity narratives are trivial or disconnected from social practice. On the contrary, interpretations of the national community exert a crucial influence on many levels of life. At the widest level, beliefs about a nation's past performance, current strength, or future prospects shape both domestic activity and the country's decisions in the global arena: where to invest, with whom to trade, when to declare war. On a more local level, conceptions of which groups of people belong to the national community, along with each group's position in the community hierarchy, help to determine who is elected for office, who is hired for what job, and who is sent to jail for what crime. Finally, extending across the entire social spectrum, national identity narratives shape culture, both in the broad sense of everyday action and communication, as well as in the specific sense of artistic or intellectual expression. As each chapter of this dissertation will show, a particular interpretation of the national community underlies every portrayal of the nation, its members, and its international peers.

Twenty-first-century Argentina offers a privileged space in which to test theories on national identity and national culture. For most of the country's history, a dominant component of its identity narrative has been what Alejandro Grimson and Gabriel Kessler have called "Argentine exceptionalism." In their 2005 work *On Argentina and the Southern Cone: Neoliberalism and National Imaginations*, the authors explain that Argentina has long considered itself an exception within Latin America. Although manifestations of local superiority appeared during the revolutionary period, when

emissaries from Buenos Aires attempted to impose their authority upon the surrounding territories, the idea that Argentina was distinct from its neighbors flourished by the late nineteenth century. Author and president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, in his 1883 work Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América, lamented the country's lack of progress with respect to Europe but saw Argentina as having surpassed the rest of the continent, contrasting Argentine achievements with the backwardness of Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Ecuador (14-15). The climate of scientific racism at this time led to racialized explanations for Argentina's purported superiority. Various governments and intellectuals have described the country as a "melting pot," yet only individuals of European descent have held a place in official history (Grimson and Kessler 119). The assumption is that, whereas the rest of the continent is Afro-Latin, indigenous, or mestizo, with all of the corresponding defects that a racialized explanation would posit, Argentina is a "white" nation. This distinction appears most prominently through a comparison of national identity narratives. In contrast to nations such as Guatemala or Bolivia, where indigenous peoples play an important role in conceptions of the national community, Argentina considers itself a European outpost in Latin America, with Buenos Aires functioning as the "Paris of the South." This mindset underlies the popular saying in Argentina that "Mexicans are descended from the Aztecs, Peruvians are descended from the Incas, and Argentines descended from ships," a reading of history that erases the country's indigenous origins and depicts European immigration as the sole source of national identity (119).

The events of 2001, which punctuated the chaos into which the country had been descending, served as a rude awakening and invited reflection on national identity. As

often occurs in moments of crisis, a variety of interpretations emerged regarding the errors that had led Argentina down the path to ruin. Many explanations, especially those that circulated in the global mass media, focused on economic mismanagement or political corruption, with the fixed conversion rate between the U.S. dollar and the Argentine peso receiving the greatest amount of attention. Yet some cultural commentators placed the blame elsewhere, attributing the crisis to the pernicious effects of the dominant identity narrative. Alejandro Solomianski offers a particularly forceful critique of Argentina's self-perception: "la tremenda crisis que la Argentina comenzó a padecer inocultablemente desde fines del 2001 confirma la enorme distancia entre la auto-percepción dominante y el sistema de sujetos, objetos y relaciones que llamamos Argentina. La densidad aparentemente irresoluble de esta crisis nos obliga a replantearnos quiénes y qué éramos los argentinos" (11). According to this interpretation of Argentine history, national identity narratives that excluded vast sectors of the population helped to perpetuate an oppressive system. The aftermath of the crisis provided an opportunity to rethink the national community and to address longstanding injustices, and Solomianski views his study of Afro-Argentine culture as one contribution to that project (11). Just as economic explanations of the crisis have advocated for structural reform in order to avoid repeating the country's errors, cultural explanations have advocated for a more inclusive understanding of national identity. This line of thought argues that, by recognizing the importance of Afro-Argentines, indigenous peoples, and regional and global immigrants, Argentina can rebuild itself in such a way as to prevent future collapse and the violence that it would entail.

This dissertation, through its emphasis on the representation of national identity, fills a gap in studies on contemporary Argentine culture. María Teresa Gramuglio's Nacionalismo y cosmopolitismo en la literatura argentina (2013) provides a thorough discussion of Argentina's self-image and relationship with the world, but most of her readings center on the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, Amy Kaminsky's excellent Argentina: Stories for a Nation (2008) takes a more comprehensive approach, discussing both local and foreign depictions of Argentine identity, but almost all of her material predates the crisis. Conversely, studies of recent Argentine culture have paid little attention to the question of national identity. Beatriz Sarlo's influential volume Escritos sobre literatura argentina (2007) features an essay on contemporary literature, "La novela después de la historia. Sujetos y tecnologías." Although Sarlo briefly considers the work of Washington Cucurto, she overlooks Ariel Bermani and Patricio Pron, and her primary interest is in literary technique, rather than in responses to the recent economic and political upheaval. The most exhaustive study of contemporary Argentine culture is Elsa Drucaroff's Los prisioneros de la torre: política, relatos y jóvenes en la postdictadura (2011), which explores "la nueva narrativa argentina" in an impressive corpus of texts published between 1990 and 2007. Despite mentioning Bermani and Cucurto, as well as discussing some of the consequences of the 2001 crisis for recent literature, Drucaroff centers her analysis on late-twentieth-century texts as a way to intervene in debates on literary history.

My work shows that twenty-first-century Argentine culture contains much that is "new," as many of the texts studied here react to the climate of poverty and instability of the post-crisis nation. Their portrayals of contemporary society emphasize Argentina's difference from Europe, the country's peer according to the traditional identity narrative, and highlight similarities with its Latin American neighbors. At the same time, however, twenty-first-century Argentine culture contains much that is "old." Familiar conceptions of national identity based on a European, middle-class population continue to circulate, as though the country's recent difficulties were only a temporary obstacle, a brief exception in a march toward greatness. On many occasions, change and continuity coexist within a single text. It is possible to describe the novelties of the present while searching for their causes in the recent or distant past, just as celebrations of Argentina's diversity may draw upon racialized discourse with roots in the nineteenth century. The works studied in the following chapters reveal that, in order to understand post-crisis Argentine culture, one must consider both contemporary debates and the centuries-long tradition of which they form part.

My readings also contribute to the vast scholarship on globalization and cultural identity. It is true, as chapters four and five will show, that diasporic communities have established transnational solidarity networks. Such connections transcend the limits of the nation and suggest the inadequacy of "national culture" as an analytical category. Yet a common theme in all of the texts that I examine is the survival, even the flourishing, of the nation as an object of inquiry. Globalization notwithstanding, national identity remains a fertile topic in mass-media cultural products and prestigious literary publications. At times, this interest in the nation results from an effort, as Solomianski has observed, to discover the roots of the crisis. The economic and political circumstances of 2001 reinforced the idea of collective membership: Argentina as a nation had defaulted on its debt, the Argentine government proved unable to guarantee

basic social services, and the Argentine people began to search for explanations and solutions. At other times, however, discussions of national identity simply reflect the continuing importance of the nation in everyday life, and this occurs even in texts that trace broader imagined communities. The work of Washington Cucurto, for example, views Afro-Argentines and Argentine indigenous peoples as members of a pancontinental and transatlantic family, while paying equal attention to the Argentine literary tradition, language, and sports. As Saskia Sassen has explained, the relationship between the local and the global is much more complex than a simple either/or binary, and the texts studied here encourage us to continue to refine our understanding of cultural identification.

In order to set a foundation for the readings that follow, chapter one provides a historical overview of conceptions of Argentine identity, showing how various groups have depicted the country and its inhabitants over the centuries. Time periods that I discuss include the pre-contact indigenous civilizations of southern South America, Spanish conquest and colonization, the colonial period, the revolutionary war, the civil wars of the mid-nineteenth century, the consolidation of the national state in the late nineteenth century, the "first Peronism" of the 1940s and 1950s, the violence of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, the return to democracy and the emphasis on the middle class, neoliberalism in the 1990s, the 2001 crisis, and the post-crisis recovery period, marked in large part by the successive Kirchner governments. Although this chapter often draws upon Argentine history, I support my argument through brief analyses of canonical literary texts, which include Esteban Echeverría's "La cautiva" and "El matadero," José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*, and Julio Cortázar's "Casa tomada."

This chapter also provides an opportunity to explore national identity narratives that have challenged or coexisted with the dominant, Eurocentric interpretation of Argentina, such as the gaucho tradition and the Peronist workers' movement.

Chapter two studies the relationship between national identity and history in two recent novels: Veneno (2006) by Ariel Bermani and El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia (2012) by Patricio Pron, each of which links the 1970s with twentyfirst-century Argentina. Although both of these texts belong to what one might call "high culture," in that they were printed by prestigious publishing houses and have earned literary prizes, they represent different ends of the spectrum. Bermani (b. 1967) is a relatively minor author within Argentina and unknown internationally, while Pron (b. 1975) is one of the most recognized figures in contemporary Argentine literature and enjoys worldwide recognition. I argue that, in each text, twenty-first-century Argentina appears as a violent, impoverished country in which crime has replaced employment as a source of sustenance. Nonetheless, continuity is equally as important as change, in that both novels view the 1976-1983 dictatorship as the origin of Argentina's recent problems. I connect this reading of the past with historian Luis Alberto Romero's idea of the larga crisis argentina, according to which the 1970s, rather than 2001, marked the beginning of the nation's decadence. Despite their similar attitudes toward history, the novels diverge in their treatment of national identity. Bermani's work emphasizes a tradition of failure, ends on a negative note, and implies that the country is irreparably damaged, whereas Pron's work focuses on a "spirit" of solidarity and resistance that, as the narrator suggests, may help Argentina to overcome its economic and social

challenges. The interpretation of history, therefore, plays a crucial role in interpreting Argentina's present situation and its prospects in the years to come.

Chapter three explores visual popular culture, studying the representation of national identity in two promotional videos for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. As background for my argument, I discuss the historical significance of soccer, the national sport, in Argentine culture, explaining that it is common to view the team and its performance as a symbol of Argentina, with success validating the nation and failure reflecting its weaknesses. I draw here upon the work of sociologists and sports historians. The first video that I analyze, the television commercial "Argentinos," was produced by the major sports network TyC to advertise its coverage of the 2010 international tournament. In a series of fictional vignettes, Argentines and Europeans voice their opinions of the country. During the first part of the video, Argentine men point out problems affecting the middle class and look toward the United States and Europe for solutions. The second part of the video reverses the terms of comparison, as a number of European observers marvel at Argentina's passionate commitment to its national soccer team. I contend that "Argentinos" laments the new context of poverty but emphasizes a middle-class, Eurocentric understanding of Argentine identity with roots in the nineteenth century. The second video that I study, La pareja del Mundial (2010), is a Clarin.com miniseries seeking to capitalize on Argentina's participation in the tournament. The short episodes follow the life of Alberto Rizzuti, a small-town factory worker who wins a trip to South Africa to support the Argentine soccer team. The miniseries defines national identity in contrast to other groups and reinforces traditional images of typical Argentines. Argentine characters are "white," while Brazilian and Uruguayan characters

have darker skin. This racial understanding of national identity becomes most apparent in an episode that parodies Brazilian soap operas, during which the Argentine protagonists appear in blackface while pretending to be Brazilian. The miniseries thus reveals the persistence of the idea of a "white" Argentina despite the climate of self-reflection and inclusion that followed the 2001 crisis. Both of these promotional videos display a mixture of change and continuity in mass-media portrayals of the nation.

Whereas chapter three shows how contemporary texts may reinforce longstanding practices of exclusion, chapter four provides a counterexample of historical revision by marginalized groups. This chapter studies two works by the Afro-Argentine novelist, poet, and journalist Washington Cucurto (pseudonym of Santiago Vega, b. 1973). Before discussing Cucurto's work, I offer a summary of Afro-Argentine contributions to national identity and discuss the myth of their "disappearance." I draw here upon the work of historians and cultural critics who, with increasing frequency over the last decade, have revealed the many ways in which the descendants of Africans have shaped and continue to shape Argentina. I then argue that Cucurto's novel 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros (2008) contributes to this project by offering a powerful deconstruction of Argentina's Eurocentric self-image, which Cucurto views as the product of "histories written by white hands for the oligarchy." Challenging these histories, Cucurto rewrites the foundational moment in Argentine nationhood, emphasizing the participation of African slaves in the struggle for independence and tracing their genetic and cultural influence on subsequent generations of Argentines. The second part of the chapter looks at Cucurto's collection of short stories Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis (sic, 2010), which explores the connections between Argentina and the rest of Latin America. I argue that Cucurto attempts to widen the national imagined community by replacing the traditional tango with cumbia and celebrating the presence of Paraguayans, Dominicans, Africans, and Afro-Argentines in Buenos Aires. Despite these important attacks on Argentina's dominant identity narrative, Cucurto's texts position themselves within the national tradition. Both the novel and several of the short stories make use of the Argentine literary canon, linguistic particularities, and sports culture when describing characters and their activities.

The final chapter turns to the northwestern province of Salta, where indigenous and gaucho cultures form the basis of local identity, taking it as a test-case for the ambiguous position of indigenous peoples in the Argentine imagined community. I begin by summarizing the historical role of indigenous civilizations in Argentina, along with the history of the Northwest in particular. This discussion also provides information on contemporary indigenous movements and observations from scholars on racism and discrimination in twenty-first-century Argentina. I then study the representation of indigenous communities in four tourism books published during the last decade by various government organizations. These materials exhibit both change and continuity, as flexible understandings of indigenous identity, which reflect the achievements of identity politics over the last decades, appear alongside essentialist notions of indigeneity. In order to complement these findings, I then analyze the 2007 Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña, a literary anthology sponsored by the provincial Secretariat of Culture, which offers a similar mixture of old and new conceptions of identity. I argue that these materials, when highlighting traditional cultural practices, present a stereotypical view of northwestern indigenous populations and overlook their participation in "modernity,"

along with the similarities to the rest of Argentina that this implies. I connect this current portrayal of the indigenous with the emergence of national historiography and the development of the sciences during the late nineteenth century, when prominent intellectuals presented the 1810 revolution against Spain as the birth of Argentina and relegated the indigenous to "prehistory." This chapter reveals the points of intersection between transnational indigenous identification, a provincial identity based on gaucho culture, and the persistent national identity narrative dating back to the late nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I: NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ARGENTINA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Although the current struggle to define Argentine identity is a product of relatively recent events, its guiding concepts took shape over the course of many centuries. Therefore, when evaluating contemporary debates regarding national character and the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups, it is first necessary to consider the history of the land that would become Argentina.

The vast territory comprising present-day Argentina features a great variety of climates, peoples, and cultural practices. Traditionally, scholars have divided Argentina into five regions: the Northwest, the Central Sierras, Pampa-Patagonia, Chaco, and the Littoral-Mesopotamia.¹ The mountainous Northwest, which borders Bolivia and Chile, has always had strong links with the Andean world. The Northwest's most recognizable area is the Puna, an arid plain situated at over 3,500 meters above sea level. The Central Sierras, with wide hills and plateaus that reach the Chilean border, constitute a point of transition between the Northwest and the Pampa-Patagonia region. A highly fertile stretch of low-lying grasslands, the Pampas are ideal for agriculture and livestock and gave Argentina its reputation as the "breadbox of the world." Most of the Patagonia region, in contrast, is characterized by windy steppes and scarce vegetation. The southern tip of Patagonia, which includes the provinces of Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego, is near to the South Pole and features snowfall and glaciers. On the opposite end of the country, the Chaco region extends from the north of the Pampas to the border with Paraguay.

¹ The following discussion of Argentina's five regions is drawn from Alberto Rex González and José A. Pérez's *Argentina indígena* (35-37) and David Rock's *Argentina*: *1516-1987* (1-6).

Located between sierras and wetlands, Chaco is arid in the west and humid in the east. Finally, the northeastern Littoral-Mesopotamia region, named for its position between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, is a sub-tropical area bordering Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil. The Littoral-Mesopotamia possesses very fertile soil, and the province of Misiones is known for its rainforests.

The territory that would become Argentina received its first immigrants approximately 30,000 years ago, when groups of hunters and gatherers entered from North America (González 25). Archeological findings have indicated the presence of nomadic, preceramic civilizations in several regions during the period from 10,000 B.C. to the first century A.D. (25-26, 45). The Ampajango culture of the Northwest produced axes for woodwork and for collecting roots and plants (31), while the Ayampitin culture of the Central Sierras produced a handheld stone-throwing weapon used to hunt deer and the camelid guanaco (32). The first agricultural civilizations appeared during what has been called the "early period," from the first century A.D. to 650 A.D. (44-46). The Tafi culture of the Northwest, for example, grew crops in terraces, ground wheat-like plants for food, and raised llamas for transport, wool, and meat (48). Other cultures, such as the Ciénaga and the Condorhuasi, developed irrigation systems to plant corn and created many types of pottery (52-53), which often featured geometric patterns and included vases in the form of human beings (56-57). Archeological findings from the "middle period," spanning from 650 A.D. to 850 A.D., suggest an increased attention to aesthetics and greater sociopolitical and religious cohesion (67). The Aguada culture created pottery with feline or warrior motifs, in which the presence of axes, headdresses, and "trophyheads" shows the importance of warfare and human sacrifice (73). In addition to a variety

of stonework, the Aguada culture used bronze to make utensils and decorative objects (73-75). These characteristics continued into the "late period," which designates the years from 850 A.D. to approximately 1480 A.D., when the Incas invaded the Northwest (85). The cultures of the late period drew upon pre-existing agricultural and technological knowledge. The Belén culture developed stone-based houses with rooms, with which they formed semi-urban centers often placed at strategic locations (89). In similar fashion, the Santamaría culture gained mastery of metallurgy, producing bronze discs, perhaps used as shields, along with bronze bells, knives, and ceremonial axes (94).

Prior to the arrival of the Incas, there had already been considerable cultural exchange among the various indigenous civilizations. Ideas and technological developments from the Lake Titicaca region, for instance, traveled south and influenced the Aguada culture (80). Nonetheless, the half-century of Inca domination left an especially deep mark upon the Northwest and intensified its connection with the rest of the Andean world. Inca rule extended as far as the present-day province of Mendoza, where the invaders secured a mountain passage into what is now Chile (111). As they had done elsewhere, the Incas subjected the Northwest through an efficient system of roads and military administration, which featured *pucarás*, large fortresses that oversaw conquered regions (112). The Incas also brought advanced techniques in pottery, ceramics, and metallurgy. Together with decorative objects in gold and silver, the invaders used deadly projectiles and hand-to-hand weapons made of bronze (113). Many of the cultural practices introduced by the Incas would survive into the Spanish colonial period. Inhabitants of the Northwest would use Inca quipus, mnemonic devices of variously colored thread with knots in different positions, to make confessions after being

converted to Catholicism (113). The Inca language, quechua, although it did not eliminate the native Diaguita or Humahuaca tongues, would become the lingua franca of the region during the following centuries (113).

European presence in the area dates from 1516, when the Portuguese navigator Juan Díaz de Solís, hired by the Castilian Crown to find a passage to the Far East and India (Rock 8), led an expedition into what would later be called the River Plate, where he was killed in a battle against the Charrúa natives (Di Meglio 22). A second expedition took place a decade later under the command of Sebastian Cabot, who traveled up the Paraná River and founded the fort of Sancti Spiritu (Di Meglio 22, Rock 8). Although neither of these early Spanish-funded incursions led to permanent settlements, reports of a "mountain of silver" in the interior, which would live on in the names "Río de la Plata" and "Argentina," motivated further exploration. In 1534, Charles V of Castile sent Pedro de Mendoza in search of the legendary riches, hoping to arrive before his Portuguese competitors. Mendoza and his crew, three times larger than that of Hernán Cortés, disembarked on the western shores of the River Plate in 1536, where they named their encampment "Nuestra Señora Santa María del Buen Aire" (Rock 10). Part of the expedition continued northward into present-day Paraguay and founded the city of Asunción, whereas those Europeans who remained in Buenos Aires struggled to find provisions and were driven out by the Querandí natives (Di Meglio 23).

As the Spaniards fought to gain a foothold in the region, they came into contact with diverse indigenous groups. Approximately two thirds of the native population lived in the Northwest, where the largest group was the Diaguitas, whose culture displayed a strong Inca influence (Rock 6-7). Other groups in the area included the Comechingones,

21

Sanavirones, Sanagastas, and the Humahuacas (7). Confederations of Guaraní peoples inhabited the Northeast in the Mesopotamia region. The rest of the territory was home to various nomadic groups, such as the aforementioned Querandís of Buenos Aires, the Tobas and Mocovíes of Chaco, the Pampa and the Kaingang tribes of the Pampas, the Pehuenches in the western sierras, and the Onas and Yamanas of southern Patagonia (Rock 7-8).

The defining characteristic of Spanish attempts at colonization in present-day Argentina was the lack of a centralized power to overthrow. In contrast to the Aztec and Inca empires, whose rulers could be captured, killed, and replaced with a Spaniard, allowing the use of existing structures of taxation and forced labor, local indigenous societies lacked an organized state and could often evade subjugation by fleeing into the mountains or forests. Consolidation of Spanish power in the region was thus a long, painstaking process. The conquerors spread across the territory in two paths. The first series of expeditions was a continuation of the conquest of Perú. In 1535, Diego de Almagro passed through what is now the province of Tucumán, and in 1547, Diego de Rojas traveled down the Río Dulce to the Paraná (12). Over the next fifty years, several Spanish explorers founded cities in the interior, with varying degrees of success, often encountering indigenous resistance. After the discovery of the Potosí silver mines in 1545, commercial considerations played a growing role in determining settlement patterns (12-14). The second series of expeditions set out from Asunción in the east and was composed primarily of "mancebos de la tierra," mestizos born of Spanish men and Guaraní women (Di Meglio 25). These explorers, led by Juan de Garay, founded the city of Santa Fe in 1573, which provided a base for the refoundation of Buenos Aires in 1580. With these new settlements, the residents of Asunción attempted to establish an Atlantic outpost for the Spanish colonial system and take part in the lucrative Potosí silver trade (Rock 13-14).

As the Spanish conquered native peoples, they imposed the encomienda system that they had used elsewhere in the Americas. Encomenderos, individuals responsible, at least theoretically, for guaranteeing the spiritual and physical well-being of the natives in their keeping, began to receive tribute payments in the 1550s (Di Meglio 43). As many societies were unable to meet the requirements of this arrangement, they paid in the form of organized labor, following the Inca *mita* system of the previous century. Through *mita* labor, encomenderos undertook agricultural and commercial ventures, the most prominent of which was the silver mining industry of Potosí, where the cruelest forms of exploitation took place (45). Forced labor, resettlement, pillage, and exposure to European diseases led to a rapid demographic decline among the indigenous peoples. By the early 1600s, the encomienda system had become untenable due to the fall in native population (Rock 20). The abuses of encomenderos seeking immense power and wealth motivated a re-organization of colonial society, which separated inhabitants, if only in principle, into a "república de indios," where natives would have limited and closely monitored contact with Europeans, and a "república de españoles" (51).

Prior to European conquest, present-day Argentina had featured a wide variety of indigenous groups. Despite points of similarity due to common origins or to contact through trade and war, each society possessed its own economy, cultural practices, and identity. The imposition of Spanish rule produced stark changes in indigenous communities and caused greater homogenization among groups. Central to the

23

incorporation of the indigenous within Spanish culture were organized efforts at evangelization, carried out by priests who had accompanied the conquerors. The Jesuit missions, especially in the Guaraní territories of the Northeast, were the primary achievement of the religious orders. Native worldviews differed markedly from European beliefs and made evangelization a lengthy and incomplete endeavor (50). Priests often persecuted native converts for their ritual use of alcohol and hallucinogenic substances or for "superstition," "idolatry," and "witchcraft" (50). Indigenous peoples were also brought into the Spanish cultural world through the spread of three lingue franche: Spanish, Quechua in the Northwest, and Guaraní in the Northeast, which gradually reduced linguistic variation (57). Additional homogenization took place through new legal categories. Once under Spanish dominion, indigenous peoples were subject to a rigid racial distinction, in which whites were the privileged group and non-whites were juridically inferior (57). As a result, native groups brought into the Spanish system were no longer "Tobas" or "Diaguitas" but rather found themselves subsumed under the category of "indio" and subject to special laws.

The indigenous were not the only non-European group residing in the newly conquered territories, as blacks and mestizos formed an increasingly visible part of colonial society. In 1534, the Spanish Crown had authorized the African slave trade in the River Plate region. Over the next hundred and fifty years, amid demands from settlers and shifting political contexts, the Crown transferred the *asiento*, a concession of the royal monopoly on slaving, to various foreign companies (Johnson 36). Even so, with the compliance of local officials, most African slaves entered as contraband and were passed off as "negros descaminados," blacks who had lost their way and could thus be sold into

slavery without the payment of import duties (Di Meglio 90). In contrast to blacks and "indios," which were considered "pure" categories, mestizos held an ambiguous position in the Spanish world. Legally subject to the "régimen de castas," which attempted, as elsewhere in the Empire, to limit racial mixing and prevent those considered "non-white" from rising in society, individuals of mixed descent occupied a middle space between whites and African slaves (Andrews 45-47). Administrators devised precise labels to categorize Spanish subjects of non-European origin, such as "pardo" and "mulato" (African and European descent), "zambo" (indigenous and African descent), and myriad subdivisions corresponding to different degrees of mixture, including "tercerón," "cuarterón," "tresalbo," and "mulato prieto" (Di Meglio 103). However, as was common throughout the Americas, such labels proved less effective in practice, with individuals receiving different classifications in different times and places (Assadourian, Beato, and Chiaramonte 344). Language, dress, behavior, and financial status all played a role in determining racial stratification. Individuals of darker skin color could become "white" through economic success, especially in frontier areas, where the caste system was weakest (105).

For much of the colonial period, Buenos Aires was of little importance to Spain. Despite the city's strategic location near the Uruguay and Paraná rivers and its connection with the Atlantic world, the surrounding waters were too shallow to accommodate ships, which were forced to anchor between three and four leagues away (Johnson 20). Held in low esteem by colonial administrators, Buenos Aires did not receive permission to take part in trade with Europe. Instead, the city was included within the Viceroyalty of Peru and subordinated to Lima, its distant capital and rival. While Buenos Aires served primarily as an outpost for contraband, the cities of the Interior directed their production toward the booming silver mining industry at Potosí in Alto Peru. Livestock, agriculture, and manufacturing, all with a view to supplying the mines, were the primary activities in the Northwest and Central Sierras regions, to such an extent that they became "satellite economies" of Potosí (Assadourian, Beato, and Chiaramonte 101-02).

At the end of the eighteenth century, however, changes in the Spanish imperial system modified the role of Buenos Aires and its relationship with the Interior. In contrast to the Habsburg monarchs, who had placed emphasis on collecting tribute and extracting gold and silver from the American territories, the Bourbon kings aimed to diversify the colonial economy and encourage a variety of exports, so as to make the Empire self-sufficient (Rock 59). A series of new policies restructured the political and economic organization of the colonies. As part of these "Bourbon reforms," the Crown focused on Buenos Aires in order to fight contraband and to reduce the influence of the Portuguese and British in the South Atlantic (62). As the capital of the newly created Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (1776), Buenos Aires received permission to take part in the Atlantic trade and acquired authority over a vast area, spanning portions of modern-day Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia. For a variety of reasons, cities of the Interior opposed this concentration of power in Buenos Aires, especially as concerned economic regulations (68).

Royal permission to participate in commerce also changed the demographics of Buenos Aires. Prior to 1776, the majority of imported African slaves passed through the city on their way to the mines of Potosí or to present-day Chile and Paraguay. After 1780,

26

an increasing proportion of slaves remained within Buenos Aires, and by the early 1800s, the city had become the leading importer of African slaves in Spanish South America (Johnson 35-36). As a result, between 1778 and 1810, a period during which the city's total population grew by thirty-four percent, the slave population grew by one hundred one percent (Borucki 85). Despite the caste system, which excluded nonwhites from schools and from positions in municipal, royal, and ecclesiastical administration (Andrews 46), both free and enslaved blacks played a number of roles in the colonial economy. They constituted the majority of street vendors, washerwomen, pest exterminators, stevedores, and *aguateros*, who sold water to homes throughout the city (37). In bakeries and workshops, slaves could attain the rank of master artisan and supervise free white apprentices (Johnson 41), a practice that led to tension with white guilds, especially in times of economic downturn, when competition for work increased (47).

During the first decade of the nineteenth century, military conflicts in Europe set Spain's American possessions on the path toward independence. In 1806, within the context of the Anglo-Spanish war, British troops unexpectedly invaded and captured the city of Buenos Aires, meeting with little resistance from the imperial garrison. Humiliated by this defeat, the city's elite and popular classes rose up and drove out the British, later deposing the Spanish viceroy, the Marquis de Sobremonte, who had fled to the central region of Córdoba during the invasion. The militia of Buenos Aires repelled a second British attack a year later. The *Reconquista* and the *Defensa* of 1806-07 were sources of pride and "patriotic sentiment" for the residents of Buenos Aires, who named an interim viceroy and began to manage their own affairs through the *cabildo*, the municipal town hall (Rock 72-73). This movement toward autonomy acquired greater strength in 1808, when Napoleon's invasion of Spain threw the metropole into disorder and gave Buenos Aires's powerful merchant class the opportunity to seize power. In 1810, after receiving news that the Spanish government in Seville had fallen to the French, members of the Buenos Aires cabildo ousted Baltasar de Cisneros, the viceroy recently appointed by Spain, and took control of the city. Over the next two decades, the new state, calling itself the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, sought to free itself completely from Spanish rule, establish a form of government, and consolidate the power of Buenos Aires over the rest of the former viceroyalty.

During the war for independence against the Spanish, feelings of American identity became increasingly widespread. In part, this identification against Spain had its roots in the colonial system, which gave Spaniards advantages over nonwhites and white creoles, the children of European colonists. Upon arriving in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, poorer Spanish immigrants received assistance from their fellow countrymen, which allowed them to prosper more quickly than the rest of the working classes and to occupy the best positions in local commerce (Di Meglio 205). Spanish men also cornered the marriage market, as plebeian women sought to marry them in order to become "decent" or to "whiten" their descendants (205). Finally, if convicted of a crime, Spaniards were exempt from humiliating punishments such as whippings or public processions. Although, by law, these measures applied only to nonwhites, white creoles could suffer them as well, perhaps because their American origin made it impossible to guarantee their whiteness (206). At the same time, upper-class Spaniards in high positions, such as bureaucrats, merchants, and administrators, were seen as "mandones"

and as representatives of colonial abuses (205-06). Such feelings motivated a petition to the cabildo for the expulsion of all Spaniards from the city, along with a wave of accusations, looting, and violence amid rumors of a Spanish counter-revolutionary conspiracy (205-07).

At a local level, identification proved to be more complex. On one hand, the revolutionary struggle produced a resignification of the term "Patria," setting the stage for the nationalist sentiments that would appear later in the nineteenth century. During the colonial period, "Patria" had referred both to an individual's city of origin (such as Córdoba, Santa Fe, or Buenos Aires) and to the territory as an abstract principle (258). This second meaning became dominant during the revolution. Nonetheless, defending the "Patria" meant different things for different groups, and this ambiguity gave the term its power. Slaves could serve the Patria in the hope of obtaining freedom, while the indigenous could conceive of the Patria as a guarantor of racial equality. In Buenos Aires, "Patria" represented the "symbolic ascent of plebeians" following their defeat of the British (258). On the other hand, no River Plate or "Argentine" identity existed yet as an intermediate step between local, city-based identity and American, anti-Spanish identity (259). As a result, residents of Buenos Aires, the *porteños*, could see themselves as the principal agents of the revolution and as the center of the resulting nation. Residents of the Interior responded by cultivating anti-porteño sentiments, accusing Buenos Aires of arrogance and a desire to impose its will upon the rest of the territory (206). Porteño military incursions into Alto Peru and modern-day Paraguay further alienated the inhabitants of these regions, which rejected the dominance of Buenos Aires and eventually formed separate nations (Rock 82-83). Within the land that would become

Argentina, tension between the capital and the surrounding provinces would persist for over a century and generate numerous armed conflicts.

Differing opinions over what form of government the United Provinces should adopt led to the emergence of two factions: the Unitarians and the Federalists. The division had its origin within the Juntas, the governing bodies created by the Buenos Aires cabildo during the revolution. The legal and political theorist Mariano Moreno (1778-1811), Secretary of the First Junta, advocated rule by an enlightened minority. He sought a dominant role for Buenos Aires in national affairs, distrusted provincial leaders, and viewed the United Provinces as superior to their Latin American counterparts (Shumway 27, 42). His rival, Cornelio Saavedra (1759-1829), President of the Junta, incorporated provincial leaders in national affairs, favored greater provincial autonomy, and took a more populist stance toward society (27, 43). The opposing philosophies of Morenismo and Saavedrismo, as they were known, gave rise to the Unitarian and Federalist parties, which would characterize nineteenth-century national politics. Influenced by French and British political theorists and by the example of the United States, Unitarians followed Moreno's precedent in calling for a strong central government based in Buenos Aires. They favored liberal policies, such as free trade, and sought to minimize the role of religion in the state. Unitarians believed it necessary to "import" culture from European nations and rejected the provinces as backward (44). For this reason, Unitarians saw immigration as a means of creating a country of white laborers and property owners (Andrews 14). Their opponents, the Federalists, inherited Saavedra's populism and concern for provincial autonomy. Federalist leaders were often *caudillos*, rural strongmen who took a paternal interest in the lower classes and held a

more conservative view of society, which included the tenacious defense of traditional Catholic practices (Shumway 45). In contrast to the rationalist, European-centered mindset of the Unitarians, Federalists championed symbols of creole culture, such as the gauchos, individuals of mixed origins who performed various livestock-related tasks on the plains (44). Whereas Unitarians looked to take advantage of Buenos Aires's port and monopolize tax revenues, Federalists fought for greater distribution of wealth among the provinces.

In the decades after independence from Spain, a series of civil wars broke out between provincial governments and between the Unitarian and Federalist factions within them. International conflicts also took place, as the United Provinces, particularly the River Plate region, went to war with the Empire of Brazil for control of the Oriental Territory, which resulted in the creation of an independent Uruguay in 1828. Peace was short-lived, as Unitarian military leaders returned home and directed their strength against Federalists. The Unitarian League of the Interior eventually fell to the Federalist provinces of the Littoral in 1831. These events had thrown Buenos Aires into a state of chaos. Its Federalist governor, Manuel Dorrego (1787-1828), had been captured and executed by the Unitarian general Juan Lavalle (1797-1841). Dorrego's supporters, primarily rural laborers, turned to ranch owner and militia commander Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877). When the assassination of the Federalist leader Facundo Quiroga threatened to bring anarchy to the region, Rosas took advantage of property holders' fears, obtaining the "Suma del Poder Público" in exchange for guaranteeing a return to order. He then used his essentially dictatorial powers to discipline the elites of the capital, using aggressive propaganda and state-sponsored violence to drive many Unitarians into

exile. In addition to his connection with the rural working classes, Rosas forged political ties with the African community, attending their social events and promoting the careers of black military officials. Through economic policies and frequent armed conflict, Rosas imposed his will upon the rest of the country as Governor of Buenos Aires Province from 1835 to 1852. Somewhat paradoxically, although Rosas was a champion of federalism, his concentration of power within Buenos Aires paved the way toward future centralization.

Awareness of class differences and national identity acquired particular strength during these years. To a certain degree, such feelings anteceded the Rosas government. In 1828, supporters of Dorrego had shouted "Mueran los de casaca y levita, y viva el bajo pueblo," attacking the upper classes through reference to their European clothing, which contrasted with the traditional American poncho (Di Meglio 325). Similarly, rural residents of Buenos Aires Province used the despective term "cajetilla" both towards foreigners and towards city-dwelling creoles and authorities, whom they accused of usury and greed for their exploitation of rural laborers and for their attempts to instate a system of private property (321). Under Rosas, however, classist and nationalist sentiments grew especially powerful. Rosas's cultivation of lower-class, traditionalist, and mixed-race support in opposition to the white, European-thinking elites traced a sharp line between groups, producing an "either / or" mentality that would mark Argentine politics for centuries. Although Rosas was careful never to alienate completely his foreign counterparts, especially the British, with whom there existed the possibility for new commercial ventures, his successful resistance of a French blockade in 1840 and of an Anglo-French blockade in 1845-47 made him a symbol of national pride (Rock 110-11).

The writer Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851), an opponent of Rosas who spent the last years of his life exiled in Uruguay, captured the political and social climate of the time in his short story "El matadero" (c. 1839). It is common to consider this work an allegory of contemporary Argentine life, even a sociological analysis of Federalist Buenos Aires (Sarlo and Altamirano xxv-xxvi). The story takes place during Lent and begins with a description of torrential rains, which flood the rivers surrounding the city and produce a meat shortage. Facing disaster, Rosas appears in public and presides over the sacrifice of dozens of cattle. After the popular classes assemble around the slaughterhouse to participate in the ceremonies, they see a young man arrive on horseback, whom they identify as a Unitarian, capture, and subject to torture. The tale ends when the proud Unitarian, defying his tormentors, dies in a paroxysm of rage, blood spurting from his mouth and nostrils.

Throughout the work, the narrator presents Rosas and his supporters in unequivocally negative fashion. Mocking Federalism's commitment to traditional Catholicism, the narrator sarcastically describes "beatos y beatas" and "predicadores" who interpret the floods as the end of the world and blame the "unitarios impíos" for provoking the wrath of God (Echeverría 125-26). The narrator then turns to attacking the popular classes, stating that the slaughterhouse "reunía todo lo horriblemente feo, inmundo y deforme de una pequeña clase proletaria peculiar del Río de la Plata" (129-30). This group includes "una comparsa de muchachos, de negras y mulatas achuradoras, cuya fealdad trasuntaba las harpías de la fábula" (131). Nonstandard, vulgar dialogue among these individuals soon provides linguistic markers of racial and class divisions (131), and their interpellation of the Unitarian as a "cajetilla" who "[m]onta en silla como

los gringos" reflects tension toward foreigners and foreignized creoles (135). The Unitarian, "de gallarda y bien apuesta persona" (135), expresses the opposite point of view, calling his captors "esclavos" and suggesting that they walk on all fours like wild beasts (137). With "El matadero," Echeverría accuses Rosas of perpetuating the backwardness of River Plate society and rejecting the liberty and intellectualism of Europe-derived Unitarianism.

While Buenos Aires had already become the focal point of politics and culture in the United Provinces, much of the territory of present-day Argentina still belonged to independent indigenous groups. On vast expanses in Chaco in the north, the Pampa in the center, and Patagonia in the south, native society had resisted Spanish colonization and had maintained its traditional culture and political structures. During the decades following independence, as a national state began to take form, the autonomous indigenous presence was both a threat to "white civilization" and a barrier to further economic growth. Neither the Federalists nor the Unitarians saw much of a place for indigenous peoples in the incipient national society (Kaminsky 104), and military campaigns against native populations, which had occurred since before the time of Rosas, intensified over the course of the nineteenth century. The "Indian Wars," border conflicts between autochthonous tribes and immigrant settlers, finally ended in the 1870s with the "Conquest of the Desert," led by general and future president Julio Argentino Roca (1843-1914).

The unstable relationship between creoles and natives was a dominant theme of nineteenth-century Argentine literature and played a central role in notions of national identity. The boundary between "white civilization" and "Indian barbarism" became

34

known as the "frontier," beyond which lay the "desert." This "desert" did not refer to a geographical reality, as the indigenous also dwelled on the highly fertile pampas grasslands, but rather indicated the absence of fixed, urban settlements. The term also, in an insidious rhetorical maneuver, carried the connotation that indigenous lands were empty and were simply waiting to be occupied by creole and immigrant pioneers.

Esteban Echeverría's epic poem "La cautiva," published in 1837, traced the symbolic contours of this confrontation. An exemplary text of the Romantic movement, with clear and deliberate echoes of Byron and Hugo, Echverría's work centers on the heroic protagonist, María, presenting her as an emblem of creole civilization amid Indian barbarism and a hostile landscape (Sarlo and Altamirano xxii-xxiii). The poem opens with a description of "El Desierto, / Inconmensurable, abierto / Y misterioso a sus pies" (Echeverría 62), an exotic, dangerous environment within which only the savage Indians thrive. Captured during an indigenous raid into creole settlements, María frees herself, using a knife to kill a guard, and then rescues her husband, Brián, wounded in the attack. They flee together through the wilderness until Brián dies, leaving María to wander on alone. After meeting up with a group of creoles, who inform her that the natives have killed her son, María is overcome by grief and dies as well. Echeverría's poem views the imposing grasslands as antithetical to culture and describes the indigenous in consistently negative terms. The natives appear as a "bando / de salvajes atronando ... Como torbellino" (65), carrying the heads of their victims upon lances in barbarous fashion (66). At a banquet, they drink blood from the slit throat of a mare "como sedientos vampiros" (69). The poetic speaker presents them as drunkards who, after filling themselves with alcohol, roll around on the ground like animals (69). Religious considerations also take part in the work's characterization. Brián recalls the "infernal regocijo" of the natives who killed his son and laments the death of his comrades by "la mano del infiel" (107). Portraying the indigenous peoples as the barbarous offspring of the plains, "La cautiva" suggests that only the spread of urban creole society will bring peace and civilization to rural Argentina.

The exclusion of the indigenous from national society was a relatively recent phenomenon. In the 1810s, the leaders of the River Plate revolution, like those of many other newly independent Spanish American nations, had considered identification with native peoples as a means of distinguishing themselves from Spain. In an example of what Rebecca Earle has called "indianesque nationalism," creole elites debated whether to place an Inca on the throne of the Río de la Plata in 1816 (Earle 43). During this time period, it was possible to argue that the indigenous, not the Spaniards, were the true "fathers of the nation." Prominent Argentine thinkers of the following generations would increasingly reject that view. Similar to the conservatives of the revolutionary years, they saw the natives as mere predecessors and emphasized the creoles' debt to the Spanish, who, despite their many faults, had brought civilization to America and set the foundation for post-independence society (83). Members of the Generation of 1837, such as Esteban Echeverría, posited May of 1810 as the birthdate of national identity (86), upholding both the Spanish conquerors and the creole independence heroes as the creators of national values (89). In consequence, these thinkers understood the May Revolution as an affirmation of creole sovereignty, motivated by European Enlightenment ideals, and not as the continuation of any indigenous American empire (89).

This shift toward a Eurocentric Argentine identity is visible in the writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888) and Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884), two of the dominant political theorists of the mid-nineteenth century. Although Sarmiento and Alberdi, who carried out a bitter rivalry, disagreed on the extent to which European models were applicable to Argentine reality, they both saw Europe, specifically England and France, as the source of national character. Sarmiento's highly influential 1845 work Facundo: Civilización o barbarie followed Echeverría's binary conception of Argentine society. Ostensibly a biography of Juan Facundo Quiroga, caudillo of La Rioja province, Facundo understood Argentina as a struggle between indigenous barbarism and the civilizing powers of European knowledge. In keeping with nineteenth-century determinist beliefs, Facundo presents Argentine history as a consequence of the terrain. In order to prevent the rise of barbarous leaders like Quiroga and Rosas, inevitable products of the boundless Argentine pampa, Sarmiento advocates populating the grasslands with Northern European immigrants (Sarmiento 39-44). Throughout Facundo and his other work, Sarmiento praised the United States, Britain, Germany, and Switzerland for their industry and order (Shumway 158-59). In contrast, he associates the indigenous with "hordas beduinas" (Sarmiento 86) and laments the presence of Africans within Buenos Aires, viewing them as a "raza salvaje," but he adds with relief that "[f]elizmente, las continuas guerras han exterminado ya la parte masculina de esta población" (274). A central figure in Sarmiento's portrait of the nation is the gaucho, of whom he offers a detailed typology. Sarmiento presents an ambivalent reading of the gauchos' role in Argentine society. On one hand, gauchos represent everything that is backward about the country and, for this reason, should be incorporated into civilized life through education

or compulsory military service. On the other hand, the gauchos are a powerful symbol of authentic national culture and provide a useful counterweight to the now undesirable Spanish tradition (Huberman 17).

Alberdi took a more nuanced position on national identity. In his early writings, Alberdi shared Sarmiento's misgivings about Argentina's Spanish heritage and viewed France and England as bearers of a superior culture (Shumway 138). He described Argentines as Europeans born in America who drew their heritage from abroad (Earle 87). Despite rejecting Sarmiento's binary of Civilization and Barbarism, as well as his belief that geography determined culture, Alberdi agreed with his projects for controlling the land through immigration and transportation networks (Shumway 135). From here derived Alberdi's often-cited maxim that "gobernar es poblar," which subtly reinforced the representation of indigenous land as mere "desert." Nonetheless, Alberdi questioned the extent to which the wholesale importation of Northern European models was a solution for American problems. His later writings took into account local reality, such as the mixed-blood gauchos, caudillo government, and the Spanish colonial heritage, as the basis for Argentine culture and national identity. Exposing the contradictions in recent political theory, he accused thinkers like Sarmiento of being no better than the tyrant Rosas for contemplating the extermination of the gauchos (184).

The second half of the nineteenth century marked a turning point in national politics, which allowed for long-lasting social and demographic changes and a consequent redefinition of Argentine identity. In 1852, Justo José de Urquiza (1801-1870), caudillo from the province of Entre Ríos, defeated Rosas's forces at the Battle of Caseros, after which the dictator fled to England. In 1853, Urquiza oversaw the drafting

38

of the first national constitution, modeled on the ideas of Alberdi and the laws of the United States, Switzerland, and Chile (Gorostegui de Torres 35). Urquiza thus became the first president of the Argentine Republic. The only province that refused to ratify the document was Buenos Aires, which opposed the federalization of the city, a proposal that would reduce its sway over the other administrative units and nationalize the customs office, a source of considerable and unevenly distributed revenue since the Viceroyalty (35).

Lacking the power to subdue Buenos Aires by force, Urquiza saw the rise of two parallel governments: his Argentine Confederation spanned the northern territories and was based in the Mesopotamian city of Paraná, while the independent State of Buenos Aires maintained its previous capital and boundaries. Competition between these nations was unequal from the beginning. The need to maintain a delicate political balance among its constituents, along with severe economic difficulties, due primarily to the lack of a suitable port, put the Confederation at a great disadvantage (38). Tension between the two governments led to the Battle of Cepeda in 1859, at which Urquiza defeated the porteño Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906). Despite the terms of the armistice, which nationalized the customs house and forbade Buenos Aires from conducting independent foreign policy, porteño leaders artfully exploited divisions within the Confederation and conserved much of their autonomy (67). Two years later, military conflict broke out once more between the parallel nations at the Battle of Pavón. The forces of Buenos Aires obtained victory when Urquiza, in a decision that historians have yet to explain, withdrew his army from the field of battle (70). In 1862, Mitre became president of a nominally united Argentina.

The dominant feature of the following decades was the growing concentration of power within Buenos Aires. After a series of civil wars with recalcitrant provincial caudillos, the new central government began to put into practice the basic tenets of Unitarianism. At the same time, the defeat of Federalism entailed a rejection of populism, traditional culture, and race- and class-based diversity. Mitre himself, one of Argentina's first and most celebrated historians, made no secret of his centrist and elitist beliefs. As Nicolas Shumway has explained, "Mitre was an untiring defender of porteño privilege who approached the writing of history as one more battlefield where Buenos Aires could triumph" (188). Like many of Rosas's liberal opponents earlier in the century, Mitre advocated rule by an enlightened minority, and he admired the Morenistas of the revolutionary period for their efforts to exclude the masses from political decisions (196). Mitre likewise presented a negative view of pre-conquest indigenous peoples, positing the May 1810 Revolution as the origin of national identity (Earle 113).

Beginning with Mitre, a series of like-minded presidents made up what Argentine historiography calls the "Conservative Republic." Power was concentrated in the executive branch and changed hands within a small group, which made possible a sweeping program of modernization. Railroads, long a favorite theme of Sarmiento, extended in multiple directions throughout the country, uniting the producers of the Interior with the exporters of Buenos Aires. Other measures included the installation of telegraphs, telephones, and streetcars (Gallo and Cortés Conde 38). The amount of arable land multiplied as the "Conquest of the Desert" seized territory from indigenous peoples. As a result, export-oriented cereal production gave Argentina its fame as the "breadbox of the world" and provided unprecedented levels of prosperity. Sheep farming and meat

production for local and foreign consumption, facilitated by the introduction of industrial refrigeration technology, further encouraged the privatization and enclosure of fields (Gorostegui de Torres 105). This economic growth took place with the help of significant foreign investment, of which British capital was the primary component (126).

Earlier in the nineteenth century, thinkers such as Alberdi and Sarmiento had advocated immigration as a means to populate the "desert" with hard-working, civilized Northern Europeans. The rise of the conservatives put them in a position to realize this dream, especially when Sarmiento himself assumed the presidency in 1868. Immigration did, in fact, occur in spectacular fashion. Between 1869 and 1895, Argentina's population grew from approximately 1.7 million inhabitants to nearly 4 million, due primarily to an influx of foreigners (Gallo and Cortés Conde 51). Although the familiar motivations, such as a lack of opportunities in Europe and a desire to take advantage of Argentina's booming economy, played an important role in attracting these immigrants, the Argentine government was a factor as well. A very successful propaganda campaign, carried out by a series of Argentine agencies in Europe, presented the country in the best possible light to potential immigrants (52-53). An 1876 law established the Hotel de Inmigrantes in Buenos Aires to assist these individuals during their first days in Argentina (52). The problem, however, was that the immigrants who reached Argentina did not correspond to the conservatives' expectations. During the period when Argentina undertook its immigration campaign, the worldwide flow of Northern European emigrants was in decline, and those who did leave home preferred the United States and British Dominion, due both to linguistic similarities and to negative publicity regarding failed British colonization projects in Argentina (54). In consequence, government policies attracted not Germans and Anglo-Saxons but rather Spaniards and Italians.

As the central government extended its reach into the Interior and sought to incorporate the rural working classes within the nascent national order, its use of force gave rise to varying forms of protest. The most noteworthy appeared in gauchesque literature, an originally popular genre that came to acquire prestige among the lettered elite. Gauchesque literature emerged within a precise legal context. Unable to provide proof of fixed residence or a stable source of work, gauchos were considered vagabonds by the Argentine justice system, which forcibly recruited them into the army (Ludmer 16-18). During the civil wars, the border conflicts with indigenous communities, and the horrific War of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay (1864-70), gaucho conscripts faced not only the risk of violent death but also a constant lack of food, shelter, and supplies. The dialogues and poems of Bartolomé Hidalgo (1788-1822) and Hilario Ascasubi (1807-1875) used the figure of the gaucho to denounce such injustices. Other works expressed a more elitist perspective. In the humorous poem Fausto (1866), Estanislao del Campo (1834-1880) pokes fun at a gaucho who, having attended a performance of the opera *Faust* in Buenos Aires, fails to distinguish between fiction and reality and tells an interlocutor that he has seen the devil.

The most celebrated example of gaucho literature, José Hernández's two-part poem *Martín Fierro*, continued this tradition of social commentary. In *Martín Fierro* (1872), also known as the *Ida*, the gaucho protagonist is conscripted into the army and forced to abandon his wife and children. Upon returning home, Fierro discovers that his family has disappeared. After killing a man in a knife fight, he flees from the police and receives the aid of Sergeant Cruz, who admires Fierro's bravery. At the end of the poem, Fierro and Cruz, himself now a fugitive from justice, turn their back on Argentine "civilization," choosing instead to live beyond the border with the indigenous tribes. The heroes' decision inverts Sarmiento's dichotomy by presenting urban society as savage. In 1879, Hernández published a sequel to the poem, *La vuelta de Martín Fierro*, which preached social integration. As the title suggests, after rescuing a white woman from her native captors, in a nod to works such as "La cautiva," Fierro returns to "civilization" and is reunited with his children. The protagonist continues to voice complaints against government mistreatment of the gauchos, but his overall message is now one of resignation and acceptance. Whereas the *Ida* portrays the gaucho as a victim of the corrupt urban legal system and the abuses of the elite, the *Vuelta* sets forth a moral code through which the gaucho should join the modern workforce.

As the consequences of massive immigration became clearer, a new generation of intellectuals, looking to preserve traditional aspects of Argentine culture, turned to gaucho literature for a symbol of national identity. Viewing foreigners as a threat was hardly a recent phenomenon, as Europeans arriving in Argentina had always met with a certain degree of resistance. As early as 1855, the first projects to colonize the Chaco region with immigrants drew complaints from the locals, who criticized the government for its generosity toward foreigners and neglect of its own citizens (Di Meglio 424). Catholic clergy and townspeople opposed the arrival of Protestants and Masons, whom they associated with the liberal government's efforts at secularization (424-25). By the late nineteenth century, however, these misgivings had transcended the popular sphere and reached political and cultural elites. Even Sarmiento, an unwavering proponent of

immigration for so many decades, expressed disappointment at its effect on Argentine society, lamenting the influx of individuals "sin patria allá, ni acá" and motivated only by economic concerns (Gallo and Cortés Conde 71). Although immigrants did settle on the grasslands, which had been "emptied" of indigenous peoples through warfare and forced relocation (Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 68), they also flowed into the cities, where they made up an increasing percentage of the factory workforce (62). These individuals brought to Argentina their experiences of class conflict in Europe. Skilled organizers and agitators, they were often members of Communist, Socialist, or Anarchist groups, and they led the struggle for greater workers' rights in their new home, forming labor unions and carrying out strikes to obtain concessions (80). Particularly during the first decades of the twentieth century, tension between workers and business owners resulted in widespread violence. The Russian Revolution of 1917 had led to fears of a similar uprising in Argentina, and the government, though initially sympathetic to the unions' demands, took swift action against perceived threats to the capitalist system. During the "Semana Roja" of 1909, police fired upon demonstrators and received the support of president José Figueroa Alcorta (1860-1931), while the "Semana Trágica" of 1919 featured rioting and brutal state repression, for which no law enforcement officials were held responsible (85).

During these decades, in reaction to the growing pressure of class-based popular organization, the Argentine elite propelled a series of political and social reforms, which in turn gave rise to further redefinition of national identity. The Ley Sáenz Peña of 1912, which seemed to promote democracy by extending suffrage to all male citizens of appropriate age, served in practice to divide the working classes. The law excluded

foreigners from civic life and separated "responsible citizens," who preferred to voice their demands in a legally sanctioned manner, from those who wished to continue the armed struggle and, in consequence, expose themselves to justifiable state repression under the new system (Adamovsky, Clase media 62). Although the victory of the Radical candidate Hipólito Yrigoyen (1852-1933) dealt the conservatives an unexpected loss at the polls, electoral reform proved successful in weakening class-based identification among workers (Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 120). Over the same period, conservatives also fought against international socialism and communism, which stressed the common cause of the global proletariat, by attempting to instil patriotic sentiment in Argentine workers. In particular after 1910, the year of the country's first centennial, nationalism became an increasingly powerful component of political and intellectual discourse. In order to reduce internal divisions, the elite promoted the myth of Argentina as a "racial melting pot" (crisol de razas), revaluing and idealizing native components of the population, such as gauchos and the indigenous, who had ceased to be a visible presence in the Littoral and who no longer represented a challenge to modern, urban society. Nonetheless, whenever the threat of popular mobilization reemerged, so too did the previous methods of classification. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, opposing politicians doubted the civility of Yrigoyen's working-class supporters. Socialist leaders, for example, revived century-old fears of "barbarian" invasion by denouncing the presence of "malevaje" and "gauchaje" among the Radical constituency (97).

Therefore, instead of eliminating the previous racial hierarchy, the new conception of national identity produced a hidden scale of values, affirming that the

45

product of racial fusion was white and European, thus excluding the millions of Argentines who did not correspond to that label (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 62-64). This maneuver did much to further the notion of Argentina as a European outpost in South America and to distinguish its population from that of neighboring countries. With immigration established as the dominant characteristic of national identity, it was possible to affirm, in a popular saying that has become nearly axiomatic, that "Mexicans are descended from the Aztecs, Peruvians are descended from the Incas, and Argentines descended from ships" (Grimson and Kessler 119). The contrast with two Spanish American nations known for their indigenous heritage suggests that indigenous peoples have made no contribution to Argentine identity. Descendants of Africans are similarly excluded, as the "ships" refer only to European immigration, not to the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and their descendants.

The conservative project to redefine Argentine identity underlies many canonical literary texts and popular entertainment from the time period, particularly those works centered on the gaucho. By forming part of what Adolfo Prieto has called "el discurso criollista," gauchesque literature allowed Argentine elites to differentiate themselves from the recent European immigrants and to build a foundation for a new national consensus. Leopoldo Lugones's *El payador* (1916), a series of lectures on *Martín Fierro* and the gaucho's role in national life, helped to solidify this project. Other intellectuals, such as Joaquín V. González (1863-1923) and Ricardo Rojas (1882-1957), contrasted Buenos Aires, which they presented as false and superficial, with the "true" Argentina of the Interior (Chamosa 117-18). Criollo dramas and circuses were important features of popular culture during these years. Gaucho characters such as Martín Fierro, Santos

Vega, and Juan Moreira appeared as romantic rebels beyond the frontier of "civilization" (117). In 1926, Ricardo Güiraldes published the novel Don Segundo Sombra, a comingof-age story in which an idealized gaucho teaches his craft to the young Fabio Cáceres. After a series of formative adventures in the countryside, Fabio learns that he is the son of a rich man and has inherited a fortune. Against his will, Fabio begins a new life, in which he must make trips to Buenos Aires in order to become "lo que se llama un hombre culto" (Güiraldes 237), leaving behind his gaucho past. At the novel's conclusion, Don Segundo and his horse appear as a "silhouette" against the sky, and Fabio explains that "[a]quello que se alejaba era más una idea que un hombre" (238). As both this image and the work's title suggest, by 1926, the gaucho had become a ghostly shadow, a legend rooted firmly in the past. In fact, as the historian Oscar Chamosa has argued, criollista authors praised folk life without concerning themselves much with the plight of contemporary indigenous and mestizo populations. Criollo literature likewise centered its portrayal of rural life on the horse-riding gauchos of the grasslands, overlooking the great diversity of cultures in regions such as Chaco, the Northwest, and the Northeast, with which residents of Buenos Aires had less direct experience (Chamosa 118).

Perhaps the most significant contribution to criollo identity during these decades appears in the work of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). A renowned author both in Argentina and throughout the world, Borges is known primarily for themes such as masks, mirrors, and labyrinths. However, within Argentine literary studies, Borges has received equal critical attention for his engagement with national history and myth. His short stories, poems, and essays frequently mention nineteenth-century figures such as

47

Juan Manuel de Rosas ("Rosas") and Facundo Quiroga ("El general Quiroga va en coche al muere"), and his work "El fin" rewrites the ending of *Martín Fierro*.

Borges's short story "El sur" is particularly important, as it exemplifies how, by the first half of the twentieth century, tension between immigrant progress and creole traditionalism had attained a prominent role in ideas of national identity. The story's protagonist, Juan Dahlmann, is descended from the two dominant strains of Argentine society in accordance with conservative beliefs. One of his grandfathers was a German Evangelical pastor who arrived in 1871, while the other was a creole who died fighting "indios" at the Buenos Aires border. The narrator mentions the "discordia" between Dahlmann's "dos linajes" and points out, perhaps somewhat sardonically, his "criollismo algo voluntario, pero nunca ostentoso," founded, among other things, upon "el hábito de estrofas del Martín Fierro" (562). When Dahlmann decides to travel south to visit a family ranch, he "pudo sospechar que viajaba al pasado y no sólo al Sur" (565). The train stops in the middle of the countryside, where Dahlmann is delighted to come across an old man in gaucho attire, "oscuro, chico y reseco," whom he associates with Southern identity and the national past, almost as if the gaucho were a museum exhibit come to life (565). However, shortly afterward, an aggressive and inebriated man with a "cara achinada" (566) interrupts Dahlmann's attempts to read and challenges him to a knife fight. Unarmed, Dahlmann receives a knife from the old gaucho. The narrator explains that "[e]ra como si el Sur hubiera resuelto que Dahlmann aceptara el duelo" and suggests that he will die as a result (567).

By mentioning a recent accident and stay at the hospital and by including several oniric elements, Borges's story introduces the possibility of an alternate reading, in which

48

a moribund Dahlmann dreams a romantic death in keeping with his criollista pretensions. Even so, regardless of the interpretation, Borges's story articulates the vision of national identity that had come to the forefront during the first decades of the twentieth century, as "typical" Argentines were the product of creole culture and European immigration. At the same time, Borges reveals the tension within this idea. Dahlmann's error is to confuse his idealized version of the gaucho with real-life rural laborers, who, like Yrigoyen's working-class supporters and the masses excluded by the new political system, could prove threatening to urban, Europeanized "civilization." The narrator's descriptions of the southern men as "oscuro" and with a "cara achinada" also call attention to the mestizo and indigenous background of the popular classes.

Borges's depiction of national identity formed part of a wider cultural struggle, which Argentine literary history has called *Florida* vs. *Boedo*, named after the two streets of Buenos Aires with which each camp of writers was associated. Florida, located downtown, was luxurious and cosmopolitan, while Boedo was located in the dingy outskirts and featured working-class bars and cafés (Gnutzmann 18). These differences extended into the realm of art. Whereas the Florida group focused on the aesthetic ideal, preferred poetry, and sought to renovate Argentine letters through contact with the European avant-garde movements, the populist Boedo group took its inspiration from Russian realists and often denounced the injustices of capitalism (19). The distinction is most apparent between the poetry of Borges, in search of beauty and solutions to metaphysical problems, and the narrative work of Roberto Arlt (1900-1942), which centered on street life, criminal activity, and everyday hardship. For the Florida group, Argentina was a progressive, European nation with a romantic creole past. For their rivals in Boedo, it was a nation of working-class immigrants struggling to make ends meet within an oppressive system.

In 1928, the Radical leader Hipólito Yrigoyen won his second presidential election. This time, however, conservatives were less disposed to share power and began a fierce opposition campaign, which included both political groups and members of the armed forces. In 1930, with Yrigoyen weakened by the deterioration of his party and by the 1929 world economic crisis, General José Félix Uriburu led a military coup to become the first de facto president of modern Argentina (Cantón, Moreno, and Ciria 159-64). Argentine historiography considers this event the "Restauración conservadora" and the beginning of the "Década infame," a period characterized by unprecedented levels of corruption, policies designed to benefit the upper classes, commercial agreements that favored British imperial interests, and intense suppression of workers' unions and leftist organizations (Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 153). Having banned the popular Unión Cívica Rádical, the conservatives ruled in a series of fraudulent governments, in which wide-scale political violence, repression, and torture made their first appearance in Argentina (Cantón, Moreno, and Ciria 166).

The 1930s also saw the rise of creole nationalists, who proposed a slightly modified version of Argentine identity. Linked to the Catholic Church and inspired by the contemporary authoritarian movements of Hitler and Mussolini, creole nationalists were fundamentally anti-liberal, rejecting liberal constitutionalism and laissez-faire economic policies. Creole nationalists were also Hispanists and sought to vindicate the historical legacy of Spanish conquest and colonization. In contrast to the *leyenda negra*, the negative portrayal of Spain that had been spread by nineteenth-century intellectuals such

as Sarmiento, they proposed a *leyenda rosa*, which presented Spain as the origin of all Argentina's triumphs and which blamed other foreign influences for all its failures (191-92). Other noteworthy characteristics of creole nationalism were its defense of Juan Manuel de Rosas as a champion of national sovereignty; its antisemitism, which blamed Jews for the evils of capitalism; and its belief that Argentina was destined to hold sway over the territories comprising the former Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (192). In 1943, during the context of the Second World War, in which Argentina had remained neutral, creole nationalists carried out a military coup against the conservative government. The leaders of the armed forces feared the spread of communism and wished to prepare for a possible conflict with Brazil over dominance in South America. In order to achieve social stability and to strengthen the military through industrialization, the new regime needed the collaboration of the working classes and thus sought to integrate them into national affairs (Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 165).

The masses' rise to prominence occurred in an unexpected manner and would challenge the dominant representations of Argentine identity. After taking power, the new regime placed Juan Domingo Perón (1895-1974) at the head of the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión, where he expressed a desire for "peaceful cooperation" between capitalists and workers (166-67). Perón quickly gained popularity by regulating collective salary agreements and imposing obligatory state mediation in the event of labor conflicts (173). Despite the misgivings of union leaders, who feared that Perón was a fascist attempting to subordinate the labor movement, he gained wide support in the streets, coming to wield such a large influence that de facto president Edelmiro Farrell relieved him of his duties and imprisoned him in 1945. In protest of this decision, Perón's

supporters spontaneously marched to Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, the symbolic center of the nation. Many of the participants were poorly dressed and had dark skin. They came from humble neighborhoods and precarious housing units on the outskirts of the city, where they worked in factories (166-173). Caught off guard by this massive demonstration, the government released Perón, who then used his reputation as an ally of the workers to win the presidential election of 1946.

The period from 1946 to 1953, known in Argentine historiography as the "first Peronism," introduced dramatic changes in society and revealed tension between competing versions of national identity. For much of the country's history, depictions of "typical" Argentines had centered on the light-skinned, urban descendants of Europeans, especially those who resided in Buenos Aires and the Littoral provinces. Even during the criollista movement of the early twentieth century, the idealization of native heritage had not implied a similar concern for modern-day indigenous and mestizo citizens. The October 17th movement in favor of Perón marked a turning point in Argentine history because it drew attention to what had long been silenced and made invisible. Until this moment, Buenos Aires had been what one historian has called a "white citadel," associated with "culture," "decency," and "progress," an outpost of European civilization in South America (187). Darker-skinned individuals, viewed as lacking culture and political acumen, were associated with the province of Buenos Aires and the interior of the country. By occupying the iconic Plaza de Mayo, these individuals made their presence known on a national scale and disproved the myth of a white Argentina.

The first Peronism, like its many reiterations over the subsequent decades, was fraught with contradictions, many of which stemmed from how the leader had risen to

power. Perón had received a Catholic, Hispanist, and upper-class education, and his alliance with the working classes was primarily circumstantial, as this was the only group that proved willing to support him (Adamovsky, Clase media 244). Perón and his wife, Eva Duarte de Perón (1919-1952), attacked cultural and political hierarchies but frequently conformed to bourgeois aesthetics and standards of behavior. Although Peronism sought to unite and mobilize the working classes, it never questioned the foundations of capitalism or private property. Similarly, Perón's criollista defense of rural mestizo and indigenous Argentines coexisted with his Hispanist view of national identity, which served to emphasize a "white," European heritage (Karush and Chamosa 16). The limits of Peronism are particularly clear in the 1946 "Malón de la Paz," remembered as the "first social movement for indigenous rights in Argentina" (Lenton 85). After marching peacefully from the Northwestern provinces of Salta and Jujuy to the city of Buenos Aires, representatives of indigenous communities petitioned the government to restore their ancestral land. Perón's ministers welcomed the delegation, but the indigenous were eventually evicted from the Hotel de Inmigrantes by the police and sent back home by express train (98).

These contradictions notwithstanding, many middle- and upper-class Argentines viewed Peronism as the enemy of civilization. Peronism's opponents interpreted the October 17th protest and subsequent mass gatherings as an "invasion" of the city. To an extent, this term alluded to the flow of internal migrants from the Interior toward the Littoral in recent decades, a result of state-sponsored industrialization campaigns (Cantón, Moreno, and Ciria 145). However, there were profound historical resonances, as well, with the "invasion" recalling the indigenous incursions across the border, the

followers of rural caudillos during the civil wars, and the defeat of Buenos Aires at the Battle of Cepeda in 1859. The urban landscape changed accordingly. Residents of Buenos Aires, now forced to share restaurants, cafés, train stations, and streetcars with dark-skinned workers, began to fear for their personal safety and property (Milanesio 55). Not surprisingly, they developed a series of negative stereotypes to disqualify Perón's supporters and, in consequence, disqualify the movement. The Radical congressman Ernesto Sanmartino coined the term "aluvión zoológico," which continued the "invasion" motif, animalized Peronists, and recalled the nineteenth-century binary of "civilization vs. barbarism" (72). These years also saw the appearance of the term "cabecita negra," which referred to dark hair and to indigenous and mestizo physical characteristics in general (55). A related term was "negro," a physical description that likewise carried connotations of poverty and incivility. One of the "black legends" of anti-Peronist propaganda depicted internal migrants who moved from shantytowns into public housing units, where they promptly removed the wooden floor to prepare a barbecue and used the bathtub as a flowerpot, thus demonstrating their inability to live in civilized fashion (57).

The trope of "barbarian invasion" underlies two canonical literary works from the time period: Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares's "La fiesta del Monstruo" and Julio Cortázar's "Casa tomada" (Plotkin 275-76). Written in late 1947, little over a year after Perón's rise to power, "La fiesta del Monstruo" features a first-person, workingclass narrator who recalls his journey from Greater Buenos Aires to Plaza de Mayo, where he and his companions take part in a political rally. Although the story never mentions Perón, it soon becomes clear that he is the "Monstruo" of the title. The narrator considers the Monstruo a "gran laburante argentino" (Borges and Bioy Casares 393), an allusion to Perón's identification with the working masses, and he sings the "marcha que es nuestra bandera" (394), which references the "Marcha Peronista," a crucial marker of Peronist loyalty since the movement's inception. In keeping with anti-Peronist strategies, the story seeks to disqualify Perón by disqualifying his constituency. Upon reaching the capital, the narrator and his companions rob and murder a Jewish man, associated with culture and a middle-class lifestyle, for refusing to respect the Monstruo's flag and photograph (401). This display of antisemitism is hardly coincidental, as Perón's opponents accused him of sympathizing with Nazi Germany. The story's historical context goes much further, however, as Borges and Bioy Casares depict the twentiethcentury "invasion" of Buenos Aires as a repetition of nineteenth-century popular uprisings. The epigraph is from Hilario Ascasubi's 1839 poem "La refalosa," which offers a gruesome description of how Juan Manuel de Rosas's police force tortured its victims. This allusion to Rosas likewise reinforces the view of Perón as a demagogue who gained power by manipulating the ignorant masses. Similarly, the lower-class gang's aggression toward a "civilized" individual recalls the violent death of the Unitarian at the end of Echeverría's "El matadero."

Whereas Borges and Bioy emphasize the occupation of "cultured" urban space by a Peronist mob, Cortázar's work focuses on the loss of upper-class privilege in a changing social and economic context. The narrator and his wife live alone in a house large enough for eight people. With no need to seek employment, as "todos los meses llegaba plata de los campos y el dinero aumentaba" (142), the couple spend the day performing domestic chores. Stamp collecting and French literature are the narrator's hobbies, but he peruses downtown bookstores in vain because "[d]esde 1939 no llegaba nada valioso a la Argentina" (142). Suddenly and inexplicably, part of the house is "taken." Shut off from his library, the narrator attempts to cope with the new situation: "poco a poco empezábamos a no pensar. Se puede vivir sin pensar" (145). Problems become more concrete in a subsequent partitioning of the house, during which the narrator leaves behind fifteen thousand pesos in a "taken" room. The story concludes with the couple abandoning their home in a scene that recalls the final lines of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This expulsion from an aristocratic Eden, with the loss of culture and wealth that it entails, symbolizes upper-class Argentines' resentment toward Peronist reform, which placed workers at the center of national identity and criticized the rich as enemies of the people. The fantastic nature of Cortázar's story, which never explains who is "taking" the house or for what reason, further conveys the upper class's confusion and sense of helplessness.

The cultural and political conflict during the first Peronist government changed the ways in which groups identified themselves and viewed their role within the nation. According to historian Ezequiel Adamovsky, Perón's 1946 electoral victory was a "trauma" with long-lasting consequences, as it showed that the "cultured" part of Argentina was neither the entire nation nor even the dominant group (*Clase media* 282). Although Argentina had been divided in this way since at least the nineteenth century (282), the increasing presence of working-class Argentines in public affairs, together with Perón's divisive rhetoric of "national vs. antinational," "pueblo vs. antipueblo," and "workers vs. oligarchs" (Karush 23), widened the rift between two competing versions of national identity. This division would eventually produce a new economic and social category: the Argentine middle class. Although the country's legacy of class struggle, along with varying degrees of government and commercial propaganda over the previous decades, had created separation between white-collar professionals and blue-collar workers, no one spoke of a "middle class" in 1945 (Adamovsky, Clase media 265, 281). Instead, both Peronists and anti-Peronists presented themselves as the entire nation and argued that their opponents did not constitute the "true pueblo" (281-84). In the following years, however, Perón's opponents realized that fostering a middle-class identity could fragment the broad coalition of workers and reduce the government's power base. Anti-Peronist intellectuals such as the sociologist Gino Germani presented Argentina as unique among Latin American nations for its large middle class. A recurring idea was that, since a period of "modernization" in the nineteenth century, Argentine society had become more egalitarian through widespread upward social mobility (357). This new interpretation of national identity portrayed the middle class as a guardian of morality and guarantor of scientific progress. Descended from Europeans and associated with culture, the Argentine middle class was, by default, both white and anti-Peronist (375-76). Consequently, the poor were depicted as the dark-skinned, uncivilized, and mindless followers of demagogues such as Perón.

Over the following decades, unable to resolve the tension between these competing visions of national identity, Argentina would fall into a cycle of political violence and economic instability. In 1955, the "Revolución Libertadora," a military coup backed not only by religious and business leaders but also by a large percentage of the population, overthrew Perón, who fled to Paraguay and then exiled himself to Spain. The new military government initially presented itself as a return to the constitutional tradition, but the hard line won out, leading to the dissolution and proscription of the Peronist party.² Intellectual and political debate at this time centered on how to "deperonize" and re-educate the masses after years of "demagogy" (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 329-31). Attention to the middle class, seen as a bearer of progress and civilization, increased as a result, and the winner of the 1958 presidential election, Arturo Frondizi (1908-1995), appeared as "el Perón de la clase media" (347). However, Frondizi had made a secret pact with Perón, who, from exile, had promised electoral support in exchange for the reinstatement of the Peronist party. When Frondizi respected this agreement in 1962, Peronist candidates won multiple provincial elections. The military responded with another coup, which placed José María Guido in power with an anti-Peronist cabinet. Perón, nonetheless, continued to wield influence from exile. A return to proscribed elections in 1963 saw the Radical candidate Arturo Illia become president with only 25.8% of the vote, as Perón had asked his supporters to cast blank ballots (Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 251).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the military's failures to eradicate Peronist loyalty, combined with an increasingly volatile international context, brought political tension to new heights. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had provided hope to leftist groups and confirmed the fears of conservative governments across Latin America. Like many of its neighbors, Argentina experienced a "turn to the left" during these years. Widespread questioning of consumer culture, traditional values, and authority in general implied greater solidarity between the middle and lower classes. Since the military coup

² Disagreement among anti-Peronist elites produced a military conflict between two factions: the Colorados and the Azules. The Colorados wished to ban Peronism, which they understood as a class-based movement and thus a gateway to communism. The Azules, in contrast, wished to fight the threat of communism by removing Peronism's subversive elements and incorporating it within national politics (De Riz 31; Adamovsky, *Clases populares* 249).

of 1955, a Peronist "Resistance" had existed in Argentina, with "commando" units operating throughout the country. Some of these groups took direct action, such as a failed attempt in 1963-64 to create a "foco," inspired by the revolutionary tactics of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, in Northwestern Salta Province (258). The dominant guerrilla organizations in Argentina were Montoneros, composed primarily of middle- and upperclass Catholic students, and the Marxist Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) (259). Such groups, together with worker disobedience and occupation of factories, sparked fears of a communist takeover and resulted in yet another military coup, the "Revolución Argentina" of 1966, led by Juan Carlos Onganía. This new regime presented itself as a protector of western, Christian values and sought to achieve stability through modernization and development. In addition to the familiar European, rational, and middle-class version of national identity, Onganía's government added a geopolitical component by attempting to lead Argentina to its "destino de grandeza" (De Riz 40). However, a series of popular uprisings, such as the "Cordobazo" of 1969, along with an increase in both rural and urban guerrilla activity, eventually left the military with no other option than to reinstate Peronism.

The return of Peronism to national politics not only failed to restore order but also opened the door to unprecedented levels of state repression. In 1973, the Peronist Héctor Cámpora became president and soon called for new elections, in which Perón himself would return from exile and take part. Perón's arrival in Argentina on June 20 of that year is a landmark in Argentine history. During the previous decades, Perón had offered contradictory messages to his followers, hoping both to prevent leaders of the Peronist Resistance from taking command of his movement and to sow chaos in Argentine society. Perón believed, correctly in the end, that prolonged instability would weaken military and non-peronist civilian governments, forcing them to lift the ban on Peronism. Even so, an unintended consequence of this strategy was that Peronist doctrine, ambivalent from the beginning, grew even more difficult to define (127). As a result, diverse ideological tendencies co-existed beneath the banner of "Peronism" and fought to impose their interpretation of the leader's philosophy. On June 20, in what scholarly and popular memory calls the "Massacre of Ezeiza," conservative members of Peronism opened fire upon leftist groups at a demonstration to welcome Perón, who immediately made it clear that he had not arrived to implement socialism. After winning the new presidential election, Perón reconciled with the armed forces and began to purge the more revolutionary members from his party. With Perón in office, and perhaps with his knowledge and consent, the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (Triple A) came into being (Adamovsky, Clases populares 307). This para-state organization would be responsible for the kidnapping, torture, and murder of thousands of individuals. Following Perón's death of a heart attack in 1974, his vice president and wife, María Estela "Isabel" Perón, took office. Having already distanced itself from leftist groups, the government assumed an even more anti-popular nature, favoring large international and national capital and passing the Ley de Seguridad of 1974, ostensibly to fight the guerrillas but used to repress workers (314-15). As the country spiraled out of control, military leaders intervened once again. This time, however, the military wanted not to restore order but rather to carry out a profound reorganization of national politics, economics, and society.

The *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, as the new military regime called itself, viewed Peronist-driven populism as the primary cause of disorder and instability.

Its leaders wished to defend "national values" against foreign subversion, which they considered a disease that had attacked all aspects of life (Novaro and Palermo 35). By early 1976, the guerrilla organizations no longer posed a military threat, but government repression intensified (74). Military, police, and para-state gangs kidnapped individuals suspected of "subversion," torturing and murdering thousands in clandestine detention centers throughout the country. Workers, students, employees, and teachers were the most frequent targets (117). As the authorities often operated outside the legal system, refusing due process to detainees, the victims of the dictatorship came to be known as *los desaparecidos*, the disappeared. Although local and international opinion would later turn against the regime as its grievous human rights violations came to light, many Argentines, worn out by years of chaos and conflict, initially supported the dictatorship and the return to order that it represented (23).

The Proceso was not a unified block but rather an unstable mixture of competing philosophies. Between 1976 and 1983, disagreement among the three branches of the armed forces, as well as personal rivalries among their leaders and the various de facto presidents, resulted in compromises and shifting policies, which the military did not always implement as intended. However, one central trait of the regime's activity was its attempt to lead Argentina toward a dominant role in Latin America. This was an old ambition, with roots in the early-nineteenth-century projects to "recover" the former territories of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, as well as in early-twentieth-century hopes of achieving levels of prosperity comparable to the United States and Europe. On one hand, the Proceso understood Argentina's international role in ideological terms. The Catholic establishment was important in the dictatorship, which viewed Argentina as a combatant in "World War III," the battle against communism and "subversion" in defense of traditional beliefs (92). Argentina was also a member of Plan Cóndor, a broad collaboration in which military forces of several Latin American countries worked in tandem to capture or kill dissidents (122). Argentine officials were particularly active in Bolivia and Central America, where they trained death squads (321).

On the other hand, and especially as domestic and international support for the regime waned, the Proceso appealed to patriotic sentiment and would connect military success with positive representations of national identity. Argentina's victory in the 1978 FIFA World Cup, which it hosted, was both a national triumph and an opportunity for the armed forces to project their vision of the country. The regime hired a U.S.-based advertising firm to promote Argentina as an orderly and attractive tourist destination. Following in the footsteps of the criollista movement from earlier in the century, the campaign extolled the virtues of the gaucho and called attention to the breathtaking landscapes of the Interior (283). At around the same time, in the face of criticism from international human rights organizations, the government denounced an "anti-Argentine campaign" and encouraged the public to solidarize with the armed forces, which had, according to their propaganda, defeated the guerrilla, restored order, and made possible an era of prosperity (164).

This identification of Argentina with its military soon acquired more dangerous implications. In 1977, rising nationalism in both Argentina and Chile had nearly resulted in a war over the control of the Beagle Channel (255).³ By the early 1980s, however, the

³ The Beagle Channel, located at the southern tip of South America on the border between Argentina and Chile, had long been a point of contention. In 1881, Argentine president Julio Argentino Roca had avoided war by signing a treaty, and in the 1902

military had grown desperate amid political and economic difficulties. With patriotic fervor still at a high point, hard-line officials saw an invasion of the Falkland Islands, a British possession in the South Atlantic, as a way to regain public support and guarantee themselves a peaceful transition to the increasingly probable civilian government (403-04). The Argentine military took control of Port Stanley, the Islands' capital, in 1982, renaming it "Puerto Argentino." Contrary to expectations, both the United States and the United Nations condemned the maneuver, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher responded to the occupation with force. Most Argentines, including intellectuals such as the author Ernesto Sabato (451), believed that national identity was at stake and came together to support the government, but the British expedition easily defeated the invaders (446-57). The humiliating defeat revealed the weakness of the Argentine military and precipitated the regime's collapse.⁴ Patriotism quickly turned into bitterness and anger, as many blamed the government for having misled the public (462-63).

Pactos de Mayo, each nation had promised to resolve border disputes through diplomacy. In 1971, de facto president Alejandro Lanusse and president Salvador Allende of Chile submitted the case to Great Britain for arbitration. The decision, handed down in 1977, awarded Chile not only the Beagle Channel islands but also additional territories not originally included in the case. Argentina refused to recognize the decision, and the hard-line members of its military saw an opportunity to rekindle support for the regime. Argentine troops, already mobilized, came within mere hours of starting a war. Papal intervention eventually dissuaded Argentina from this course of action (Novaro and Palermo 247-58).

⁴ Like the Beagle Channel disagreement, the Falkland Islands conflict had deep historical roots. The British had occupied the territories in 1833, and the 150th anniversary was approaching when the Argentine military carried out the invasion (Novaro and Palermo 411-12). The question had existed alongside Argentina's long commercial relationship and cultural affinity with Great Britain. Following the rise of Hispanism in the early twentieth century, the Falkland Islands debate offered an opportunity to denounce British imperialism in the South Atlantic. Leopoldo Marechal's 1948 novel *Adán Buenosayres*, for example, negatively portrays the British through the character Mr. Chisholm, and one of his Argentine interlocutors demands that Britain return the Islands to their rightful owners (Marechal 335). In 1965, in a worldwide context of decolonization, a United

The period from 1976 to 1983 also featured a number of economic reforms, without precedent in national history, that both contributed to the idea of Argentina as a "first-world" country and sowed the seeds of long-term instability and poverty. In contrast with previous governments, both civilian and military, the leaders of the Proceso saw the welfare state and protective tariffs as breeding grounds of subversion. Inspired by the dominant theories in the United States, as well as by the regional examples of Chile and Brazil, Economy Minister José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz introduced a series of neoliberal policies designed to attract foreign investment and subject the country to the logic of the market (35-37). For a time, the resulting prosperity created the illusion that Argentina had rejoined the club of wealthy nations. Argentines had the ability to travel and make purchases abroad, and some held savings accounts in U.S. dollars (353). Nonetheless, the negative consequences of economic reform soon became apparent. The government had financed itself through foreign loans, and heavy external debt left Argentina dependent on foreign creditors. The historian Luis Alberto Romero has described 1976 as the beginning of a "decadent Argentina," characterized by a sharp decline in production, high levels of unemployment, a polarized and impoverished society, and the systematic destruction of the state (Romero 73-74).

Despite its ignominious exit from power, the Argentine military had achieved its goal of profoundly reorganizing all aspects of society. Although Peronism had survived both in collective memory and in multiple resistance movements, 1983 marked a turning

Nations resolution had recognized Argentina's claim and invited the two parties to negotiate. By 1982, the Argentine military had planned an invasion in the event that negotiation proved fruitless. This strategy was based on numerous miscalculations, as the regime saw Britain as weak and decadent, expected the United States to remain neutral, and counted on the support of the "third world," China, and the USSR (Novaro and Palermo 413-20).

point for the party, which lost a legitimate, open election for the first time in its history (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 412). The horrors of the dictatorship made possible the definitive triumph of the middle class as a symbol of Argentine identity. Rejecting the emotional and plebeian character of Peronist political expression, the mass media portrayed the middle class as rational and as a guarantor of stability. To a certain extent, this interpretation of national identity had socioeconomic and racial implications, with "white" middle-class professionals replacing darker-skinned workers as "typical" Argentines. The victory of the middle class thus counteracted the inversion of values that Peronism had introduced in the previous decades. Nonetheless, ideological considerations also played a significant role in the new conception of Argentine identity. President Raúl Alfonsín, who often portrayed democracy as a cure to all of the nation's problems, proposed a moderate and respectful "civismo democrático" as a behavioral model (414-15). Related to this maneuver was the emergence of the "teoría de los dos demonios," most prominent in Alfonsín but common in Peronist discourse as well. This interpretation of the chaotic preceding decades placed the blame on left-wing guerrillas and the rightwing military dictatorship. To equate isolated acts of terror with massive, state-sponsored violence was certainly problematic, but the theory's most direct consequence was to exculpate the vast majority of Argentines (Novaro and Palermo 491-93). Freed from any responsibility in either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary violence, the "democratic" Argentine middle class saw itself as a break from the past.

In practice, however, the military's legacy proved more difficult to erase. The return to democracy had done little to alleviate the economic crisis. Civilian governments found themselves at the mercy of foreign lenders and the International Monetary Fund,

65

which imposed austerity plans in order to reduce government spending (Romero 78). An uncontrolled rise in prices, which received the name of "hyperinflation," forced Alfonsin to leave office in 1989. His successor, the Peronist Carlos Menem, had campaigned as a man of the people but began to implement neoliberal reforms after taking office. Menem's Minister of the Economy, Domingo de Cavallo, had worked for the Proceso, and he eliminated most protective tariffs and privatized nearly all state companies. As before, financial and investment sectors greatly benefited from the open market, but many workers found themselves unemployed, and many middle- and small-scale businesses went bankrupt due to competition from multinationals. Nevertheless, these consequences did not immediately become apparent, and a brief climate of prosperity and consumerism, known popularly as the "fiesta menemista," allowed the government to win reelection in 1995. Never had Argentina felt like such a part of the "first world." An artificial parity between the U.S. dollar and the Argentine peso, the so-called *uno a uno*, provided broad segments of the population with access to imported appliances--the purchase of a new refrigerator frequently appears in collective memory--and to foreign travel, primarily on shopping trips to Miami. This illusion of economic success greatly reinforced the centuries-old notion that Argentina was superior to its neighbors, more similar to Europe or the United States than to Bolivia, Peru, or Paraguay.

The inevitable crash back to reality compelled Argentines to revise such beliefs. Menem's neoliberal reforms not only widened the gap between the rich and the poor but also wreaked havoc upon the middle class. The late 1980s saw the emergence of a new social class, the "nuevos pobres" or "clase media empobrecida." Unemployment hit the educated particularly hard, growing twice as much among those with university degrees, and this is the origin of the engineer or architect driving a taxi, a stock figure in collective memory (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 425-26). With the disappearance of the state as arbiter in collective negotiation and protector of workers' rights, employment in general became increasingly precarious. Freelance work or *trabajo en negro--*informal work not reported to the government, in contrast to official *trabajo en blanco--*were common, while other individuals took low-paying jobs with more hours and fewer benefits. A new occupation was the *cartonero*, derived from the word for cardboard, *cartón*. These individuals, often working as a family, sift through the garbage left for waste collection, looking for recyclables and other saleable materials. As a result of these changes, Argentina had difficulty in presenting itself as a middle-class nation and came to have a social structure similar to that of its "underdeveloped" neighbors (426-27).

During the late 1980s, and particularly during the 1990s, the new economic context brought about new forms of social stratification. Amid rising crime and the overall decay of public space, the members of the few groups that had benefited from the open-market economy took refuge in luxury shopping malls, modern apartments in exclusive neighborhoods, and high-security gated communities, known as *countries*. Those individuals who had most suffered, in contrast, built precarious housing units in shantytowns, or *villas miseria*, on the outskirts of major cities such as Buenos Aires and Rosario.⁵ Inhabitants of *villas*, despectively termed *villeros*, were seen as uncivilized and

⁵ Neither *countries* nor *villas* were recent phenomena. Gated communities for the wealthy had existed since the 1930s and had become somewhat more common in the 1970s (Adamovsky 428). Similarly, shantytowns, known as *villas de emergencia*, had emerged in the late nineteenth century (78). Even so, each type of housing became more common as the gap widened between the rich and the poor. *Countries* were no longer weekend resorts for the elite but rather permanent, everyday homes for middle-class families, which created a "bubble" and reinforced suspicion toward the rest of society (427-29).

dangerous, a continuation of anti-Peronist stereotypes from the previous decades. Xenophobia also increased as Argentines searched for a scapegoat. Although *villas* were home to many Argentine citizens, the popular imagination associated them with illegal immigrants from the surrounding countries. In the 1990s, the derogatory terms *bolita*, *peruca*, and *paraguas* emerged to describe individuals from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay. Multiple politicians and at least one workers' union blamed illegal immigrants for rising unemployment (412), and it has become equally common to accuse them of overburdening Argentina's public health care system.⁶

César Aira's 2001 novel *La villa* captures these tensions and portrays the consequences of impoverishment for national identity. Through multiple interwoven stories, the work portrays different segments of late-1990s Buenos Aires. One narrative thread follows a young man, Maxi, whose family lives in a modern apartment in the neighborhood of Flores, known for its South American immigrant population. Maxi represents the possibility for middle-class solidarity with the poor, as he takes an interest in a homeless boy and helps local *cartoneros* to transport their findings. When these individuals later come to Maxi's aid during a difficult situation, the description of their residence in the *villa*, which focuses on cleanliness and order, contradicts the popular characterization of *villeros* as uncivilized (Aira 162). Similarly, another line of the narrative provides a positive representation of immigrants, focusing on Adela, a respectful and hardworking maid. The remaining narrative arcs serve to denounce corruption and the prejudices of the Argentine middle class. Aira's novel offers a starkly

⁶ An example of recent xenophobia appears in the apocryphal headline "Mueren dos personas y un boliviano," attributed to the sensationalist Argentine news channel *Crónica*. The implication is that Bolivians are not human beings.

negative depiction of Judge Plaza, who pursues her victims regardless of the facts, and of Officer Cabezas, who looks down upon "narcos villeros, en su mayoría bolivianos y peruanos" (150). Maxi's sister, Vanessa, believes that all "Bolivians," a term that she uses to describe dark-skinned foreigners in general, are alike, and she associates them with dangerous drug dealers (46-47). Through free indirect discourse, the narrator reveals Jessica's perception of the maid Adela as "negra como una cucaracha" (48). Aira's novel thus criticizes, and often counteracts, racial and class biases while suggesting ways to overcome them.

The upheaval of the late 1990s, however, was only the preamble to a far more turbulent sequence of events. Menem's government had kept the economy afloat through refinancing and new loans. When foreign credit began to tighten up in 1998, the parity between the U.S. dollar and the Argentine peso became impossible to sustain. President Fernando de la Rúa, who succeeded Menem in 1999, oversaw the infamous "corralito," which limited the amount that Argentines could withdraw from their bank accounts. Public indignation led to diverse forms of protest. In addition to the familiar union marches, groups of individuals looted supermarkets and cut off highways and major streets. The *cacerolazo*, from the word *cacerola*, was a primarily middle-class phenomenon in which protesters beat on pots and pans with cooking utensils.⁷ By 2001,

⁷ Saqueos, the looting of supermarkets, had begun during the hyperinflation of 1989 (Romero 88). Multinational chains were frequent targets, but local, small-scale grocery stores suffered as well. The blocking of highways, known as *piquetes*, had the intention of forcing authorities to recognize and address a problem. The *piquetero* movement forged ties with other segments of the population and remains an important form of collective action. During the height of the 2001 economic and political crisis, the street chant "piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola" expressed an alliance between the middle and lower classes. This solidarity would diminish following the return to "normalcy" (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 456-61).

the legitimacy of the political system itself was at stake. Frustrated with politicians from across the ideological spectrum, Argentines chanted "Que se vayan todos." Despite the declaration of a state of siege, popular mobilization in Plaza de Mayo, a tradition with roots in the colonial period, forced De la Rúa to resign, and the series of presidents who succeeded him fared little better. Riots occurred in the streets of major cities throughout Argentina, and crime increased amid the chaos, with police members even organizing illicit activities (Romero 90-93).

Over the last decade, Argentina has returned to relative economic and political stability. The Peronist governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2016), taking advantage of an international context that favored Argentina's agricultural export industry, have managed to deactivate or co-opt many protest movements through the distribution of subsidies and opportunities for state employment. The Kirchner administrations have likewise made significant progress in correcting the errors of the neoliberal Menem years. Noteworthy actions include restoring the credibility of the Supreme Court, reopening human rights cases concerning the 1976-1983 dictatorship, and recovering a degree of economic autonomy (Adamovsky, *Clase media* 471). The Kirchners have also taken important steps toward promoting social justice. In 2010, Argentina became the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage, and government-sponsored programs have supported historically marginalized groups, such as Afro-Argentines and rural indigenous communities.

These achievements notwithstanding, a combination of old and new challenges has placed Argentina at a crossroads yet again. Opponents of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government have questioned whether the country has improved with respect to the previous decade. As a result of economic downturn, the government no longer holds the resources with which to pacify potential dissidents. In 2008, for example, rural producers successfully resisted an increase in soybean export taxes, and the dispute acquired national relevance as a struggle between the capital of Buenos Aires and the interior *campo*, which its supporters presented as the economic and cultural heartland of the nation. More recently, the government has received criticism for misrepresenting or hiding economic data, particularly as concerns inflation. Corruption has increasingly come to light in events such as a major train accident in Buenos Aires and an embezzlement scandal involving the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, an iconic human rights organization (Romero 120-22). Fears of growing authoritarianism, together with accusations that government negligence has facilitated drug trafficking, have led the opposition to decry the *bolivarización* of Argentina, the transformation into a country resembling Venezuela under Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro.

Definitions of national identity have played a central role in the struggle to determine Argentina's future. Néstor Kirchner's successful presidential campaign in 2003 resulted in part from his appeal to deep-rooted interpretations of Argentine society. Kirchner's speeches portrayed Argentina as unique in Latin America for its large, upwardly mobile middle class, a source of great national pride. Simultaneously, Kirchner drew upon the ideas of Perón and Frondizi by supporting workers' rights and calling for an "empresariado nacional" committed to production (Adamovsky 472-73). During the government's wide-reaching human rights campaign, both Kirchner administrations spoke of their supporters as sons and daughters of *desaparecidos*, a characterization that sought to bridge a generation gap and connect twenty-first-century populism with

71

resistance to the military dictatorship of 1976-1983 (Romero 116). However, not all of the government's interpretations of national identity have met with success. Critics have pointed out a return to the divisive rhetoric of the first Peronism and a concomitant rejection of democratic pluralism (116-17). According to the "relato," a term that denotes the administration's way of understanding the world, the "nation" battles against its enemy, the "corporations" (115). The similarity to Perón's formula of "pueblo vs. oligarchy" is both striking and intentional. As a result of such rhetorical strategies, a binary conception of Argentine society has re-emerged, this time between "ser K" (pro-Kirchner) and "ser opositor" (often conflated with center-right beliefs).⁸

Similar tension exists at a demographic and "racial" level, where long-held beliefs about the nature of the Argentine people often clash with evidence to the contrary. Middle-class identity, having taken shape in reaction to the first Peronism's glorification of workers, became nearly synonymous with national identity after the return to democracy in 1983. Nonetheless, "middle-class" had always connoted "whiteness," European ancestry, upward mobility, and a certain degree of culture or social tact. Descriptions of Argentina as a middle-class nation today not only overlook the impoverishment and lack of opportunities in the wake of the 2001 crisis but also, albeit implicitly, exclude residents of the *villas*, immigrants from neighboring countries, and the many descendants of indigenous and other non-white groups. To a certain extent, the continued presentation of Argentina as a "white," middle-class nation repeats the centuries-old myth of a European Buenos Aires in contrast to an indigenous and mestizo Interior. This imaginary persists in the association of tango with the capital and of

⁸ One often hears the question " $_{\dot{c}}$ Vos sos K?" during present-day discussions of political identification.

autochthonous cultures with many of the provinces, as though these practices were confined to more or less precise geographical limits. Nonetheless, the city of Buenos Aires itself is much more diverse than many representations of Argentine identity suggest. It is not simply that, like most large cities, Buenos Aires has "ethnic" enclaves whose residents do not fit the image of a "typical" Argentine. Chinese supermarkets, owned by immigrants and their children, are common in nearly every neighborhood, and African immigrants, selling jewelry and other inexpensive items on busy streets, are an ever more visible component of daily life. Only in the wealthiest areas and on most products from the entertainment industry does Argentina conform to the myth of whiteness.

The following chapter explores some of the ways in which change and continuity coexist in twenty-first-century Argentina. Although the collapse of 2001 represented a turning point in national history, having brought attention to a new social landscape characterized by poverty, violence, and a lack of opportunity, certain thinkers have identified the roots of today's problems in the 1976-1983 military dictatorship. Historian Luis Alberto Romero, for example, understands contemporary struggles as part of a "long Argentine crisis" and argues that the nation has yet to suture the wounds of political division. A similar conception of Argentine history underlies the recent novels *Veneno* by Ariel Bermani and *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* by Patricio Pron, both of which portray the relevance of twentieth-century conflicts for current discussions of Argentine identity.

CHAPTER II: THE "LONG ARGENTINE CRISIS": CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST IN TWO RECENT NOVELS

In her 2006 essay "La novela después de la historia. Sujetos y tecnologías," literary critic Beatriz Sarlo posited a generational divide in the Argentine novel. According to Sarlo, the novel of the 1980s was obsessed with recent national history (471-73). At this time, historians had yet to analyze in depth the causes of the 1976-1983 military dictatorship and the human rights violations that it had committed. Literature, Sarlo argued, came to fill this void, attempting to reconstruct and interpret the preceding decade (472). Among the examples that Sarlo provides are Ricardo Piglia's Respiración artificial (1980) and Juan José Saer's Glosa (1985), whose protagonists undertake such a project. As time went by and new information became available, historians provided increasingly detailed accounts of the previous years; and various other media, for both educational and entertainment purposes, began to transmit stories related to the dictatorship, occupying the role that literature had once held. The Argentine novel responded by directing its attention elsewhere. For Sarlo, "leyendo la literatura hoy [2006], lo que impacta es el peso del presente no como enigma a resolver sino como escenario a representar" (473). She thus argues that, in contrast to the "interpretative" novel of the 1980s, which sought to understand the past, twenty-first-century fiction is "ethnographic," centered on depicting the present. Sarlo's examples here include César Aira's La villa (2001), whose portrait of contemporary Buenos Aires includes immigrants, middle-class Argentines, and residents of shanty towns.

Two recently published novels, however, suggest a need to reevaluate Sarlo's hypothesis. Ariel Bermani's *Veneno* (2006) and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres*

sigue subiendo en la lluvia (2011)⁹ are simultaneously "interpretative" and "ethnographic," in that they explore Argentine history not in order to decipher the past but rather to reflect upon the current problems facing the nation. Sarlo herself concedes that these labels are not mutually exclusive: "No se trata de clasificar libros en un par de columnas" (473-74). Even so, by privileging "ethnographic" descriptions of society in twenty-first-century literature, Sarlo's analysis overlooks the possibility of adopting a broader perspective, of interpreting the present through historical inquiry. The novels of Bermani and Pron show that, although most contemporary Argentine fiction no longer seeks to understand what occurred during the 1970s, authors have identified a connection between the years of the military dictatorship and current problems such as violence, instability, and socioeconomic inequality. For these novels, the present is indeed an "enigma to be solved," and the clues to the solution dwell in the past.

In this chapter, I argue that *Veneno* and *El espíritu* each portray contemporary Argentina as an impoverished country offering few opportunities for advancement. Both novels link this unflattering representation of national identity with a sense of defeat and failure, which they view as a consequence of the unsuccessful revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s and, in particular, of the authoritarian regime of 1976-1983. I suggest that, by focusing on the 1970s rather than on the 2001 economic collapse, these two works trace what historian Luis Alberto Romero has called the "larga crisis argentina," an interpretation according to which the last military dictatorship constitutes the turning point in modern Argentine history. From this perspective, Argentine identity in the twenty-first century is a result of continuity with previous periods in the nation's

⁹ I refer to this novel hereafter as "*El espíritu*."

history, rather than a dramatic rupture. Finally, I contend that *Veneno* and *El espíritu* provide opposite readings of national identity. Whereas *Veneno* is pessimistic and ends on a negative note, closing off the possibility for change, *El espíritu* offers a hopeful conclusion by emphasizing a "spirit" of solidarity and resistance. The interpretation of the past, therefore, plays a significant role in discussions of contemporary national character and of Argentina's future trajectory.

The "Long Argentine Crisis": 1976 as a Key to the Present

It has become common, in both academic publications and the mainstream media, for Argentines to view the 2001 economic and political crisis as the defining moment in recent national history.¹⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, the impoverishment of the middle class, the emergence of the piquetero movement, and the collapse of public services undermined the traditional view of Argentina as a stable, upwardly mobile society. It suddenly appeared that Argentina had much more in common with neighboring countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay, long scorned as backward, than with the United States or Western Europe, its supposed "first-world" peers. Depending on

¹⁰ The 2001 crisis frequently appears as the breaking point of a society increasingly debilitated by the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. Gabriela Delamata, for example, states that "[a] lo largo de la década de los noventa, la desocupación y la pobreza crecieron exponencialmente. El desempleo, que era del 6 por 100 en 1990, alcanzó el 18,8 por 100 en 1995 y llegó a ser del 21,5 por 100 en 2002, cuando los hogares bajo la línea de pobreza superaban el 40 por 100" (82). In 2004, *Clarín*, one of Argentina's most-read newspapers, shared the findings of a study on the attitudes of Argentines toward the economy. The article's opening phrase is representative of popular historiography: "Acostumbrada a vivir desde la cuna con la promesa del ascenso social, la crisis económica que se abatió sobre la Argentina y estalló en diciembre de 2001, castigó muy duramente a la clase media" (http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2004/02/22/s-04101.htm). In the original, the phrase "promesa del ascenso social" appears in bold, marking the importance of this loss of social ascent.

one's point of view, post-2001 Argentina was either a cautionary tale of government malfeasance or a testimony to the dangers of neoliberal economics. In any event, it was clear that Argentines were no longer, and perhaps never had been, considerably different from the rest of Latin America.¹¹

Despite the importance of 2001 in representations of national identity, the 1976-1983 military dictatorship continues to play a central role in Argentine politics and culture. In part, the lasting relevance of the Proceso is a consequence of the deep wounds, both physical and emotional, that it inflicted upon society. The transition to civilian government may have restored the freedoms of speech and organization, but it cannot undo the state-sanctioned murder of tens of thousands of individuals. Since the return to democracy in 1983, successive administrations have grappled with the questions of justice and official memory. Under the threat of military insurrection, Ricardo Alfonsín's moderate government approved the "Obediencia Debida" and "Punto Final" laws of 1987, which placed limits on the prosecution of former military personnel for the torture, kidnapping, and execution of political prisoners. In 1989 and 1990, president Carlos Menem went further by issuing an amnesty both to members of the armed forces and to the leaders of the guerrilla organizations for their acts of violence during the 1970s. In

¹¹ Exclusion from the U.S. Visa Waiver Program was a painful confirmation of Argentina's diminished status in world affairs. During the illusory prosperity of the 1990s, which featured artificial parity between the peso and the dollar, Argentines could visit the United States without applying for a visa. In 2002, as Argentines with European Union passports attempted to escape the crisis, often trying their luck in Spain, the U.S. government reinstated the visa requirement, fearful that Argentine tourists would decide to immigrate illegally. Since that time, exclusion from the waiver program has associated Argentina, in a concrete, legal sense, with the poorer and unstable nations from which it had striven to distinguish itself. Recent steps, under the Obama administration, toward including long-time rival Brazil in the Visa Waiver Program have only exacerbated the Argentine sense of failure.

2003, with the left-leaning Néstor Kirchner in office, Congress annulled those laws, making possible the trial and conviction of several prominent military officials for human rights violations.

The resulting tension between the government and certain segments of the population suggests that the battle lines drawn during the 1970s continue to play a role in contemporary society. As Germán Ferrari has shown in Símbolos y fantasmas, the debate over justice constitutes part of a wider struggle to shape public memory and national identity. Although the two Kirchner governments have correctly presented the human rights trials as a significant achievement, their opponents see them as evidence of revenge, opportunism, and partiality. Some of these accusations stem from the far right, often from groups that continue to justify the dictatorship and downplay the scale or the severity of its human rights violations. Other complaints have emerged from more reasonable sectors and reveal the problems involved in creating a shared history. The families of individuals killed by guerrilla activity in the 1970s have been petitioning the government, with little success, to consider agents of revolutionary violence and agents of state repression as equally subject to punishment. Through the term "hemiplegic memory," they have accused the Kirchner administration, some of whose members belonged to guerrilla organizations such as Montoneros, of perpetuating ideological conflict by telling only half of the story. The government and its supporters have responded by pointing out, not without foundation, the danger of equating small-scale guerrilla activity with institutional terror. Both sides claim to defend the interests of the Argentine people. At a deeper level, therefore, two opposite readings of recent history are struggling to define the current national community. Much has changed in Argentina

since the return to democracy, but the political and cultural divisions of the dictatorship years remain a point of contention.

Many historians take this analysis a step further, arguing that the country's instability over the past decade and a half is a direct result of the military regime. As Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo explain, although the self-styled "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" failed to create the new Argentina that it had envisioned, it succeeded in transforming the roots of society, politics, the state, and the economy (19). For Ezequiel Adamovsky, the Proceso brought about a new cultural landscape, driving revolutionary ideas back to the more modest position that they had held before the turn to the left in the 1960s and 1970s (Clase media 415). The most enduring changes were economic. In the words of Agustina Schijman and Guadalupe Dorna, "[e]ntre 1974 y 2003 Argentina pasó de un nivel de desigualdad característico de un país desarrollado como Suiza al de un país pobre como Lesoto" (179). The national debt problem, which would be at the center of the 2001 crisis, had increased rapidly when the military used foreign loans to modernize its arsenal (Novaro and Palermo 227). Over the same period, the reforms of Economy Minister Martínez de Hoz sought to destroy the developmentalist state of the previous decades and to liberalize the movement of capital, opening up the country to global investment. According to Novaro and Palermo, disagreement among military leaders and a fear of imminent return to civilian government led to a now-or-never attitude and a large degree of improvisation in these measures (220). As a result, when the dictatorship finally relinquished control, liberalization had become irreversible, and its chaotic implementation was tearing apart the social fabric. By 1983, inflation had reached 345% (528), the government faced diminishing revenue and rising foreign debt, and citizens struggled to pay for health care and similar basic services amid plummeting real salaries. Novaro and Palermo describe the challenges at the moment of transition: "la democracia heredaba un país con pesadas hipotecas económicas y fiscales, repleto de víctimas de las más diversas condiciones" (542). Hyperinflation and crumbling infrastructure, core aspects of the 2001 collapse, were already plaguing the country in the early 1980s.

Points of contact between the dictatorship and the turbulent present have led historian Luis Alberto Romero to speak of a "larga crisis argentina." When Argentines today mention "la crisis," 2001 is the implicit reference. Romero, however, extends the term to describe an ongoing situation with roots in the recent past. According to this reading of history, Argentine society was "vital, pujante, sanguínea y conflictiva" from the end of the nineteenth century up to 1976, when social upheaval resulted from the conflicts that had accumulated during the era of prosperity (12-13). The military dictatorship put an end to the dynamic and creative Argentina, leaving behind a country that is "decadente y exangüe, declinante en casi cualquier aspecto que se considere" (12). The only exceptions that Romero finds are the failed attempts at building a pluralist democracy in the late twentieth century and at fueling sustained economic recovery through the agricultural boom of the early 2000s (12-13). Over the last forty years, he argues, "giró el destino de la Argentina, que fue un país con futuro, llegó a ser un país sin presente y hoy tiene otra vez la posibilidad de recuperar su futuro. Pero es solamente eso: una posibilidad" (13). Exactly what this possibility entails, and whether it exists at all, will depend on the observer. The answer plays a central role in defining Argentine national identity: is the country irreparably broken, or fighting the odds to fulfil its potential?

No Antidote for the Crisis: *Veneno* and the Impossibility of Redemption

Ariel Bermani's *Veneno* takes a pessimistic stance on national identity, as missed opportunities doom the novel's protagonist to a hopeless future. Bermani, born in 1967 in the Greater Buenos Aires area, works as a professor at various institutions within Argentina. He has published poems, articles, and short stories in magazines and anthologies. His novels include *Leer y escribir* (2006; translated into Hebrew and published in Israel in 2009), *Veneno* (2006), and *El amor es la más barata de las religiones* (2009). Although his work has won prizes locally and appeared abroad, Bermani is a minor author within Argentina and has received little critical attention. This is an unfortunate oversight, as Bermani addresses important questions and looks beyond the surface in order to reveal the points of contact between the 1970s and today.

A novel in three parts, *Veneno* tells the story of Enrique Domingo, nicknamed "Quique," "Negro," or "Veneno," a forty-year-old Argentine man with few redeeming qualities.¹² Part one features a third-person omniscient narrator who describes four days in Enrique's life, each representative of a particular decade in recent national history: 1978, 1988, 1998, and 2003, the "present" of the novel. The work opens in 2003, leaps back to 1978, and then progresses in chronological order. Part two, the most formally innovative section, features the direct discourse of an unidentified speaker, whom context

¹² In order both to avoid confusion with the work's title and to point out the significance of nicknames at different points in the story, I refer to the protagonist as "Enrique," a name that rarely appears within the novel.

clues identify as Enrique. The addressee is his best friend, Gerardo, who serves as the possible "author" of the novel, the link between the protagonist and the readers. The various blocks of speech in this section indicate the passing of time but lack concrete temporal references. Without the filter of the narrator, this section contains the protagonist's crudest language and most intimate thoughts. Part three returns to third-person omniscient narration and inverts the scheme of part one, beginning in 2003, moving backward from 1998 to 1978, and eventually returning to the present for the work's conclusion.

Throughout the novel, the reconstruction of the past creates a context for Enrique's actions in 2003. The episodes of 1978 portray the protagonist as an adolescent during the first years of the military dictatorship. Growing up in Burzaco, a small city located to the southeast of Buenos Aires, Enrique smokes, drinks, and talks about girls with his friends. His participation in Acción Católica is his primary connection to local society.¹³ Enrique has recently fallen in love with Stella, who was returning from a trip with the youth group when he saw her for the first time. The second day included in the novel, in 1988, focuses on Enrique's wedding with Patricia, his first wife. He arrives at the last minute, smelling of beer. After the ceremony, in what proves to be the defining moment in Enrique's life, he visits Stella's house and kisses her before an interruption forces him to leave. The events of 1998 depict Enrique's relationship with Susana, one of Patricia's cousins, whom he has married after his divorce. He mistreats Susana and

¹³ Acción Católica, founded in 1931 by the Argentine Bishopric, sought to unite the different Catholic tendencies at work in the country. The organization still exists and affirms a commitment to protecting human rights (see its website, <u>http://www.accioncatolica.org.ar</u>). Nonetheless, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the Catholic Church has played an ambivalent role in the history of Argentina.

abandons her and the children in order to spend time at the bar, where he receives a beating after instigating a fight. In 2003, which constitutes the majority of the narration, Enrique turns forty years old. He stops and sits down in the middle of a city street, causing a bus driver to leave his vehicle and attack him. A woman, who turns out to be Stella, gets off the bus and helps Enrique to his feet. She invites him to the house of her ex-husband, Carlos Gallo, who is seeking reconciliation after years of living apart. The ensuing conflict makes possible the novel's climax, in which Enrique attempts to form a relationship with Stella and redress his past mistakes.

Enrique is a decidedly unsympathetic character. During his first appearance in the story, the events of 2003, he tricks a waiter at a bar and leaves without paying, escaping in a taxi from the infuriated staff and the police (Bermani 16). Immediately afterward, he manipulates the taxi driver by stating that his mother has recently passed away and then disappears into the night, seemingly again without having paid (20). Visits from Enrique's neighbors soon confirm that he was telling the truth about his mother's death, but his actions, which include smiling, playing solitaire, and asking his grandmother for money, suggest his detachment from the scene (21-23). This portrait becomes increasingly negative as the narrator reveals information from the past. In 1988, on the day of his first marriage, Enrique's future in-laws view him as an alcoholic and incapable of finding work, while the narrator's comments suggest that he is not truly in love with Patricia (68). We later learn that he was drunk on the day that his first child was born (85). In 1998, Enrique is unemployed and depends economically on Susana (141), whose self-esteem he has destroyed through years of physical and emotional abuse. The narrator

reveals that Enrique becomes violent when drunk and that Susana fears for the safety of the children (145-46).

The novel's descriptions of 2003 Argentine society suggest that, although Enrique is a particularly troubled individual, the rest of the country is facing problems as well. It is true that there are exceptions, such as Enrique's best friend, who has left the neighborhood and now lives among intellectuals, and Stella's sister, who has grown up to become a doctor (127); but poverty, violence, and instability are the defining traits of the nation in this work. First, it is possible to read Enrique's decision to block traffic in 2003 as an allusion to the piquetero movement and its attempt to secure benefits by occupying public space. The difference, of course, is that Enrique is not participating in a collective demand for rights or services. Rather, he is living out his adolescent fantasy, expressed in 1978, of sitting down in a busy street and simply doing nothing (56). Through this inverted image of the piqueteros, a symbol of the new Argentina, the novel suggests that the solidarity born in the collapse of 2001 has given way here to individual wish fulfilment, devoid of deeper meaning and isolated from community action.

The bus driver's response to this behavior, as he beats Enrique with a large stick, is equally problematic (27). At the very least, it suggests frustration: the bus driver may have grown tired of similar protests and is now taking out his anger on the helpless protagonist. This sequence also points to the wider issue of violence in contemporary society, reflected at several other points in the novel. When escaping from the bar in a taxi, for example, Enrique treats the driver in an aggressive manner. Feeling threatened, the taxi driver "baja la mano y roza el revólver con la yema de los dedos" (17). Throughout the remainder of this scene, the narrator creates suspense by periodically

calling attention to the position of the gun, causing readers to wonder whether the driver plans to shoot Enrique. Like the previous example, this event reveals not only a need to carry weapons in order to protect oneself but also an inclination towards violence as a solution to conflict. Enrique never threatens the taxi driver with physical force, yet the driver's first reaction is to prepare his firearm.

A later episode proves that this line of thinking has become common in Argentina. Toward the end of the novel, Enrique accompanies Stella to the house of her ex-husband, Gallo. As the tension between the two men rises, Gallo begins to think about a gun that he keeps hidden in his bedroom. What follows is a more elaborate version of the suspense that previously emerged with the taxi driver. Through free indirect speech, the narrator transmits Gallo's growing desire to use the weapon to kill Enrique and Stella, and the character reaches the conclusion that "es el momento de embestir contra la adversidad y matar o morir en el intento" (191). He eventually brings out the gun, points it at Enrique, and forces him to leave (208). During the entire buildup to this moment, Enrique has never physically threatened Gallo or given any indication of bearing a weapon. As before, the use of violence appears out of proportion with the problem that it attempts to solve.

The episode with Gallo serves to point out the connection between violence and social instability. Prior to the conflict with Enrique, Gallo has never used the gun or wanted to shoot anyone, and the narrator explains that he acquired the weapon only to protect his property:

Lo compró al día siguiente de haber sido asaltado en su propia casa por segunda vez. Un pibe del barrio se lo vendió, probablemente uno de los que se habían

85

metido en su casa aquel domingo a la tarde, cuando él estaba en la cancha, para llevarse algunas tonterías: ropa, poco dinero, una bicicleta. El televisor y el tocadiscos no fueron robados, será porque son aparatos viejos, macizos." (191)

This explanation first alludes to the crime problem that has plagued Argentina in recent years. The mention of two robberies in Gallo's home suggests that this was not an isolated occurrence. More worrisome, however, are the conjectures regarding the thieves. Due to the use of free indirect speech in this passage, it is impossible to determine whether the assumptions ("probablemente," "será") belong to Gallo or to the omniscient narrator, but they paint in either case a bleak picture of contemporary youth. Gallo resides in the working-class neighborhood of La Boca in Buenos Aires, and the narrator describes his pride as a handyman, but the implication is that theft has replaced work as a source of sustenance for the younger population. Gallo or the narrator believes it likely that Gallo has bought a weapon from one of the young men, living in his own community, who robbed him. Gallo would then be supporting the illegal gun trade and financing future robberies through his purchase. The novel suggests that there is no way out of the cycle, as the character's reaction only worsens the situation. The police, conspicuously absent from this chain of events, appear unable to prevent crime in the area, and Gallo prefers to take his defense into his own hands.

Through various details, the novel associates these problems with diminishing opportunities for employment and their negative effects on society. In one brief episode, Enrique spends time with friends at a *remisería*, a neighborhood taxi service, where the owner explains that there is not much work for his drivers (223). When Enrique reunites with Stella, we learn that she is unable to find a steady job despite being an educated

woman, for which reason she and her children now live together in a room at her parents' house. The narrator explains that "[d]esde que la echaron de su trabajo de empleada en Entel, cuando privatizaron la empresa, no ha vuelto a tener un trabajo estable" (32). Although no exact date is given for Stella's firing, the reference to privatization suggests that she worked for a state company prior to the second wave of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s. The character thus represents the decline of Peronist society, in which social integration took place through steady employment and membership in trade unions, and the transition to a much more flexible and unstable labor market that has taken its toll on families.

The novel also points out the consequences of the financial crisis and the withdrawing of the state from the public sphere. Toward the end of the novel, as Enrique looks out the window of a train to Burzaco, the narrator mentions that only the letters "b," "r," and "o" are still visible on the railroad sign: "las otras letras fueron robadas, como ocurre en la mayor parte de las estaciones" (217-18). The city's identity has literally been stolen. The theft of public property, depicted here as a common occurrence, may reflect simple vandalism or an attempt to sell the materials on the black market, as often happens in Argentina with metal components of electrical and telephone lines. In either case, the description offers yet another example of crime and of the government's inability or unwillingness to address the problem.

A final detail in this series, however, introduces another dimension to the novel's understanding of Argentina. At the train station, attempting to figure out the current time, Enrique and Stella see two enormous clocks on the wall, but "ellos saben desde siempre que esos relojes nunca funcionan correctamente" (218). The adverbial phrase "desde

87

siempre" indicates that this is not a recent issue. Although the impoverished or uninterested government of 2003 may have taken no action to repair the clocks, previous administrations appear equally responsible, probably as far back as the characters' childhood in the 1970s. It is perhaps no coincidence that objects that keep track of time are serving here as a link between the past and the present, as if to show that the challenges facing contemporary Argentina have their roots in the nation's history.

This interpretation gains strength in the novel's many flashback sequences, one of whose primary contributions is to reveal a common thread across the decades. The protagonist and, by extension, the country that he inhabits come increasingly to appear as the products of historical circumstances. Stella's thoughts, as filtered through the narrator, describe Enrique as an Argentine everyman of sorts: "No es intelectual, piensa Stella, pero tampoco es del todo burro. No es lindo, pero tampoco es extremadamente feo. No es bueno, eso es verdad, pero tampoco es tan malo como para matar o robar" (174). Despite repeated and unquestionable evidence of Enrique's negative traits, he elicits a degree of sympathy when studied within a context. His father thinks of the fortyyear-old Enrique as attempting to escape from himself and always emerging "más frágil, más golpeado, cubierto de una falsa máscara de soberbia. Más vulnerable cada vez" (202). This opinion counterbalances the other impressions that we receive of Enrique, in which he seems invulnerable to criticism and oblivious of his shortcomings. The narrator explains how the protagonist's suffering motivates his exploration of the past: "Si está solo en su casa, con las luces apagadas--la tristeza oprimiéndole el pecho--, los ojos ardiendo por el humo del cigarrillo, se acuerda de esa época de su vida y le vuelven las

caras y los nombres" (15). Here, "esa época" refers to the late 1970s, which the novel identifies as the point of origin for both Enrique's and the nation's failures.

The flashback to January 25, 1978, the earliest time featured in the work, depicts Enrique as a victim of racism. In addition to "Veneno," Enrique has always gone by a variant of "Negro" (39). To a certain extent, this nickname seems innocuous, perhaps even affectionate. However, the revelation that Enrique's dog goes by the same moniker hints at an equivalence between them and a negative connotation (39). The appearance of "negro" in other contexts confirms this impression. As an adolescent during the military dictatorship, Enrique fantasizes about the Rojo twins, "rubiecitas" who come from a privileged family and whose father is a "coronel o capitán" (37). The racial and cultural differences prevent Enrique from establishing a relationship with the girls. When he tries to approach them, their governess chases him away, telling him, "con su voz de mando militar," "buscate una sirvientita, estas chicas no son para negros como vos" (38). Within the novel, therefore, "negro" is more than a physical label. The governess represents the association of "whiteness" with culture and privilege, and "blackness" with ignorance and poverty. The despective term "sirvientita" hints at the assumption that dark-skinned immigrants or internal migrants, who acquired social protagonism in Argentina during the Peronist years, should perform only menial labor and remain subordinate to the descendants of Europeans.

A second use of the adjective "negro" demonstrates that racism has continued into the present. In 1998, while married to Susana, Enrique recalls the birth of his first son, at some point in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Having been drinking that day, he was inebriated and passed out at the hospital when Patricia went into labor. When a nurse

woke him up afterwards, she looked down upon him, "mirándolo con desprecio: como suelen mirar las personas de tez blanca, de clase media y trabajo estable a las personas de tez morena, de clase media baja, desocupadas" (85). This explanation shows that, a decade later, Enrique remains a victim of racism. Through symmetrical oppositions, this passage also traces a sharp division in Argentine society: middle-class "blancos" and working-class or unemployed "negros," positing these categories as mutually exclusive. As in other moments in the novel, these ideas appear through free indirect speech, and it is therefore impossible to determine whether they arise from Enrique or the omniscient narrator. If they are Enrique's thoughts, they reveal that, unlike in 1978, he is fully aware that he occupies a marginal role in a racist society. If they are the narrator's comments, they acquire a universality that grants them increased significance. The use of the present tense--"suelen"--in this passage, despite its belonging to a flashback, makes the narrator the more likely of the two sources and extends the social criticism into 2003. The later episodes of the novel, therefore, even when they lack explicit references to racism, unfold within the same cultural context. If only in a subtle way, decades of racial prejudice underlie Enrique's present misery and his attempts to reunite with Stella, described as "morena" but whose sister has blond hair and blue eyes (52).¹⁴

Economic instability, associated with post-2001 Argentina, is likewise already visible in the flashback sequences. In 1978, a period that coincides with the military dictatorship's first reforms, neither of Enrique's parents holds steady employment. His father sells handkerchiefs to passengers on the trains, while his mother organizes cosmetics parties in neighbors' homes (37). Enrique's best friend, Gerardo, explains how

¹⁴ For further information on the use of racial categories in Argentina, see Chapter 4.

his entire family depends upon his grandmother, who is having difficulty breathing. He tells Enrique that "mi viejo chupaba mate y me decía despacito: si se muere la vieja perdemos la jubilación. Vas a tener que salir a trabajar, Gerardito" (54). Gerardo's family, for reasons never specified, seems unable to survive without the grandmother's retirement plan, and the teenager would be forced to look for a job. It is probable that Gerardo's grandmother was an active member of the workforce during the first Peronist government. Her death thus acquires symbolic value, standing in for the disappearance of job security and social welfare with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies under the military dictatorship.

These issues persist into the following decades. In 1988, as Enrique marries Patricia, the narrator describes his mother-in-law as a broken, disappointed woman whose children have fallen short of her expectations: "Ninguno de los varones se recibió de abogado, ni se casó con una médica. Las mujeres se hicieron embarazar por tipos sin futuro y sin presente, pobres, desocupados" (61). Unable to cultivate a profession, these individuals are a failed version of "m'hijo el *dotor*," a social ideal of education and progress that was popularized in literature by the Uruguayan playwright Florencio Sánchez.¹⁵ At the same time, the notion of "men without a present or future" recalls Romero's previously cited characterization of the "decadent" post-1970s Argentina. Enrique's brothers-in-law therefore appear as victims of the new Argentine society and represent the continued economic difficulties after the return to democracy. Enrique's

¹⁵ *M'hijo el dotor*, first performed in 1903, centers on the conflict between Olegario and his son, Julio, who has been studying in the city and has acquired dangerous new ideas. Julio's mother spoils him and speaks proudly of "m'hijo el dotor," a phrase that reflects both the desire for social ascent and the influence of Italian immigration on popular speech in the region.

first date with Susana a few years later refers again to this context, as the narrator points out that their conversation focuses twice on the problem of inflation (139-40).

In the novel's final flashback sequence, 1998, during the second wave of neoliberalization, there are signs that Enrique's neighborhood still faces economic difficulties. The protagonist, as always, has neither the resources nor the desire to pay for services, and he receives a free taxi ride from a friend, who jokes that "[c]on toda la guita que me debés ya podría haber terminado mi casa" (80). A description of Burzaco reveals shortly afterward that there is some truth to this quip. Although the portrait of the downtown area is neutral, "[1]o demás, lo que puede verse apenas se deja atrás el centro, es la gran cantidad de casas a medio hacer, de calles sin asfalto, de terrenos baldíos" (81). In this snapshot of underdevelopment, the friend's unfinished house is one of many, and it is not clear whether he will ever earn enough money to complete the project. The unpaved streets, in contrast, point to the diminishing role of the state, recalling the broken clocks at the station and foreshadowing the missing letters from the city sign in 2003. As this series of examples makes clear, the novel understands the troubles of the present as the latest manifestation of a crisis that spans decades. The collapse of 2001 may have left a deep mark on the country's economy and on the quality of life of its residents, but the underlying causes have existed since the dictatorship.¹⁶

¹⁶ Schijman and Dorna analyze the "clase media vulnerable" in Argentina over the past two decades, a group that they define as having suffered a loss of economic welfare equal to or greater than that of the families who were most severely affected by the 2001 crisis (192). When considering the likelihood that a household will fall into this category, the authors state that "[s]er un trabajador informal es la variable que más aumenta las chances de vulnerabilidad" (196). This description fits Enrique's family exactly, as both of his parents earn their livelihood through informal sales. Their economic situation as described in 1978, therefore, makes them particularly susceptible to the instability of the following decades, and it is not surprising to see the family struggle in 2003.

According to *Veneno*'s interpretation of history and national identity, Enrique and his friends belong to a defeated generation, whose parents failed to change the country during the revolutionary fervor of the 1970s. Political references abound in the flashback segments. In 1978, by focusing on two Catholic priests, the narrator addresses the complicity between the Church and the military.¹⁷ The character of Father Andrés has been destined for greatness since youth, when the bishop discovered him working among underprivileged populations and collaborating with guerrillas: "ayudaba en una villa y estaba muy cerca de los montoneros" (47). The character thus represents the reformminded priesthood in contact with the Liberation Theology movement. Father Andrés's political sympathies soon got him into trouble, however, as the Church transferred him to Burzaco after he "dio asilo a un grupo de terroristas que había intentado poner una bomba en una comisaría" (46). The use of the term "terroristas," instead of a positive "revolucionarios" or the more neutral "guerrilla," reflects the shared perspective of the Church and the military regime. In 1978, Father Andrés appears to have conformed, reflecting cynically that his chances for promotion depend not on his faith but on the will of his superiors (48). Meanwhile, the new military regime is keeping watch for signs of leftist activity among the clergy. Father Miguel, another Burzaco priest, is preparing for

¹⁷ Much has been written on the Catholic Church's role in Argentina during the dictatorship period. To a large extent, the organization faced a problem seen elsewhere in Latin America over the same decades. Novaro and Palermo recall that, in the 1960s, reformers who denounced socioeconomic inequality had clashed with traditionalists, who feared the infiltration of Marxism and denounced collaboration between priests and leftist guerrilla organizations. Once military rule began, the Church benefited from the new emphasis on conservative values and the opportunity to spread Catholic doctrine after the moral upheaval of the previous decade. The authors explain that priests were among the victims of state terror but that many more cooperated with the military, justifying the use of torture and the war against subversion (99). As the dictatorship faced increasing local and international opposition in the early 1980s, the Church began to distance itself from the military (372), eventually supporting and perhaps instigating protests (391).

"una reunión con dos personas que envía el gobierno nacional para tratar el delicado tema de la subversión que se ha infiltrado en la Iglesia" (169). Within such a context, it is hardly surprising that a character like Father Andrés should have renounced his spirituality and commitment to the poor.¹⁸

Although revolutionary groups have lost the war, Enrique and his friends continue to fight at the symbolic level. In 1978, Enrique listens to alternative music, has memorized many poems (163-64), and appears as a freethinker when he defends love and criticizes Church doctrine (167). When the narrator summarizes Enrique's activities as a youth, the protagonist emerges as a compendium of revolutionary experiences: a brief stay in Acción Católica, participation in Montoneros (just when the group had been eliminated by the army), activity as a radical (until the party expelled him for praising Che Guevara in his fliers), and membership in the Communist Party (he quit because they talked about Stalin and Trotsky instead of Che). Enrique's admiration for Che Guevara has an equivalent in art, as he "[e]mpezó a escribir poesía de tanto leer a Neruda" (67). Throughout the novel, the Chilean communist poet represents a connection with Latin American politics, an alternative worldview, and the hope for social transformation. When Enrique meets Patricia at a literary workshop in 1988, we learn that she writes poems about poverty, suffering children, and violence (65). Neruda is the inspiration for her poetry, as well, and when Patricia becomes a school teacher, she has her pupils read the "Veinte Poemas" and encourages them to become poets (150).

¹⁸ This scene presents Father Andrés as a victim, and another episode dwells on the two priests' interest in local soccer teams, but the novel's overall portrayal of the clergy is negative. Father Andrés takes a romantic interest in one of the youth group members, while a neighborhood prostitute has a daughter who resembles Father Miguel (166).

The strongest link to the revolutionary context appears through Patricia's and Enrique's child, Pablo, whom they have named after Neruda. Once Enrique has abandoned Patricia and begun a relationship with Susana, with whom he also speaks about poetry, Patricia lies to the young Pablo about his father's history. In 2003, the narrator explains that "[e]lla inventó una biografía heroica, llena de sucesos memorables, donde el padre de Pablo, que era un gran poeta, es protagonista de grandes movilizaciones políticas en países pobres y es asesinado por la policía y en su sepelio participa el pueblo entero" (197). This fictionalized biography, which combines aspects of Neruda's life with scenes from the Latin American revolutionary movements of the mid-twentieth century, demonstrates the persistence of Patricia's ideals despite her suffering. Nonetheless, the contrast between fiction and reality emphasizes the failures of the protagonist and of the society that he represents. By 2003, Enrique still describes himself as a poet (187) but has otherwise become a caricature of the hero whom Patricia invents, while contemporary Argentina, despite the return to democracy, differs sharply from the country that the revolutionaries had imagined.

The novel also permits a far more negative interpretation of national identity. Whereas the defeat of revolutionary ideals in the 1970s provides a historical context for the characters' failures, thus leaving open the possibility for future change, other information suggests a constitutional weakness within the Argentine people themselves. In an episode in 1988, Enrique's mother falls asleep at the table while drunk, and the narrator mentions that this occurs frequently: "tomó mucho, en los últimos años. Y no recuerda lo que es dormirse sobria" (153). As has been shown, Enrique acts in a similar manner throughout the novel, both in the flashback segments and in the present. The

narrator never speculates whether alcoholism is hereditary in Enrique's family, but other negative traits do appear across generations. At the beginning of the work, Enrique appears with "un ojo desviado" (16), and his father's thoughts later reveal that he "había nacido mal, con un ojo enfermo" (214). The narrator draws attention to this problem as a disability when explaining the protagonist's lack of skill at soccer and consequent lack of popularity among his classmates and teachers (43). Through this detail, the novel further connects Enrique's failures with those of the nation: ineptitude at soccer, the Argentine national sport, implies ineptitude in general. During the next generation, in the late 1980s or early 1990s, Pablo is born with unspecified developmental difficulties, and Enrique cries inconsolably before abandoning his family (88-90). None of Enrique's children appears to have been successful. When speaking with Stella in 2003, he describes all of them as "[h]ijos idiotas" (34).

The presence of alcoholism and hereditary conditions in the novel recalls nineteenth-century naturalist literature.¹⁹ According to this scheme, Enrique inherits his parents' weaknesses and then passes them on to Pablo and his other children. This interpretation gains support near the end of the novel, when the narrator describes the protagonist returning home "después de haber pasado un día entero vagando sin rumbo" (222). The phrase "sin rumbo" echoes the title of the most well known Argentine naturalist novel, published in 1885 by Eugenio Cambaceres. In *Sin rumbo*, which bears the suggestive subtitle of "estudio," the protagonist's debauchery appears to condemn his

¹⁹ Naturalism, associated primarily with the French writer Émile Zola, sought to apply contemporary scientific theories to works of fiction. For Zola, the author was a scientist and the work a laboratory in which to test a hypothesis. Naturalist literature presented human beings as products of various types of determinism (social, biological, etc.) and focused on the ugly details of existence.

daughter to illness and death. A dominant theme is the "influencia misteriosa de leyes eternas y fatales" in human behavior (Cambaceres 205). Although *Veneno* is not a naturalist text, the repetition of disabilities through Enrique, portrayed as an everyman and as a bearer of revolutionary ideals, introduces a sense of determinism in the nation's failures. As the novel includes no information on previous time periods, it is uncertain whether this interpretation of the Argentine character would encompass all of national history or, like Romero, would posit the "long crisis" as the root of present-day problems. In either event, by "studying" Enrique within a context, the novel portrays Argentina as a country that missed its opportunity to flourish and that perpetuates its disadvantages.

Seen in this light, Enrique's attempt to reunite with Stella symbolizes a desire to correct the errors of the past. The stakes are clear at the personal level. After falling in love with her in 1978, the only case in which the novel uses this expression, Enrique has thought of Stella at every point in his life. As the Latin meaning of her name implies, she is a pure, shining, ideal being, located beyond the protagonist's reach. His chance encounter with her in 2003 introduces the main action of the novel and generates suspense, as readers wonder, moving through the flashbacks, whether Enrique will fulfill his lifelong dream. The narrator's word choices reflect the protagonist's transformation when spending time with Stella. For much of the novel, the narrator refers to Enrique as "Veneno," a nickname that he received as a teenager and that describes his violent disposition well. Enrique's acknowledgement of "[d]estrozo todo lo que toco" underlines his poisonous nature (84), simultaneously reinforcing the idea of determinism. Stella, in contrast, calls him "Quique," as though she were rescuing a better side of him, and the narrator adopts the same term with increasing frequency. The novel suggests that, if

Enrique manages to win Stella's love, he can escape his painful memories and begin life anew.

The work's final scenes frustrate these hopes and doom the protagonist to an empty existence. After Gallo threatens him with the gun, Enrique spends time at a bar and then boards the last train home, where he falls asleep, dreams of Stella, and wakes up to find her sitting next to him. She explains that she has left Gallo and accompanies Enrique to Burzaco. After having kissed him during the entire trip, she invites him to her house and expresses a desire to have sex. However, in a literal anticlimax, Enrique's body is unable to perform. Stella then tells him that he should leave, because tomorrow morning she is getting up early and moving to La Boca, presumably to live with Gallo again. Enrique returns home and dreams of a woman who calls him "Quique." At this point, the protagonist "comprende, de una vez y para siempre, que está solo, completamente solo," and the work reaches its conclusion (226). No further opportunities to atone for the past will come about.

Through Enrique's inability to achieve the happiness that he has sought since adolescence, *Veneno* denies any possibility for redemption. The detailed representation of the past through flashbacks offers two potential outcomes: triumph despite the previous events, or failure as a result of them. By taking the second path, the novel completes the portrait of Enrique as a victim of his circumstances and a member of a defeated generation. Love, which the protagonist defended as an adolescent, remains beyond his grasp in his adult years and cannot save him from misery. By the novel's conclusion, poetry and revolutionary ambitions have proven incapable of changing anything. The protagonist resigns himself to sorrow, regret, and a sense of impotence. Enrique's failure to reunite with Stella has additional consequences for national identity. In 1998, he imagines Stella "vestida con una minifalda blanca, una blusa celeste" (83). White and sky blue are the colors of the Argentine flag. This image of Stella, the ideal woman in Enrique's life, dressed in patriotic colors thus corresponds to the ideal country envisioned by Enrique and by the revolutionaries of the preceding generation. As is apparent from figures such as Britannia and Marianne, there is a long, worldwide tradition that symbolizes the nation as a woman. This practice receives grammatical reinforcement in Argentina, where the feminine definite article, "la," commonly precedes the country's name. That Enrique, the Argentine everyman, should prove incapable of consummating his union with Stella, the female personification of national identity, underlines the protagonist's failure to produce the nation of his dreams: Enrique is an unsuccessful "founding father." Through this pessimistic ending, in which no ideal has become reality, the novel portrays Argentina as a country with a tragic past, a painful present, and a future without hope.

El espíritu: From Oblivion to Four Decades of Resistance

Patricio Pron's *El espíritu*, despite its many similarities to *Veneno*, reaches the opposite conclusion regarding national identity. Pron is one of the most important figures of contemporary Argentine letters and a rising star within the Spanish-speaking literary world. Born in 1975 in Rosario (Santa Fe, Argentina), he completed a Ph. D. in Romance Philology in Germany and currently resides in Madrid. Pron's reception has been especially positive in his adoptive country, where reviews of his work present him as "uno de los escritores más interesantes y capaces de la actualidad hispanoamericana" (*El*

Cultural) and argue that he "domina el lenguaje y la estructura con una solvencia poco frecuente en autores de su edad" (*ABC*). Pron has published many award-winning novels and collections of short stories, the most well known of which are *El comienzo de la primavera* (2008) and *El mundo sin las personas que lo afean y lo arruinan* (2010). His work often draws comparisons to that of Roberto Bolaño for its mixing of genres and exploration of the role of fiction.²⁰

El espíritu, published to international critical acclaim in 2011, tells the story of an Argentine man living in self-imposed exile in Germany, where he works at a university and pursues a career as a writer. When he learns that his father, a journalist and former political activist, is suffering from a serious medical condition, the protagonist returns home to a small provincial town and must confront the past that he has been attempting to forget. Upon perusing his father's papers, he discovers that he has been following the press coverage of a crime: a local man disappeared and was later found dead in an abandoned well. This case suggests a connection with the 1970s, as the victim's sister was kidnapped by the military dictatorship while collaborating with a guerrilla organization. The protagonist's search for the truth brings him closer to his father, helps him come to terms with painful memories, and reconciles him with the country of his birth. By the work's conclusion, the protagonist has identified an alternative national identity, based on resistance, willpower, and solidarity, that persists across the generations.

²⁰ The writer Francisco Solano sees Pron as "una réplica del seísmo literario generado por Roberto Bolaño" and as the individual who has filled the void left by the Chilean author's death. For Solano, "Es como si, a falta de un Bolaño vivo, el ruedo literario se avivara con las promesas de otra figura que lo desplaza y de quien cabe esperar todo tipo de prodigios" (46).

If one uses traditional literary genres, *El espíritu* defies classification. At first glance, it is a novel featuring a first-person limited narrator, who, as is customary in such works, shifts between his perspective at the time of the events and his perspective at the time of writing. However, in the final pages, the narrator's voice blends into that of Pron, who enters the text and explains that many of the events actually took place. As he provides a transcription of recent documents that update the facts, the previous content, by association, appears to be true as well. The book thus recounts Pron's own experiences and the history of his family. He reaffirms this idea by adding that his father, the work's secondary protagonist, has supplied his own version of the events, which readers can consult on Pron's blog page. With this information, it now appears that the text belongs to the realm of non-fiction and that one should consider it a memoir. Pron argues, nonetheless, that he has written a work of fiction: "Aunque los hechos narrados en este libro son principalmente verdaderos, algunos son producto de las necesidades del relato de ficción, cuyas reglas son diferentes de las de géneros como el testimonio y la autobiografía" (237). He supports this argument by citing the Spanish writer Antonio Muñoz Molina, for whom "[u]na gota de ficción tiñe todo de ficción" (237). While it is true that, according to poststructuralist theories of discourse, these distinctions between fiction and nonfiction carry little importance, I follow Pron's reasoning here and consider the work a novel, so as to facilitate comparison with the narration, characters, and plot structure of Veneno.²¹

²¹ Therefore, in what follows, I divide the narrative voice into four individuals: Pron (the real-life author of the work, who does not appear in the text), "Pron" (a textual projection of the author, who appears at the end of the work to consider the "truth" of the events), the narrator (speaking from the moment of composition, with full knowledge of all that has taken place), and the protagonist (the narrator's limited perspective in the past as the

Regardless of the label that one chooses, history and historiography play a central role in *El espíritu*. The novel's opening epigraph, a phrase from the beat writer Jack Kerouac, introduces the problem of perspective and memory: "the true story of what I saw and how I saw it." It is not clear whether "truth" here entails some absolute, impartial record of what occurred or the limited, personal recollections of the first-person narrator. The lack of a preposition after "and" also permits the reading that the terms are incongruent, that the speaker "saw" the events in a way that differed from the "true story," and that a new perspective or new information came to correct the misperception. Within the Hispanic tradition, furthermore, it is difficult not to hear an echo of Don Quijote, in which Cervantes subverts the idea of a "verdadera historia" through a series of narrative masks. The narrator-as-writer of *El espíritu* plays upon the same concept, at one point calling into a question a scene that he has just observed: "Como quiera que sea, aquel encuentro, que ocurrió realmente y que, por tanto, fue verdadero, puede leerse aquí sencillamente como una invención, como algo falso" (Pron 30). After reducing to absurdity the distinction between truth and falsehood, he proceeds nonetheless to insist on the veracity, but not the verisimilitude, of the remaining material: "casi todo lo que sucedió después, lo que yo vengo a contar, fue verdadero pero no necesariamente verosímil" (30). Such affirmations not only make the narrator unreliable but also point at the subjectivity that underlines any retelling of the "facts."

This unreliability is more than a narratological game, however, as it stems from the narrator's personal history and forms a significant part of the novel's structure. When the story begins, the protagonist is suffering from a lack of memory. This problem seems

events are unfolding). Whenever this final distinction is unimportant, I speak simply of the narrator.

in part to have a natural cause, in that "mi padre siempre había tenido una mala memoria" and "me auguraba que vo también la tendría así" (21). The narrator states, nevertheless, that he lost his ability to recall the past as a consequence of drug use and that visits to the psychiatrist failed to uncover anything (11). This loss of memory perhaps constitutes one of the literary devices to which "Pron" alludes at the work's conclusion. When the narrator claims to have made a discovery but, by communicating information through the limited perspective of the protagonist, keeps the readers guessing, he creates suspense and involves them in the search. At one moment, for example, the narrator interrupts himself and declares "pero esto aún no lo sabía, por lo que aquí debo fingir que lo desconozco" (134). The resulting suspense is greatest concerning the narrator's relationship with his family and country of birth. He mentions early on that "[a]lgo nos había sucedido a mis padres y a mí y a mis hermanos y había hecho que yo jamás supiera qué era una casa y qué era una familia incluso cuando todo parecía indicar que había tenido ambas cosas" (18-19). The problem of national identity, then, is a consequence of that unspecified "algo" in his damaged memory, and the protagonist must return from his self-imposed exile in order to discover it.

The distance between the protagonist and Argentina is immediately visible. Upon arriving at the airport in Buenos Aires, he marvels at how the country has changed during his stay in Germany. Although he has been absent for only eight years, it appears to him that more time has passed, as though everyone around him had been on a roller coaster (26). This disconnect is consistent with other aspects of the narrator's biography. During the 1990s, he voted for all of the political candidates who lost, which implicitly frees him of responsibility for the corruption and economic collapse as a result of the Menem presidency (55). He likewise separates himself from Catholicism, the state religion and a longtime pillar of national identity. The narrator was a "católico fanático" between the ages of nine and thirteen, but he later discovered an incompatibility between Christian morality and his personal ethics. His solution was to convert to Islam, which he considers "la religión más acorde con nuestros tiempos" (56). He does not elaborate on this opinion, but his adoption of what would be a minority, less visible religion back home emphasizes his break with the past and with the dominant view of national identity.

Like *Veneno*, *El espíritu* paints a negative portrait of contemporary Argentina. In *El espíritu*, however, perhaps because the narrative voice is that of an intellectual, the criticism is more analytical than descriptive. While spending time with his brother after returning to Argentina, the protagonist watches a television program in which members of the police pursue criminals in a *villa* "en las afueras de la capital del país" (188).²² Up to this point, the passage reflects the issues identified in *Veneno*: poverty and crime in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Yet the narrator takes a step further, explaining that

el idioma local parecía haber cambiado mucho desde mi partida y yo no entendía nada de lo que decían. Aunque tampoco resultaba comprensible lo que decían los policías, en el programa tan sólo se subtitulaba a los pobres, y yo me quedé pensando por un momento acerca de qué país era ése en el que los pobres debían ser subtitulados, como si hablasen una lengua extranjera. (188)

²² Although the narrator never mentions the title of the program, his descriptions suggest that it is *Policias en accion*, a popular series broadcast on Argentina's Canal Trece (see http://www.eltrecetv.com.ar/policias-en-accion). Similar to the U.S. program *COPS*, *Policias en acción* features police officers on duty in cities around the country, focusing on violence, moments of tension, or strange cases. The sensationalistic portrayal of law enforcement, together with the often negative representation of impoverished neighborhoods, is an important topic in contemporary culture but lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The beginning of this citation reaffirms the protagonist's distance from society, with the linguistic differences indicating how much has changed during his absence. This observation then creates an opportunity to denounce the media's portrayal of the poor. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of subtitles only for residents of the *villa* lacks justification, as the narrator cannot understand the police officers, either. He connects this editorial decision with an interpretation of Argentine identity, in that the program seems to exclude the poor from the national community, whose members presumably speak "comprehensible" Spanish, even when an impartial observer feels otherwise. Living outside Argentina has granted the protagonist a detached perspective, through which he perceives that something has gone wrong in a country that marginalizes a segment of its population and reinforces this act through the media. He builds upon this idea a short time later, when he compares himself to "uno de esos marginales que había visto en la televisión hablando en su lengua de pobres y perdidos en la tierra que no les pertenecía" (191-92). The lack of land ownership has a double meaning here. In a literal sense, the poor do not have access to property and must live as squatters in shantytowns; in a figurative sense, like the protagonist, they do not belong to the national community. Nonetheless, unlike the protagonist, who had the opportunity and resources to leave of his own volition, these impoverished citizens have no choice in the matter and simply find themselves excluded, foreigners in their "own" country.

El espíritu likewise resembles *Veneno* in uncovering the historical roots of contemporary problems, but Pron's work delves deeper into the past and interrogates the national literary tradition. Recalling his first experiences with literature, the narrator explains that he read primarily "autores extranjeros y que estaban muertos. Que un

escritor fuera argentino y pudiera estar vivo aún es un descubrimiento bastante reciente y que todavía me causa asombro" (54). This interest in cosmopolitan authors was a way to escape reality "cuando era un adolescente pobre en un barrio pobre de una ciudad pobre de un país pobre y estaba empeñado estúpidamente en convertirme en parte de esa república imaginaria a la que ellos pertenecían" (16). As the repetition of "pobre" makes clear, the narrator views his childhood as typically Argentine. It is not that his family was particularly underprivileged or lived in an impoverished region: at all levels of society, Argentina was poor in the 1970s and occupied a marginal role in world affairs. The narrator's opinions on national literature reflect this evaluation. His library contained "un puñado de libros que pertenecían ya a una literatura de la que yo había querido escapar sin lograrlo; una literatura que parecía ser la pesadilla de un escritor moribundo, o mejor aún, de un escritor argentino y moribundo y sin ningún talento" (16). He clarifies that he is referring to Ernesto Sabato, whom he attacks as an author who believed he had talent but discovered that he did not, and who recalled with shame that he had sat at the table of dictators (16). The narrator's distance from Argentine literature plays a role in his decision to leave the country. His reason for choosing exile in Germany, he explains, was that it was the home of the writers who had most interested him (16).

This rejection of national literature forms part of a broader rejection of national sentiment. The narrator remembers trips that his father organized to different parts of Argentina, hoping that the children would discover the beauty of the landscape. He attempted to "darle [sic] un contenido a aquellos símbolos que habíamos aprendido en una escuela que no se había desprendido aún de una dictadura cuyos valores no terminaba de dejar de perpetuar" (20). Having grown up during the military dictatorship and

attended school during the first years of democracy, the narrator points out the moral continuity between the two societies. He likely alludes here to the rise of the middle class in the early 1980s, based upon the individualistic mindset that had motivated the neoliberal reforms. His father's plan to associate national symbols with the physical features of the country is a result of what he sees as their misuse in public discourse. The narrator remembers that schoolchildren would draw "una escarapela redonda y una bandera que era celeste y blanca y que nosotros conocíamos bien porque supuestamente era nuestra bandera," but he and his siblings felt no connection to them (20-21). His explanation for this detachment is a summary of recent history and underlines the continuity between past and present. The narrator associated the Argentine flag with

circunstancias con las que nosotros no teníamos nada que ver ni queríamos tenerlo: una dictadura, un Mundial de fútbol, una guerra, un puñado de gobiernos democráticos fracasados que sólo habían servido para distribuir la injusticia en nombre de todos nosotros y del de un país que a mi padre y a otros se les había ocurrido que era, que tenía que ser, el mío y el de mis hermanos. (20-21)

In this passage, national identity is an unwanted burden, forced upon the narrator and his siblings by authority figures. Nothing positive or worthy of pride has occurred under the Argentine flag since 1976: the military regime, the FIFA World Cup of 1978--used as propaganda for the dictatorship--, the disastrous invasion of the Falkland Islands, and a series of ineffective democratic administrations. The protagonist refuses to identify with the country that committed these errors. Of particular note is the connection, as in *Veneno*, between the dictatorship and the following decades, which recalls Romero's interpretation of the "long crisis." For the narrator, the return to democracy only

worsened the previous inequalities and spread the responsibility among the entire population.

The disappearance of Alberto José Burdisso is the most visible connection in the novel between the 1970s and the twenty-first century. At first glance, the case appears to be yet another example of crime in present-day Argentina. Through a series of press clippings that the protagonist discovers among his father's papers, and through additional information that the narrator includes while telling the story, we learn that Burdisso, a humble resident of the rural town of El Trébol in Santa Fe province, has gone missing. As the townspeople grow impatient and begin to fear for their own safety, they criticize the police department's mishandling of the investigation (94). Like the character Gallo's decision in Veneno to take justice into his own hands by purchasing a firearm, this episode hints at the perceived lack of accountability among today's public officials. Nonetheless, the narrator's comments and the language surrounding the protests and press coverage connect the Burdisso case with the military dictatorship. The narrator detects "una especie de amenaza imprecisa pero que afecta al colectivo," in which the residents are ill at ease and claim to know nothing about the victim (87). When community members organize a march "por la aparición de un vecino," its slogan of "Contra la impunidad y a favor de la vida" recalls not only the anti-dictatorship protests of the past but also the increased visibility of the human rights movement under the Kirchner presidencies (90).

The connection is strongest in the term "desaparecido," which the narrator uses to describe Burdisso and which he identifies as the common theme of the articles. "Desaparición," he reflects, stood out in the press clippings "como una escarapela

108

fúnebre en la solapa de todos los tullidos y los desgraciados de la Argentina" (96). Through this comparison, Burdisso becomes the latest victim in a series of crimes, equated with the victims of state terror during the military dictatorship. The use of the word "escarapela," which has appeared previously in a patriotic context, underscores the responsibility of the nation for these injustices. It is for this reason that the narrator emphasizes the social dimension of Burdisso's disappearance and the need for an investigation in the name of the collectivity (140). This chain of violence also likely motivates the narrator's consistent use of the place-name "*osario" instead of "Rosario," the nearby major city. To a certain extent, the asterisk is a nod to the conventions of nineteenth-century realist fiction, which often modified or truncated the names of real cities. "*osario," however, conveys a deeper meaning in the novel, turning the city into an "osario," a pile of human bones.

Burdisso's biographical details also reinforce the connection with the past, as his sister, Alicia, a journalist, poet, and member of the Communist Party, disappeared in the northern province of Tucumán in 1977 (67). The focal point for revolutionary activity, Tucumán was the battleground of "Operativo Independencia," in which government forces perfected the tactics that they would later use to subdue guerrillas and persecute dissidents throughout the country. The disappearance of the two siblings is more than mere coincidence. In indirect fashion, the dictatorship's murder of Alicia in 1977 is the cause of her brother's death. Citing a press clipping, the narrator explains that, in 2005, during the Kirchner administration's human rights campaign, Burdisso had received an indemnization payment from the government for his sister's disappearance. He used this money to purchase a house, a car, a motorcycle, and other goods (122). Another article

states that this sudden prosperity attracted the attention of criminals, who manipulated Burdisso and killed him when he refused to sign away his property (123). This series of events implies that, in the unstable society that emerged after the dictatorship, violence and inequality remain present under new guises. The suggestion is that redressing past errors, though an important step forward, will hold limited meaning as long as new errors continue to plague the country.

The connections among Burdisso, Alicia, and the narrator's father constitute the final link between the present and the past. The protagonist discovers that his father has been following the Burdisso case not only because it affects the local community but also because he knew Alicia and her brother in the 1970s. In both cases, his father was unable to prevent the disappearance of a friend (112). While gathering information, the protagonist finds portions of a speech that his father gave at Burdisso's recent funeral, in which he mentioned Alicia as "parte de aquella generación que tuvo que luchar para que volvieran las libertades a la patria," without whom the contemporary human rights demonstrations would not have been possible (148). The protagonist later discovers a photograph of his father with Alicia and other young people (164-65), and he concludes that his father felt guilty for having involved her in politics without foreseeing the consequences (169). It thus becomes clear that the narrator's father, in searching for Burdisso in the present, is attempting to atone for his perceived shortcomings in the past.

The symmetry between this search and the protagonist's search for his father leads to a rediscovery of identity. Early in the work, the narrator describes children as the "detectives" of their parents, whose lives they feel a need to understand (12-13), and the protagonist's actions follow this pattern. After spending time browsing through his father's papers, he attends a local museum exhibit and watches a documentary, which includes an interview with his father. When an employee turns off the television, the protagonist continues to look at the screen. Past and present come together in the image: "donde estaba la cara de mi padre comencé a ver la mía, que se reflejaba en la pantalla negra con todas las facciones reunidas en un gesto de dolor y tristeza que nunca antes había visto" (160). This overlap represents both the protagonist's growing identification with his father and his renewed self-awareness. By investigating the past and recovering emotional bonds, he begins to overcome his loss of memory.

The museum visit proves to be the turning point in the novel, after which the protagonist recovers his childhood memories. Deeply affected by the experience, he falls ill and has a series of feverish dreams. In one sequence, his father appears and cryptically states that "2010 es 2008 sin 1977, y 1977 es 2010 al revés," reinforcing the connection between the two disappearances and the historical contexts in which they occurred (182). While convalescing, the protagonist remembers his father always starting the car by himself when he was a child. This memory is the catalyst for a series of revelations: in those years, members of the dictatorship killed journalists with car bombs; his parents formed part of the Peronist resistance; and they took precautions to prevent the narrator from being kidnapped and sharing information on their activities. With this discovery, the narrator comes to the conclusion that it was not the drugs that had made him forget but rather the events themselves. His hatred of Argentina and his rejection of the dominant national identity likewise resulted from the terror of the dictatorship years (192-93). He decides to remember those experiences "por mí y por mi padre y por lo que ambos habíamos salido a buscar y nos había reunido sin que lo quisiéramos" (195). It is a difficult process, but the outcome suggests that the narrator has made the correct decision.

At first, confronting painful memories entails accepting membership in a defeated generation. Similar to Enrique and his friends in *Veneno*, the narrator has inherited his parents' failure to realize their ideals. During a conversation with his sister, the protagonist learns that his father has underlined a phrase from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy: "He peleado hasta el fin el buen combate, concluí mi carrera: conservé la fe" (44). In contrast to his father, the narrator and the rest of his generation have neither fought for their beliefs nor kept their faith after defeat. He reflects that "algo o alguien nos había infligido ya una derrota y nosotros bebíamos o tomábamos pastillas o perdíamos el tiempo de uno y mil modos como una forma de apresurarnos hacia un final tal vez indigno pero liberador en cualquier caso" (45). This generation was thus born into defeat, after the decisive battle had taken place, and has no hope of achieving victory under the current circumstances. The narrator is a product of the "decadent," post-dictatorship Argentina that Romero associates with the "long crisis."

Even so, *El espíritu* differs from *Veneno* in that its protagonist ultimately finds hope through the expression of a new political project and an alternative national identity. Within the novel's plot, the roots of this difference lie in the narrator's family history. Despite focusing on the 1970s and the present, the novel delves into the early twentieth century to rescue a tradition of activism, solidarity, and determination. The narrator remembers his grandfathers; "el primero era anarquista y el segundo peronista, creo. Mi abuelo paterno meó una vez el mástil de la bandera en una comisaría, pero no sé por qué ni cuándo; creo recordar que fue porque no le permitieron votar o algo así." He then suggests that his maternal grandfather helped to transport explosives during the Peronist resistance (55). Although the temporal references in this passage are vague, the narrator's grandfathers represent two iconic forms of popular participation in twentieth-century Argentina: anarchist protest against the corrupt conservative order of the early 1900s, and Peronist struggle against the military governments of the latter half of the century. His paternal grandfather's insult of the Argentine flag symbolizes the rejection of the official national identity, which his grandchildren, as seen previously, would repeat.

This contestatory spirit and loyalty to one's beliefs carried over into the following generation, as the narrator's parents adapted to the new context without renouncing their values. Novaro and Palermo, in their study of the 1976-1983 dictatorship, distinguish between "internal exile" and "external exile." They argue that, unlike totalitarian regimes that sought to mobilize all of society, the Argentine de facto government suppressed public space but left a certain margin of action within the private sphere. Homes conserved their autonomy, and some of them remained centers of discussion and antidictatorship propaganda (150-52). The narrator's parents in *El espíritu* are an example of internal exiles. Despite conforming in public in order to protect their children, they display the Peronist shield in their house (194), and their library reflects their concern for justice and desire for social transformation. In a scene that recalls the "escrutinio de la biblioteca" in Don Quijote, the narrator offers a summary of his parents' book collection, whose titles show a commitment to Peronism, revolutionary thought, Latin American identity, literature, and history. He identifies "celeste, blanco y rojo" as the dominant colors on the book covers (41). This combination symbolizes Argentina's violent past, mixing the colors of the flag with the color of blood, but also points toward an alternative

national tradition, in which the nation receives an infusion of communist and socialist ideals. Similarly, the narrator's identification of key words such as "táctica," "estrategia," and "lucha" in the titles proves that his parents, though defeated, continued their revolutionary struggle (41).

Recovering this tradition allows the narrator to overcome the adverse situation into which he was born. At the beginning of the work, by taking the path of external exile, by both emigrating to Germany and taking pills to forget, the narrator appears to have betrayed his family's legacy. He seems destined for the same unhappy ending as Enrique in Veneno, falling victim to the set of circumstances that arose with the dictatorship. The primary difference between the two novels, however, is that Pron's narrator rescues the sentiments that drove his parents to fight for a better country. Upon remembering his childhood, he first wonders whether it is even possible to continue the struggle: "Me pregunté qué podía ofrecer mi generación que pudiera ponerse a la altura de la desesperación gozosa y del afán de justicia de la generación que la precedió, la de nuestros padres" (213). He does not necessarily approve of the "guerra insensata y perdida de antemano" that they undertook (213), but he values the spirit that motivated them and wishes to follow in his own way. The narrator eventually posits the interrogation of history as a political task, "una de las pocas que podía tener relevancia para mi propia generación, que había creído en el proyecto liberal que arrojara a la miseria a buena parte de los argentinos durante la década de 1990 y les había hecho hablar un lenguaje incomprensible que debía ser subtitulado" (218). Through an exploration of the past, it is possible not only to understand where Argentina went wrong but also to solve contemporary problems, in this case poverty and marginalization. At the same time, the narrator's generation can atone for its own failures in having allowed, whether through ignorance or through apathy, the further disintegration of the country in the 1990s.

The narrator's decision to write and publish his book achieves both of the goals in that mission. On one hand, he carries on his father's commitment to political journalism. He has already described his father as the "maestro ... de los periodistas que con el tiempo iban a ser mis maestros" (121), and, while browsing the collection of articles on the Burdisso case, the protagonist realizes that his father has left him the materials to write a book (171). At a textual level, the blank page at the end of the father's folder suggests an invitation to continue the project (148). By writing his book, the narrator proves that he has incorporated the spirit of resistance and that his parents' values have survived. On the other hand, the novel offers a message of hope to the current generation. Avoiding naive optimism, the narrator proposes defending the values that disappeared with the revolutionary movement. His mother, also a politically active journalist, who had crossed the Matanza river when Perón returned in 1972 and who once taught the narrator how to make a barricade (207-08), encourages him to spread this message. She states that "pese a todos los malentendidos y las derrotas hay una lucha y no se acaba, y esa lucha es por verdad y por justicia y por luz para los que están en la oscuridad" (223). The narrator, explaining his decision to follow this advice, expresses hope that a reader will feel "interpelado" by the story. In the best case, readers will begin their own investigation of the past, "acerca de un tiempo que no parecía haber acabado para algunos de nosotros" (218). The dictatorship years hold the key to solving Argentina's current problems, and the narrator sees his book as a small contribution toward that collective effort.

In articulating this project, *El espíritu* offers an alternative national identity that contrasts with the abuses and injustice committed over the last decades. After explaining in detail his detachment from the country and his lack of association with patriotic symbols, the narrator realizes that his search for his father's history is "un destino argentino" (218). Even when acknowledging his role in a defeated generation, he finds continuity with the struggles of the past, "un hilo que atravesaba las épocas y nos unía a pesar de todo y era espantosamente argentino: la sensación de estar unidos en la derrota, padres e hijos" (45). What separates El espíritu from Veneno, nonetheless, is that this common defeat is not the end of the story. Near the work's conclusion, after he announces that he has returned to Germany, the narrator imagines himself with his father, "contemplando la boca negra del pozo en el que yacen todos los muertos de la Historia argentina, todos los desamparados y los desfavorecidos y los muertos porque intentaron oponer una violencia tal vez justa a una violencia profundamente injusta y a todos los que mató el Estado argentino" (228). This image connects current inequality not only with the last dictatorship but with all of national history. The implication is that, from this critical perspective, the narrator and his generation can denounce the errors of the past in order to prevent their repetition. In the following pages, the black hole into which the characters stare gives way to memories of a forest, a symbol of fear for the narrator. His interpretation of this scene encapsulates the novel's approach to national history: "él y yo seguimos allí y él sigue guiándome, y que quizás salgamos de ese bosque algún día" (229). With his parents' spirit as a guide, the narrator searches for a path towards a better future.

Final Comparisons

Both Veneno and El espíritu connect the 1976-1983 dictatorship with the problems of twenty-first-century Argentina. Each work depicts poverty, instability, and violence as defining characteristics of the country since the beginning of the military regime. Their portrayal of recent history thus corresponds to Luis Alberto Romero's idea of the "larga crisis argentina," in which the dictatorship was the turning point between a vibrant, upwardly mobile society and a decadent, impoverished shell of its former self. Each novel also features a protagonist who has inherited the previous generation's failures. In Veneno, Enrique is the continuation of his parents' economic and personal troubles, and his transmission of this disadvantage to his own children suggests that the problem is perpetual. In *El espíritu*, the protagonist comes from a strong political and intellectual background but chooses to forget his childhood and abandon the country. Both novels view their protagonist as symptomatic of a larger problem. In Veneno, the narrator's description of society and focus on other individuals reveal that Enrique is not uncommon, whereas the narrator of *El espíritu* explicitly includes himself in a defeated generation that has only increased Argentina's misery.

The clearest difference between the novels, however, is their ending and the consequent implications for national identity. Enrique fails to attain his life-long goal of starting a relationship with Stella, the only woman whom he has ever loved. Enrique's role as an Argentine everyman and Stella's association with the Argentine flag point at a

wider message: actions taken today cannot redeem the country from decades of failure, and resignation to this fact is the only remaining option. According to this reading, Argentina is irreparably broken. *El espíritu*, in contrast, reaches a positive conclusion by redefining national identity. Having distanced himself from the country's history of injustice, the protagonist adheres to an alternative tradition based on the struggle for truth and equality. No longer helpless victims, the members of his generation receive the opportunity to continue their parents' battle, investigating the past in order to prevent its errors from recurring. This interpretation of Argentina sees the "larga crisis" not as a condemnation but rather as a challenge to be overcome. With commitment and tenacity, the novel seems to argue, the dreams of the revolutionaries may yet become reality.

Divergent conceptions of politics help to explain the contrast between the two works. In *Veneno*, politics plays a very minor role. With the exception of the military's pressure on the Church, itself not necessarily a "political" act in terms of collective organization, no political activity takes place during the main narrative. Politics appears only indirectly and in ambiguous fashion. The narrator's summary of Enrique's former political affiliations--Montoneros (after its military defeat), radicalism (which rejected Che Guevara), and communism (which focused on Stalin and Trotsky instead of Che)-says just as much about the protagonist as about the organizations in which he participated. There is a touch of humor in this list, as though the hapless protagonist were always joining at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. One can also find a criticism of Enrique for his failure to understand party beliefs. Finally, if one sees Che Guevara, as Enrique seems to do, as an individual to be emulated, this passage contains a criticism of at least two political parties. Radicalism appears as too moderate to effect social change (as it would indeed prove to be), while Argentine communism appears mired in debates over Soviet figures from the past and thus out of touch with contemporary Latin America.

El espíritu, centered within the Peronist tradition, presents an opposite view of political organization. It is true that the narrator expresses reservations about his parents' activities. He describes the youth of the 1970s as "peleando una guerra insensata y perdida de antemano y marchando al sacrificio con el canto sacrificial de la juventud desesperada, altiva e impotente y estúpida" (213). When recalling the resistance group to which his parents belonged, the narrator states that unconditional loyalty to Perón had been a trap, as it had forced the group to accept Isabel's repressive government and pushed them into a dead end when Perón died (197-98). The narrator is likewise critical of Montoneros, which he accuses of having left its followers as easy prey for the dictatorship after going undercover (203). Even so, it is through political organization that the narrator's parents protect their ideals and pass them on to their children. Despite his membership in a defeated generation, the narrator is able to point out that he voted for the unsuccessful opposition candidates during the neoliberalization of the 1990s. His true defeat, the novel suggests, was to turn his back on Argentina and dissociate himself from the country's problems instead of fighting to end them. In this sense, the "political" in El *espíritu* goes beyond party identification and comes to signify the defense of justice and human rights. Writing his book, therefore, becomes the narrator's political contribution and his proof of commitment, despite his decision to return to his university work in Germany.

The social backgrounds of the protagonists also explain the differences between the novels. Evidence of racism in *Veneno* points at the first barrier that Enrique faces, and

a lack of education puts him at a further disadvantage. The novel offers little information on Enrique's parents, but their occupations suggest that they did not receive professional or university training. In the flashback to 1998, the narrator reveals that Enrique did not finish the first year of high school (139-40), and there is no indication that he ever returned to complete his degree. This background helps to explain his inability to find a job, as well as his dilettantism in politics and culture. Part two of the novel reveals the protagonist's inability to express himself. His interlocutor, who from context clues appears to be his best friend, Gerardo, has moved out of Burzaco and now spends time with middle-class intellectuals whom Enrique dislikes. The protagonist tells his friend "Tengo algunas ideas. Quiero que las escuches y que le [sic] hables a tus profesores de mis ideas" (116). This exchange, which creates the impression that Gerardo or one of his acquaintances ends up writing Enrique's story, also introduces the possibility that the narrator is less impartial than first appears. In any event, the lack of education constitutes a barrier for the protagonist and affects the novel's outcome. If Enrique's failures present the country in a negative light, would a different novel, told from the successful Gerardo's point of view, have offered an opposite reading of national identity? In his story, the upwardly mobile protagonist would overcome a precarious childhood, better himself through education, move to the capital, and gain a better understanding of his country's problems. Taking this possibility into consideration, the decision to focus on Enrique and offer a pessimistic ending becomes even more significant.

El espíritu provides a glimpse into the path that *Veneno* chooses not to follow, as Pron's work presents its discussion of history and national identity from a decidedly intellectual point of view. From the first pages of the novel, allusions and references to Argentine literature abound. The narrator defines both himself and his parents in relation to the national literary tradition. As discussed previously, the narrator's distance from Argentina and closeness to Germany is articulated through his reading preferences. He takes a similar approach to his parents, observing that they have not read local authors such as Silvina Bullrich, Victoria Ocampo, and Ernesto Sabato (40-41). With the notable exceptions of Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, their library contains popular works and titles devoted to Peronism or revolutionary politics. Salient authors include Juan Domingo and Eva Perón, Che Guevara, Lenin, and Mao. In contrast to Veneno, where the poetry of Neruda inspires multiple characters but does not lead them to take action, writing plays a significant role in the events of *El espíritu*. Describing his father's political journalism and its importance in his own ethical upbringing, the narrator speaks of a "proceso casi preindustrial de aprendizaje que se oponía radicalmente en forma y contenido a las tonterías que pretendían enseñarnos en la universidad y, además, nos unía a mi padre y a mí en una especie de tradición involuntaria, una vieja escuela del rigor y de la voluntad y de la derrota en el periodismo" (121). The journalistic tradition is simultaneously a burden and a benefit. Although it brings the narrator into the losing side of the battle, it allows him to inherit and preserve his parents' values during the 1990s, a decade that he describes elsewhere as "tiempos de soberbia y de frivolidad y de derrota" (199). The narrator's ability to recover the past, trace an alternative national history, and find hope in the future is a result of his parents' education and commitment to their profession. The composition process within the novel symbolizes this link across the generations. Although the narrator, when writing his book, chooses to fill the blank page in his father's papers, it is his father who has brought together the materials and invited his son to continue the story.

Finally, the different time periods in which the works take place may also contribute to their opposite views on national identity. In 2003, *Veneno*'s present, the effects of the 2001 crisis were still keenly perceptible, and it was impossible to tell whether a worse collapse was imminent. Similarly, the human rights movement had not yet acquired full force under the Kirchner governments, and the unpunished abuses of the dictatorship were a painful symbol of defeat. The situation had changed by the end of the decade, when the events of *El espíritu* occur. Although Pron's novel centers on a violent crime and denounces the marginalization of the poor in *villas*, it generally pays less attention to economic difficulties, perhaps because economic recovery was already underway at this time. The human rights campaign had likewise made important strides, as is visible when the narrator's father argues that the revolutionary politics of the 1970s made possible the convictions of the 2000s. If the pardon granted to military officials had still been in effect, it may have proved more difficult to feel optimistic about the struggle for truth and justice.

Despite the opposite conclusions that they present, both *Veneno* and *El espíritu* show that investigating the past remains a meaningful practice in the contemporary Argentine novel. Since the 1980s, the proliferation of academic and popular accounts of the dictatorship has reduced uncertainty over what took place; but with the increase in knowledge, a new set of questions has emerged. Contradicting Sarlo's distinction between the "interpretative" novel of the 1980s and the "ethnographic" novel of the twenty-first century, *Veneno* and *El espíritu* use history to emphasize continuity. Each

novel suggests that the problems facing the country are deeply rooted, rather than products of circumstance. For these texts, in order to understand contemporary Argentina, it is necessary to look beyond the 2001 crisis and to come to terms with broader social divisions. *Veneno* calls attention to a legacy of racism and socioeconomic inequality, while *El espíritu* traces the effects of political violence across several generations. In turning to the 1970s to explain and offer solutions for Argentina's current problems, the novels studied here contribute to wider cultural and historiographical debates.

At stake in the interpretations of history that the novels offer is the representation of national identity. For these texts, the choice between despair and hope is a product of historical perspective, of the degree to which they feel that twenty-first-century Argentines can overcome a series of moral, political, and economic failures. Enrique represents a pessimistic approach to national identity. Described as "fragile," "beaten up," and "vulnerable" (Bermani 202), the character is a symbol of the nation in distress. "Vulnerable," a ubiquitous adjective in descriptions of the Argentine economy and of the Argentine middle class in particular, holds a central position in this novel, as Enrique's growing vulnerability reflects the nation's broken self-image. Behind the "falsa máscara de soberbia" (202), Enrique and his country remain at risk, ready to collapse anew at a moment's notice. Pron's narrator, in contrast, represents an optimistic approach to national identity. The novel acknowledges Argentina's tragic and traumatic past, depicting the ways in which a "defeated generation" resigned itself to failure, but the protagonist's rediscovery of his parents' struggle for justice leads him to continue the battle. Alongside the legacy of violence and terror that today's Argentines have inherited, there also exists a legacy of solidarity and resistance with which to identify. Through this

alternative national tradition, which Pron's narrator associates with Peronism, it is possible to accept the weight of history and to face the challenges of the present.

Literature is not the only cultural sphere in which debates over Argentine identity are occurring. As both novels studied here point out, soccer, the Argentine national sport, has long played a significant role in discussions of the country's dominant traits and position in global affairs. The next chapter explores the ways in which Argentina's national soccer team, tasked with defending the flag against foreign rivals, defines the limits of the national community and serves as a vehicle for celebration or criticism of the nation as a whole.

CHAPTER III: THE NATION TAKES THE FIELD: SOCCER AND ARGENTINE NATIONAL IDENTITY

In July 2014, as Argentina prepared to face Germany in the final match of the FIFA World Cup, Argentine coach Alejandro Sabella was asked for his thoughts on the opposing team. After praising the current players of the German national squad and acknowledging the program's long tradition of excellence, Sabella turned his attention to the wider socioeconomic context, describing Germany as a "país del primer mundo de verdad que sabe lo que es trabajar a mediano y largo plazo y el trabajo en equipo" (Misionesonline). It is difficult to imagine the coaches of England, France, or the United States comparing their teams with the opponent in such terms. Implicit in this characterization is the image of Argentina as a non- "first-world" country, unable to plan beyond the short term or to coordinate its efforts toward a common goal. In Sabella's description, the soccer match appears as an uneven contest between the prosperous, orderly Germany and the impoverished, chaotic Argentina. Performance on the field, according to such an interpretation of sports and national character, is a reflection of society at large.

Sabella's remarks are only the most recent manifestation of a deeply rooted practice within Argentine culture. Since its arrival in Argentina, soccer, the national sport, has held a central position in portrayals of national identity. By cultivating a supposed "national style," the first Argentine players distinguished themselves from both Europeans and members of neighboring countries. Argentina's national squad, with its FIFA World Cup championships of 1978 and 1986, has always been a source of great pride. A number of local clubs have also found success in regional and international tournaments, solidifying Argentina's place among the soccer powers of the world. Over the last decade, however, financial and administrative problems, often resulting from Argentina's general instability, have undermined that foundation. As Argentine soccer struggles to remain a dominant force in the twenty-first century, every match acquires greater political significance. For many spectators, a victorious national team suggests that all is well despite recent challenges, while defeat reflects the nation's failures and diminishing relevance in global affairs.

This chapter studies the role of soccer in contemporary representations of Argentine identity.²³ I begin with a general discussion of sports and nationalism, in which I draw upon the work of historians and sociologists. I then examine the cultural importance of soccer within Argentina, focusing on the game's first decades, its problematic ties to the 1976-83 military dictatorship, and its status following the economic and political crisis of 2001. Finally, as an example of soccer's recent contributions to portrayals of national identity, I analyze two promotional videos created for the 2010 FIFA World Cup: the short commercial "Argentinos" and the miniseries *La pareja del Mundial*. I argue that these texts offer an optimistic, middle-class reading of contemporary Argentina. "Argentinos" laments the country's recent setbacks but uses soccer to define the "true" national character, while *La pareja del Mundial* depicts an idealized society based on integration through employment. In both cases, Argentina appears as a "white" nation, and *La pareja del Mundial* underlines this "racial"

²³ I follow current usage in the United States, which calls the sport "soccer" to distinguish it from American football. Nonetheless, as the majority of English-language scholarship on the sport is produced in Britain, the British term "football" appears in many of the texts that I cite.

component of national identity through stereotypical representations of neighboring countries.

Soccer and National Identity

International sporting events, of which the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup are the most well known, feature competitions between members of "national" teams. As expressions such as "selección argentina" and "Canadian delegation" make clear, these squads have a synecdochal relationship with their countries of origin, constituting a careful selection of the best athletes that the nation has to offer. Team and country often become synonymous. Instead of "the national squad of Brazil has defeated the national squad of Argentina," one reads that "Brazil has defeated Argentina." In similar fashion, "Germany" wins the World Cup, while the "United States," not its Olympic delegation, takes home the greatest amount of medals. The suggestion is that the entire citizenry takes part in these triumphs or failures. Far from being mere journalistic shorthand, these ways of speaking reflect the generalized process of identification between athletes and the nation. Yet there is no intrinsic reason why a sports team, or any other group of individuals, should represent a country and its citizens on the global stage. As Jorge Luis Borges, speaking of Argentina, once argued, "No es posible que un país se sienta representado por jugadores de fútbol. Es como si nos representaran los dentistas" (qtd. in Gilbert and Vitagliano 83). The speed at which an individual can run a mile or swim the length of a pool has no objective connection to the character, fortunes, or wellbeing of a country. The role of athletes--instead of dentists, teachers, or factory workers-- as national representatives is a product of historical circumstances, namely the rise of nationalism and the globalization of sports.

As Barbara Keys explains, the bond between sport and national sentiment took shape in late-nineteenth-century Europe, where increased leisure time, technological development, and the rise of mass commercial entertainment allowed for an emphasis on physical education and athletic activities (17-18). Motivated by notions of social Darwinism and fears of degeneration, national governments began to intervene in public health and to encourage their citizens to improve their physical strength. Moral rectitude, according to the philosophy of this time period, was intimately linked to bodily wellbeing, and the modern state needed strong individuals to fill the ranks of its armies and to endure labor in factories (18). Sports and recreation thus acquired national significance: "[a] healthy nation, vigorous enough to produce economic growth and maintain its stature in the world, depended on a healthy population" (18). Therefore, by extension, victory in athletic competitions implied superiority in the other realms of society.

The founder of the modern Olympic Games, the French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, applied this line of thought within an international context. His first motivation was nationalistic. In the wake of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, Coubertin turned to sports as a means of revitalizing the French people (29-30). Nonetheless, the World's Fairs of 1889 in Paris and 1893 in Chicago, which brought together representatives from around the globe, led Coubertin to envision sports as a medium for international exchange (31). Like his European contemporaries, Coubertin was fascinated by ancient Greece, and he sought to adapt the original Olympic spirit to the needs of the present. He came to understand athletic competition as both a means to develop the physical and moral abilities of national populations and as a contribution toward universal fellowship and world peace (34). This philosophy guided the creation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894 and the celebration of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896.

Following the First World War and the emergence of a new global system, sports came to hold particular international relevance. Unlike other spheres of cultural activity, such as painting, music, or architecture, whose value depends on subjective and mutable criteria, "sport offers a single, universally accepted standard of achievement" (37). When running a mile, for instance, athletes measure themselves not only against all current competitors but also against every individual in human history to have run an identical length. Similarly, teams play according to common rules, and, although disagreement may arise over referees' decisions, performance translates neatly into rankings, wins, and losses. Mindful of these universal standards, during the interwar period, national governments began to organize athletic competitions in order to publicize their citizens' achievements, and the outcome became a method of gauging general national aptitude. According to Barbara Keys, the performance of national delegations "was interpreted by governments and by the general public not just as an indication of the athletic abilities of individuals or teams, but also as a reflection of the quality of a country's sociopolitical system. Victories became a barometer of a nation's overall power and prestige" (36). Not surprisingly, despite Coubertin's best intentions, the proliferation of international athletic competitions led to an intensification of nationalism and chauvinism (36-37).

By the second half of the twentieth century, sport had become firmly identified with the nation. This process occurred at both the domestic and the international levels.

At the domestic level, sports helped to form citizens, serving as "an important way to instill a sense of belonging to a nation, to solidify loyalty, to create a bond of attachment to an abstract entity" (17). According to this point of view, sport provided citizens with a common cause. The unity achieved through nationwide support of the national delegation would, at least in theory, promote harmony and cooperation among the various sectors of a country's population. Sport therefore helps to produce and sustain an imagined national community. This resulting sense of unity, in turn, affects the nation's performance in international affairs. To support the national soccer team, for example, implies not only to cheer for individual players but also to participate in a symbolic battle against the citizens of another country. This commitment to the nation may then carry over into other, more direct, types of competition, such as the economy or military conflict.

So powerful was the identification between sport and country that, in the twentieth century, sending a national delegation to global sporting events became one of the basic markers of nationhood, occupying a role similar to that of the national flag and anthem (17). It is conceivable that some spectators of international competitions receive their only exposure to certain countries through their participation in the event. Organizing a national team also confirms the country's membership in the community of nations and can be seen as a performance of identity for domestic and international audiences (17). From this perspective, Florida, British Columbia, and Bavaria, despite their size and significance, are not nations because they do not field national teams, whereas Trinidad and Tobago, despite its lesser demographic and economic importance, performs its status as a sovereign nation at a variety of international sports events. International athletic associations may even find themselves "ahead of the curve" in

recognizing nations as part of the global community. For example, in 2008, FIFA "had more national members (208) than the United Nations (192)," providing these members with an opportunity to construct and display national identities (Giulianotti and Robertson 101).

The development of soccer, the world's most popular sport, involved a similar interplay between the national and the global. While various ancient civilizations played a form of the game, most scholars view Britain as the creator of the modern version (6). During the second half of the nineteenth century, British elites codified rules that would distinguish "association football" from rugby and from the variants of football played in the United States (7). Britain's global presence facilitated the spread of soccer into continental Europe and throughout the rest of the world. Nonetheless, unlike rugby and cricket, which circulated through British imperial outposts, soccer traveled informally by means of trade and social clubs. British expatriates, local citizens who had studied in British schools, and Anglophiles in general were instrumental in increasing the sport's popularity (8).

As soccer spread across the globe, it became intimately linked with national sentiment. By 1890, the four British "home nations" had created national soccer associations and leagues, and European countries such as Germany, Italy, and Belgium quickly followed suit (10). Over the next two decades, similar governing bodies emerged in Latin America (10). Giulianotti and Robertson argue that soccer provided political and cultural cohesion over these years, stressing "the role of football players, coaches, teams, and tournaments, in connecting cities and towns with hinterlands, and building forms of national identity at grassroots level" (11). This connection was both physical and

symbolic. For example, soccer tournaments brought together teams from around the country, and they were frequently held in observance of national holidays or named after national heroes (10). Around the turn of the twentieth century, sports newspapers with nationwide circulation centered their attention on soccer. These media outlets not only increased public interest in the sport but also incorporated it within wider "nation-building narratives" (10).

Like the founding of the modern Olympic Games, the internationalization of soccer featured tension between the global and the local. In 1904, after clashing with British organizers, who had promoted the sport worldwide but were unwilling to share power in a transnational governing body, Dutch and French soccer owners founded the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (Keys 50). FIFA held its first World Cup tournament in 1930 in Uruguay, moving the event to France in 1934 and to Italy in 1938. From its inception, FIFA emphasized the role of soccer in promoting world peace. Just prior to the start of the First World War, the organization passed a resolution against armed conflict (Giulianotti and Robertson 14). The Frenchman Jules Rimet, FIFA's president from 1921 to 1954, shared Coubertin's vision of sport as a form of international fellowship and understood soccer as a way to promote healthy competition within the global family (Tomlinson and Young 5).

Nonetheless, the spread of soccer under the auspices of FIFA also reinforced the position of the nation-state. Although FIFA sought to promote the game internationally, it likewise expressed a firm commitment to its national member associations. FIFA regulations established local monopolies by recognizing only one soccer federation within each constituent nation (Keys 50-51). When these federations began to compete in

FIFA tournaments through national delegations, the matches, as had occurred in the Olympics, took on broader relevance. On one hand, international soccer encouraged national identification: "as national societies came into increasing contact with each other, so they were inspired to differentiate themselves, to sharpen their identity-markers, in relation to others" (Giulianotti and Robertson 19). A significant part of this "identity-marker" was the development of national soccer traditions, which supposedly distinguished countries for their playing style, speed, technical ability, or offensive and defensive philosophies (11). On the other hand, like Olympic sports, soccer offered a simple test of general national aptitude. Governments and spectators alike equated victory with strength and defeat with weakness. In mid-twentieth-century Britain, for example, observers linked losses on the soccer field with the Empire's diminishing global power, while Latin American reactions to defeat in the 1960s foreshadowed debates over the effects of "underdevelopment" (19).

In the twenty-first century, international soccer provides a valuable glimpse into the role of the nation in a globalized world. To a large extent, soccer today reflects the increasing fluidity of people, capital, and commodities across national boundaries. Many soccer clubs, in particular the wealthy European superpowers such as Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Manchester United, easily fit the definition of a transnational corporation.²⁴ Such clubs have a loyal global fanbase and command impressive revenues through worldwide merchandising. Every organizational level, from owners to coaches, staff, and players, features individuals who hail from around the world. National teams have

²⁴ Giulianotti and Robertson define the transnational corporation as "a profit-centered business that traverses national borders in trade and investment, and has relatively weaker connections to its 'home' origin compared to prior corporate models." The authors cite Wal-Mart, Nike, Adidas, and oil and motor companies as examples (82).

undergone a similar transformation. It is common for national teams to hire a foreign coach, and their players often reflect the generalized destabilization of national identities. France, for example, has long incorporated players from its former colonies, while immigration has added diversity to teams such as Germany and the United States. The ever-increasing movement of people would seem to undermine national soccer traditions, as fewer players "belong," according to traditional definitions of identity, to the nations being represented on the field.

Yet despite its role in globalization, international soccer simultaneously perpetuates division along national lines. Giulianotti and Robertson argue that, in general, "football tends to confirm the continuing significance of the modern nation state model" (102). The authors point out that tournaments involving national teams attract the largest television audiences and that these events "still encapsulate and dramatize senses of 'shared fate' across the imagined communities that comprise the nation, increasingly beyond territorial boundaries and among large diasporic groups" (102). The extended reach of television and, one might add, internet broadcasts allows national identity to reinforce itself outside the geographical confines of the nation, turning the national team into a "brand" for worldwide consumption (103). In certain countries, soccer's vast popularity provides elite groups with a means of integrating diverse segments of the national community and legitimizing political projects (102-03). Although the composition of each nation remains in flux, national soccer programs remain effective forms of mobilizing national sentiment. The increasing diversity within each national community may even enlarge the role that soccer has to play: as the nation becomes less homogeneous and traditional conceptions of national identity diminish in relevance, there

is a greater incentive for producing symbols around which everyone can unite. Similarly, the rise of supranational political and economic organizations has done nothing to reduce the symbolic importance of national teams. The World Cup remains the focal point of global soccer, and it would be difficult to imagine much support for a match between the members of NAFTA and those of Mercosur.

Soccer and Argentine National Identity

The role of soccer in Argentina offers a particularly forceful example of the ties between sports and national identity. Like many other countries, Argentina has long tended to interpret itself through its performance on the field. Eduardo Archetti has argued that "football is a powerful masculine expression of national capabilities and potentialities. Argentinian football has constituted a symbolic and practical male arena for national pride and disappointments, happiness and sorrow" (Masculinities 15). Argentine soccer is unique, however, for the extent to which it permeates national culture. As Pablo Alabarces and María Graciela Rodríguez explain, "[n]o discourse in Argentinian society is a stranger to football" (130). Ignoring all distinctions of register, topic, or tone, soccer forms part of popular publications, highbrow cultural programs, and intellectual debates alike (130). Scholars have paid special attention to the points of contact between soccer and politics. Alabarces understands soccer as a focal point in Argentine society, from which one can study the relationship between politics and the symbolic ("Perspectivas" 75). For Vic Duke and Liz Crolley, "[w]hat is distinctive about Argentina is that sport and politics are inextricably linked. Fútbol is an extension of politics; it is part of the political system and anything that begins as a sports issue rapidly

becomes politicised" (93). The authors go as far as to state that "there are grounds to claim that *fütbol* is the social model around which the political system has been constructed" (93). The history of Argentine soccer lends support to that conclusion, as the sport entered the country and gained popularity during the years when modern Argentina was taking shape.

Like countless other aspects of late-nineteenth-century Argentine culture, soccer arrived by way of the British. In keeping with the mindset that had motivated Coubertin's Olympics, the British prided themselves on bringing to Argentina not only capital, industries, technology, and new forms of livestock, but also "el gusto y la pasión por los deportes que permitieron el desarrollo moral de la juventud" (Archetti, *El potrero* 11).²⁵ Visiting sailors, known locally as los ingleses locos, were the first to play soccer in Argentina, and British railroad workers spread the game along the line as the railway system expanded (Duke and Crolley 94). The first recorded match took place in June of 1867 (94). Alexander Watson Hutton, a Scottish schoolteacher living in Buenos Aires, is considered the father of Argentine soccer. When he founded the English High School in 1884, he made soccer a central part of the curriculum (94), and he went on to organize the first Argentine soccer league in 1893 (Miller 3-4). Although the sport grew quickly in popularity across the country, with clubs established as far north as Santiago del Estero by 1910, the best players were British or Anglo-Argentine (Archetti, Masculinities 48-51). During a series of international exhibitions around the turn of the century, "[n]o

²⁵ The introduction of British sports in Argentina was part of a larger process: "los deportes de origen británico son concomitantes con la modernización, la construcción de estados nacionales y la internacionalización creciente de los intercambios económicos, sociales y culturales en el siglo XIX y comienzos del XX" (Archetti, *El potrero* 11). Soccer was thus one of the ways in which Argentina participated in the broader changes occurring at this time.

match was played against a typical 'Argentinian' team: all the Argentinian national team players had British names" (51). It was not until 1913, when a team composed primarily of Argentines won the championship, that local players began to replace their British counterparts (58-59).

As the skill of Argentine players became an increasing source of pride, the game found its way into discussions of national identity. In the 1920s, when soccer had taken hold both within Argentina and around the world, the Argentine middle-class sports weekly *El gráfico* developed the theory of the "two foundings" of Argentine soccer: one British, and the other *criollo* (58). According to this reading of the sport's history, Argentine *criollos*, identified as individuals with Spanish or Italian surnames, gradually "refounded" the national tradition by making the game their own (59).²⁶ The creole style that emerged was, for contemporary sports journalists, a product of deeper cultural traits. British soccer was monotonous, efficient, and based on precise teamwork, as though each player were a component in a machine. Creole soccer, in contrast, was less disciplined and allowed greater space for personal effort and innovation (59). Later formulations would slightly modify these comparisons, setting British physical strength against Argentine agility and virtuosity (60).

For Alabarces and Rodríguez, who view soccer as a pillar of national identity from the 1920s onward, the supposed "creolization" of the sport was a necessary step in

²⁶ Archetti observes that "[l]o *criollo* is founded through the sons of Latin immigrants. The sons of 'English' immigrants were never conceived of as *criollos*, and could not become *criollo* by playing football. They remained English, playing an English sport and, in this way, keeping their English identity" (59). The articulation of a supposed national style during these years thus reflected the considerable demographic changes that had resulted from Spanish and Italian immigration during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

the forging of an Argentine character. The country "needed a differential practice: the couplet of we (the nation) and they (the others) found its imaginary expression in a differentiated playing style" (120). Although these differences appeared more clearly in the narratives of sports journalism than in on-the-field performance, they nonetheless "yielded a great capacity for the production of social meanings" (120). The success of "creolized" Argentine teams in international tournaments, the 1928 Olympics, and the 1930 World Cup constituted a victory for the entire nation (120), now represented by its "true" citizens. These outcomes held special value because Argentina had triumphed by relying on its supposed national traits of creativity and spontaneity, rather than by imitating the foreign style of the game's British inventors.

During these years, the meanings that soccer and the surrounding cultural industry produced often diverged from official state discourse. It is possible to consider the spread of soccer as part of the development of an "organic" Argentine civil society, "ya que las organizaciones y clubes deportivos generaron espacios de autonomía y participación social al margen del Estado" (Archetti, *El potrero* 12). Thus, in contrast to elite groups' idealization of the rural gaucho, the soccer press transmitted a national identity narrative based on the urban working and middle classes, whose heroes were the creole star players of local clubs and members of the Argentine national team (Alabarces and Rodríguez 121).

Soccer's connection to the base of society granted it a central role in the governments, both democratic and de facto, of the following decades.²⁷ Sports

²⁷ The Asociación del Fútbol Argentino (AFA), since its foundation in 1934, has frequently demonstrated close ties with the ruling party of the moment. Between 1934 and 2002, one-third of AFA presidents had received their appointment during a time of

publications such as the aforementioned *El gráfico*, along with radio and film coverage of soccer, were consumed by the recently urbanized masses that pushed for change as part of Yrigoven's populist Radical Party (121). During the corrupt administrations of the 1930s, the national government offered subsidies for local clubs to upgrade or build stadiums (Duke and Crolley 102). With the rise of Peronism, however, soccer acquired particular relevance. Between 1945 and 1955, the state intervened as never before, understanding soccer "as a mechanism of national integration via the socialization of the youth and as political propaganda" (103). Athletic triumph and political triumph were synonymous, as Perón called national team medals "medallas peronistas" (103). Government efforts to promote the national soccer program and to take credit for its achievements formed part of a wider strategy of identity production through the mass media. Thirty percent of all Argentine films about sports appeared during this decade, and Peronist directors unabashedly used their work to glorify the new state system (Alabarces and Rodríguez 123-24). Such films depicted national squad players as representatives of the common people, thus incorporating the working masses into the construction of the nation. Soccer could also appear in egalitarian terms as a mechanism of social and cultural mobility (124).²⁸

The 1978 FIFA World Cup, which Argentina hosted and won for the first time, connected soccer and Argentine identity on an international stage. The military regime inherited the tournament, awarded by FIFA in 1968, and saw it as both a risk and an

state intervention. This link was especially strong in the 1940s, when AFA president Ramón Castillo was the son of the president of Argentina (Duke and Crolley 102).

²⁸ Alabarces and Rodríguez analyze the films *Pelota de trapo* (1948), in which a star player is willing to die on the soccer field in defense of the national flag, and *Escuela de campeones* (1950), which tells the story of the first Argentine soccer team and its founder, Alexander Watson Hutton (124).

opportunity (Archetti, "1978" 136). At this time, international observers had become aware of the wide-scale human rights abuses that the Proceso was committing, and influential foreign governments had begun to pressure the Junta for answers. To host a World Cup was to become the focal point of global attention. Argentina would receive an influx of international journalists, who were likely to ask uncomfortable questions and denounce any attempt at intimidation (Novaro and Palermo 160). Any guerrilla activity during the World Cup would likewise imply social instability and disprove the military's assurances that it had vanquished socialist "subversives." In fact, Montoneros, the most important guerrilla organization, planned to transform the tournament into a "press conference" to reveal the tragedy of the Argentine people (Gilbert and Vitagliano 53).²⁹

With these risks in mind, the government went to great lengths to present a positive image of the country. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the regime hired a United States advertising agency to depict Argentina as a stable society (Novaro and Palermo 283). Massive sums of money were spent to improve the country's infrastructure, including road networks, the public transportation system, stadiums, and a television center (Duke and Crolley 113). The government also cleaned up, destroyed, or built walls to hide the *villas miseria*, which any foreign observer would have immediately understood as a sign of poverty and inequality (Gilbert and Vitagliano 70-71). To avoid violence within tournament venues, the military brought together the leaders of the *barras bravas*, extreme soccer fan groups with political connections, and enforced a truce

²⁹ Although, by mid-1978, successful counter-insurgent campaigns and international criticism had led the regime to close down many torture centers, some remained operational (Novaro and Palermo 119). The infamous Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) was within earshot of River Plate stadium, where World Cup matches took place, and survivors of government persecution have reported being able to hear the crowd cheer after each goal.

among them for the duration of the World Cup (Duke and Crolley 113). Television coverage of the opening ceremony emphasized the country's skill and discipline. By using the event as an international showcase for Argentine virtues, the military produced "la sensación de estar no sólo a la altura de la capacidad organizativa de los grandes países, sino la de sentirse por primera vez protagonistas de una película *de* país con taquilla asegurada en todo el mundo, en vivo y en directo (Gilbert and Vitagliano 40; authors' italics). The nation itself had become a spectacle, transmitted to the entire world through a series of carefully scripted performances.³⁰

As play began, the military followed the long tradition of equating performance on the soccer field with the general aptitude of the country. In the Argentina of 1978, however, this familiar maneuver acquired particular significance. Accusations of human rights violations, which the Junta persisted in dismissing as an "anti-Argentine campaign," had put Argentina on the defensive before the tournament had even begun. A victory for the national team would thus serve a twofold purpose: galvanize local support for the military and protect the "Argentine way" from its foreign detractors. The national soccer coach, the left-leaning César Luis Menotti, tried to dissociate sports from the government's wider ambitions. Menotti stated that "[el] fútbol es un deporte, está para defender el prestigio del fútbol argentino. Jugando no protegemos nuestra frontera, ni la

³⁰ Alongside images of order and prosperity, the military also promoted familiar interpretations of national identity. Promotional materials focused on Argentina's rural landscapes and offered a romanticized portrayal of the gaucho lifestyle. The World Cup mascot, designed by a local entertainment company, was "Mundialito," a gaucho dressed in the uniform of the Argentine national soccer team (Gilbert and Vitagliano 35). Similarly, the official game ball for the tournament was the Adidas Tango. Although FIFA later used this model around the world, its introduction in Argentina, where the tango has figured prominently in displays of national culture for tourists, suggests the commodification of Argentine identity for global consumption.

Patria, ni la bandera. Con la selección nada se muere ni nada se salva" (qtd. in Archetti, *El potrero* 35). Yet the regime insisted on the connection, ordering the local press, for example, not to print anything negative about the national team (Duke and Crolley 113). For the military, "el fútbol no solo era un juego sino el rasgo de una estirpe y una raza peculiar de hombres" (Archetti, *El potrero* 37), and winning the World Cup would be "la mejor respuesta a la campaña 'anti-argentina' orquestada desde el exterior" (35).

Argentina's eventual victory produced, at least over the short term, the effect that the military had desired. The path to the championship was not free of controversy. Tied with Brazil in the tournament standings, the Argentine team needed to defeat Peru by at least four goals in order to advance into the final round. Argentina ended up winning 6 to 0 amid accusations of match fixing.³¹ Local spectators paid little attention to such details, however, and the ensuing triumph over the Netherlands led to massive celebrations in the streets. The World Cup championship sparked euphoria and national pride, even among prominent Argentine intellectuals such as Ernesto Sabato and Félix Luna (Novaro and Palermo 162). Argentina's admirable results on the soccer field, which took place during a climate of stability, led the Proceso to view the tournament as a resounding success. Military leaders considered the country's performance a triumph of order and national unity over the threat of subversion (Archetti, "1978" 137).

However, following Argentina's victory, the "efecto Mundial" quickly fizzled out (Gilbert and Vitagliano 231). Optimism decreased as the country drifted closer to war with Chile over the Beagle Canal dispute, and Videla, pressured by the United States,

³¹ The episode provoked international outcry and remains a mystery to this day. Rumors abounded concerning military expenditure on soccer bribes (Duke and Crolley 113), and others have suspected the Junta of sending a grain shipment to Peru in exchange for the convenient loss (Gilbert and Vitagliano 207).

would soon find himself forced to accept the visit of human rights inspectors (231). Yet the military continued to exploit the bond between soccer and national sentiment. In 1979, Argentina won the Youth World Cup. When families of *desaparecidos* gathered to protest at the iconic Plaza de Mayo, the government responded by inviting Argentines to gather at the same location in order to celebrate the soccer triumph. Sports-based nationalism thus served to overshadow an important human rights demonstration (Duke and Crolley 114). During the Falkland Islands conflict with Britain in 1982, both the regime and the people drew comparisons with the nationalist fervor that had characterized the 1978 World Cup: "[1]a guerra de Malvinas utilizó al máximo la retórica del campeonato de fútbol, convertida en júbilo guerrero" (Gilbert and Vitagliano 234). The distance from the soccer field to the battlefield was a short one.³²

The financial and political crisis of 2001 marked another significant point in the long history between soccer and the nation. The 2002 World Cup, hosted jointly by South Korea and Japan, was the first opportunity to gauge the strength of the newly impoverished Argentina. Sports offered a way to overcome the tensions that had emerged during the crisis, and "football played a symbolic role as the public turned to the national team's colours to signify solidarity in the midst of economic and social meltdown" (Giulianotti, "Football" 46). It was this very importance of soccer, nonetheless, that made the World Cup such a potentially dangerous event. Although some observers expected the national team to rekindle pride in the country and perhaps even help to overcome the crisis, others worried that an unsatisfactory performance would result in new

³² The war coincided with the 1982 World Cup, held in Spain. The Argentine forces in the South Atlantic surrendered while the national team was playing against Brazil. Press coverage alternated between the soccer match and reports from the Falkland Islands (Gilbert and Vitagliano 234).

demonstrations of violence (Alabarces, "Crisis" 95). The connection between soccer and social upheaval was fresh in the memory of many Argentines. Just six months earlier, anti-government demonstrations had incorporated aggressive behaviors often seen in stadiums, such as cheering, chanting, jumping, and provoking the police (100). Luckily, these fears proved groundless. Argentina played poorly and was eliminated in the first round of the tournament, but no major uprisings took place (103).

Over the last ten years, Argentine soccer has reflected broader trends in South American athletics programs, which many scholars associate with the effects of neoliberal globalization. During the first decades of international soccer, "the poor could compete with the rich and win" (Miller 7). The period from 1930 to 1970 was the golden age of South American soccer, during which Uruguay or Brazil won five out of nine World Cups (8). Since this time, however, financial superiority has increasingly implied superiority on the field: "[t]he impacts of neoliberal globalisation place South American football within a weak economic position compared with that of the game in the leading industrialised nations" (Giulianotti, "Football" 50-51). Giulianotti and Robertson argue that "the underdevelopment of South American football is partly connected to longstanding forms of economic dependency upon the North" (76). As South American clubs struggle to meet their financial obligations, they fall into chronic debt and become forced to sell their best players to rich European teams. Rory Miller has called this phenomenon "The Vicious Circle of South American Football," in which financial problems lead teams to sell players, which results in a loss of stars, which results in

falling attendance at matches, which results in renewed financial problems (13).³³ It is through this process that "[t]he great clubs of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay have been turned into football nurseries" (Gilbert 70). Players are imported and exported in similar fashion to other commodities. According to critics of neo-colonialism, "South America's elite athletes are treated like its natural resources--such as coffee or bananas--by powerful Western sports corporations and their rich markets" (Giulianotti, "Football" 45). If South American athletes represent "raw materials" in this scheme, transferred from the periphery to the center, their performance in Europe represents something of a "finished product" sent back to the colonies. Following the progress of "exported" stars, residents of South America may decide to become fans of European teams, purchasing merchandise or television subscriptions.³⁴

Although these problems are affecting a variety of South American nations, there are signs that the Argentine case is particularly troubling. In Argentina, as elsewhere, sports have promoted both unity and polarization. While introducing "la posibilidad de épicas donde los actores populares aparecían como actores legítimos en los repertorios

³³ As Gideon Rachman points out, fans are well aware of this cycle. It makes little sense to become emotionally (and financially) attached to a star player of a South American team, because it is obvious that, sooner or later, the club will sell him to a member of the rich European leagues. As a result of frequent transfers, "the fans lost interest. No sooner have they discovered a new idol than he is on the next plane to Europe" (Rachman 165). For linguistic and cultural reasons, South American stars often end up in Spain's Primera División or Italy's Serie A. For example, two of the world's most famous players, the Argentine Lionel Messi and the Brazilian Neymar, began their European careers in Barcelona.

³⁴ This phenomenon thus increases not only the economic strength of Northern nations but their symbolic strength, as well. Each time that a European squad takes the field, its collection of star players reminds spectators of the hundreds of millions of dollars spent in transfer fees. Likewise, the fact that all of the best players and teams reside in Europe may suggest the conclusion that Europe is superior in general, as though South American stars were "too good" to confine themselves to their impoverished countries of origin.

nacionales," Argentine sports culture has also "tendido a construir microidentidades locales fuertemente tribalizadas, radicalizadas hasta la violencia" (Alabarces, "Perspectivas" 99). Pablo Alabarces connects this fragmentation with "una ética, una estética y una retórica del *aguante*" (100). The author clarifies that "el aguante no significa, inocentemente, la celebración infinita de la pasión deportiva; significa, centralmente, en las prácticas reales de las hinchadas [fan groups], la puesta en acción de un cuerpo violento, racista, homofóbico y machista que construye legitimidad masculina en la violencia contra el *otro*" (100; author's italics). Several international scholars have understood this violence as endemic to Argentine soccer. In a discussion of "Football in the Americas," Rory Miller states that crowd violence began in Argentina before spreading to Brazil, Peru, and Chile (10), while Giulianotti and Robertson mention the nearly two hundred soccer-related deaths that have taken place in Argentina since the 1930s (79).

The activities of *barras bravas*, extreme fan groups with considerable influence over their respective clubs, demonstrate the connections between soccer violence and general social problems. *Barras bravas* represent "the militarization of *fútbol* support" (Duke and Crolley 108). These organizations have a strict hierarchy, and their core members tend to be full-time militants without other employment. *Barras bravas* attack the fans of other teams, intimidate or blackmail players and managers of their own team, and clash with the police. Members of the *barras bravas* frequently involve themselves in political disputes in exchange for payment or match tickets, which they sell for a profit on the black market. The leaders of the largest *barras bravas* are well-known figures and appear in the mass media, sometimes in the company of club presidents, who implicitly condone their actions (106-12). *Barras bravas* thus exemplify the corruption, violence, and lack of personal security that have characterized post-crisis Argentina.³⁵ Their members occasionally receive prison sentences, but, in general, *barras bravas* have become an accepted part of the social landscape and bear close resemblance to other contemporary forms of organization.³⁶

"Argentinos": A Middle-Class Perspective on Soccer and the Nation

In nearly every country on the planet, soccer is the most popular sport, and the FIFA World Cup is the grandest of athletic events. The tournament acquires even greater significance for the thirty-two nations whose teams have qualified. In these countries, a special opportunity arises to connect national identity with performance on the field. Even more important, perhaps, is the opportunity for companies, both national and

³⁵ Rachman associates *barras bravas* with the falling attendance figures at Argentine soccer matches, which have become unsafe for families and tourists. His discussion of the economics of soccer includes an anecdote from a foreign visitor who, upon attempting to sit near the local fans at a stadium in downtown Buenos Aires, "had been swiftly identified as a *gringo*, hurled to the ground and stripped of all of his possessions" (167). The scene recalls the killing of the "judío" in "La fiesta del Monstruo" by Borges and Bioy Casares. Within Greater Buenos Aires, *barras bravas* of suburban teams fill several train compartments when traveling to and from the games, and residents know to choose a different means of transportation at these times.

³⁶ A very well known song to support the national team, heard in stadiums, in the streets, and even in television commercials, includes the following lyrics: "Vamos vamos, Argentina / Vamos vamos, a ganar / Esta barra quilombera / No te deja, no te deja de alentar." The use of *barra*, which by itself means simply "loyal fan group," does not imply identification with the violence and corruption of the *barras bravas*. Nonetheless, the adjective *quilombera*, which might be translated as "troublemaking" (derived from *quilombo*, synonym of *lio* in Argentina), points toward the *aguante* culture that Alabarces has described. The song portrays all Argentine soccer fans as disorderly and willing to cause trouble in defense of the national team. The wide semantic field of the adjective permits various interpretations of the "quilombo" to be produced, ranging from innocuous noise, banners, and movement to borderline criminal activity, such as rioting and intimidation of players and rival fans.

international, to demonstrate solidarity with the national soccer team in order to build rapport with consumers. It is thus common for intense advertising campaigns to begin during the month preceding the tournament and to last, in some cases, until even after the team's elimination. These advertisements are texts worthy of close analysis, as they offer, at the time of each World Cup, a glimpse into popular understandings of national identity.³⁷

A sample of advertising within Argentina reveals a close link between commercials and the historical context. In Spain 2002, the first World Cup after the crisis, advertising for the tournament in the Argentine media acknowledged that social unrest had recently occurred (Alabarces, "Crisis" 107). For example, a commercial for the oil company Repsol-YPF featured a character who wanted "at least something to be happy about," placing all of his hope in a victory for the national squad. Similarly, a Coca-Cola advertisement saw the World Cup as an opportunity for Argentines to celebrate and "hug each other again" (107). In similar fashion, Quilmes, the national brewery, produced a clip entitled "Eran otros tiempos." Although the images and accompanying lyrics provide a history of Argentine soccer, the "other times," considering the context, also refer to Argentina before the crisis. This interpretation is supported by the video's insistence on national unity and inclusion. Commercials could be even more explicit in their references to the crisis. In a Visa clip, appropriately titled "Apagón," a blackout occurs in an Argentine city, preventing fans from following the national team's match on television. Such power outages, lasting hours or even days in some cases, have

³⁷ In this chapter, I focus on television advertising, but the scope of the phenomenon is much wider. Internet banners, highway billboards, newspaper inserts, and store decorations all provide space for companies to display their loyalty to the national colors.

become common over the last decade and serve as a reminder of the country's economic problems.

Advertising for the Germany 2006 World Cup generally reflected Argentina's newfound stability under Néstor Kirchner, as several videos adopted a humourous, "apolitical" approach. Passionate fandom was the dominant theme. For example, the Coca-Cola clip "En esto estamos juntos," set to the tune of Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire," features people and objects cheering on the national squad. The video concludes with the message "Todos y Todo, Locos Por Argentina." In similar fashion, the Quilmes clip "No me arrepiento de este amor" showed images of devoted fans and national team players. The telephone company Personal made reference to the host country, presenting clips of Germans interacting with what appears to be snow but turns out to be paper, which Argentines throw from stands and buildings during soccer matches. Amid chants of "Argentina, Argentina," the national rallying cry, the video explains that "Argentina está en Alemania." Another Quilmes commercial, however, suggested that the wounds of 2001 had not completely healed. In this clip, entitled "Bendito seas," a narrator gives thanks for the positive moments in national soccer history while complaining about bad luck, losses, and injustices in previous tournaments. Near the end, over footage of national team victories and the sound of an announcer celebrating a goal, the narrator emphatically states: "Bendito ese momento que nos regala el fútbol de poder cambiar nuestro destino y sentir otra vez, y frente al mundo, lo glorioso, lo groso de ser argentino."³⁸ The "fate" that Argentina wishes to change, along

³⁸ "Groso," a common adjective in colloquial Argentine speech, is a synonym of "grandioso," "genial," "muy bueno." As a noun, most frequently in the phrase "Sos un

with the desire to feel confidence toward the rest of the world, may refer to the team's early elimination in the previous World Cup. Yet, just four years removed from the crisis, it would have been difficult not to hear these words as a call to vindicate Argentine national identity in general.

Much of the advertising for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, held in South Africa, similarly reflected Argentina's growing political and economic stability. Now nearly a decade removed from the meltdown of 2001, Argentina could boast of institutional continuity, as Cristina Fernández de Kirchner had succeeded her husband as president following a peaceful democratic election. Humor was once again the preferred strategy of advertisers. In a Quilmes commercial, the voice of God (who speaks with the accent of Buenos Aires) addresses the Argentine people. He takes credit for some of the crucial moments in World Cup history, but he clarifies that many triumphs were due entirely to the players. He exhorts the fans to support the national team and concludes with the phrase "Yo creo en ustedes." A Coca-Cola commercial features a group of Argentine fans who travel to Lesotho, whose team did not qualify for the World Cup. The tourists encourage the locals to cheer for the Argentine team during the tournament, giving them Argentine soccer jerseys and teaching them to sing well-known fan songs.³⁹ A Nike commercial, finally, portrays a soccer "celebration" at the iconic Plaza de Mayo in

groso," the term denotes ability worthy of admiration. To say that being Argentine is "groso," therefore, creates an even stronger appeal to national sentiment.

³⁹ The commercial ends with images of locals dressed in Argentine gear and shouting "¡Vamos, Argentina!". The intended humor resides in the performance of established markers of Argentine soccer identity by Africans who do not speak Spanish. It is possible to interpret this advertisement as a "colonization" of a weaker nation, ostensibly only in the realm of soccer yet, given the ties between sports and national identity, inevitably in a wider sense, as well. Such an analysis unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Buenos Aires, interrupted by the appearance of the stars of the national team. This celebration, however, closely resembles a massive protest, suggesting at times that a riot may erupt. The advertisement can thus be seen as "anti-political," in that popular mobilization gives way to individual demonstrations of soccer technique.⁴⁰

A promotional clip from the sports network TyC, appropriately titled "Argentinos," broke with this trend and offered a deeper reflection on national identity. Despite lasting just over two minutes, the commercial sheds light on how a segment of Argentina, by connecting soccer to the nation, views itself in 2010 and wishes to be seen by other parts of the world. I will first describe the video in order to create a context for the detailed analysis that follows.

The first part of the commercial begins in the financial district of Buenos Aires, where two Argentine men are taking a walk. One of them says "Si me preguntás a mí, esto ya no tiene arreglo. Escuchame: en Estados Unidos, vos ponés un pie en la calle, frenan todos, viejo. Acá, ¿sabés qué?". They both smile bitterly. The camera cuts to the inside of a car. The driver, an elderly Argentine man, states "Por ejemplo, en Suiza, aunque sigas trabajando, cobrás la jubilación igual, hermano." His unseen male interlocutor answers "Y Europa es Europa," to which he responds, "Y Europa es Europa, pero acá nunca ligamos ninguna" ["we never catch a break"]. The scene shifts to a group of Argentine men who are eating *asado* on the rooftop of an apartment building. One of them explains, "En España, agarrás una bicicleta, la usás, la dejás, se la lleva otro." The host replies sardonically, "Acá también se la lleva otro," and the others laugh. Finally, the

⁴⁰ Although the advertisers certainly did not wish to draw a parallel, the scene also recalls the military's use of soccer celebrations at Plaza de Mayo to defuse human rights protests.

camera reveals two elderly men, different from the previous characters, seated at a table in an urban café. Music begins to play in the background. One of the men, holding a wad of paper, explains "En Alemania, vos tirás un papelito, y se te acercan y te dicen, señor, se le cayó esto." The other responds, "Es cultural," dragging out the final syllable in order to emphasize his meaning. The screen fades to black as the music continues.

The second part begins with an establishing shot of an unspecified city. Two Germans are conversing in a bar, and Spanish subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen. The first man, increasingly enthusiastic, exclaims "Es increíble. Tiran un millón de papelitos, cada vez que sale el equipo." His friend replies, in a clear echo of the first portion of the video, "Es cultural." A lyrically shot sequence then features thousands of paper streamers floating down from the stands in an Argentine soccer stadium. Next, two middle-aged men are speaking in French. One of them, as though incredulous, explains that "Allá, no importa si van ganando o perdiendo, los tipos cantan igual." The camera cuts to scenes of fans jumping up and down together in an Argentine stadium. In the next segment, an Italian chef is speaking with an expression of admiration and disbelief: "Con una media. Yo vi jugar con una media." The camera rotates dramatically, and the chef removes his handkerchief so as to demonstrate what he describes: "La agarran, hacen un bollo, y juegan en la calle. ¡Una cosa que nunca vi en mi vida!". The camera then shows children playing soccer on dusty ground with a ball made out of socks. The image appears in faded color, almost sepia tone, but it is clear that all of the children are darkskinned, and what little can be seen of the background suggests that they are in a villa.

Afterward, the camera shows a man speaking Greek in a restaurant. He tells his friends that "El tobillo era del tamaño de tu cuello, y el tipo jugó igual." The next scene

makes it apparent that they are talking about Diego Maradona, who is shown getting injured by violent opposing players. The camera zooms in on his swollen ankle. The following scene features young British men sitting around a table. One of them states that "If they lose, they won't go to the cinema, they don't go to the theater. They do nothing." These ambiguous pronouns lead a friend to ask, "The fans?", to which the first speaker replies, with conviction, "The fans or the players." A montage follows of Argentine players looking upset after losing matches. In the final segment, the camera shows a barroom argument between men speaking French. One of them, visibly agitated, shouts, "Ellos no juegan con las piernas. Ellos juegan con el corazón. ¡Con el corazón!". He glares at his interlocutor. Then, as if determined to convince him, he adds, "Fijate, en cualquier equipo campeón hay uno de ellos." We then see footage of Argentine soccer stars celebrating championships on European clubs, followed by the Argentine flag and Maradona with the 1986 World Cup trophy. Recent images of national team players then alternate with more clips of fans. The commercial concludes with a shot of an entire stadium, upon which white text appears: "En TyC Sports, Argentina es más Argentina. El Mundial es más Mundial."41

What first stands out in "Argentinos" is the explicit connection between soccer and other aspects of national identity. As is apparent from previous examples, nearly every World Cup commercial has associated the national soccer team with the nation as a whole; but this maneuver often takes place at the most general level, through vague exhortations to "defend the flag," "protect our national tradition," or "show the world

⁴¹ The clip can be found on YouTube (<u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdrhT3-u05A</u>). Many uploads are available; as of April 2015, the most-watched file had nearly two million views. The commercial aired on television during the 2010 World Cup and was doubtless seen by millions more at that time.

what it means to be Argentine." When local problems appear in commercials, it is always through allusion, never direct reference. In the 2002 Visa advertisement, for instance, no explanation is given for the blackout, nor do the characters identify the problem as characteristic of the new Argentina. The expectation is simply that the audience will understand the occurrence and reach the intended conclusion: "the power may go out due to an energy crisis, but our passion for the national squad lives on."

The first part of "Argentinos," in contrast, offers an explicit litany of complaints regarding post-crisis Argentine problems. The first conversation focuses on disorderly traffic and aggression toward pedestrians, the second points out the insufficiency of retirement packages, the third refers to petty theft, and the fourth centers on litter. Most of the speakers appear to cite a particular issue as a symptom of wider social maladies. Chaotic Argentine traffic represents a general disregard for the law, the stolen bicycle represents the proliferation of crime ("la inseguridad"), and litter represents the lack of respect for public property. Three of the conversations portray these problems as inevitable traits of contemporary Argentina. "Esto ya no tiene arreglo" precludes any opportunity for improving society, "Europa es Europa" denies Argentina the possibility of implementing similar policies, and "Es cultural" goes even further, suggesting a congenital, and not merely circumstantial, propensity of Argentines toward disorder.

Each scene emphasizes Argentina's weaknesses through comparison with a developed nation: the United States, Switzerland, Spain, and Germany. These choices are anything but random, as they point to countries that Argentina has used, at different moments in history, to gauge its progress as a nation. For nineteenth-century intellectuals such as Alberdi and Sarmiento, Switzerland and the United States represented what

154

Argentina might become. Germany, with whom Argentina has had a long rivalry on the soccer field, represents the triumph of order in sports and in society. Spain occupies both ends of the historical spectrum. Its role as the metropolis to the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata granted the country significant influence through the colonial period and beyond. As seen in Chapter 1, Argentines have taken conflicting approaches to their Spanish heritage for over two hundred years. More recently, Spain has served as the gateway to Europe for Argentine expatriates. As European Union citizenship laws made it possible for descendents of Spanish immigrants to acquire a EU passport, many middle-class Argentines were able to flee the crisis in search of new opportunities overseas. All of these countries, therefore, hold a vivid place in the popular imagination of Argentina and allow the creators of the video to convey their message. A certain degree of variation would have been possible. England and France, for example, would have offered similar historical relevance. Yet comparisons with Singapore and Estonia, for instance, while equally valid from a "factual" perspective, would lack that symbolic force.

The second portion of the video inverts the terms of comparison, as now it is the Europeans who are speaking about Argentina. Structural parallelism reinforces thematic parallelism. Through the identical concluding phrase of the last Argentine dialogue and of the first European dialogue ("Es cultural"), the clip suggests that the same type of conversation is taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. Similarly, the first topic of discussion in Germany is a mirror image of the last topic in Argentina, and what Argentines viewed as negative appears as positive to the Germans. Whereas the elderly Argentine men complain about litter and view Germany as a paradise of order and cleanliness, the young Germans admire the paper streamers thrown from the stands in

Argentine soccer stadiums. The remaining conversations obey a different logic. After the point of inversion, which serves to clarify the change of scenery and perspective, the European characters discuss material that does not correspond to the Argentine complaints. This sequence inherits the focus on passion and loyalty that has characterized so much of the soccer advertisement genre. We now receive a litany of Argentine virtues: fans sing in the stands regardless of the score; poverty cannot stop children from playing; Argentine stars are completely dedicated to the game, remain on the field despite injury, and are a fundamental component of any championship soccer team. The difference from other commercials, however, is that Europeans, not Argentines, are the ones praising Argentina. While it would be entirely conventional for Argentines to praise their national team, the decision to attribute such compliments to Europeans grants them exceptional validity. In this sense, the commercial enacts an Argentine fantasy or wish-fulfilment, depicting Europeans who see Argentines as they would like to be seen.⁴²

It is here that the intended message of the advertisement becomes apparent. All of the dialogues in both segments of the commercial begin *in medias res*, both to increase the effect of realism and to suggest that the examples provided form part of a longer

⁴² At first glance, the rest of South America, geographically and culturally much closer to Argentina, may appear to be a more logical point of comparison. Yet, in addition to the deeply rooted importance of Europe in conceptions of Argentine identity, European nations also pose a lesser risk of offending the audience. Given the negative portrayal of Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay in many spheres of Argentine society, it would have been difficult to praise these countries in a credible fashion. Conversely, it would have been problematic to compare Argentina with Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. Although one often hears Argentines cite these countries as success stories in the region, as examples of what Argentina would be under "good government," to include them in the commercial would invite debate and controversy, thus reducing the effectiveness of the comparison. The rhetorical value of Europe is that many Argentines view it as "obviously" superior and subject to different historical circumstances: "Europa es Europa." In contrast, a phrase such as "Chile es Chile" would lead the audience to ask how a neighboring country, operating under a similar context, has achieved what Argentina could not.

debate. The first segment stages a common practice in Argentina, which one might call the "complaint genre." It is as though the characters in each scene were complaining about Argentina in general and, at the precise moment when the camera begins to film, discovered an example to buttress their argument. One can easily imagine the missing portion of each dialogue. For instance: "Europe knows how to take care of the elderly. Por ejemplo, en Suiza..." or "Europeans actually respect public property. En España, agarrás una bicicleta..." In every case, the grass is greener on the other side. By introducing the perspective of Europeans, the commercial argues that such complaints are unfounded, as it is clear that Europeans are envious of the Argentine soccer culture. The conversations in the second portion also begin *in medias res*, this time to suggest a wider discussion of European soccer inferiority. As before, one can imagine the missing pieces: "Our fans don't cheer enough. But in Argentina..." or "Of course Argentina is better than us at soccer. Their players never give up..." Meanwhile, the crescendo of the background music and the celebratory series of images of the Argentine players and fans appeals to national sentiment.⁴³ The final words, which constitute the only obvious "narrative" intromission into the text, explain that "Argentina es más Argentina" on TyC's coverage of the World Cup. Although the commercial does not deny the problems of contemporary Argentina, the general message is that Argentines should feel proud of their passion and skill at soccer, which Europeans admire to the point of envy. Argentina may suffer from crime, poverty, and instability, but the "real Argentina," the Argentina that appears in the soccer stadium, holds a central position in global society.

⁴³ The background theme is "Lux Aeterna" from the 2000 film *Requiem for a Dream*. Alongside the lyrical violins of the original track, which create a solemn atmosphere, the advertisers include chants of "Argentina" whenever positive aspects of the country appear.

Although one might be tempted to dismiss that message as a typical display of chauvinism, a "logical" product from a station attempting to promote its coverage of the World Cup, the commercial presents its positive interpretation of national identity through complex rhetorical maneuvers. In the first place, the terms of comparison between Argentina and Europe are unequal. The Argentines speak about society in general, whereas the Europeans speak exclusively about soccer. Only in the symmetrical discussion of litter, the bridge between the two sections, does an Argentine complaint correspond to European praise; and even this correspondence is partial, as the Germans are enthusiastic about paper streamers thrown during soccer matches, not random waste left behind in the streets. The other problems remain unaddressed: Europeans have nothing positive to say concerning dangerous drivers, insufficient retirement plans, or theft, and it is indeed difficult to imagine how they might do so at any rate. Likewise, the Europeans never formulate any complaints about their own societies. Even if we attempt to imagine, through context clues, the rest of each conversation, we never abandon the realm of soccer. From this perspective, the Argentines' complaints seem much more serious. It is likely for this reason that the commercial avoids full correspondence and shifts the frame of reference, arguing that success in soccer outweighs Argentina's socioeconomic difficulties.

The narrative structure of the clip also reinforces a positive interpretation of Argentina. Each dialogue in the first section leads directly into the following scene, with no "visual evidence" appearing to corroborate the speakers' complaints. It would have been possible to show, for instance, footage of traffic accidents, robberies, or the elderly poor. Thus, although the Argentine characters receive space to criticize the country, their

ideas fail to receive the support of the "narrator." During the European section, in contrast, a brief montage follows each conversation, serving as "proof" for the stated opinions. The presence or absence of such images has nothing to do with the presumed knowledge of the intended audience. It is not that Argentines know that crime occurs and do not need a visual reminder, while praise of the national team without visual support would run the risk of seeming incredible. On the contrary, the images increase the rhetorical force of the European dialogues, making the positive interpretation of national identity more convincing. The advertisement further reinforces this interpretation by placing it at the end. With the exception of "Argentina es más Argentina," the Europeans literally have the last word in the discussion.

The "Argentina" that the commercial depicts, along with the "Argentinos" who describe their country, also reflects a particular understanding of national identity. All of the characters in the Argentine portion of the clip are "white," middle-class men who speak with a southeastern accent. Each conversation takes place in an urban setting, and the opening characters appear in the financial district of Buenos Aires, just minutes away from emblems of Argentine identity such as the Obelisco or Plaza de Mayo. Two of the characters make the type of expressive gestures commonly found in the Southeast and that reflect the influence of Italian immigration. Finally, the *asado* among friends and the conversation in a café are typical scenes of "Argentine" daily life. Absent from this portrayal of the nation are individuals from the working classes, darker-skinned Argentines, examples of rural life, regional accents, and immigrants from Africa, Asia, or neighboring countries. Although Buenos Aires is, by far, the country's largest television market, appeals to national sentiment often make reference to society in general. The

aforementioned Quilmes advertising from 2002, "Eran otros tiempos," depicts darkerskinned Argentines in an arid climate, likely the northwestern provinces of Salta or Jujuy. "Argentinos," however, presents a middle-class, Eurocentric reading of Argentine identity, and this perspective explains the structure of the commercial. It is only by understanding Argentines as Europeans in South America, as the unsuccessful cousins of the Europeans featured in the second half, that the symmetry with Europe proves effective. The commercial may disagree with the complaints of middle-class Argentines, but it presents this group, in keeping with the practice that emerged during the Alfonsín presidency and reaffirmed itself after the 2001 crisis, as the bearer of national identity.

The sole exceptions to this portrayal of Argentina appear on the soccer field and in the discussion of poor children using socks to make a ball. This latter exception, furthermore, is only partial, as the footage of the dark-skinned boys differs from the other sections of the clip. Whereas the rest of the commercial uses clear focus and natural color, the camera in this segment uses a blurred focus and a grainy, faded-color filter. To a certain extent, this visual style adds realism, as the children are playing on dusty ground, but it also depicts the residents of the *villa* as an afterthought or something to be covered up. This is the only aspect of the European dialogues that most Argentines would qualify as shameful.

There is no contradiction, however, in the clip's representation of poor communities as a training ground for future stars. Eduardo Archetti has studied at great length the function of the *potrero* in Argentine soccer history.⁴⁴ He explains that, during

⁴⁴ According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, a *potrero* is a "terreno inculto y sin edificar, donde suelen jugar los muchachos." The term is common in Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru. Archetti offers the important clarification that *poteros* are

the 1920s, Argentine journalists linked *potreros* with the emergence of the "criollo style," as urban children learned the game spontaneously, without supervision from adults as in the British schools (*Masculinities* 67). The harsh conditions of the field, along with the sheer concentration of players in a small space, encouraged the development of creativity, technique, and "wiliness" (67-68), traits that would later appear in characterizations of the Argentine soccer tradition. It is likely no coincidence that, after two conversations about passionate fans, the image of children in the *villa* initiates a series of conversations about Argentine players. The scene in the contemporary *potrero* serves as a metonym for the development of the creole style, as though to explain that "this was where our national tradition came from, and this is how we continue to excel today." The scene in the *villa* literally features a "pelota de trapo," the title of the aforementioned film that praised the Argentine athletic spirit. Having given rise to star players, who in turn glorify Argentina on the international stage, poor neighborhoods have acquired a firm, albeit uncomfortable, place in the history of national soccer.

Archetti considers Diego Maradona, who figures prominently in "Argentinos," the greatest product of this environment: "Maradona ha tenido el talento y la suerte de producirse y reproducirse como un verdadero *pibe*, como el mejor de todos, como *el pibe de oro*. Su vida comenzó en una villa miseria, se educó en los *potreros* de Villa Fiorito en Lanús, y no es sino una realización perfecta del mito argentino" (*El potrero* 40). The strongest link between Maradona and the nation was forged during the Mexico 1986 World Cup, where he scored two goals in a victory against England and gave Argentina symbolic revenge for the recent Falkland Islands war. One of these goals, scored illegally

[&]quot;empty urban spaces of different sizes, usually small, with very uneven surfaces" (*Masculinities* 67).

with the fist and known as the "Hand of God," is a celebrated example of "picardía criolla," the Argentine knack for beating the system (Alabarces and Rodríguez 126). Diego Maradona has long been a polarizing figure within Argentina. His supporters admire his athletic genius and his rise from humble origins to world fame, while his detractors describe him as ignorant and call attention to his struggles with addiction. Maradona thus represents, simultaneously, the best and the worst that Argentina has to offer.⁴⁵ His portrayal in "Argentinos" contributes toward the positive interpretation of national identity, as he defeated Europe and the rest of the world despite his flaws, on his own terms, and embodying the Argentine style of play.

With its championing of the Argentine passion and spirit, "Argentinos" follows the concept of *arielismo*, associated with the work of the Uruguayan intellectual José Enrique Rodó (1871-1917). Rodó's essay *Ariel*, published in 1900, uses Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* to interpret Latin American culture, modifying its relationship with Europe and the United States. Whereas the savage Caliban represents the crass materialism of the industrialized giant of the north, the ethereal Ariel symbolizes Latin America's appreciation for the ideal, its most precious inheritance from Europe. Archetti finds evidence of *arielismo* in the sports newspaper *El Gráfico*, which opposed Latin American creative sensitivity to Anglo-Saxon mechanical repetition (*Masculinities* 74). "Argentinos" departs from this model by depicting Europe in unfavorable terms, but the

⁴⁵ Alabarces and Rodríguez summarize Maradona's ambivalent position in Argentina: "If, for some in the media, Maradona was to be equated with great wealth, for others he could also be presented as a lost, wandering soul: that image resonated with a sense of a society in which the most elementary political references can simply collapse" (127). In Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, the narrator describes a soccer player, now fat and recalling his past glories, who closely resembles Maradona (27-28). The implication is that the decaying Maradona symbolizes post-crisis Argentina.

underlying message, translated into the context of twenty-first-century Argentina, is the same. Like Rodó, the commercial argues that the outward signs of development do not imply moral superiority or greater happiness. "Argentinos," in fact, goes further than *Ariel* through its staging of European characters, who express their admiration of Argentine virtues.

La pareja del Mundial: Middle-Class Idealism and Nostalgia

"Argentinos" was not the only piece of World Cup advertising to connect soccer and national identity from a middle-class perspective. In April 2010, as part of the buildup to Argentina's participation in the tournament, Clarín.com aired the miniseries *La pareja del Mundial*.⁴⁶ The work blurs the line between artistic expression and commercial motivation. Whereas TyC's "Argentinos" had the explicit aim of promoting the sports network's television coverage, the Clarín miniseries presented itself as pure entertainment, as a brief online soap-opera of sorts. Nonetheless, each of the eighteen episodes begins by featuring the logos of two commercial sponsors, the mobile telephone provider Movistar and the electronics and appliances chain Garbarino. Unlike most television advertising, which appears during commercial breaks and usually lacks an overt connection to the content of the program, these sponsors are firmly linked to the story being told. At several points in the miniseries, the camera depicts the protagonists using Movistar or Garbarino products, often through a lengthy closeup on logos. The

⁴⁶ La pareja del Mundial was produced by PPCC.tv for Clarín.com, the internet news platform for Argentina's largest media conglomeration. The miniseries was written and directed by Maxi Gutiérrez and produced by Diego Villanueva. At the time of filming, most of the actors were little known, but several have gone on to appear in other works for television or film.

miniseries thus resembles many Hollywood blockbuster films in that, although the work views storytelling as its primary function, product placement offers an important source of revenue and reveals the close ties between the culture industry and large corporations.

As the title indicates, La pareja del Mundial centers on a young Argentine couple, Alberto and Valeria Rizzuti, during the months preceding the 2010 World Cup. In the first episode, Alberto, who works at a local factory, wins an all-expenses-paid trip for two to South Africa to support the national team in the tournament. The problem is that Valeria is pregnant with their first child, and her due date coincides exactly with the beginning of the World Cup. Alberto fears that, if he travels to South Africa and misses the birth of his son, Valeria will never forgive him, and he decides to remain silent until he can reach a decision. However, his employers, who are sponsoring the trip, assume that he will participate and thus take every opportunity to publicize Alberto's upcoming journey. Suspense arises at two levels, as the audience wonders what decision Alberto will make and how long he can keep Valeria in the dark. The miniseries draws upon the conventions of the nineteenth-century *feuilleton*, ending most episodes with a cliffhanger in order to increase interest in the following installment. At the work's conclusion, Alberto receives Valeria's permission to travel to South Africa with his best friend, Daniel, but he decides at the last moment not to board the plane. The final scenes are humorous, as the cheerful Daniel will now attend the World Cup with a taciturn, elderly co-worker who has provided comic relief.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The plot is straightforward and generally obeys the conventions of realism, defined loosely as an intention to mirror the speech and actions of everyday individuals while respecting the laws of the physical universe. In one case, however, the miniseries breaks with these conventions and takes a turn toward the fantastic. Plagued with doubt, Alberto recurs to a carnival Zorgo machine and wishes for the ability to attend the World Cup

From the first episode, the miniseries traces connections between soccer and Argentine national identity. The work begins with a brief scene in 1978, in which Alberto's parents are watching the World Cup final between Argentina and the Netherlands. During a climactic moment in the match, Alberto's mother, who is pregnant with him, announces that her water has broken. Alberto's birth thus coincides with an iconic moment in national history, Argentina's first World Cup championship. This type of coincidence is a familiar symbol in contemporary Argentine culture. Juan José Campanella's 2004 film Luna de Avellaneda, for instance, focuses on a man who was born during a social club dance, which strongly identifies him with both that institution and the country as a whole. Alberto Rizzuti, however, is even more representative of Argentina. His first name, either Spanish or Italian, along with his Italian surname, points at the groups of immigrants who arrived in the late nineteenth century and have dominated conceptions of national identity for decades. More importantly, the protagonist's initials are AR, the first two letters of the country and its abbreviation in many fora. Although ARG remains common and appears, most visibly, in sports broadcasting, AR is the preferred form on the Internet: .ar is the official country code, while AR, as in @CasaRosadaAR, identifies Twitter handles with Argentina. In this sense, Alberto Rizzuti is a marker of Argentineness and of Argentine soccer in particular, and it is unsurprising that the alternate title for the miniseries is simply "Rizzuti."

free of guilt. In a clear reference to the 1988 Hollywood film *Big*, Alberto learns that his wish has been granted. He wakes up the following day in an alternate world, in which he is the boss of the factory, owns a new car, and is now married to the attractive company secretary. Unhappy with these changes, Alberto seeks out the Zorgo machine in the parallel universe and wishes to return to his former life, adding an extra request for Daniel. When he wakes up once more, Alberto's world has returned to normal, with the exception that Daniel is now in a relationship with the company secretary, whom he has long secretly admired. The miniseries ends with this "improved" reality still in place.

The connections between soccer and national identity grow stronger as the work progresses. In his car, Alberto has a photograph of current soccer icon Lionel Messi, arguably the best player in the world, who has won several European championships with Barcelona and is a great source of Argentine pride. Soccer is so important to Alberto that he has decided to name his first son "Lionel." The cycle will begin anew, therefore, as Alberto, born during a World Cup, will witness the birth of his son during a new edition of the tournament. The 1986 World Cup, Argentina's other international triumph, plays a similar role in the plot. Throughout the story, Alberto has remarkable good fortune. In addition to winning the company raffle, he often manages to escape his problems through sheer luck.⁴⁸ He explains these events by saying that he was touched by the "Mano de Dios," an expression that, in the history of Argentina, refers primarily to Maradona's illegal goal against the English in 1986. Alberto's life thus summarizes the recent success of the national soccer program. By connecting the events of 2010 to those of 1978 and 1986, the miniseries introduces the hope that the South Africa World Cup will provide yet another worldwide stage for Argentine glory.

Throughout the story, Alberto's employer, Mancuso, is a mouthpiece for the familiar connection between sports and country. He presents Alberto as Argentina's representative in South Africa, and he has a banner put up to declare the protagonist "nuestra esperanza mundialista," as though Alberto himself were defending the national flag across the Atlantic. In a later episode, Mancuso is preparing for an "inter-factory" soccer tournament, which, like the World Cup that it symbolizes, takes place every four

⁴⁸ Although, as will be discussed, the protagonist's own characteristics determine part of his success, many other events are purely fortuitous. Alberto manages to renew his passport in time only because the city clerk turns out to be his boss's sister, while Daniel twice appears unexpectedly to extract Alberto from an unpleasant situation.

years. He names Alberto the team captain, equates the factory team with the national team, and declares that anything other than victory will mean failure. Mancuso's catchphrase throughout the miniseries, "No nos defraude," creates a wider frame of reference for each of his remarks, implying that Alberto will let the entire nation down if he falls short of expectations. Alberto incorporates these beliefs. When Mancuso asks him to give a speech at a company social night, Alberto dreams of himself addressing the multitudes from a balcony, an image that Argentines would easily associate with Juan Domingo Perón speaking to the crowd in Plaza de Mayo. This scene thus enacts the process through which politics influence sports and, in turn, sports acquire political significance. Mancuso takes the comparison even further during the company sendoff for Alberto and Daniel, in which he calls the men representatives of the company and the nation, "que volverán siendo héroes ... que librarán las más duras batallas," implying that they are going to war to defend the community. The mise-en-scène reinforces the message, as Mancuso delivers this speech in front of the local monument to military hero General José de San Martín, considered the father of Argentina.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, after continually reinforcing the bond between soccer and the nation, the miniseries takes a surprising turn. Daniel first hints at this possibility when giving the protagonist advice before the inter-factory soccer match. After hearing Mancuso's declarations that he is "el jugador del pueblo y que no lo defraude," Alberto fears that he will lose his opportunity to attend the World Cup if his team comes up short. Mancuso adds further pressure when stating: "ganar y victoria; ésas serán las letras de nuestro himno," essentially proposing a new national anthem based on athletic triumph. Daniel's

⁴⁹ See Chapter 4 for additional information on San Martín's role in Argentine identity.

reply, however, contradicts these patriotic associations. "Es un juego," he argues, "la felicidad de jugar, como todos los juegos. Hoy divertite." Alberto, still unconvinced, asks "¿Y el amor por la camiseta, los colores, el discurso que dio Mancuso, el himno?" This question summarizes not only the dominant theme of the plot to this point but also over one hundred years of nationalistic reflections on sports. Alberto has incorporated Mancuso's ideas and has become the voice of tradition. Daniel responds with a question of his own: "¿Qué tiene que ver la pelota con el himno?" With this observation, noteworthy in a miniseries dedicated to Argentina's participation in the World Cup, Daniel echoes César Luis Menotti's dissociation of soccer from wider discussions of national identity. Alberto takes this logic even further at the work's conclusion. Immediately after Mancuso's patriotic speech equating soccer and war, the protagonist receives the loudspeaker and explains "La verdad es que yo no sé mucho de guerras y de héroes." He mentions his lifelong passion for the World Cup but states that, recently, he has realized that the World Cup is a "distracción," an event that makes life easier to bear but that lacks transcendental significance. As a result of these declarations, it is not surprising that Alberto later decides to forego the World Cup and remain home for the birth of his son. It would be a mistake to claim that, through Alberto's decision to miss the tournament, the miniseries encourages its viewers to disregard the national soccer team. Instead, the work concedes that some things in life, such as the birth of one's child, are more important than soccer. The protagonist is the exception rather than the rule.

To a certain extent, *La pareja del Mundial* and "Argentinos" offer similar portrayals of the national community, as each text focuses on Argentines of European descent and depicts Argentina as a combination of vices and virtues. Both physically and culturally, Valeria and Alberto are "typical" Argentines: they are light-skinned, have brown hair, and speak with the southwestern accent and gestures found in most national film and television productions. Through his role as "Argentine everyman," Alberto represents the best and the worst that the country has to offer. The protagonist worries constantly, suffers from nightmares, and is often shown with different nervous tics. He also has a propensity to avoid conflict by lying, which provides a number of cliffhangers at the end of an episode, leading the audience to wonder whether the lie will prove convincing. The miniseries suggests that this habit is not only harmless but also a source of humor. Most of Alberto's lies follow the formula "¿Qué X?", in which X is a piece of incriminating evidence that would seem impossible to deny. Humor arises through the escalation of Alberto's denials: he starts with questions such as "¿Qué frasquito?" and eventually reaches the absurdity of "¿Qué río?" when his father-in-law catches him fishing on the river during a supposed business trip. Alberto is also open to corruption. Upon learning that his new passport will not arrive in time for the tournament, he asks one of his acquaintances whether he knows anyone who falsifies documents. During another episode, a police officer discovers the protagonist attempting to break into his father-in-law's car and steal a package related to his World Cup journey. In general, however, these defects appear as minor, a way for the miniseries to present Alberto as a lovable loser. He becomes a sympathetic character through his devotion to Valeria and his decision to forego the trip to South Africa. Alberto thus provides a balanced, rather than idealized, depiction of contemporary Argentina.

The first important difference between "Argentinos" and *La pareja del Mundial* appears in their terms of comparison. Whereas "Argentinos" uses the United States and,

to a much larger extent, Europe as a foil for Argentine identity, *La pareja del Mundial* adopts a more narrow perspective, centering its attention on Brazil.⁵⁰ Although contemporary Argentine culture uses Brazil to trace comparisons regarding the economy, military prowess, and international reputation, soccer has long provided the most visible point of difference. Both Brazilians and Argentines have used their on-field rivalry to reach wider conclusions about national aptitude. As Gilberto Agostino explains, "Desde 1908, quando, pela primeira vez, uma equipe argentina visitou o Brasil para jogos amistosos, a opinião pública encarou o evento como o momento decisivo da afirmação nacional" (59). During the first decades of South American soccer, the Brazilian program was at a disadvantage and suffered from an inferiority complex in relation to Argentina and Uruguay, the first rivals to overcome in order to prove the nation's worth (58-59). Since this difficult beginning, Brazil has grown into a global soccer power, winning the World Cup five times and earning the respect of rivals around the world.

In Argentina, however, the Brazilian national team has been an object of hatred, the victim of physical and verbal assault. The supposed "racial" difference between the two countries has been the sharpest point of contention. In 1920, a Buenos Aires

⁵⁰ Other countries also make an appearance. South Africa, by far the least common in discussions of national identity, figures here only as a result of the World Cup. After Alberto wins the trip, Daniel begins each morning's carpool by sharing random facts about South Africa, such as its national anthem, measuring system, and languages. These scenes serve more to educate the audience and to stimulate interest in the tournament than to distinguish Argentina from the host country. Oppositions begin to appear with respect to Argentina's South American neighbors. When incorporating Chile, the miniseries avoids politically sensitive issues, making no mention of the Beagle Canal conflict or Chile's lack of support during the Falkland Islands war. Instead, the contrast is cultural and linguistic. One of Alberto's dreams in an early episode features a Chilean, whose accent differs markedly from that of Alberto and who uses the stereotypically Chilean term "huevón." Nonetheless, as will be seen, Brazil is the nation with the most consistent presence in the story and the most significant points of contact.

newspaper called the Brazilian soccer team "macaquitos," provoking a diplomatic scandal that Argentine ministers hastened to defuse (64). The connection between race and nation acquired particular force during the following decade, when, in Brazil, "A presença de negros na seleção era apresentada como símbolo da democracia racial" (72). In the final match of the 1936-37 South American Cup, held in Argentina, local fans again chanted "macaquitos" at the Brazilian players, prompting the Brazilian coach to consider entering the field alongside the national flag, "tornando a partida mais do que um triunfo esportivo, um dever cívico" (70). Interrupted by violence on several occasions, the match earned the name "o Jogo da Vergonha" in the Brazilian press (71). More recently, the 1978 World Cup revealed aggression even when Brazil had not taken the field. Following Argentina's suspicious victory over Peru, which put the hosts into the final instead of Brazil, Argentine fans took to the streets to celebrate. Gilbert and Vitagliano document the presence of racist and homophobic chants: "Ya todos saben que Brasil está de luto / son todos negros / son todos putos" (204). The situation has changed little over the past decade. In 2005, Argentine player Leandro Desábato was arrested in Brazil for racist remarks during a Copa Libertadores match. According to the police chief, Desábato "Declaró que en la Argentina es común insultar a uno u otro, que allá no es delito decirle 'negro' a alguien." The Argentine consul in São Paulo at that time supported these declarations but conceded that the law was quite different in Brazil.⁵¹

La pareja del Mundial reflects such tension through the character of Edson, a young Brazilian man who works for Valeria's father. Edson is a compendium of

⁵¹ These comments are taken from a 2005 *La Nación* article on the event: <u>http://www.lanacion.com.ar/696020-desabato-insultar-es-una-cosa-comun-en-la-argentina</u>. See Chapter four for an extended discussion of the meaning of "negro" in Argentina.

Argentine stereotypes regarding Brazil. A dark-skinned mestizo with long hair, Edson views life as a sensual experience, is perpetually cheerful, and demonstrates skill as a musician and dancer. The miniseries confirms Edson as a typical Brazilian when Daniel, speaking about Brazil, mentions "zunga," "praia," and "menina," reducing the country to a beach full of scantily clad individuals. Edson gains further status as a symbol of Brazil through his green and yellow clothing, which contains the colors of the national flag and, more significantly, of the national soccer team, nicknamed the Verde-Amarela. Not surprisingly, Edson, the representative of Brazil, is the arch enemy of Alberto, the representative of Argentina. Alberto despectively calls him "ese brasilero" and interprets his signature greeting, a wave of the hand, as an insulting reference to Brazil's five World Cup victories. Nonetheless, Edson is an ambivalent character. On one hand, he is often a source of good advice and helps Valeria in multiple episodes. Occasionally, he even serves to portray Alberto in a negative light, as the protagonist, before asking Edson for information, undertakes a *captatio benevolentiae* in which he calls Argentina and Brazil "hermanos latinoamericanos." On the other hand, the miniseries justifies Alberto's aggression through repeated signs that Edson is planning an affair with Valeria, such as when he brings her pastries known as "cuernitos." Through Edson, Brazil poses a threat to the Argentine household and to the Argentine family at large.

This threat becomes reality after Alberto uses the Zorgo machine and wakes up in an alternative universe. At first, Alberto seems pleased with his newfound wealth and prestige. His thoughts quickly change, nonetheless, when he visits his father-in-law's hardware store in search of Valeria. In this alternate universe, in which Alberto lives with the company secretary, Valeria is now married to Edson, the father of her child. Yet Edson is no longer Brazilian. He now speaks colloquial Argentine Spanish, has his long hair tied back, and wears white and sky-blue clothing, a reference to the Argentine flag and national team, the *Albiceleste*. The markers of Brazilian identity have been transformed, in perfect symmetry, into their Argentine counterparts. Although this scene acts as "proof" that Edson is a threat and motivates Alberto to return to his normal life, it also offers a summary of stereotypical Brazilian and Argentine traits. In addition, Edson's transformation articulates a performative understanding of identity: characters are not essentially "Brazilian" or "Argentine" but rather acquire these labels by displaying mutable characteristics.

Unfortunately, other episodes place limits on the ability to perform national identity. Whereas Edson, as a mestizo, is light enough to pass as an Argentine when behaving in an "Argentine" way, the miniseries suggests that individuals of African descent remain outside the national community. During episode 12, "El discurso," Mancuso organizes a company social event. An unidentified dark-skinned man is shown serving punch to the employees while dressed in a strange, sailor-like outfit. In the following episode, Daniel has become inebriated and takes the servant for a foreigner, asking him if he speaks "South African." The servant responds, in perfect Spanish, that Daniel has had too much to drink. Later on, within Alberto's alternate universe, the protagonist enters a shop owned by a Uruguayan, who turns out to be the servant from the company party. The implication is that individuals of African descent who speak with the River Plate accent must be from Uruguay, as all Argentines are "white." Elsewhere in the work, a similar "racial" definition of national identity is projected upon Brazil. Many of the characters are watching the Brazilian soap opera *Coração maluco*, a reference to

the popularity of such shows in contemporary Argentina. When footage from the program appears in the miniseries, its characters are played by the same actors, who speak an exaggerated Portuñol to great comic effect. However, language is not the only identity marker in these scenes, as the actors appear in blackface, further associating African descent with Brazil. The actors cease to be Argentine and become Brazilian by adopting a dark skin tone. As before, the underlying assumption is that blackface makes clear that foreign characters are involved, because no Argentine would possess that complexion. The creators of the miniseries clearly find this image humorous, repeating it in the final scenes, perhaps as a safety measure should the audience not enjoy the story's conclusion.

Another crucial difference between "Argentinos" and *La pareja del Mundial* is that the miniseries offers an idealized and nostalgic image of the country. To a certain point, the Rizzuti family's lifestyle accurately reflects post-crisis Argentina. Their home, located in the town of Santiago del Baradero, is characteristically provincial, with security bars on the windows, whitewashed exterior walls, and sparse interior decoration. This *mise-en-scène* suggests that robberies are common and that the couple cannot afford expensive furniture. Alberto's old car, which he replaces with a newer model in the alternate universe, similarly indicates the protagonist's modest economic situation. Despite these details, in contrast to "Argentinos," whose Argentine characters recite a litany of complaints, the miniseries never states directly that anything is wrong with the country. On the contrary, *La pareja del Mundial* often takes the opposite stance, as though refuting, point by point, the national problems that remain uncontested in "Argentinos." The road on which Alberto and Daniel commute to work each day is well maintained and free of litter, and no graffiti mar neighborhood homes or city monuments. Nor is crime an issue: when Alberto breaks into his father-in-law's car to steal a package, a police officer is immediately on scene to investigate the alarm. The leading couple is able not only to subsist on Alberto's menial job at the factory but also to make large purchases. Valeria buys an LCD television for her husband and later plans to purchase him flight lessons. Although Valeria's visit to the electronics store is most likely intended to highlight Garbarino, one of the sponsors, this set of details paints an idealized picture of the country in which even factory workers enjoy considerable purchasing power.

By depicting the working-class Rizzuti family in such positive fashion, the miniseries nostalgically recreates the years of the first Peronist governments. Alberto's employers not only provide financial security but also take sincere interest in the welfare of the workforce. In one sense, the entire narrative arc is a symbol of paternalist, socially responsible capitalism intimately bound up with the fate of the nation, as Mancuso raffles off the trip to South Africa in the first episode, accompanies Alberto and Daniel through each step of the preparations, and drives them to the airport in a company car at the work's conclusion. Although the company benefits by publicizing Alberto's trip, Mancuso is no cynic, as he also organizes a social outing for families and gives away prizes, scenes that prompt him to associate the happiness of workers with the success of his company. The nostalgic evocation of Peronism is clearest when, prior to the interfactory soccer tournament, he tells the employees "Ustedes son mis hijos."

All other aspects of labor are similarly idealized. Ostensibly a large factory, the place where Alberto and his colleagues spend their days offers fresh air and balanced meals served by the company secretary. The work of Alberto and Daniel, the only

175

employees shown performing tasks, consists in straightening bottles of water as they slowly make their way across a conveyor belt. The two friends work unsupervised and have ample opportunities for conversation. In one episode, Alberto is able to leave during his shift, with no need for explanation, in order to rush home and prevent Valeria from learning about his trip. With such benevolent employers, it is unsurprising that labor relations are peaceful and that unions have no place in this world. It is also understandable that Alberto, when wishing to return to his normal life, happily renounces his position as boss in order to rejoin the production line. Of course, no real factory has ever resembled Mancuso's, neither in Argentina nor in any other country. The miniseries depicts what might be defined as an "anti-taylorist" workplace, in which human welfare and happiness take precedence over efficiency and profit. Nonetheless, within the Argentine context, Mancuso's factory carries historical significance, as it turns back the clock to a "golden age" of labor, erasing the instability and exploitation associated with neoliberal economics from the 1960s onward.

This idealized representation of factory life, so different from anything that real working-class Argentines experience, allows for conjectures as to the intended audience. Many working-class spectators would not see themselves reflected in the miniseries. Although Alberto and Daniel are supposedly menial laborers in a provincial town, they speak like educated residents of Buenos Aires. All of the protagonists, as well as nearly every other character, are light-skinned and of European descent. This portrayal of workers contrasts sharply both with demographic fact and with the dominant image of the working classes in the Argentine imagination, which describes provincial Peronists as "negros" due to their indigenous and African origins. The soundtrack of the miniseries

creates a similar distance from working-class audiences. Popular music in Spanish occasionally appears in the background, but many episodes feature lyrics in English, Portuguese, or Italian. In at least one case, in which the song "Stand by Me" accompanies Valeria's declaration of support for Alberto, audience members gain an added appreciation of the plot if they understand the foreign-language lyrics. All of these details suggest that the intended audience for *La pareja del Mundial* is precisely the middle-class, urban Argentines featured in the first portion of "Argentinos," an educated viewing public with the ability to purchase the products of the corporate sponsors. The protagonist's neighborhood and workplace belong to a "typical," small-town Argentina that allows for a comforting interpretation of national identity. Argentina, like the lovable loser Alberto Rizzuti, has its defects but is good at heart.

Conclusion

"Argentinos" and *La pareja del Mundial* demonstrate the lasting ties between soccer and Argentine national identity. In each case, following a practice with roots in the early twentieth century, the national team represents the country as a whole, and victory in the World Cup justifies Argentina on an international stage. Both texts also present a middle-class understanding of Argentine identity. In "Argentinos," middle-class Argentines, continuing a tradition that dates back at least to Sarmiento, compare their home unfavorably with Spain, Switzerland, and Germany. Although the commercial opposes this pessimistic attitude, it nonetheless justifies the Eurocentric mentality, recurring to a group of Europeans in order to prove the Argentine critics wrong. *La pareja del Mundial* reveals its middle-class focus through an idealized portrayal of working-class life. The miniseries whitewashes Peronism, both figuratively and literally. In the world of Alberto Rizzuti, factory workers earn a decent wage and are peacefully integrated into national society through employment, just as Perón had intended. Conspicuously absent, nevertheless, are the dark-skinned, "uncultured" working masses who threatened middle-class privilege with their demands for incorporation.

Absence is a common trait of "Argentinos" and *La pareja del Mundial*, as each text excludes non-Europeans from the national community. "Argentinos" makes a partial exception with respect to residents of the *villas*, but the suggestion is that these individuals hold value only for their potential to become the next national soccer stars. *La pareja del Mundial* is even clearer in tracing boundaries. While the character of Edson reveals that identity, to a certain extent, is a result of performance, the miniseries denies that flexibility to individuals of African descent. Blackness twice appears as a marker of foreignness: the man whom Daniel mistakes as a South African can only be Uruguayan, not Argentine, once he reveals his command of River Plate Spanish, while the Argentine actors appear in blackface to indicate that they have become Brazilian.

These practices of exclusion have deep roots in Argentina, but a new generation of scholars and artists has questioned such a limited definition of the national community, emphasizing the contributions of marginalized groups. The following chapter provides one example of this project, focusing on the protagonism of Afro-Argentines in the work of Washington Cucurto.

CHAPTER IV: AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, AND BEYOND: ARGENTINE NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TWO WORKS BY WASHINGTON CUCURTO

In the introduction to his groundbreaking work The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900 (1980), the historian George Reid Andrews transcribed a commonly heard phrase in contemporary porteño society: "Negros en Buenos Aires no hay" (3). More than twenty years later, Alejandro Solomianski attested to the continued exclusion of Afro-Argentines from the national imagined community: "Formular hoy [2003], en la nación más grande del Cono Sur, la expresión 'negritud argentina' es un acto excéntrico, hacer una broma a mitad de camino entre el mal gusto racista y la estupidez. Y como ante tal reaccionan quienes la escuchan: con cara de sorpresa o incredulidad" (16). Yet despite an extended process of omission, it has since become increasingly difficult to deny the contributions of Africans and their descendents to Argentine cultural production. Whether as slaves and free laborers during the colonial period, as soldiers during Argentina's war for independence and the internecine conflicts that followed, or as migrants and refugees at the turn of the twenty-first century, they have played an important role in national affairs and are beginning to receive the scholarly attention that they deserve.⁵² This chapter seeks to contribute to that growing body of literature by

⁵² In *Afro-Argentine Discourse: Another Dimension of the Black Diaspora* (1996), Marvin Lewis connects the work of Afro-Argentine authors with African cultural production in the Atlantic world. Lewis studies nineteenth-century Romantic authors such as Mateo Elejalde, Horacio Mendizábal, and Casildo G. Thompson, as well as the presence of Afro-Argentines in popular poetry. Donald Castro, in *The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture* (2001), points out Afro-Argentine contributions to the circus, popular theater, and tango. The African roots of tango, a controversial topic since the nineteenth century, hold particular importance through their role in national identity. In the official version presented to tourists in twenty-first-century Argentina, tango appears as an elegant dance cultivated by whites, associated primarily with the singer Carlos Gardel. Solomianski's *Identidades secretas: la negritud argentina* (2003) builds upon these

examining the representation of Afro-Argentines in two works by the author, journalist, and poet Washington Cucurto (pseudonym of Santiago Vega, b. 1973). I argue that Cucurto's novel 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros (2008), through both historical revision and deliberate anachronism, creates a new tradition in which Afro-Argentines are a pillar of national identity. This project continues in the collection of short stories Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis (2010), but Cucurto now focuses on a variety of marginalized and immigrant groups in order to trace an even broader picture of the Argentine community. The nation that emerges from these texts subverts the deeply rooted idea of "Argentine exceptionalism," according to which Argentina, a European outpost in Latin America, is "racially" and culturally distinct from its neighbors. Cucurto emphasizes contact and fluidity in his portrayal of twenty-first-century Argentina, drawing attention to the mixture of African, Latin American, European, and native components in an increasingly diverse mosaic. In each work, however, the author also points out the challenges that face the nation as a whole, criticizing Argentina's political and economic leaders.

"Negros" in Argentina: Past and Present

Although the land that would become Argentina failed to develop large-scale sugar or cotton plantations and never figured among the main participants in the African slave trade, it nonetheless received shipments of human cargo from both coasts of Africa,

studies, examining the cultural production of Afro-Argentines from the colonial period up to the end of the twentieth century.

with Brazil often serving as an intermediary.⁵³ As elsewhere in the Americas, colonial officials turned to African labor to supplement the indigenous workforce, which had diminished as a result of disease, war, and flight from European encroachment. The Crown first authorized the slave trade in the Río de la Plata in 1534. At the end of the sixteenth century, settlers' complaints of insufficient supply prompted administrators to grant the *asiento*, a royal concession of the monopoly on slaving, to the Portuguese (Andrews 23). Over the next hundred and fifty years, as alliances shifted in Europe, Spain would transfer this permission to several foreign companies, such as the French Guinea Company and the British South Sea Company (Johnson 36).

Slaves played a crucial role in society throughout the subcontinent. Prior to 1776, the majority of imported slaves passed through the port on their way to the lucrative silver mines of Potosí or to what is now Chile and Paraguay. The interior city of Córdoba served as a distribution center for the entire region, linking Africa with destinations as far away as Lima (Assadourian 25). In the northwestern city of Tucumán, for example, Africans and their descendants came to make up forty-four percent of the population in the early eighteenth century (Halperín Donghi, *Revolución* 87). African slaves also

⁵³ According to the classic study by Elena F. S. de Studer, between the years of 1742 and 1806, approximately half of all black slaves arrived from Brazil. The other half came directly from Africa, most from the west coast, with the remainder coming from the east coast. Studer connects the origins of slaves with the traders' areas of activity: The French Guinea Company operated in the factories of Loango and Cabinda of Lower Guinea and enslaved Bantu peoples, while the English, in addition to Lower Guinea, embarked Sudanese slaves from the Gold Coast and Bantus from Madagascar (323). Complementing Studer's findings with more recent data, Alex Borucki has argued that, from 1777 to 1812, ninety-seven percent of slaves reaching the Río de la Plata through Rio de Janeiro originated in West-Central Africa, whereas the majority of slaves arriving through Salvador da Bahia came from the Bight of Benin. The direct African trade, in contrast, embarked primarily from three regions: Mozambique, Loango and Angola, and the Bight of Biafra (92-94).

performed a variety of tasks on Jesuit missions, such as shoemaker, bricklayer, barber, potter, baker, seamstress, and cook, as well as specialized agricultural labor (López-Chávez 468-69). The Bourbon reforms of the late colonial period contributed to a slaving boom and shifted the focus to Buenos Aires. After 1780, an increasingly greater proportion of slaves remained within the viceregal capital, and by the early 1800s, the city had become the leading importer of African slaves in Spanish South America (Johnson 35-36). The demographics of Buenos Aires changed accordingly: between 1778 and 1810, when the city's total population increased by thirty-four percent, its slave population increased by one hundred and one percent (Borucki 85). As a result, in the early nineteenth century, individuals of African descent comprised nearly a third of the urban population (Halperín Donghi, *Revolución* 86). They were the majority among street vendors, washerwomen, pest exterminators, stevedores, and *aguateros* (Andrews 37) yet achieved particular success in bakeries and workshops, where slaves could reach the rank of master artisan and supervise free "white" apprentices (Johnson 41).

Military conflicts, the spread of Enlightenment philosophies, and pressure from European nations gradually undermined the institution of slavery in the Río de la Plata. The defeat of two British invasions in 1806 and 1807, in which the plebeian classes of Buenos Aires played a leading role, featured the participation of Afrodescendants. In recognition of this service, the municipal government purchased the freedom of slaves who had been wounded in defense of the city and later held a public lottery to manumit an additional thirty slave soldiers (Meisel 282). After the outbreak of revolution in 1810, despite a strong liberal current that had attacked slavery and racial discrimination, Buenos Aires opted for a compromise between full-scale abolition and the conservation of property rights (Andrews 47). The 1813 Free Womb Law granted limited freedom to children born of slave mothers, requiring them to serve the mother's owner without salary until the age of fifteen (48). Similarly, the outlawing of the slave trade during the same year failed to prevent contraband slaving, which would remain a common practice throughout the following decades. Formal abolition did not occur in the city until Buenos Aires, the last province to join the Argentine Confederation, ratified its Constitution in 1861 (57).

The supposed absence of Afro-Argentines today is usually linked with their "disappearance" at some point in the nineteenth century. Up until the 1850s, Afro-Argentines remained a visible component of national society. They figured among the most loyal supporters of the *caudillo* Juan Manuel de Rosas (Governor of Buenos Aires from 1835 to 1852), a fact reflected in contemporary literature, such as Esteban Echeverría's "El matadero" or José Mármol's Amalia, each of which depicts Afro-Argentines in negative fashion. After the fall of Rosas, however, the Buenos Aires census no longer collected information regarding "race"; and when a similar question returned in 1887, Afro-Argentines now constituted only two percent of the population (4). As Andrews observes, the most prevalent explanation for this decrease is that many Afro-Argentines were killed in military conflicts, first during the interprovincial clashes and then in the horrific Paraguayan War (1864-1870). According to this account, Afro-Argentine women, due to the sudden lack of Afro-Argentine men and to a desire to rise in society, sought out men of European descent. At the same time, the gradual decline of the slave trade brought fewer Africans into the region. Low birth rates and high death rates among the remaining Afro-Argentine population, a consequence of socioeconomic inequality, further reduced its numbers (4-5). This demographic shift would intensify at the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of millions of European immigrants, primarily from Italy and Spain.

Alternative explanations have focused on the symbolic and discursive aspects of the "disappearance," denouncing a widespread attempt to "whiten" the nation. Andrews hypothesized that *mestizaje*, together with the use of ambiguous racial categories, led government record-keepers to classify many Afro-Argentines as "white," even though they continued to participate in African cultural organizations (89). The historian also explains how the adjective "trigueño," used to denote individuals of an intermediate skin color, "neither black nor white," avoided positing any concrete racial origin, unlike the loaded terms of "mulato" and "pardo" (83-84).⁵⁴ The benefits of being "white" or "trigueño" only increased within the context of scientific racism during the second half of the nineteenth century. Influential thinkers, such as the author and president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, associated African heritage with "barbarism" and wished to transform Argentina into a European and "civilized" nation. According to Alejandro Solomianski, the denial of the Afro-Argentine population responded to an "operativa de blanqueamiento simbólico ('civilización,' europeización) de un espacio 'inferior,' supuestamente 'desértico' (dotado de objetos o 'sujetos' degradados cuya idiosincracia es

⁵⁴ The flexibility of racial categories has its roots in the early colonial period. Like the rest of the Spanish Empire, the Río de la Plata followed a *régimen de castas*, through which it attempted to limit racial mixing and prevent individuals of non-European origin from ascending in society. The *castas* held an intermediate legal status between Spaniards and slaves, while the indigenous "indios" were considered a separate racial category and thus subject to special legislation (Andrews 45-47). As Tulio Halperín Donghi has noted, it was possible to acquire legal standing as a Spaniard by leaving one's place of origin or by paying for the necessary government procedures and witnesses. Accusations of "sangre impura," however, could ruin careers (*Revolución* 64).

la falta) y 'anacrónico' (detenido o instalado en una etapa 'pasada' de 'el itinerario evolutivo "universal" del género humano')" (24-25). These negative stereotypes spread throughout society. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Afro-Argentines "eran visualizados principalmente como sirvientes de los blancos: los hombres como ordenanzas de instituciones públicas o como mucamos, las mujeres como cocineras, mucamas o lavanderas" (Frigerio 89). At the same time, the popular press depicted them as "brutales, poco confiables, taimados, con propensión de engañar a sus empleadores" and "tontos, cómicos y/o infantiles" (89).

During the following decades, linguistic changes began to erase altogether the African presence in Argentina. Alejandro Frigerio argues that, between approximately 1900 and 1940, the term "pardo" underwent a transformation similar to that of "trigueño." Formerly used to describe "temibles compadritos, formidables bailarines y madamas de fama" (80) of African origin, "pardo" ceased to hold automatic racial connotations (86). Over this time period, an increasingly smaller number of phenotypic traits referred to African heritage, eventually leaving only two: very dark skin and "mota" (short, curly) hair. A decreasing percentage of the population, therefore, fulfilled the conditions for Afro-Argentine identity (86). Only a few years later, the term "negro" itself acquired a new meaning. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Peronist economic policies stimulated internal migration, leading darker-skinned residents of the Interior to settle in the Greater Buenos Aires region. The urban middle and upper classes, who identified themselves as "white" and as the inheritors of modern European "civilization," labeled the new arrivals "cabecitas negras" or "negros," associating them with barbarism and backwardness. Some internal migrants indeed had African origins, and the negative

stereotypes that characterized provincial "negros" were similar to those that had marked Afro-Argentines at the beginning of the century (91). Nonetheless, "negro" had lost its connection with Africa, coming to signify any darker-complected individual (whether indigenous, mulatto, or *mestizo*) who failed to meet the cultural standards of the "gente decente" or "gente de bien" (91). In this new system of classification, "[1]a 'blanquedad' no se recorta contra los 'indios' (que ya 'no existen') sino contra la 'negritud,' aunque en este caso no tuviera nada de africana (al menos imaginariamente)" (Solomianski 256).

"Negro" remains an ambiguous label in twenty-first-century Argentina. On one hand, it is a term of endearment toward individuals with darker skin or hair, regardless of their origins. This use of "negro" appears on a variety of socioeconomic levels in everyday life. On the other hand, "negro" maintains the negative connotations that it acquired during the first Peronist government. It is common to hear the words "negro" and "cabecita" as insults, often toward those viewed as uncultured and as a threat to middle-class values. This use of "negro," however, has a phenotypic basis. Frigerio observes that "[p]or más que enfatizamos las dimensiones sociales y culturales que caracterizan a los 'negros' es indudable que la gran mayoría de los individuos así clasificados, especialmente cuando lo hacemos de manera peyorativa, son de tez más o menos oscura" (92-93). Another variant of the term "negro" has emerged with the villas miseria, precarious neighborhoods that have become increasingly common on the outskirts of major cities. Members of other social classes use the insult "negro villero" to refer to the inhabitants of these communities, even when they are indigenous Argentines or immigrants from neighboring countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, or Peru. For this reason, the mention of "negros" in Argentina does not suggest African roots, unless the

context has indicated otherwise. Frigerio has argued that only the phrase "negro mota" now offers an unmistakable denotation of African identity (86). Nonetheless, whereas "negro" has lost its original meaning, the semantic field of other terms has widened to fill the gap. The adjectives "moreno" and "morocho," which can characterize lighter-skinned individuals with dark hair, may also refer to descendants of Africans, particularly those from the United States or Europe, seen as more developed societies. It is possible that the word "negro" seems inadequate in these cases due to its association with the Argentine lower classes.

Nonetheless, contact with other nations has forced Argentina to rethink its racial categories, if only to a limited extent. During the 1980s and 1990s, the country received a significant amount of immigrants from Latin America, some of them Afro-Hispanic, as well as immigrants directly from Africa. In the process of "cultural democratization" and "citizen participation" that characterized the return to democracy in 1983, it became possible to debate the role of Afrodescendants in Argentina and to recognize the long-standing African contributions to national society (López 109).⁵⁵ The activities of transnational organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and a variety of NGOs also called attention to racism and discrimination in the region (102-07). The collecting of government statistics changed accordingly. Prior to 2001, when citizens gained the ability to self-identify as indigenous, the Argentine national census had lacked any reference to "raza/color/etnicidad" (100). In

⁵⁵ According to the historian María Elena Vela, it was during these years that the discipline of Afro-Argentine studies acquired its current form. This new field, however, was based in academic departments such as Anthropology, Ethnography, Geography, and History (49-51). In literary and cultural studies, the process has proved more gradual and has featured greater participation of foreign scholars.

2003, negotiations began in order to include a question on African heritage by 2010. When this census took place, however, only 0.37 percent of Argentines identified themselves as Afrodescendants, possibly as a result of the uneven distribution of the questionnaire that mentioned African identity.⁵⁶ Laura Cecilia López concludes that, although international pressure led to institutional reform in Argentina, it failed to "cuestionar ideologías dominantes en el plano local, lo que muestra la dificil implementación de políticas oficiales de reparo específicas para los afrodescendientes, pensando en la 'blanquitud' imaginada como predominante" (111). The state had acknowledged the African roots of Argentina, but, in practice, "whiteness" remained the standard.

The growing number of African immigrants in Argentina thus provides a test case for the nation's attitudes on race. As long as Africans remained an external, exotic, and unthreatening Other, it was possible for Argentines to claim that "racism is a problem in other countries, not here," a common statement in local speech. Solomianski has argued that "[1]a africanidad al no contar claramente con un grupo de referencia social (y por lo tanto carecer de peligrosidad o de la posibilidad de ser explotada a un nivel grupal) no resulta necesariamente rechazada. Pueden escucharse afirmaciones tales como 'respecto a los "negros verdaderos" en la Argentina no hay racismo'" (257). This does not mean, of course, that Argentine public discourse was free of prejudice. Following the 2001 economic and political crisis, both jokes and serious analyses mentioned the "africanización" of the newly impoverished Argentina.⁵⁷ Yet, by portraying Africans as

⁵⁶ For the census results, see http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_afro.asp

⁵⁷ Frigerio offers a number of examples from respected publications, among which one finds phrases such as "nos sentimos etíopes"; "terminaremos como un pobre país

foreigners, and by explaining attitudes toward local "negros" primarily in terms of class, Argentines could deny that race played a role in socioeconomic hierarchies.

Recent trends in immigration, nevertheless, have increased the visibility of Africans throughout the country and have encouraged discussion of their position in the national community. Whereas previous arrivals, such as those from Cape Verde in the twentieth century, settled on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and received less attention due to their marginal physical location, the African immigrants of the twenty-first century have become an undeniable feature of urban life in many regions of Argentina. Initially, this group consisted of African men who spoke little Spanish and often sold jewelry on street corners, setting up small tables in the downtown and touristic areas of Buenos Aires. The impression was that their presence in the country was superficial and temporary. For this reason, Solomianski, writing in 2003, could state that "en líneas generales, quienes havan quedado, conservan un aspecto de 'extranjería'" (258). It has since become common, however, to see not only African men but also women and children in several parts of the city. The phenomenon is clearest in the working-class neighborhood of Once, home to a major bus hub and one of the most important regional railroad lines, where African immigrants sell a variety of goods alongside Argentines and other Latin Americans. A similar process has begun as far away as the northwestern province of Salta, which borders Bolivia and Chile. Already an established component of the urban population, these African immigrants have begun to undermine the traditional view of national identity. As they strengthen their social and economic ties with other groups, and as they give birth to Argentine children who will acquire the local dialect and

africano"; "vivo como en África ... como en el continente negro"; "Como en el candombe, estamos descalzos, en la calle, como esclavos" (95).

cultural parameters, it will become increasingly difficult to equate African heritage with foreignness.

Washington Cucurto: Self-Projection and Critical Reception

Over the past two decades, the novelist, poet, and journalist Washington Cucurto has reflected the diversity of Argentina, gradually acquiring an influential role in national and regional literature. After publishing the collections of poetry Zelarayán (1998) and La máquina de hacer paraguayitos (2000), he founded in 2002 the Eloísa Cartonera publishing house, which prints books on cardboard purchased from cartoneros, individuals who earn a living by reselling discarded materials. The success of this socially committed initiative, together with the positive reception of his 2003 volume of short stories Cosa de negros, gave Cucurto "una visibilidad amplificada y una mejor posición para intervenir en el mundo de la literatura latinoamericana, y no ya sólo argentina" (Palmeiro 301). In the following years, Cucurto's growing popularity as a "cult author" earned him a contract with the prestigious Emecé Editores, which published the narrative works El curandero del amor (2006), 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros (2008), and Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis (2010). Translations into German, Portuguese, French, and English have begun to extend Cucurto's fame beyond Spanish America.

Throughout his work, Cucurto presents himself as an Afro-Argentine or Afro-Latin writer. The creation of this authorial figure often takes precedence over the narration of events. As Cecilia Palmeiro explains, "[g]ran parte del trabajo de Cucurto como escritor se ha concentrado en la construcción de su figura" (311), to such an extent that "[p]odría decirse que ningún autor argentino ha trabajado su imagen del modo en que lo ha hecho Cucurto" (319). Although this project responds in part to the demands of the contemporary cultural market, allowing Cucurto to build rapport with his readership, it also has the more noble objective of creating a voice through which to champion Argentina's marginal figures: "Cucurto habla sobre los mundos marginalizados construyendo figuras autorales autorizadas por la pertenencia a esos mundos" (313). This process frequently begins even before the reader has opened the book. The cover of *El curandero del amor*, for instance, features a photograph of the author with a 1970s-style afro, while *1810* presents a smiling Cucurto dressed in an early-nineteenth-century military uniform, foreshadowing the author's intervention in national history. In *Hasta quitarle...*, a comic-book drawing of the author playing baseball, a sport rarely seen in Argentina, strengthens his ties to the Caribbean immigrants whose stories he will tell.

The musical genre of cumbia is at the heart of Cucurto's textual self-creation, providing a vehicle through which to focus on the working-class and Latin American communities of Buenos Aires. A fusion of indigenous, African, and Latin American rhythms, cumbia is popular in many parts of the continent. In Argentina, its most well known varieties are the cumbia santafesina, which emerged in the provincial city of Santa Fe, and cumbia villera, developed in the slums outside of the nation's capital. Particularly in its Latin American forms, cumbia undermines established versions of Argentine identity. Unlike tango, which the tourist industry presents as a refined, civilized art form, and unlike Argentine *rock nacional*, whose connection to the United States and European traditions reinforces the notion of "white" culture, cumbia unabashedly celebrates its native origins. By focusing on cumbia, Cucurto's texts portray Buenos Aires as "un centro cosmopolita de pobres con una diversidad étnica y cultural que el proyecto de nación argentina siempre se encargó de disimular poniendo en primer plano la inmigración europea" (302). The author/narrator/protagonist is at home in this world, often depicting himself in nightclubs alongside Paraguayans and Dominicans in the working-class, immigrant neighborhoods of Once and Constitución. These neighborhoods are also significant insofar as they connect the capital with the poorer areas of Buenos Aires Province, a journey that, since the colonial period, the city's upper classes have considered a transition from "civilization" to "barbarism."⁵⁸ Cucurto rejects this dichotomy, highlighting the degree of contact and mixture between Buenos Aires and the rest of Latin America.

Cucurto occupies an ambiguous place in the Argentine literary tradition. On the one hand, the author establishes a dialogue with canonical writers and movements, most frequently through direct references or through parodies. In this sense, Cucurto presents himself as the latest member of a long trajectory, who must destroy his predecessors in order to carve out his own space in the canon. The author's attention to important themes such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and socioeconomic inequalities makes him an unavoidable figure in contemporary Argentine literature. On the other hand, however, Cucurto often seems most interested in shocking his readers through a compendium of obscene language and explicit sexual acts. This aspect of Cucurto's style, of course, reflects a desire to *épater le bourgeois* and thus fits in well with his attack on the political and aesthetic establishments. Even so, his texts run the risk of appearing pornographic, provocative for their own sake, and the coarse exterior may distract readers from the

⁵⁸ For example, in the previously mentioned "La fiesta del monstruo" by Borges and Bioy Casares, working-class supporters of Perón invade the capital from the south.

complex reasoning and profound critiques of Argentine society that represent the author's most valuable contribution to national culture.

Given the recent emergence of Afro-Argentine studies as an academic discipline, as well as the general lack of attention toward Afro-Argentines in the media, it is perhaps unsurprising that few critics have underlined the racial component of the author's work. In a review of *Cosa de negros*, Ariel Schettini points out that Cucurto's title alludes to Vicenti Rossi's 1926 study Cosas de negros, which explored the contributions of Afrodescendants to national culture. Schettini also mentions Cucurto's involvement in social debates, through a strategy that the author shares with "cantantes de rap americanos (blancos y negros) o los cantantes de cumbia." Even so, the remainder of Schettini's essay links Cucurto to other literary projects, such as the Latin American boom, the Latin American baroque (in particular, Reinaldo Arenas), and the "gesto de mímesis de lo oral y mediático de la cultura literaria latinoamericana de la década del noventa," which the critic associates with Manuel Puig. Schettini's final comparison refers once more to the Western and Argentine canons: like the authors of gaucho literature and Gustave Flaubert, Cucurto identifies with his characters and expresses himself through them.

This approach also characterizes Beatriz Sarlo's 2006 essay "La novela después de la historia. Sujetos y tecnologías," in which the critic examines twenty-first-century Argentine literature. Using the work of various contemporary authors to illustrate literary trends, Sarlo describes Cucurto as an example of a "narrador sumergido," "indistinguible de sus personajes, incluso porque declina el poder de organizar visiblemente la ilación del relato" (479). Sarlo's reading operates in terms of class, rather than race, as she finds in

Cucurto's work "un populismo posmoderno, que celebra no la verdad del Pueblo sino su capacidad para cojer [*sic*], bailar cumbia, enamorarse y girar toda la noche" (478). According to Sarlo, whose opinions reflect the stigmatization of cumbia among the middle and upper classes, Cucurto seeks to attract an educated public through exotic vulgarity, whose novelty serves to mask the boredom it would otherwise produce (479). Like Schettini, Sarlo traces comparisons to Roberto Arlt and Manuel Puig, who drew upon popular language and culture.

Only Cecilia Palmeiro, whose *Desbunde y felicidad* (2011) includes an analysis of Cucurto's position in contemporary Argentine literature, pays attention to matters of race. Palmeiro differs from Sarlo in that Palmeiro praises Cucurto's involvement in the world of cumbia and immigrants. Following Schettini, Palmeiro mentions Rossi's study as the origin of *Cosa de negros*, but she understands the term "negros" in Cucurto as a reference to the popular classes in present-day Argentina; "los 'negros' equivale a decir 'pobres,' en una juxtaposición que solapa etnia y clase" (306). In a footnote, however, Palmeiro emphasizes the racial considerations of Cucurto's project, arguing that the cover of Cosa *de negros*, a caricature that accentuates the author's African features, serves to comment upon the link between classist insults and the racial differences to which they allude (306-07). Palmeiro also connects the historical significance of Afro-Argentines with the new communities of Afrodescendants that have settled in Argentina, such as the Dominican migration in Buenos Aires (307). Nonetheless, despite these valuable points of contact with contemporary Argentine society, Palmeiro's primary concern is the function of desire and sexual identities in Cucurto's work, as well as the author's relationship with

trash, kitsch, and queer literature. As a result, Palmeiro's study does not place Cucurto within a broader tradition of Afro-Argentine cultural production.

1810: The Reinvention of National Identity

Cucurto's novel 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros seeks to invent such a tradition, reimagining the seminal moment in Argentine national history and tracing new lines of continuity between past and present. The work's title refers to the "Semana de Mayo" of 1810, during which the elites of Buenos Aires, supported by the city's plebeian classes, seized power and expelled the Spanish viceroy, Baltasar de Cisneros. After organizing a revolutionary government, Buenos Aires began to send emissaries and armies into its vast hinterland, attempting to confirm its dominion over the former territories of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, which included modern-day Bolivia and Paraguay. The area that would later comprise the Argentine Northwest was the focal point of military action. By 1817, loyalist troops based in Peru had forced the pro-independence Ejército del Norte into a defensive position, threatening the survival of the revolution. José de San Martín, governor of the western region of Cuyo, put into action his "plan continental," leading an army across the Andes. After liberating Chile in 1818, he sailed to Lima and achieved similar success in 1821. Although military conflict would continue throughout the region, these victories guaranteed the independence of the provinces of the Río de la Plata, which would later unite to form the Republic of Argentina. Individuals of African descent, both free and enslaved, took part in the revolutionary struggle. In primary school, children learn about patriotic figures such as the soldier Falucho, killed during a loyalist uprising for refusing to salute the Spanish flag, or sergeant Juan Bautista Cabral, who sacrificed himself to protect San Martín in battle. Yet these figures are the exception, as Afro-Argentines have occupied a limited space in the country's mythology and historiography.

Through a combination of both fiction and deliberate anachronism, Cucurto establishes a new national identity that places Afro-Argentines at the center. In the work's Prologue, the author/narrator/protagonist has discovered a collection of documents from the nineteenth century, from which he learns that one of his distant ancestors, an African slave, was the lover of general San Martín, thus making Cucurto a descendant of the liberator of America. The main action of the novel explains the origins of the Cucurto family and the crucial role that they played in the war for independence. In Part One, "Africa," San Martín and his troops arrive in search of slaves. The general falls in love with Olga Cucurtú, with whom he has a son prior to her death in a tragic accident. Part Two, "Negros en Buenos Aires," begins with the arrival of San Martín and a boat full of Africans in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. Following the overthrow of Spanish authority in the capital, a group of young "indios" from Chuquisaca, led by San Martín's son, Ernesto Cucurtú, decides to attack Buenos Aires and depose the revolutionary government. The Junta sends the general to halt the invasion, but father and son, after a series of military clashes, join forces and lay siege to the Buenos Aires cabildo. Independence hero Manuel Belgrano sets fire to San Martín's boat, and Ernesto manages to reunite with his father as the vessel sinks. The novel ends with an Epilogue,

in which Cucurto casts doubt on the general's death and suggests that he may have escaped to Africa with his sister-in-law.⁵⁹

In order to introduce his own version of national history, Cucurto undermines the distinction between fact and fiction upon which official accounts are based. The guiding premise of Cucurto's argument is that, because historians necessarily choose and organize their material in the form of a narrative, objective historical knowledge is impossible. By means of a self-aware, unreliable narrator, the novel provides an extreme example of how personal biases and shortcomings affect the telling of history. For example, after describing the opening scene in anachronistic terms, the narrator rebukes himself for his mistake, or perhaps imagines the complaints of future readers: "¡Pero si La Habana, ni Cuba, ni Argentina existen todavía, bestia iletrada ahistórica!" (27). Shortly afterward, he states that Dutch pirates sold his ancestor for "cien euros" (37), over two centuries before the creation of the Eurozone. It is thus unsurprising when, in a summary of noteworthy members of the revolution, the narrator includes a spurious citation from Wikipedia (131). Later in the novel, unsure of how to proceed with the tale, the narrator confesses that "estoy confundido en mi propio atolondramiento, no sé cómo seguir, y lo peor de todo, no tengo la idea de cómo pudo seguir todo aquello, todo ese cuento deleznable de la Revolución de Mayo" (122). As his frustration mounts, a declaration of his own limitations ("¡cómo voy a saber lo que pasó hace doscientos

⁵⁹ As even a mere glance at Argentine history will make clear, nearly every aspect of this plot summary is pure invention. Although San Martín fought briefly in North Africa as a teenager (Lynch, *San Martín* 8), he never trafficked slaves; no indigenous army invaded Buenos Aires; Belgrano never assaulted San Martín; and the general died peacefully in France after ceding leadership of the American revolution to Simón Bolívar. San Martín had no male heirs; his only daughter, Mercedes, accompanied him to Europe, where she spent the rest of her life.

años!"[121]) builds up to a generalized pessimism regarding any attempt to know the past: "digamos la verdad, nadie tiene la más puta idea de lo que ocurrió, ésta es la historia de una revolución inexistente" (123). The narrator will eventually repeat this conclusion, attributing the historical narrative to the fantasies of drunken artists: "[n]unca hubo una Revolución de Mayo, ni menos un Cabildo, fue un invento de poetas y bohemios afectados por la resaca de la joda más grande jamás habida en las tierras del Plata" (159). At other points in the story, the narrator inverts the process and affirms that events truly occurred despite not appearing in official histories (35, 182-83). Through this denial of established historical knowledge and exaggerated disregard for the conventions of historiography, the novel suggests that our ideas about the past are the product of competing narratives. In Cucurto's universe, in which the narrator shamelessly invents his own documents to support his argument, denying two hundred years of material and discursive evidence, "facts" cease to provide a criterion for determining the validity of any given account. As all versions are now equally valid, or equally invalid, Cucurto no longer requires academic credentials to offer his views on Argentine history.

Similarly, albeit in broader philosophical terms, the novel draws attention to the myriad ways in which to tell a story, along with the negative consequences that this freedom implies. As the narrator explains, all works of history are products of their own time and depend upon the perspective of the writer: "la historia es copia, o fotocopia, del presente ... ¿existe una verdadera historia para el presente? ¿La que nos contó Pedro, la que nos contó Juan? ¿Cuántas historias diferentes de un mismo hecho puede haber?" (121). The narrator then extends this argument to the contradictions of memory, providing an example from contemporary Argentina. Prompted by television news

reporters, two witnesses of a bus crash each offer a different version of the accident, despite a mere ten minutes having gone by. In this case, neither of the two is lying, and the narrator emphasizes the multiple possibilities for recalling a single event, but he immediately reflects on what would happen if a bribe were involved: "si a esos señores les pagaran por contar... ¿Qué contarían? ¡Lo que les dijera el dueño de la plata!" (121). As, according to the novel's reasoning, objective information is impossible, subjectivity runs the risk of losing its innocence. It is not simply that each person views the world differently; some observers--and, by extension, some writers--present the version that best corresponds to their interests.

In Cucurto's opinion, this type of corruption has allowed the Argentine elites to shape national historiography and consolidate their power. Just as a witness to an accident may accept a bribe in exchange for false testimony, historians may accept financial or social benefits in exchange for texts that favor the powerful. As a result of such collusion, the narrator argues, the Argentine national tradition is based on "la historia escrita por manitas blancas con dedos de carnicero" and represents "una conveniencia del poder" (122). History appears as a battleground for class and racial conflict throughout the novel. The opening pages contain a brazenly anachronistic "Manifiesto" attributed to Ernesto Cucurtú, the son of San Martín in the text, in which the author's ancestor denounces the Argentine historiographical tradition and calls for a new approach to the past. Unsurprisingly, given the frequent overlap between Cucurto and his characters, Ernesto follows the same logic that will later characterize the narrator's critique: "Basta de hechos verídicos investigados por el estado. / Nadie sabe la verdad de nuestra historia, / ni siquiera los que la vivieron" (13); "la realidad tiene mil caras, / o sea,

/ no existe / y sólo es instrumento / de la política partidaria y las grandes empresas / de best sellers" (14). Access to power determines the narration of history, and Ernesto sees affluent "whites" as those who have dictated their version of the events: "Basta de historiadores de manos blancas / y oscuras ideologías ... La historia ha sido por años una actividad / para burgueses adinerados / o vanos intelectuales de cerebro de pajarito" (13). This language re-emerges in the main text when the narrator, describing a party that will later fail to appear in official histories, mentions the "Mujeres, madres, esposas olvidadas por la mano blanca, tapadas por la mano milica de la historia con una gran carpa como una villa del Mundial 78 mandada a tapar por Videla" (150). In this reading of Argentine history, which coincides with the ideas discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, the military dictatorship of 1976-1983 represented the triumph of "white" economic interests and the subsequent marginalization of the poor, symbolized through the publicity campaign for the 1978 World Cup. The novel reinforces this interpretation by denouncing the "clase oligarca letrada" (14), an echo of the polarization that has characterized Argentine political discourse since the first Peronist government. According to Cucurto, the domination of privileged "whites" has extended into the twenty-first century and continues to influence the circulation of texts. The narrator presents himself as the victim of his current editors, complaining that "estoy en manos de los editores blancos, y escribo como quien obedece" and praising his former bosses, "que además eran negros como yo" (138-39). Cucurto never specifies whether his use of the term "negro" refers, in the local sense, to a racially grounded discrimination of the poor or, in the more general sense, to individuals of African descent. Even so, his opposition in these passages of "negros" with "blancos," a label rarely found in Argentine discourse, suggests Afro-Argentines as the intended reference. This interpretation also gains support from the narrator's use of "negros" when describing San Martín's adventures in Africa and the slave market in colonial Buenos Aires.

As the flexibility of history has allowed dominant groups to impose their version of the past, the solution is for the marginalized to write their own narratives. Ernesto's Manifiesto describes school textbooks as vehicles for indoctrination and, therefore, as the first obstacle to overcome: "Para que la historia sea del pueblo, / se necesita urgentemente desescolarizarla, / la historia escolar / es una bazofia de la clase imperante" (14). Argentine children have grown up learning the history of the ruling class and ignoring their own traditions. In consequence, the majority of the national community lives "sin historia, / aceptando lo que nos contaron" (14). The solution, Ernesto argues, is to "reinventarla urgentemente / para que nos ayude a sobrellevar nuestra realidad / (que es bien distinta a la de ellos)" (14). Far from an abstract ideal, history at the service of the people holds practical, even existential, value in everyday life. Turned toward a different goal, the malleability of history becomes a tool for social transformation. The Manifiesto, true to its textual genre, makes this point through series of prescriptive statements: "La historia debe ser / el eje de nuestra imaginación creadora ... "Que sea la historia la encargada de lujo / de educar con su pensamiento liberador, / con su abrupta toma de conciencia. Sea la historia el motor y el arma inspiradora / de la nueva odisea que se está gestando" (16). All history is a product of its age, as Cucurto's narrator will later observe, but the Manifiesto shifts the focus of inquiry toward the future. The question is no longer "How did we reach this point?" but rather "Where should we go from here?" With the Manifiesto's preference for creative inspiration over the collection of facts, historical narrative comes to resemble its literary counterpart.

In order to reimagine national identity from the perspective of literature, Cucurto must first carve out a niche for himself in contemporary Argentine culture. One facet of Cucurto's approach is purely iconoclastic. The novel's prologue features a conversation between Cucurto and his friend/alter-ego Santiago (an allusion to the author's real name), in which they exchange ideas about the structure of the book. Santiago dismisses conventional notions of aesthetic value: "la literatura, la historia, los personajes, no son lo importante en un libro. Cucu, los escritores que hacen eso están perdidos. Usan palabras como calidad, logros, estética, poética, elipsis, simbolismo alemán, parodia, gauchesca. Esas palabras dejaron de existir hace cincuenta años y no tienen ningún valor" (8). He then turns to attack the literary critics who, in his view, uphold these outdated standards, declaring that "no hay [Josefina] Ludmer o [Beatriz] Sarlo que puedan decir este libro es bueno o malo con veracidad, ellas sueltan puros chapoteos sobre sus propias dudas de análisis literario" (8). According to Santiago, judgments of artistic merit tell us nothing about the function of literature within society because "[1]o importante en un libro es lo que representa para el mundo" (8). This audience-centered mindset anticipates the rejection of received knowledge and the emphasis on creativity that characterizes the rest of the novel. Insisting on the transformative power of literature, Santiago exclaims that "vamos a reescribir la historia desde la literatura, vamos a inventar una nueva literatura que todavía no existe por culpa de los convencionalismos, la vanguardia burguesa y la hipocresía católica" (8-9). The role of the author in this mission acquires greater clarity a few pages later, near the end of Ernesto's Manifiesto, when Cucurto's voice intervenes to

explain how he understands his place in contemporary Argentine culture: "Desde este lugar pedorro que me toca / --escritor de ficciones-- / incito al pueblo a tomar las armas / de manera urgente, pues no hay otra solución" (16). From this perspective, the entire novel becomes a call to arms, an invitation to ignore the established historiographical and literary traditions, regardless of their intellectual accomplishments, and to reimagine Argentina with the goal of achieving a more tolerant, inclusive, and egalitarian society.

Nonetheless, Cucurto is aware that, even in a city as full of bookstores as Buenos Aires, literature no longer holds the dominant position in the cultural marketplace. The novel repeatedly calls attention to the disadvantages of literature with respect to newer media. In the Prologue, Santiago affirms that the famous Argentine television and film producer Adrián Suar "es mucho más importante para el mundo que cualquier escritor contemporáneo" (8). It is possible, at this point, that Santiago is merely referring to the greater circulation and popularity of Suar's works, an indisputable fact that may give rise to comments on the contemporary culture industry or the preferences of the masses, but not to an indictment of literature itself. Yet, as the novel progresses, the narrator becomes increasingly pessimistic about his medium of expression. During a broad reflection on the passage of time, the narrator states that technology has rendered literature obsolete:

> Y qué me dicen de la literatura de Borges, parece un pastiche anticuado ante los avances del playstation, y el mundo cortazariano, pizarnikiano, un piringulín ante los avances del Second Life. Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Philip Dick, Cordwarname Smith, Isaac Asimov, Stanislaw Lem, son un poroto ante cualquier chip de internet. (133)

In every part of this sequence, literary creations once considered visionary now pale in comparison to their technological rivals. The complex universe of Jorge Luis Borges loses its wonder alongside the immersive graphics and interactivity of a video game console, just as the imaginative texts of Julio Cortázar and Alejandra Pizarnik fail to compete with the online virtual world Second Life. Similarly, the invention of the Internet, even in its most rudimentary form, has turned the work of authors like Bradbury and Asimov into museum exhibits. It would be easy to dispute such an argument, and the inclusion of Ray Bradbury, whose *Fahrenheit 451* cautions precisely against the suppression of literature, suggests a certain degree of irony in the passage. Likewise, no one would produce a literary work of over two hundred pages without faith in the value of the endeavor. Nonetheless, by positing literature as the least engaging medium in today's society, Santiago and the narrator imply that their novel will reach a limited audience and is thus an unsuitable means for transmitting revolutionary ideas.

The novel's cynical attitude toward literature reaches new depths in relation to the cultural marketplace. When attempting to persuade Cucurto to write about the Revolución de Mayo, Santiago states that "[1]a idea es ganarnos unos mangos [a few bucks]" (8). He envisions the text as a way to introduce characters and then profit from their popularity: "hacemos muñequitos de Cucurto, el Libertador Negro de América y los vendemos en el Once" (9).⁶⁰ As the primary reason for publication is financial, Cucurto

⁶⁰ In another tongue-in-cheek reference to the author's newfound celebrity status, Santiago imagines merchandise as more lucrative than the books themselves. He tells Cucurto, "¡Pero qué lectores, gil de goma! ¡El negocio está en el juguete! Vamos a vender más muñequitos que libros. Hay que apuntar a las madres, las madres son las que largan el peso. ¿Alguna vez viste un muñequito de Borges? Ni en pedo, nadie compraría un muñequito de Borges, de Cortázar, de David Viñas, vos tenés tinneiyers [teenagers], tickis, grupis que te siguen a morir" (9).

need only throw something together "rapidito," producing "boludeces"--a vulgar term meaning "stupid things"--for mass consumption (9). These plans for marketing and merchandising the story undermine the lofty rhetoric found elsewhere in the Prologue and Manifiesto. Even worse, by mentioning the residents of Once as the target demographic, Santiago depicts the poor and discriminated as customers rather than as comrades. The narrator takes a less extreme but similarly instrumental approach to the novel. More than one hundred pages into the story, immediately after denouncing history as the mouthpiece of the "white" ruling class, the narrator declares that "[1]a novela es un género de mierda" (122). This opinion derives, at least partially, from an opposition to conventions such as narrative cohesion and a logical plot structure, both of which the present novel consistently subverts. The narrator's primary source of frustration, however, is the never-ending struggle against his critics and the negative consequences for his family. He explains that "tengo que salir tirando piñas sin parar, porque si no los boludos de siempre que nunca escribieron ni leyeron ni fundaron nada me van a destrozar... Tengo que salir a matar como un boxeador, si no le sacan el pan de la boca a mis hijos" (122). Although the language in this passage paints a more sympathetic portrait of the author, who is forced to "throw punches" at the "idiots" who attack his work and, presumably, hurt his sales, literature remains a mere means to an end. The underlying assumption is that writing novels is the narrator's best or only way of earning a living and that, were other options available, he would cease to publish. As before, these statements are at least partially ironic. 1810, written after Cucurto's rise to fame, is one of several works that "se conciben ya bajo la figura del escritor exitoso" (Palmeiro 315) and that play upon the author's polemical success. To an extent, by recognizing the necessary participation of contemporary authors in the cultural marketplace, Cucurto signals to his readers that he understands the world that he proposes to change. His references to money, nonetheless, plant the seeds of doubt: is the author edifying readers or profiting at their expense?

Despite these numerous misgivings about the value of literature and its role as a commodity, Cucurto views himself as part of a literary tradition. At the core of this project is the clear homage to *Don Quijote*, whose use of metafiction echoes throughout the literature of Argentina, from canonical authors such as Arlt, Borges, and Cortázar to more recent figures like Ricardo Piglia, César Aira, and Patricio Pron. In a first point of contact, the prologue to Cucurto's novel recalls the prologue to Part I of Cervantes's text. Both prologues feature a conversation in which a friend of the author encourages him to write a book: Cervantes receives guidance from his "amigo," whereas Cucurto consults with his alter ego, Santiago. Likewise, each author's interlocutor provides cynical advice on how to present oneself to the market. Cervantes's friend proposes making up sonnets, epigrams, or words of praise and associating them with famous poets. Should any pedantic scholar denounce the forgery, there is no cause for alarm, as "no os han de cortar la mano con que lo escribistes" (Cervantes 10). The friend goes on to suggest that, in order to impress readers and critics as a man of culture, the author should include mythical and religious references that are easy to annotate, as well as "algunas sentencias o latines que vos sepáis de memoria, o a lo menos que os cuesten poco trabajo el buscalle" (10). Four hundred years later, Cucurto's friend takes a similar approach to the same problem. He initially recommends that the author copy his plot from a famous Argentine historian, telling him "Cucu, no seas boludo, agarrate un libro de Halperín

Donghi y reescribilo" (Cucurto 9).⁶¹ When Cucurto complains that "Halperín Donghi es más complicado que Proust," Santiago suggests the path of least resistance, replying "Bueno, entonces, copiale todo a Felipito Pigna" (9), a popular contemporary historian whose accessible style contrasts sharply with the labyrinthine prose of Halperín Donghi.

The greatest similarity between Cervantes and Cucurto, however, is each text's use of narrative masks to subvert the idea of historical "truth." In the metafictional game of Don Quijote, the real author, Cervantes, invents a narrative persona, "Cervantes," who appears alongside the Arab historian Cide Hamete Benengeli and the mysterious "segundo autor." Verisimilitude gradually disappears. The opening chapters purport to transcribe the knight errant's adventures from the local historical archive. When the tale abruptly ends, the "segundo autor" claims to have stumbled across a collection of manuscripts on Don Quijote, which he has had translated from Arabic into Spanish. At this point, historical reliability is already tenuous, as Cervantes's readers would not have considered Cide Hamete a trustworthy source of information. The possibility of an objective view of the past vanishes altogether when the narrator paradoxically states that the original version of the text included a reference to Cide Hamete's inaccurate translation. Following in Cervantes's footsteps, Cucurto's text also begins with historical documents of questionable authenticity. The first source for the tale is a bundle of letters from Cucurto's great-grandmother, according to which Cucurto is a descendant of San Martín. Cucurto then acquires, for the meager sum of five hundred Argentine pesos

⁶¹ After going into exile in 1966, Tulio Halperín Donghi (1926-2014) spent the rest of his life in the United States, where he held the title of Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley. The most important Argentine historian of the second half of the twentieth century, he is best known for his *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* (1967) and *Revolución y guerra* (1972).

(approximately fifty U.S. dollars as of 2015), a collection of papers with information about his family's arrival from Africa and participation in national history. Even so, the author quickly undermines the veracity of these documents. He confesses that "tuve que meterle mucha manopla al manifiesto, porque Ernesto no tenía la menor idea de prosodia, era un sordo poético" (11) and that "[1]as cosas que no entendí en los otros manuscritos también las reescribí" (11-12). These textual liberties become apparent throughout the work, most visibly in the intentional plot holes and the anachronistic references to contemporary events. Cucurto justifies his behavior with the explanation that "[s]iempre hay que retocar un poco todo, como han hecho los infames historiadores blancos para distorsionar la historia de este pueblo" (12). The novel's approach to history, therefore, recalls *Don Quijote*'s subversion of "truth" and "history" but differs in its attempt to correct the evils of previous historians, substituting their versions with the author's equally "false"--yet more beneficial--vision of the past.

Cucurto likewise makes numerous efforts to insert himself into the Argentine canon. Following the Prologue and Manifiesto, the novel proper begins with a quotation about Buenos Aires in 1810 from the author Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, whose *Radiografía de la pampa* (1933) contains lengthy, and generally pessimistic, reflections on Argentine national identity. Later in the story, the narrator affirms that "se arma el melodrama puigiano, porque el amor existe" (157), a reference to Manuel Puig's use of popular culture in his most famous novels, as well as an attempt to place Cucurto, who uses a similar style, into the same literary genealogy. The novel also links itself to its predecessors through parody. In Cucurto's narration of colonial Buenos Aires, two Spanish women seduce a young African, who later finds himself at the mercy of a group

of Spanish men, who torture and murder him in public (114-15). The plot details, the defiant resistance of the African, and the language in general all point to Esteban Echeverría's "El matadero." This allusion is especially significant insofar as, in the original story, Africans appear as the collaborators of arbitrary violence rather than as its victims. Cucurto also puts his own spin on the canonical tale, using crude vocabulary and emphasizing sexuality throughout the episode: in his version, the torturers kill their victim not by slitting his throat but by applying a boa constrictor to his genitals (116).

Cucurto's most innovative approach to the canon, nonetheless, takes place through his reinvention of Afro-Argentine contributions. Similar to the narrator in Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, Cucurto's narrator articulates his vision of national identity by tracing an alternative literary tradition. At first glance, it may seem that Cucurto overlooks Afro-Argentine discourse altogether, omitting poets such as Casildo G. Thompson, whom both Marvin Lewis and Alejandro Solomianski have studied at length, as well as the importance of Afro-Argentine journalists, whose ambivalent position toward the dominant culture has attracted the attention of numerous scholars.⁶² This absence explains why such a perceptive critic as Cecilia Palmeiro fails to link Cucurto with the Afro-Argentine tradition. Cucurto's strategy, in keeping with his playful attitude toward history, goes beyond recognizing figures from the past, as if to suggest that the initial phase of historical recovery has come to an end. Instead, Cucurto turns the canon upside-down by reimagining its origins.

⁶² In addition to the previously mentioned works, see Lea Geler's *Andares negros, caminos blancos* (2010).

clash on the outskirts of modern-day Greater Buenos Aires, the narrator remarks, through a long parenthetical digression, that

de ahí nacieron los parideros que darían lugar al *Matadero*, el *Martín Fierro*, *La refalosa*, *Las Islas*, *Facundo*, *El entenado*, *El Aleph*, *Don Segundo Sombra*, *Rayuela*, *Ema*, *La Cautiva*, y otros clásicos argentinos que fueron escritos todos por descendientes de estos soldados negros. Es decir, una literatura negra, escrita por aburguesados y emblanquecidos descendientes de negros. (188-89)⁶³

Descriptions of the battle reinforce this interpretation of the canon, as the narrator mentions "Viñas, Aira, Mansilla, Gamerro, Cortázar" among the soldiers, presumably the African ancestors of the renowned authors (189). According to the novel's logic, Africans were present in Argentina from the beginning of national history. As a result, most, if not all, Argentines have African origins. Therefore, all Argentine literature is Afro-Argentine literature, "literatura negra" in the racial sense, despite the claims of "whitened bourgeois" intellectuals. By subverting the canon from within, Cucurto transforms Afro-Argentine literature from a neglected sub-category, easy for its critics to deny or discredit, into the foundation of national literature, to such an extent that "Argentine" and "Afro-Argentine" become synonymous.

Cucurto puts this idea into practice in the novel's Appendix, "Los papeles de Berazategui: una literatura de negros," which contains parodies of stories by Borges and

⁶³ Italics in the original. The passage lists some of the most important works in the Argentine literary canon, together with recent novels that have received critical acclaim. In chronological order: "El matadero" (Esteban Echeverría, 1839); "La refalosa" (Hilario Ascasubi, 1843); *Facundo* (Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, 1845); *Martín Fierro* (José Hernández, 1872 and 1879); *Don Segundo Sombra* (Ricardo Güiraldes, 1926); "El Aleph" (Jorge Luis Borges, 1945); *Rayuela* (Julio Cortázar, 1963); *Ema, la cautiva* (César Aira, 1981); *El entenado* (Juan José Saer, 1983); *Las islas* (Carlos Gamerro, 1998).

Cortázar intended to prove the African origins of Argentine literature. The manuscripts appear for the first time in the Prologue, as Santiago exclaims that "este texto es igualito al 'Aleph,' y este otro es igual a 'Casa tomada.' Tenías razón cuando saliste a decir en las revistas que Borges era un chorro" (11). He goes on to conclude that "la literatura argentina es toda robada, es un chasco, un choreo infame" (11). Through contemporary porteño slang such as "chorro" (thief) and "choreo" (robbery), Santiago provides an updated version of Borges's belief that originality is impossible and that all texts steal or borrow from one another. Cucurto's innovation, however, is to posit African literature as the source of Argentina's most prestigious and well known writers. The underlying argument is that Borges and Cortázar took inspiration from Cucurto's ancestors, while the connection to the working-class, provincial town of Berazategui depicts the masses, and not privileged urban intellectuals, as the creators of literature.

Each of the parodies, in yet another example of playful anachronism, centers on life in twenty-first-century Argentina. The first story in the Appendix, "Dama tocada," an obvious reference to "Casa tomada" by Cortázar, narrates a sexual encounter between the narrator, "negros," and bourgeois women. The footnote from Cucurto describes the story as "el origen del afano efectuado por un importante escritor argentino del boom" (209), indirectly calling Cortázar a thief. As in Cortázar's story, the owners gradually find themselves cut off from sections of the house; but here, Cucurto's invaders break down a door, enslaving (perhaps killing) the wealthy owners and usurping the property. A family of Africans, recent arrivals from Nigeria, ends up taking over the house as the protagonists leave. Whereas Cortázar focused on the growing presence of the working classes in national society, using the house as a metaphor for public space, Cucurto's version emphasizes post-2001 economic difficulties. The narrator, despite referring to nineteenth-century Buenos Aires, uses language that addresses contemporary problems: "La casa es el tema nuestro y de 40 millones de argentinos. La casa siempre imposible, el sueño eterno, lejano impróspero para nuestra pobreza" (213). Impoverished by the recent economic crisis, Argentines (implied in the narrator's "nuestra") have given up on the dream of purchasing their own home. The story's conclusion likewise alludes to financial difficulties, albeit in comical fashion. In Cortázar's ending, one of the protagonists throws away the house key before abandoning the residence. When one of Cucurto's characters suggests copying this action, his friend replies "Sos loco, vos, un botellero me da dos pesos por el cobre" (217). In twenty-first-century Argentina, economic problems are so severe that even the copper from a house key, worth a mere twenty cents in U.S. currency, becomes an indispensable resource. At the same time, the scene calls attention to the individuals who make a living by searching the streets for discarded materials.

The second story in the Appendix, "El Phale," whose title is a *vesre*⁶⁴ rendition of Borges's "El Aleph," introduces a new component to the novel by focusing on the diversity of contemporary Argentina. As with previous "historical" documents, Cucurto starts by blurring the lines between fiction and reality. "Lamentablemente los contornos de la prosa virreinal son ilegibles," he explains, "y ya no sé si esto que van a leer lo escribí yo o lo escribieron otros. Ya no sé si esto se lo copié a Borges, o si yo me copié del original donde se copió Borges" (218). These reflections, in another echo of *Don Quijote*, constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the concept of originality, as Cucurto

⁶⁴ *Vesre*, a common feature of colloquial language in the Río de la Plata region, involves reversing the order of syllables in a word, as in *jermu* (mujer), *ñoba* (baño), or the word *vesre* itself (revés). A contemporary electronic tango band, Gotan Project, uses *vesre* in its name.

wonders whether he has copied from an original or from a copy of that original, of which, in turn, he himself may be the author. Regardless of the source, Cucurto's text offers a twenty-first-century update of Borges's classic short story. "El Aleph" focuses on a point of space, located in a basement in Buenos Aires, in which it is possible to view the entire universe from all vantage points. Cucurto's "Phale," in contrast, plays upon the common idea that Borges anticipated the invention of the Internet. The narrator understands the website YouTube as a Phale for uploading videos for the entire world to see (220). Addressing Borges, he then asks "iNo será Yahoo el Phale que usted tanto soñó en un sótano de Constitución?" (221) This link to the neighborhood of Constitución, which Argentines today associate with poverty, insecurity, and the presence of darker-skinned immigrants, further depicts Borges as an inheritor of the popular tradition in Cucurto's reinterpretation of the canon.

Of greater importance in this story, however, is the narrator's description of a wider national community. Whereas much of *1810* focuses on Afro-Argentines, the novel's concluding pages turn to immigrant groups. Invoking the "selva bolita ... en el corazón perenne del Once," the narrator exclaims that "más que el Phale, lo que debería yo estar haciendo es escribiendo el *Bolialef*," turning the insult "bolita" into a term of pride and part of a canonical text (219). The narrator thus implies that an updated depiction of the world should include the Bolivian presence in Argentina. A similar motivation underlies the statement "Perucas y bolis y paraguas, objetos" (219). On one hand, the narrator's list may be an attack on the dominant mindset, which views

Peruvian, Bolivian, and Paraguayan immigrants to Argentina as mere objects.⁶⁵ On the other hand, the appearance of the word "objetos" may serve as a reminder that these epithets originally designated objects (wigs, marbles, and umbrellas) and are inappropriate in reference to human beings. In both cases, as the narrator's vitriolic denunciation of Borges throughout the passage makes clear, the point is that the demographics of Buenos Aires belie the city's "white" and "European" self-image. The narrator continues to make this argument by mentioning other groups. Recent African immigration appears through the reference to "Nigerianos, caboverdianos, congoleses y de Sierra Leona, vendedores de joyas y relojes de baja calidad en puntos estratégicos de la ciudad" (226), with Asian immigration, which often receives less attention, represented by the possibility of using the Internet in "cada locutorio coreano" (221). At the story's conclusion, the narrator includes himself in "la primera cooperativa de trabajo delictivo latinoamericano," to be named "Libertadores de América, como la Copa de Fútbol" (236). He explains that "[a]cá todos somos extranjeros (soy dominicano), peruanos, de las provincias del Norte y africanos" (236), implying that the group of outcasts must band together in order to survive. By placing residents of the "provincias del Norte" alongside foreigners, the narrator also reflects the ambivalent status of residents of the Northwest, who are legally Argentine but fail to conform to the Eurocentric idea of national identity centered on the "white" Buenos Aires.

Cucurto extends the connection between Argentina and the rest of Latin America into the realm of literature, as several of the novel's episodes incorporate the conventions of magical realism. Although magical realist elements have appeared in the work of

⁶⁵ In Argentina, one often hears of an apocryphal news story that mentioned the death of "tres personas y un boliviano," with the implication that Bolivians are not human beings.

canonical Argentine authors, such as Héctor Tizón and Juan José Saer,⁶⁶ the fantastic, most often associated with Borges, Cortázar, Silvina Ocampo, and Adolfo Bioy Casares, has been the dominant narrative genre in the national tradition. Although Cucurto makes reference to the Argentine canon, his novel more often resembles those of Gabriel García Márquez in that his narrator describes supernatural events as if they were entirely commonplace. Early in the tale, Olga Cucurtú kisses San Martín and causes "tal intensidad en la selva que despertó a los más peligrosos leones" (36). When the characters make love, all the animals in the jungle become aroused (39). Later on, San Martín's speech upon the Pampa Húmeda creates a noise that awakens the Viceroy in Buenos Aires, eventually crossing the Atlantic and disturbing the Spanish queen (99). Cucurto also alludes to more recent practitioners of magical realism. In an echo of Laura Esquivel's Como agua para chocolate (1989), a substance in a cake sends San Martín's soldiers flying into the air, and the general himself ends up soaring past Montevideo (171). The most shocking example combines magical realism with Cucurto's penchant for obscenity. In a distasteful reference to a recent tragedy in a Buenos Aires nightclub, San Martín's genitalia enter the earth and produce a tremor so powerful that the Cabildo rises into the sky and catches on fire, killing nearly all its occupants (155).

In another parallel with Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, Cucurto reinterprets national identity by tracing an alternative socio-political tradition. References to geography, always significant in Cucurto's work, locate the action within a series of precise economic and racial contexts. By situating the conversation between Santiago and the author in a "barsucho del Once" (7), Cucurto

⁶⁶ See, for example, Tizón's *Fuego en Casabindo* and Saer's *El limonero real*.

makes clear, from the opening paragraph, the popular roots of his novel. Through a play on words, the author laconically affirms that "Once, a las tres de la mañana, es zona peligrosa" (9), referring both to the neighborhood's reputation for crime and to the dangerous ideas that the two friends plan to express in their book. The scene then shifts to Constitución, entry point to downtown Buenos Aires from the southern outskirts. Describing himself as "encerrado en una pieza" (17), the author addresses San Martín in a letter from the working-class neighborhood, and it is presumably from the same location that he writes the rest of the novel. Cucurto widens his sphere of geographical references in order to contrast himself with the privileged. He proudly declares that "Yo me siento parte de la familia revolucionaria, tanto como los Urguiza y los Alvear que son dueños de bancos y tierras, y aunque a todos los Cucurtos que viven por el conurbano y la selva tucumana no les alcance para comprarse un terrenito en Varela" (12). This statement brings together two marginal areas of the country, each associated with poverty: Greater Buenos Aires (the "conurbano"), peripheral with respect to the national capital, and the Argentine Northwest, peripheral with respect to the nation as a whole. "Varela," a reference to the provincial district of Florencio Varela, joins the towns of Berazategui and Quilmes as markers of the text's popular origins.⁶⁷

Deliberate anachronism also plays a key role in this project. San Martín's African adventures take place within "el barrio africano Consti," an obvious reference to

⁶⁷ As explained in chapter one, Argentine literature of the early twentieth century involved the rivalry between two groups of writers, each associated with a street in Buenos Aires: the cosmopolitan *Florida* and the working-class *Boedo*. Cucurto updates this geographical opposition, identifying himself with Constitución, Once, the south and west of greater Buenos Aires, and the provinces of the Northwest. His upper-class rivals, by way of omission, would be located in the upper-class neighborhoods of Recoleta and Palermo, as well as in the wealthy provincial suburbs to the north of the capital.

Constitución, where people dance "cumb," the precursor of cumbia (27). Descriptions of African nightlife in the opening chapters recall the "barsucho del Once" from the Prologue, and when San Martín crosses the Atlantic, his ship resembles "una gran bailanta [nightclub] ... en el barrio mítico de Constitución" (76). Despite their comedic function, these comparisons trace demographic and cultural continuity between eighteenth-century Africa and twenty-first-century Buenos Aires. Cucurto portrays Africa as the source of Argentine national identity, as his African characters already practice typically "Argentine" behavior prior to their contact with San Martín and their voyage to Buenos Aires. The Africans also speak like contemporary Argentines, using the *voseo* and expressions such as "guacho" [bastard] and "rajar" [get lost, leave]. As a result of these anachronistic points of contact, in similar fashion to Cucurto's view of the literary canon, "Afro-Argentine" and "Argentine" become increasingly synonymous.

Cucurto further resembles Pron and Bermani in pointing out the connections between past and present, using a broad historical trajectory to address the problems of twenty-first-century Argentina. In these passages, the author sets aside his focus on race and speaks primarily from a class-based perspective. According to the narrator, "[e]l gran fracaso de la Revolución de Mayo fue que al Cabildo jamás lo copó el pueblo y sí estos pelafustanes, estos burgueses adinerados que lo único que tramaban eran guerras burguesas sin el pueblo, y ante el primer tiro eran los primeros en meterse debajo de la mesa" (138). This reading of Argentine history, which could apply to the revolutionary and civil wars of the early nineteenth century, to the Paraguayan War, and even to the Falkland Islands War, depicts the elite as cowardly, manipulative, and dishonest, always looking to protect its own interests. Cucurto thus views "ese mayo supuestamente libertador" of 1810 as an opportunity for change that failed to arrive, in which "todo siguió igual, cambió para que nada cambie" (113). As throughout the novel, Cucurto's discussion of national history grants him a platform from which to evaluate contemporary Argentina. Like the historian Ezequiel Adamovsky, cited in chapter one, who blames the Argentine middle class for having abandoned its initial solidarity with the poor during the 2001 crisis, Cucurto wonders what might have been: "Mayo de 1810 era el momento para hacer algo, como fue diciembre de 2001" (135). Some problems have lasted for over two hundred years. Describing the accumulation of garbage in colonial Buenos Aires, the narrator states that "no existía ni existe una recolección de basura como la gente ["decent," "acceptable"]," pointing out the waste management issues that plague certain areas of the city (93). When indigenous and African invaders surround the Cabildo, the narrator remarks that "[p]arecía un supermercado Eki tomado por asaltantes en la provincia de Buenos Aires y rodeados de patrulleros, algo muy común en nuestros días" (196). The image of looters surrounded by police cars, a familiar scene since the 1990s and particularly in the wake of the 2001 crisis, calls attention to the injustices that, in Cucurto's reading of history, have always taken place in Argentina.

Cucurto gives voice to a broad political skepticism, in the sense that, rather than identify with any particular group, he denounces the shortcomings of a variety of parties and individuals. On one hand, he attacks neoliberal economic policies and U.S. imperialism. In a chapter significantly titled "San Martín y las multitudes obreras," a group of Africans rejects San Martín's plan for a Cabildo, proposing instead to build houses and a community space that closely resembles twenty-first-century neighborhood cooperatives. The narrator, through free indirect speech, transmits the general's thoughts: ... todavía no era el momento de hacer esos trabajos comunitarios. Pues la cosa era sencilla, para que haya microemprendimientos, asambleas, cooperativas, se necesitaba una nación en crisis, y ellos estaban en la prehistoria, todavía ni nación había, después, muchos años después vendrían todos los quilombos modernos, hiperinflación, explotación extrema, especulación financiera, neoliberalismo, capitalismo estadounidense. ¡Pero ahora había que inventar una nación! (162)

The "nación en crisis" refers to 2001, with its numerous community initiatives designed to solve problems that the government had shown itself unwilling or unable to address. Cucurto's list of the challenges that awaited Argentina summarizes the nation's economic history since the 1970s. Through the term "quilombo," the narrator reveals his focus on the present. Originally denoting fugitive slave communities, the most famous of which was that of Palmares in Brazil, "quilombo" in contemporary Argentina is a synonym of "lío" or "problema." This linguistic detail may point at the negative consequences of joining the national community: whereas quilombos were once a source of freedom, they now signify the challenges that Afro-Argentines, like all Argentines, must overcome as a result of right-wing government policies.

The novel's skepticism also extends, on the other hand, to the political left. In this instance, Cucurto's anger targets those who mislead the masses. His criticism begins with the Primera Junta of the 1810 revolution, who "[n]o querían el poder para el pueblo, sino para gobernar ellos" (130). He describes the lawyer Juan José Paso as "un cheto [yuppie] que se las daba de líder popular (¡como tantos amigos míos!)" (130), denouncing wealthy Argentine politicians who present themselves as allies of the poor in order to seize and remain in power. Peronism, no longer a mid-twentieth-century political movement, finds

itself at the heart of national identity: "La patria antes de nacer, en la cuna, antes de la emancipación, ya era peronacha" (147). In these anachronistic portrayals of earlynineteenth-century popular culture, Cucurto opposes the proto-Peronist masses with the colonial elites, whom, as always, he paints in an unfavorable light. Yet the novel argues that some Peronists have taken advantage of their supporters. When San Martín excoriates the Primera Junta as "unos inconducentes, unos paralizadores de la esperanza del pueblo," the narrator is quick to add, thinking of his own time period, "como lo son hoy muchos líderes populares, sean de izquierda, peronistas, montos o de cualquier ideología política" (204). This lack of faith in the political system, regardless of the ideologies of its members, recalls the slogan "Que se vayan todos," heard on the streets during the 2001 crisis. Cucurto, like the post-crisis Argentine society that he represents, reveals the flaws of previous projects but chooses not to articulate a project of his own. Cucurto's approach to politics, expressed in the terms that Adamovsky uses to describe the frustrated revolution of 2001, is *destituyente* rather than *constituyente*.

The novel's most powerful attack on the traditional view of Argentine identity occurs through its portrayal of San Martín. In every aspect of contemporary Argentine society, the general appears as the embodiment of national virtues. When Argentines speak of "El Libertador," they refer unequivocally to the general, always in positive terms. His face appears on the five-peso bill, while his name adorns streets, government districts, landmarks, and public buildings throughout the country. August 17th, the date of his death, is a holiday in Argentina, on which the nation celebrates the "Paso a la Inmortalidad del General José de San Martín."68 In the city of Buenos Aires, the Avenida del Libertador houses multiple embassies and passes through some of the wealthiest neighborhoods. The Catedral Metropolitana of Buenos Aires represents the cult of San Martín in its purest form. Located in the historic main square, Plaza de Mayo, the cathedral contains the mausoleum of San Martín, along with a replica of his sword and a monument to his military triumphs. Given the general's importance as a bearer of national identity, the armed forces have carefully guarded his image in popular culture and works of literature. The Instituto Nacional Sanmartiniano, founded in 1933 and now part of the Argentine Ministry of Culture, has taken great pains to contradict the versions of San Martín that have appeared in historical novels, taking upon itself the mission of protecting the "historical" San Martín whom its members believe to find in archival documents. Much of the general's validity as a symbol derives from his universality. Regardless of the government in power or the country's economic situation, San Martín exemplifies unquestionable Argentine courage, resourcefulness, intelligence, and love for one's fellow human being.⁶⁹

It is logical, therefore, that Cucurto should turn this image of San Martín upsidedown in his attempt to reimagine Argentine national identity. Cucurto's novel, which ranges from healthy skepticism to outright character assassination, depicts San Martín as

⁶⁸ General Manuel Belgrano, honored on June 20th of every year, is the only other public figure to receive such recognition.

⁶⁹ Canonical works of literature have captured the Argentine devotion toward San Martín. In Osvaldo Soriano's 1986 novel *A sus plantas rendido un león*, whose title alludes to a verse in the original version of the national anthem, an Argentine bureaucrat looks at a portrait of the general before defying the British Embassy during the Falkland Islands War. When attempting to secure political asylum in Argentina for an Irish patriot, this same character praises the "ideales sanmartinianos" of his newfound ally (80).

a slave trader, thief, dictator, drug trafficker, racist, hypocrite, and sex addict.⁷⁰ In contrast to the masculine, heterosexual military ideal, Cucurto's version of the general is a repressed homosexual. As elsewhere in the work, the novel's reinvention of Argentina's founding father neglects the distinction between fact and fiction, centering on the production of new information for specific purposes in twenty-first-century Argentina. The author's letter to the general attacks both historians and writers of historical fiction: "Los intelectuales referencistas de nuestro pasado, los grandes escritores de best sellers, te niegan rotundamente. Se ciegan a la liberación política y sexual que significó tu vida y tu lucha" (19). Cucurto ignores historical evidence of any kind in order to supplant the "official" San Martín with his own creation. He justifies this poetic license with the idea that "la primera obligación de San Martín / ... es ser nuestro compinche, / ser como nosotros queramos" (15). Declaring his total lack of interest in San Martín's feats of bravery, even denying that the general crossed the Andes (16), the author praises the revolutionary leader for having been "el padre del verdadero héroe negro de la Revolución de Mayo y de nuestra historia argentina, negado por las plumas de

⁷⁰ Although most of these negative traits, as one might expect given Cucurto's treatment of history elsewhere, have no basis in historical evidence, the image of San Martín as dictator reflects Argentina's traumatic experiences under military rule. The general's soldiers tell him, albeit "un poco en joda," "al fin y cabo, no sos más que un milico sudamericano, golpista, represivo, dictador y chorro como todos" (73). Such criticism stems not from the early nineteenth century, when military leaders took up arms in defense of republican ideals, but rather from the twenty-first, which has witnessed the human rights abuses of numerous *de facto* governments throughout the world. The epithet "milico," used to insult soldiers, alludes to the conflicts between leftist guerrillas and the right-wing military from the 1950s onward. San Martín responds with great cynicism to his troops' accusations: "Cómo se equivoca la gente. Los militares estamos para servir al pueblo y el pueblo tiene que dejar de leer los diarios opositores" (73). As discussed in chapter three, this was precisely the attitude of the Junta during the 1976-83 dictatorship and the source of the vast advertising campaign surrounding the 1978 World Cup.

historiadores blancos, que no podían aceptar el liderazgo de la negritud en nuestra historia" (18). The general's historical function, in Cucurto's version of the past, is to have founded the Afro-Argentine tradition or, more exactly, to have founded Argentina as a country with African roots. San Martín's value as a symbol makes him an ideal vehicle for Cucurto's plan to reinvent national identity. As the Manifiesto explains, "De nada sirven San Martín y Bolívar / --con todo el respeto-- si no nos ayudan a solucionar / nuestro horrendo presente de hambre y desesperanza" (15). The previous representation of San Martín, Cucurto argues, proved unable to solve the country's problems. Implicit in this conclusion is the idea that Argentina arrived at its present difficulties through wilful ignorance, by insisting on its European origins and denying the contributions of Africans, the indigenous, and Latin American immigrants to the national community. Searching for a way to overcome the legacy of the 2001 crisis, Cucurto uses San Martín to create a new, more egalitarian Argentina.

Despite these noble ambitions, the novel runs the risk of perpetuating stereotypes about Africans and their Argentine descendants, thereby confirming and reinforcing, rather than eliminating, deep-seated Argentine prejudices. In a study of tango lyrics, Norberto Pablo Cirio has identified a variety of stock themes and "estereotipos del negro socialmente consensuados desde lo musical" (33). Among these are "El negro como epítome de alegría"; "La desparición del negro"; "el negro como un ser simple, infantilmente alegre y siempre predispuesto al baile y la diversión"; and "El negro como un ser bestial, sucedáneo menos que humano de las oscuras selvas africanas e incapaz de integrarse a la modernidad blanca" (32-35). Cirio adds that "[p]or su parte, la mujer negra es siempre sensual y provocativa" in his corpus of compositions (35). With the partial

exception of "exclusion from white modernity," Cucurto's African characters embody each of the aforementioned stereotypes. Anachronistic exoticism governs the narrator's approach to Africa throughout the work. He confesses that "[n]unca sabremos cómo era África ... pero tenemos la esperanza que era igual a como la soñamos doscientos años después" (63). In their homeland, Africans stand out for their love of life, penchant for dancing, and obsession with sex. When the general arrives, "era imposible parar la calentura umbilical y cachenguera de los negros" (33), and San Martín himself proves incapable of educating his troops, "en su mayoría esclavos africanos," who turn out to be "una banda de cagones [cowards], egoístas, mujeriegos y borrachos de la peor calaña" (43). These soldiers later become addicted to marihuana, reject viceregal authority, and propose to open a brothel or drug ring instead of following their leader back to Buenos Aires (45). Hypersexualized descriptions of Africans appear in nearly every chapter; at one point, San Martín arrives at a party with "cien africanos y cincuenta africanas meneando las caderas al ritmo frenético de la música" (143). Perhaps the most negative component of the novel's depiction of Africans is its insistence on their disappearance. Paradoxically, given the work's efforts to connect Argentina with Africa, as well as the narrator's own identification as Afro-Argentine, certain passages imply that military conflict all but erased the African presence in the country. San Martín reflects that "esos negros eran la base del ejército, la carne de cañón que iría al frente ante el poderío guerril de la Corona de España," coldly concluding that "No quedaba otra, a cualquier sangre había que liberarse" (71). This prediction becomes a reality in the clash between Ernesto and his father, which the narrator deems "una batalla de luto total, pues murieron todos los negros libertados por San Martín" (183). Although Ernesto, born of an African mother, founds the Afro-Argentine tradition, the novel's treatment of San Martín's men reinforces the myth of the disappearance that historians have attempted to disprove and that, elsewhere in the novel, seems to have motivated Cucurto to reinvent the past.

Other aspects of the novel, nonetheless, suggest that Cucurto receive the benefit of the doubt. While Cucurto's African characters are undoubtedly hypersexualized, the same description applies to nearly all of his characters throughout his fiction and poetry, regardless of their origins. In 1810, as part of a wider attempt to subvert the myths surrounding Argentina's founding fathers, the patriots Manuel and Mariano Moreno appear as sex-crazed perverts (144), and the narrator associates similarly shocking behavior with revolutionary leader Juan José Castelli (131). Several episodes call attention to the sexual excesses of Spanish and creole women, such as the parody of "El matadero" mentioned earlier. It would seem, then, that the stereotypical portrayal of Africans in the work derives primarily from a uniform application of Cucurto's style, with which it coincides in this case, rather than from the selective application of inherited prejudice. In like fashion, the cultural stereotypes of Africans also characterize Europeans. San Martín's African soldiers provide a compendium of negative traits, but so too do the members of the Primera Junta and the general himself. Through virulent language that recalls his characterization of the rebellious Africans, the narrator describes the "españoles que estaban asentados en la ciudad" as "unos ñoquis de la peor calaña que cobraban por estar ... unos vagos de mierda en representación del Rey, unos atorrantes de cuarta, unos nenitos de mamá con bachillerato inconcluso, que no había forma de hacerlos laburar" (105). The colonial functionaries are intrinsically and inveterately lazy.

In contrast to the Africans, who refuse to serve the crown but propose at least some form of obtaining an income, these men are perpetual leeches upon the public treasury.

Cucurto's treatment of homosexuality in the novel likewise suggests that, even when the narrator uses vulgar language and attempts to shock his readers, a progressive social message underlies the coarse surface. In many parts of the work, homosexuality functions as a badge of shame. A consistent element of Cucurto's efforts to undermine the mythos of Argentina's founding fathers is to depict them in relationships with other men. As usual, San Martín is the focal point. The narrator's opening letter mentions the general's sexual encounters with "Hombres y Mujeres de Todas las Etnias" (18), and both San Martín's soldiers and the Africans, with some of whom he has relations, draw attention to his preferences. The novel's attitudes toward homosexuality become clear through the use of the epithet "puto." Having lost respect for the general, the Africans call him "San Putín," but he states "Claro que no soy puto," turning the accusation against his lover, Clodoaldo (79). At this point, the narrator embarks upon a lengthy--and, it would seem, sincere--defense of homosexuality and attack on repressive morals. He praises those who struggle against "las imposiciones de la buena conducta, la costumbre impecable, la moral humanista y el credo religioso" (80). The apology contains a nuanced portrait of the individual's conflicted emotions and a denunciation of heteronormative patriarchy: "Lucharon contra la familia, amando a la familia; lucharon contra el padre, amando al padre. El padre mujeriego que jamás aceptará un hijo puto" (80). The passage builds up into a list of multiple uses of the same term, accompanied by Cucurto's typically coarse language. At the height of this crescendo, an anecdote from the narrator erases all doubt as to his view of the question: "Apurate, negro puto', me gritó en la calle hoy un tachero, y me ruboricé. A cualquiera le hubiera resultado un insulto, a mí me resultó un honor" (81). Having resignified the term, the narrator accepts with pride the taxi driver's racist and homophobic insult. This attempt to reshape the meaning of language finds its way into the novel's plot shortly thereafter. Upon reaching Buenos Aires, the Africans repeatedly shout "pu-to," the only Spanish word they know, "en demostración de alegría y agradecimiento" (87). Although other aspects of Cucurto's prose seek to shock readers, his resignifying of homophobic language in defense of progressive ideals suggests a similar motivation behind his approach to matters of race.

The National Community Expands: Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis

Cucurto's reinterpretation of Argentine national identity continues in his 2010 collection of short stories *Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis*. All of the author's trademarks return: an emphasis on popular culture and the nightlife of working-class Buenos Aires neighborhoods, graphic descriptions of sex and violence, obscene language, and the denunciation of economic inequalities and racial prejudice. Although this volume lacks the multiple layers of narration that characterize *1810*, Cucurto's presence remains dominant at all times, as each story features a first-person narrator who often identifies himself as the author or alludes to aspects of his biography. The greatest difference between *1810* and *Hasta quitarle*... is Cucurto's focus on the national community as a whole. Whereas *1810* places Afro-Argentines at the center of Argentine history, *Hasta quitarle*... sees the African tradition as but one piece of the growing diversity of Buenos Aires.

Cucurto's outrage at contemporary injustices, expressed in 1810 through anachronisms and narratorial intrusion, reaches new heights in this work, which takes place in the present or the very recent past. Multiple stories involve the narrator's job as a stock clerk at a local branch of the French supermarket chain Carrefour, and he views the company as a symbol of exploitation and economic imperialism. The narrator's most immediate target is the local upper classes, who collaborate with foreign interests to the detriment of the general welfare. His employer, Carrefour Salguero, is located within an upscale "barrio de milicos y de embajadas" (43), on the opposite end of the spectrum from the working-class areas of Once/Constitución/Conurbano with which Cucurto so often identifies. This wealthy neighborhood is home to "[g]ente concheta, ex oligarcas y actuales progresistas ... financistas y funerarias, diseñadores de moda del jetset ... empresarios que se hicieron ricos de la noche a la mañana con las privatizaciones, la reforma laboral, la evasión fiscal" (43-44). In this reading of society, only by taking advantage of the system or serving the powerful is it possible to acquire wealth. The narrator argues that neoliberal deregulation has led to "explotación sin control ... transparente, legal, enriquecimiento ilícito" (45), in a structure designed to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. These harsh attitudes toward other segments of society cause the narrator, despite his solidarity with the poor, to derive a certain satisfaction from the country's recent impoverishment at the hands of its foreign rivals. Identifying himself with the Peronist cause, the narrator attacks the "oligarcas y gorilas"⁷¹ who "gobernaron este país siglos y siglos, hasta que los yanquis les metieron la mano en el bolsillo y salieron a chocar cacerolas, qué papelón, qué inmundicia, los cagan y ellos

⁷¹ In Argentina, since the mid-twentieth century, "gorila" denotes an enemy of Perón and, by extension, of the "pueblo." The term carries no racial connotations.

tocan cacerolas" (32). In this unforgiving assault on Argentina's ruling classes, the narrator suggests that the elite have no right to present themselves as victims of imperialism when they have long colluded with foreign powers. The historical turning point, according to this argument, was the *corralito*, which froze accounts in order to avoid a run on banks during the 2001 financial crisis. Only then did the middle and upper classes take up a patriotic defense of economic sovereignty, and the narrator ridicules the passive means of protest to which they resorted, implying, as in *1810*, that only a true revolution would have solved Argentina's problems.

This evaluation of the crisis, already marked by class tension, soon acquires a racial tone. In the wake of "el capitalismo cruel" of the 1990s, the privatization of public companies, and the dismantling of the Peronist welfare state, working-class Argentines found themselves subject to the laws of the market. This explains the presence of "tantos negritos entre las cosas más caras" (85), earning a living as cashiers and stock clerks in the supermarkets of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods. The corporate hierarchy reflects this separation between employees and the surrounding area, as the narrator's boss calls him a "[n]egro de mierda" and threatens to deny him a bonus (21). Despite the possible socioeconomic, rather than racial, use of "negro" in this passage, the narrator indicates elsewhere that race informs his attitudes toward other groups. After attacking the middleclass obsession with money, he gleefully adds that, during the crisis, "todo su dinero se quedó en los bancos para siempre, yo sonrío, sonríe mi raza" (77). This "raza," regardless of its specific referent, traces a distinction between the lighter-skinned, privileged minority and the darker-skinned masses. In this way, the narrator calls attention to the separation, after an initial period of solidarity, between the lower and middle classes in response to the 2001 crisis. The narrator's satisfaction derives from the middle class's experience of loss, with the implication that, by this time, their less-privileged neighbors had little left to lose.

The collection of stories also continues the author's project of widening the national community through the representation of marginalized and minority groups. Whereas Cucurto's *1810* invents an alternative literary canon, in which all Argentine literature proves to be Afro-Argentine, *Hasta quitarle*... calls attention to aspects of contemporary society that rarely figure in mass culture. At its most basic level, this strategy consists of mentioning or including in the plot a cast of characters from all over the world. Paraguayans, a Dominican prostitute, and even a Japanese man populate Cucurto's stories. One episode features the narrator, a projection of the author, playing the Caribbean musical genre of bachata on an expensive portable radio, attempting to pass as a Colombian in order to win the affection of a Paraguayan girl whom he meets in Constitución. The narrator's ploy not only underlines the strong presence of immigrants in this neighborhood but also suggests, contrary to stereotypes, that foreigners find other Latin Americans more attractive than Argentines.

At a deeper level, Cucurto's efforts to widen the national community subvert traditional aesthetic hierarchies. The story "El Rey de la Cumbia" depicts a version of the author in a nightclub, where he looks forward to meeting up with his Paraguayan girlfriend among the "cumbianteros del Paraguay" (11). Although cumbia is a product of African, indigenous, and Latin American styles, the narrator associates the genre, in exceedingly positive terms, with cultural mixture in general. He declares: "Aguante las mezclas, los mestizajes, los criollismos, viva el indio con el español o el tano o el turco o

el árabe o el polaco, de ahí viene la cumbia" (17). This list has its roots in the familiar. Alongside the original mixture between Spaniards and the indigenous, as well as the massive immigration of Italians (tanos) at the end of the nineteenth century, one finds Turks and Poles, recognizable parts of the national community who occasionally figure in the conventional version of Argentine identity. Even so, by means of polysyndeton in the second half of the passage, the narrator suggests that the list could go on forever and that any combination would be equally beneficial for national culture.

This project continues into several other stories, as the narrator not only reveals neglected components of national identity but also proclaims their superiority to dominant standards of beauty. In "Paraguayito de mi corazón," the narrator appears in another bar with friends, whose experiences he views as representative of a much broader community. He explains that "son setecientos, pero representan a quince millones de pobres, setecientos en cada bailanta a lo largo de setecientas bailantas, en La Matanza, Lomas del Mirador, Fiorito, Morón, Lanús y todo el Gran Buenos Aires" (27). The story's cast of characters is merely one instance of a wider phenomenon, and the narrator's list of cities reestablishes the opposition between the upper-class neighborhood where he works and the humble locations that he and others like him call home. Having established this geographical reference, the narrator invokes the language of class conflict, presenting his peers as the historical victims of exploitation: "Ellos pagan con su vida, generaciones y generaciones, el uno a uno, los cascos verdes a la guerra, las privatizaciones, el default, y todo todo" (27). Although the problems mentioned here all occurred during the last decades, the repetition of "todo" at the end indicates a longer reflection on the country's past. This frame of reference becomes clearer soon afterwards, as the narrator addresses his readers directly, declaring with pride that "[a]nte sus ojos tienen en este papelito, por única vez en la historia de las gorilas letras cultas de este país de esteticismo europeo, acá los tienen señores, mírenlos espléndidos ejemplares de Patoruzitas con trenzas y nikes y remeras de Los Redondos, sólos [sic] les faltan las boleadoras" (27-28). As frequently occurs in the author's work, a comical tone introduces a serious argument. Having dismissed the Argentine aesthetic tradition as Eurocentric and, for this reason, anti-pueblo, the narrator presents his work as a historically significant innovation: he, for the first time in national literature, has represented the mestizo/indigenous patrons of a Buenos Aires nightclub. His language pokes fun at the stereotypes that he attempts to undermine. Through repeated appeals to the audience, along with the phrase "espléndidos ejemplares," the passage depicts the nightclub patrons as circus acts or museum exhibits, as in fact occurred with the indigenous during the nineteenth century. Likewise, by mentioning "boleadoras" and referring to the group as "Patoruzitas," the narrator invokes the stereotypical image of the "indio" roaming the Argentine grasslands beyond the confines of white "civilization."⁷² Despite the character's undeniable popularity and connection with supposed Argentine values, the comic series relegates the indigenous to the past, to a national prehistory, thus denying their participation in modern-day Argentina. Cucurto subverts this tradition by focusing

⁷² Patoruzito, a young indigenous inhabitant of Patagonia, is the hero of the eponymous comic book series for Argentine children. He often appears wearing a feather headdress, riding a horse, and equipped with *bolas*. In 2010, the same year in which Cucurto published *Hasta quitarle*..., the Argentine newspaper *Perfil* released a collection of Patoruzito comics, declaring the protagonist "uno de los personajes más entrañables de la cultura popular argentina." In this same article, a publisher states that "[e]l argentino se identifica con la nobleza y la honestidad de Patoruzito." The characterization recalls nineteenth-century Indianist literature, which portrayed the indigenous as "noble savages" while excluding them from the present national community.

on the name-brand tennis shoes and rock t-shirts that his friends are wearing, as though to say that, in this respect, they are identical to every other member of the national community.⁷³

Cucurto's attack on aesthetic standards also characterizes two stories involving Germany. In "El combinado de dramaturgos," the narrator forms part of a soccer team of unathletic men in their thirties, a group of playwrights whom the government has invited to represent Argentina at the 2010 book fair in Frankfurt, an actual event for which Argentina was the theme-country and guest of honor. Argentina's decision to use figures such as Carlos Gardel, Eva Perón, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara as symbols of national identity provoked an intense debate in the local press. Cucurto refers to this controversy, although modifying the terms to fit his own purposes, when his characters meet with Julio Grondona, president of the Argentine Football Association. After giving the delegates money for their expenses abroad, Grondona orders them to place a bomb "justo debajo del atril de las celebridades truchas de este país" (150). His list of "fake celebrities," however, reflects Cucurto's views on the literary canon: "Borges, Silvina Ocampo, Manuelcito Puig, Cortázar, Mujica Lainez, Eduarda Mansilla, David Viñas" (150). In symbolic terms, Grondona is inviting the narrator's group of contemporary Argentine writers to destroy the national tradition, based on European aesthetics, that the country's leaders are attempting to publicize to a worldwide audience. The would-be terrorist soccer team is also noteworthy for its political alignment. Valuing ideology over skill, the narrator describes his squad as "todos peronistas de la Vieja Guardia de Perón" (140). Unfortunately for Grondona and the playwrights, both aspects of the plan end in

⁷³ For a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see chapter five.

failure: the team loses badly in a match against the Germans, and they are unable to place the bomb because "la seguridad alemana es cosa seria" (158). None of the writers returns to Argentina; many decide to pursue a new career as minor-league soccer players in Russia. Through this outcome, Cucurto alludes to the perception, studied in chapter three of this dissertation, that the superior soccer teams of European nations reflect the superior organization of their societies.

Cucurto's defense of the indigenous, from both a historical and a current perspective, continues in the story "Salida al mar." The plot and tone create a parody of middle- or upper-class Argentines who, upon returning from a visit to Europe or the United States, point out the differences between their homeland and "first-world" countries, just as Pron's narrator does in *El espíritu*... As usual, Cucurto's narrator identifies himself with the Greater Buenos Aires area, mentioning the city of Quilmes, but his primary loyalty here is to Stuttgart, which he considers his "segunda patria" (177). Disembarking in the international airport with a fistful of "euros nuevitos" (177) after his stay in Germany, he notices an "aire de guerra" in Argentina (178). When the taxi driver explains that "[s]e armó quilombo con el campo" (178), a reference to the 2008 standoff between the Argentine national government and rural business owners, the narrator tells the reader that "[m]e acordé entonces que estábamos gobernados por una manga de pelafustanes de la peor calaña" (178). This statement uses the same language--"pelafustanes," "de la peor calaña"--as the narrator's attacks on Spanish functionaries in 1810. Cucurto thus implies continuity between the co-opted revolution of May 1810, the failed uprising of December 2001, and the social conflict of the late 2000s. Satirizing the accounts of Argentine travelers who proclaim the superiority of Europe, the narrator

claims to have forgotten the country's problems while abroad and to have received a rude awakening upon his return: "La realidad nacional me pegó un cachetazo ... este país sudaca y tercermundista" (179). The insult "sudaca" is particularly revealing of the narrator's Europeanized mindset because it derives from an external perspective, from that of an observer outside the continent for whom "South American" is synonymous with "inferior."

Although the narrator expresses sympathy toward the demands of the indigenous, he denounces the government for taking advantage of their plight. Upon reaching the National Congress, the narrator sees a multitude of tents pitched in the square, a common means of furthering a cause in Argentina. One of these tents is distributing "papeles fotocopiados que denunciaban cómo los señores saqueaban los campos y mataban indios en el Norte de nuestro país" (180). Even before reading these documents, the narrator has felt a connection with the protest, reflecting on the "[p]obre carpita de nuestro norte empanadero, de nuestra Catamarca saadista, de nuestro Jujuy turístico y hambriento" and recalling that his father was born in the northern province of Tucumán (179). Yet anger accompanies these feelings of pity, as the narrator accuses the government of political opportunism. The tent "reclamaba los derechos para todos los indígenas del Norte argentino a quienes les habían robado las tierras, y probablemente fueron los mismos ladrones que ahora los trajeron en micro y convocaban en nombre de la democracia, la igualdad social y todas esas chantadas" (179). As in 1810, Cucurto directs his rage at both ends of the political spectrum. On the surface, of course, there is no connection between the encomenderos of the colonial period and the progressive national government of the early twenty-first century. What unites these groups, according to the narrator, is a lack of concern for indigenous rights, with the current government possibly a worse offender due to its hypocrisy. The narrator implies that the government defends the indigenous movement in order to present itself as an ally of the downtrodden and to receive electoral support, but that the situation of the poor never improves. For this reason, buzzwords such as "democracy" and "social equality" prove to be "chantadas," farces or lies.

In another similarity with 1810, the narrator's language and actions ultimately prevent the work from becoming overly sentimental or a mere political pamphlet. As part of his assault on Argentine standards of beauty, the narrator frequently depicts himself in relationships with mestizas, indigenous Argentines, foreigners from neighboring countries, or Afro-Latin women. This project reaches a high point in the story "El barrio de las siervas," in which the narrator sets forth his complaints against the local "oligarchy" and criticizes middle-class women, whom he accuses of hypocrisy: "Odio a las conchetas de clase media que estudian medicina o Administración de Empresas y les importa lo mismo un carajo todo. Católicas reprimidas por la ley del dinero" (77). The implication here, perhaps fueled in part by the narrator's attitudes toward relationships elsewhere in the volume, is that such women would take little interest in a dark-skinned member of the working classes. Likewise implicit in the passage is the belief that education and a career are status symbols for the privileged, whereas attending a university is a luxury for the masses, who must content themselves with any job in order to make ends meet. After criticizing the inhabitants of wealthy neighborhoods, the narrator turns his ire toward the mass media who focus on their lifestyle, lamenting "lo abominablemente pantagruélico de nuestra espantosa farándula porteña" and stating that Argentine celebrities are hideous "ante la belleza de estas paraguayitas, peruanitas y norteñas divinas de la calle Zenteno" (47), who rarely appear in film or on television.

This inversion of values reappears in "Salida al mar." While taking a look at the protest tents in Plaza del Congreso, the narrator sees a Wichí woman whom he had met in Chaco. This encounter dispels the narrator's middle-class ambitions and feelings of superiority from the beginning of the story, as he exclaims "ojalá me llene de hijos, me empobrezca a lo loco, por tantos críos para darles de comer; para no ser un burgués. ¡Viva la procreación indiscriminada y llena de riesgos!" (181). These final statements, which put a positive spin on middle-class stereotypes about the poor, celebrating poverty as a way to avoid a bourgeois lifestyle, introduce the ironic tone that continues throughout the passage. Using language that recalls the previous tongue-in-cheek reference to Patoruzito, the narrator imagines himself as the father of indigenous children: "Indiecitos quiero para llevarlos al colegio en fila india, uno detrás de otro, haciendo quilombo, cagándose y meándose, obligándome a robar pañales en el supermercado Eki" (181). Despite the humor in this passage, the narrator issues a serious statement of identification with his country. He embraces the "quilombo" that his hypothetical children would cause, which functions as a metonym of the wider instability of Argentina, and views himself with pride in the situation of the poor, forced to rob the same low-cost supermarket chain that the narrator of 1810 associates with protesters and police repression. Even so, as is typical in Cucurto's work, the narrator undercuts the readers' sympathy by ultimately protecting his own interests. His initial offers to help the demonstrators give way to selfishness when, as a friend distracts the security guard, he

enters a tent and steals a plasma television and other objects of value, leaving everyone else behind (186).

A series of comics featuring the author, dated 2005, closes the work and summarizes many of its primary themes. One drawing, which focuses on Cucurto's controversial position in the literary canon, begins with a close-up of the author's face as he appears to be eating books. In the second panel, he is defecating the names of famous authors: Lezama, Rulfo, Góngora, Sarduy, Arenas. There is a possible link here to Cucurto's place in the Hispanic baroque and neobaroque traditions, which critics such as Schettini and Palmeiro have pointed out. According to this reading, the author is consuming the works of his predecessors, digesting them, and producing something new, with a clear connection to the "Cannibalist" aesthetics of early twentieth-century Brazil. It is also possible, however, that the author is eating his own books and defecating onto famous literary figures in defiance of their work, an interpretation that gains strength from the vulgar construction "cagar + direct object pronoun," which refers literally to defecation but carries the figurative meanings of "to ruin," "to spoil," or "to mess up."

Other drawings reinforce the work's criticism of the dominant portrayals of Argentine identity. In the comic "¡No hay como ser blanco!", whose title reveals its satirical intent, the dark-skinned author states "¡Me cansé de ser negro!" and announces his intention to dye his hair. Through a reference to Michael Jackson, he implies that he also plans to change his skin color. This transformation has taken place in the second panel, in which the narrator appears with lighter skin and white hair. He proclaims "¡Ya está! Soy blanco y platinado. Parezco un findlandés…" The assumption here is that, having left behind his origins, the narrator will now find a clear path to success in contemporary Argentina. Nonetheless, one important obstacle remains. With his hands outward as though shrugging, the narrator adds that "¡Sólo me falta dejar de ser pobre!" This acknowledgment of poverty as a lasting condition reveals the intended meaning of "negro" in the previous panel. As the author has ceased to be "negro" but continues to be poor after his racial transformation, the label "negro" referred not to a lack of money or to perceived cultural shortcomings but rather to skin color, to the phenotypic markers of an Afro-Argentine. Through this transformation, the drawing suggests that "whitening," in both a figurative and a literal sense, retains the positive connotations that it has held throughout Argentine history.

Whereas "¡No hay como ser blanco!" satirizes racial hierarchies, the introductory comic in the series attempts to widen the national community. The narrator presents himself along with his Paraguayan girlfriend and their infant son, as well as "[e]l croata pelirrojo del locutorio y el coreano del cyber." By focusing on individuals who form a part of his daily routine, the author provides a real-life example of the diversity of contemporary Argentina. He has not gone out of his way to find these men in order to make a point; rather, he, together with all of his neighbors, sees the Croatian on a regular basis at the telephone booth agency, while the Korean works at the Internet café. By choosing such typical aspects of nearly any town or city across Argentina, the author suggests that he has offered a small sample of a common occurrence. Even so, the individuals whom he chooses to feature are also important, as immigrants from the Balkans rarely appear in discussions of national identity, while Koreans receive far less attention than do their Japanese and, in particular, Chinese counterparts.

This chapter has shown how Cucurto's fiction reinterprets Argentine identity to include marginalized groups in the national community. 1810 reimagines the past in order to portray all Argentine culture as Afro-Argentine, whereas Hasta quitarle ... centers on contemporary immigration and the diversity that it produces. Both works, however, discuss problems that affect Argentina as a whole, and Cucurto launches an unforgiving attack on the political and economic elites who, in his understanding of national history, have led the country into a series of crises by exploiting the poor and collaborating with foreign interests. Cucurto makes a number of valuable contributions to the Argentine literary tradition. His work deconstructs the Eurocentric mentality that has dominated national society; he has drawn attention to cultural practices, such as cumbia, that define twenty-first-century Argentina; and he has disproved the myth of the "disappearance" by portraying Afro-Argentines in contemporary settings. In this sense, Cucurto's work poses a test case for twenty-first-century Argentina, revealing the extent to which the country, following the upheaval of 2001, has begun to question longstanding ideas about national identity. Even so, the texts studied here also reveal the potential limitations of the author's project. His use of racial stereotypes, regardless of their satirical purpose in the work, risks perpetuating the portrayals of Afro-Argentines and the indigenous that the author seems eager to dispel.

A similar tension among history, contemporary society, and representation in the media characterizes the following chapter, which focuses on the portrayal of the indigenous in the Argentine Northwest. Whereas Afro-Argentines hold an important position in accounts of the past but have found themselves excluded in the present, the Andean provinces of the Northwest constitute an internal Other. Located on the margins of the national community, in both geographical and symbolic terms, this area provides another test case for the understanding of Argentine identity in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER V: THE AMBIGUOUS PLACE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ARGENTINE NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF SALTA PROVINCE

As the first chapter of this dissertation has shown, the dominant images connected to indigenous peoples in Argentina are the desert and the frontier. Canonical works of literature, such as Esteban Echeverría's "La cautiva" (1837) and José Hernández's Martín Fierro (1872, 1879), as well as more recent texts, such as David Viñas's Los dueños de la tierra (1958) and César Aira's *Ema, la cautiva* (1981), focus on the relations between natives and creoles as the fledgling Argentine state expanded into the west and south during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Each of these works enters into dialogue with the familiar dichotomy of European civilization and indigenous barbarism, a formula that gained particular influence through the writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. The emphasis on the "Conquest of the Desert" in both literary criticism and historiography has yielded mixed results for indigenous political struggles. While denunciations of the genocide that underlay the "consolidation of the national territory" have played an important role in campaigns for human rights and government reparations, the focus on violence has also had the unintended effect of perpetuating elite conceptions of Argentine identity. As Silvia Hirsch and Gastón Gordillo observe, the idea that military conquest had eliminated the country's indigenous peoples seemed to confirm that Argentina was now a European nation (21). For this reason, "muchos de quienes en el siglo XX lamentaron la brutalidad de las 'campañas al desierto' también participaron del dispositivo de invisibilización, al reproducir la idea de que lo indígena ya no era parte de la nación" (21). The portrayal of the indigenous as victims of statesponsored extermination could thus serve, despite commentators' best intentions, to reinforce a Eurocentric understanding of national society, making invisible the millions of Argentines descended from the original peoples of the continent.

In other regions of the country, however, debates on the role of the indigenous have featured a different, and less-studied, set of assumptions about what it means to be Argentine. In the northwestern provinces of Argentina, the early incorporation of many indigenous communities into the Spanish colonial system, together with the frequent displacement of peoples across national boundaries during the post-independence period, led to a complex interweaving of indigeneity, Argentineness, and foreignness in discussions of national identity.⁷⁴ The northwestern province of Salta offers an especially useful "test case" for understanding inclusion and exclusion in twenty-first-century Argentina. Indigenous cultures, creole and gaucho traditions, syncretic cultural forms, the influence of neighboring countries, and, most recently, African immigration have combined to produce a diverse society that would seem to trouble the dominant conceptions of Argentine identity. At the same time, Salta holds an important place in national and international tourism circuits, due primarily to the province's geographical variety and to its archaeological significance. For this reason, the interpretation of Salta, whether as an especially "colorful" piece of the national mosaic or as a bearer of the "authentic" national character, exerts considerable influence on domestic and global understandings of Argentine identity.

⁷⁴ I use the term "Northwest" to designate the Argentine provinces of Catamarca, Jujuy, Salta, Santiago del Estero, and Tucumán. Although some texts, such as the tourism manuals that I will analyze later in this chapter, use the term "North" to mark this same group of provinces, I prefer "Northwest" because it provides non-Argentine readers with a clearer understanding of the country's geography. One might also argue that "North" is a misleading label in any event, as it leaves out the provinces of Chaco, Formosa, and Misiones, located at a similar latitude.

This chapter uses Salta Province to examine the ambiguous position of the indigenous peoples of the Northwest in contemporary Argentina. Through an analysis of tourism materials and a literary anthology sponsored by the provincial government, I argue that both continuity and change characterize the representation of the indigenous in Salta. On one hand, the tourism materials that I study perpetuate the elite view of national identity, established during the origins of Argentine historiography in the nineteenth century, according to which national history began with the 1810 revolution, relegating the indigenous to "pre-history" and considering them museum exhibits rather than members of modern civilization. This perspective also appears through an emphasis within Salta on gaucho culture, colonial architecture, and the province's role in the war for Argentine independence from Spain. Nonetheless, the materials that I study also draw attention to the reimagining, reinterpretation, and flexibility of indigenous identity, in harmony with movements by indigenous organizations in recent decades for political recognition. I find a similar tension within the literary anthology that I study. Whereas certain texts from previous generations make use of "local color," this approach to provincial life is all but absent in selections from the latest generation of writers. I argue that, by de-essentializing its portrayal of local literary production, the anthology espouses the broad understanding of Argentine literature made famous by Jorge Luis Borges's 1932 essay "El escritor argentino y la tradición."

This chapter has three parts. First, in order to establish a context for my discussion of contemporary texts, I discuss the historical role of the indigenous in national identity in general, along with the history of the Northwest in particular. This section also contains information on indigenous movements and observations from scholars on racism and discrimination in twenty-first-century Argentina. Second, I discuss the representation of indigenous communities in four tourism books published during the last decade by various government organizations. This section offers, in large part, a textual and visual analysis based on the historical background from the previous section. Finally, I analyze the 2007 *Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña*, a literary anthology sponsored by the provincial Secretariat of Culture, in order to show what kind of cultural identity the selection of works portrays.

The Northwest, the Indigenous in Argentine National Identity, and the Place of Salta

Human presence in the Argentine Northwest dates back to between 11,000 and 9,000 years ago (Mandrini 48). By around 1200, the population in the Puna region had grown considerably, as the domestication of camelids and large-scale agriculture had permitted the emergence of complex societies, with settlements holding hundreds or even thousands of individuals (135). Intense contact and cultural exchange occurred among the inhabitants of different regions. The inhabitants of the arid, mountainous Puna, for example, had long traded through a caravan system with the population of the temperate Lerma Valley, the present location of Salta City (139). On a larger scale, the Puna was linked to the *altiplano* of southern present-day Bolivia, as well as to parts of what is now Chile (144). A variety of groups lived in what is today the Argentine northwest, such as the Atacamas, Diaguitas, Juríes, Lules, Omaguacas, and the Chiriguanos or Ava, who were related to the Tupí-Guaraní of the eastern portion of South America (167). According to anthropologist Carlos Martínez Sarasola, the warlike Diaguita culture of the

valleys and gulches region "fue la que alcanzó la mayor complejidad en todos los aspectos, a tal punto que redundó inclusive en una importantísima densidad de población" (79).

Although the Tiwanaku culture of the *altiplano* had left its mark on the region during the previous centuries, the most important external influence in pre-conquest times came from the Incas, who arrived in the final decades of the fifteenth century under the rule of Tupac Yupanqui, son of Pachacutec (Mandrini 155; Martínez Sarasola 81). Inca domination gave the Northwest a certain degree of cultural uniformity, primarily through the spread of Quechua as a *lingua franca*, the expansion of the road network, intensified urbanization, advanced metallurgy, the imposition of religious practices, and record-keeping through the *quipu* (Mandrini 164). Nonetheless, local differences persisted, and the various dialects of the most prominent language, known as *cacán* or *diaguita*, would survive for at least another two and a half centuries (156). Other languages included *kunza*, spoken by the Atacamas, and possibly *aymara*, introduced by way of the highlands (156).

The Spanish reached the Northwest in 1535, as Diego de Almagro, one of the conquerors of the Inca empire, passed into the eastern section of the Puna (190). As elsewhere in the Americas, Spanish efforts at colonization depended on the foundation of a series of forts and urban centers. Over the second half of the sixteenth century, Spaniards established cities that continue to exist today as provincial capitals, such as San Miguel de Tucumán (1565), Córdoba (1573), Salta (1583), La Rioja (1591), and San Salvador de Jujuy (1593) (191-93). The Spanish attempted to subject indigenous peoples to the encomienda system, which entailed forced religious conversion, tribute obligations,

and personal service. Indigenous resistance was fierce and sustained. Raúl Mandrini has argued that "La resistencia indígena en la región valliserrana del actual noroeste argentino fue, sin duda, la que más preocupó a los invasores, pues ponía en peligro un área clave para sus proyectos de expansión" (200). Of the various groups who defied Spanish encroachment, the Diaguitas and Omaguacas "produjeron la máxima oposición a la Conquista, no solo en el sentido defensivo sino también en el ofensivo" (Martínez Sarasola 151). Powerful leaders such as Viltipoco and Juan Calchaquí led attacks on Spanish positions, which resulted in the destruction or evacuation of multiple settlements (151; Mandrini 202-03). The foundation of Salta is particularly illustrative of this process. Between the years of 1574 and 1580, Gonzalo de Abreu attempted at least three times to found a city in the Lerma Valley, failing on each occasion as a result of indigenous resistance (Martínez Sarasola 151).

By the mid-seventeenth century, the Spanish had finally solidified their grasp on the region, subduing its inhabitants and connecting the local economy to the silver mines of Potosí, of fundamental importance to the colonial project. Even so, the frontier of the Chaco would remain unstable for centuries to come, and the northwestern provinces served as a base for unsuccessful Spanish attacks on the region in the early eighteenth century (206-07; Mandrini 242-45). Throughout the colonial period, the Northwest was the site of contact, conflict, and demographic and cultural mixture: "Fusiones, enfrentamientos, expoliaciones y adaptaciones configuran un cuadro en donde las zonas grises todavía son la regla. No hay límites precisos que separen absolutamente una realidad de la otra" (Martínez Sarasola 175). The Northwest in general and Salta in particular were notable for their degree of *mestizaje* (174). In the decades prior to the revolution, a rich aristocracy held power over *mestizo* masses (Halperín Donghi 27), while the expansion of the sugar industry in the region created a demand for cheap indigenous labor in the yet-unconquered territories (Mandrini 242-45).

When the creole elites of Buenos Aires rebelled against Spanish rule in May 1810, the northwestern portion of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata acquired even greater significance. Separated from the mining economy of Potosí, which had remained under the control of royalists, the Northwest suffered stagnation and population decline (Lynch, *Revolutions* 66). The revolutionary struggle, therefore, met with mixed reactions in northwestern cities, and the division of opinions was particularly acute in Salta, where the real possibility of a return to royalist control gave royalist tendencies more strength than elsewhere (Halperín Donghi 307). In 1810, creole forces defeated the royalists in Córdoba, asserted their control over Salta and Tucumán in the Northwest, and moved toward Upper Peru (Lynch, Revolutions 121), but the occupation ended in failure the following year with the military disaster at Huaquí (Halperín Donghi 281). The royalists, pressing their advantage, invaded the Northwest, where creole resistance at the 1813 Battle of Salta halted the advance and saved the revolution. As further creole incursions into Peru met with failure, Salta took on a central position in the defensive war that ensued. Martín Güemes, a *caudillo* from the Salta upper class, gained undisputed control over the city in exchange for keeping the royalists at bay (Halperín Donghi 308-11). The strength of Güemes's military and political system lay in the *mestizo* masses who made up his troops, and the "gauchos de Güemes" both acquired contemporary fame and left a significant mark upon provincial identity in the centuries that followed.

Indigenous policy played a crucial role throughout the war. The 1810 revolution had declared the indigenous and creoles equal before the law, indigenous tribute was outlawed the following year, and the General Assembly abolished the encomienda and all other forms of personal service in 1813 (Lynch, Revolutions 84). Equally symptomatic of this new attitude were the creole leader Juan José Castelli's call for the designation of indigenous government representatives and his homage to the Incas in Tiawanaco (Martínez Sarasola 223). Although partially motivated by Enlightenment ideals, such proindigenous measures had the primary goal of weakening royalist control over both Perus, and revolutionary leaders implemented much more cautious reforms within cities such as Salta, so as not to alienate powerful sources of military and economic support (Halperín Donghi 285-87). These reforms, moreover, affected only the indigenous cultures that had already been subjected to colonial rule, as the indigenous groups who continued to resist on the frontiers of the Viceroyalty received no such promises of liberty and equality (Martínez Sarasola 227). Even within the limits of the colonial system, early championing of the indigenous past brought few benefits to the indigenous of the present. As Tulio Halperín Donghi explains, "aunque la identificación con los indígenas herederos del pasado prehispánico se transforma en un lugar común de la retórica revolucionaria, las viejas actitudes basadas en el sentimiento de superioridad de casta sobreviven" (285). Creole revolutionaries may have contemplated placing a descendant of the Incas onto the throne of the newly independent provinces (Earle 43), but, in practice, exploitation of the indigenous continued.

During the century that followed independence, creole elites increasingly excluded indigenous peoples from the national imagined community. The liberal

249

Generation of 1837, famous for its opposition to the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas, depicted 1810 as the origin of the nation (86). Emphasizing the role of both Spanish conquistadors and creole independence heroes in the forging of Argentine national identity, these thinkers saw the May Revolution as a break with the past, denying continuity with any indigenous political units (89). This was the understanding of the national character that would come to dominate official Argentine historiography. Statesmen such as Bartolomé Mitre, Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento articulated a negative view of preconquest societies, often considering them intrinsically barbaric (113, 168). Ideas of racial superiority acquired additional support during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as scientific racism claimed to provide an explanation for the supposed inferiority of the indigenous and a justification for their expulsion or elimination. Scientific racism held particular influence in Argentina, where leaders "condemned racial and cultural intermixture as threats to the unity of an Argentine nationality" (Stepan 106). According to Martínez Sarasola, "La oligarquía naciente, dueña del poder de la Nación, hace suya la idea del progreso, del orden y de la superioridad de unos hombres sobre otros. Los unos son ellos, los otros son los indígenas" (383). This intellectual climate produced the "Conquest of the Desert," a series of military actions against the indigenous peoples to the south and west of Buenos Aires. These campaigns, which ended in 1884, not only extended the central government's control over Patagonia but also transferred enormous tracts of indigenous land to a small amount of creole property owners, a scheme driven by the newly created Sociedad Rural Argentina (404). National troops then turned their attention to the northern Chaco region, where formal occupation took root in 1911 (Mandrini 268).

Political leaders understood these expeditions as a "consolidation" of the Argentine territory and as a confirmation of the national destiny, celebrating the recent conquest of the interior frontiers as part of the first centennial in 1910 (268-69).

During the same period of time, the struggle for land also characterized indigenous life in the Northwest. The nascent provincial governments attempted to expropriate the indigenous land that had remained in an uncertain legal status inherited from the colonial period (Martínez Sarasola 441). Multiple indigenous uprisings occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, some of which seized control of northwestern cities and obtained support from indigenous groups in Bolivia (442-43). Similar conflicts took place in the eastern portion of Salta Province, in the so-called Chaco salteño, where the Toba and Pilagá resisted well into the twentieth century (465). Whereas military occupation in Patagonia had entailed the expulsion or annihilation of the indigenous and the assigning of their land to European immigrants, occupation in the Northwest attempted to harness indigenous labor for work on farms, in particular for the sugar industry (Mandrini 270-71). Although this system of exploitation often led to the destruction of indigenous communities (Belvedere et al. 38-39), "esta integración a economías más amplias estuvo entrelazada a la acción de agencias estatales, que comenzaron a delinear los primeros rudimentos de las políticas indigenistas en el país" (Gordillo and Hirsch 21). Nonetheless, government policies were haphazard over the following decades, and the state treated the indigenous more as "vencidos, prisioneros o colonos" than as fully-fledged citizens of the nation (Belvedere et al. 39).

The fall of the conservative order and the rise of Juan Domingo Perón brought noteworthy changes to state indigenous policies. The first Peronist governments

251

increased the social and political rights of indigenous groups, many of whose members received national identity documents, a confirmation of citizenship that allowed them to vote for the first time (Gordillo and Hirsch 23-24). Whereas previous policies concerning the indigenous had focused, in accordance with scientific racism, on problems of hygiene, Perón's government acted in search of political centralization (Lenton 89-90). The 1949 "Constitución Justicialista" was the first national constitution to denounce racial discrimination, and Perón criticized previous laws for having set up race and class distinctions among citizens (89). Perón's policies had a lasting effect on conceptions of Argentine identity. Gordillo and Hirsch argue that, "Al nivel de los imaginarios nacionales, el legado más importante del peronismo fue sin duda el expandir la visión pública sobre el contenido de la nación argentina" (24). This reimagining of national identity occurred primarily through migrants of the interior provinces to the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, whom the urban elites despectively called "cabecitas negras." If one accepts Martínez Sarasola's characterization of the migrants as "portadores de la primera gran mestización, de la primera matriz en la conformación del pueblo argentino, herederos directos de los indígenas" (528), the role of the indigenous in the Peronist transformation of Argentine society becomes even more significant.

There were important limitations, nonetheless, to Peronist indigenous policies. Although Perón took a positive view of Argentina's pre-Hispanic past and made gestures toward pan-American indigenous heritage, Peronism sought to include indigenous Argentines within a broader movement for social justice, rejecting what would today be known as "identity politics" as a threat to a unified nation (Lenton 85-92, 101). The ambivalence of Peronism toward the indigenous appears most clearly in the 1946 "Malón

252

de la Paz." Angered by unequal land distribution and harsh labor conditions, indigenous groups of Salta and Jujuy made the long march to Buenos Aires to demand that their community lands, which had been privatized, be returned to them (93-94). The Peronist authorities welcomed the groups in the national capital, but initial conversations led nowhere. Shortly afterward, in a confusing episode, members of the police and coast guard evicted the indigenous from their hotel and sent them back home by train. The government alleged that a misunderstanding had occurred, yet coordination between national and provincial police forces, instructed to prevent the indigenous groups from fleeing the train into cities along the rail line, reveals the high level of organization behind the operation (98). Despite its failure to improve the situation of the indigenous, the Malón de la Paz increased the visibility of indigenous struggles, has been connected to subsequent movements for land restoration, and even functions as an "origin myth" for some of today's indigenous activists (104).

Starting with the military coup d'état of 1955, which one author has considered a "golpe a las políticas para los indígenas" (Martínez Sarasola 590), a series of authoritarian regimes took steps to reverse the limited progress that the indigenous had obtained under Peronism. Perón's Dirección de Protección del Aborigen gave way to a chaotic sequence of bureaucratic entities, such as the Dirección Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas (1958-1967), the Servicio Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas (1958-1967), the Servicio Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas (1968), and the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas (1969) (Gordillo and Hirsch 25). The policies that these organizations put into effect often served as unilateral, top-down, and ad-hoc attempts to deal with urgent issues without addressing their underlying structural causes (Martínez Sarasola 669-70). At the same time, government agencies tended to follow a

segregationist mindset, based on the supposed inferiority of the indigenous peoples, that produced division within the national community (670). For the military regimes between 1966 and 1973, for which "national security" was the principal concern, indigenous communities constituted something of a "necessary evil." Disrespected by the government in theory, these groups were crucial to national interests because they lived in border regions and thus asserted Argentine control over the territory (611-12). Opposition to the military regimes called attention to the country's exclusion of the indigenous. As a portion of Argentine society became increasingly radicalized, leftist parties, Peronist groups, and guerrilla organizations made public demands for "la causa indígena," while indigenous activists and students within Buenos Aires took part in contestatory politics (Gordillo and Hirsch 27). The state repressed these movements in 1975, and the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional of the following year imposed an even harsher view of indigenous culture. The most recent military dictatorship "representó un intento por parte del Estado de reconstituir la vieja visión hegemónica sobre la barbarie indígena" (27). In 1979, the Junta commemorated the centennial of the incursions into the Pampas and Patagonia, celebrating the victory of "civilization" over the indigenous "malón" (27). These actions were consistent with the military leaders' conservatism and generalized glorification of Argentina's Hispanic roots.

The return to democracy in 1983 opened up spaces for political participation by indigenous groups, in what Gordillo and Hirsch have called "el comienzo de lo que ha sido el período de mayor movilización indígena en la historia argentina" (28). As a result of such activism, several provinces, including Formosa (1984), Salta (1986), Chaco (1987), and Misiones (1987), passed laws on indigenous rights, while a 1989 national law

recognized the need to grant land titles to indigenous communities (28). In 1992, protests against the five-hundredth-anniversary celebration of the "discovery of America" brought public attention to indigenous affairs, and this political climate helped to shape the constitutional reform effort of 1994. Whereas the original national constitution had tasked Congress with "promoting pacific relations with the Indians and their conversion to Catholicism," the new document contained duties such as "Reconocer la preexistencia étnica y cultural de los pueblos indígenas argentinos," "Garantizar el respeto a su identidad y el derecho a una educación bilingüe e intercultural," and "Asegurar su participación en la gestión referida a sus recursos naturales y a los demás intereses que los afecten" (29). The 2001 national census included, for the first time, the possibility for citizens to self-identify as indigenous, and a complementary census in 2004-2005 provided additional data (19).⁷⁵

Conceptions of identity have played a central role in recent indigenous political movements. To a certain extent, there has been a sense that the return of democracy in 1983 and the rise of identity politics in the 1990s led to a "recovery" of history and a "rediscovery" of indigenous origins (Karasik 268). A significant part of contemporary activism has involved "la emergencia de colectivos que habían supuestamente desaparecido" (Gordillo and Hirsch 30-31), as though, upon the removal of centuries of

⁷⁵ Scholars have taken different views on the validity of the census. Gordillo and Hirsch, while recognizing the general methodological difficulties and mentioning alternative findings, cite the official figure of approximately 1.5% of the total population as indigenous (19). Belvedere et al., in contrast, argue that "el intento presentó fallos que comprometen la fiabilidad de los resultados--tal como las organizaciones indígenas ya predijeron" (39). In any event, the recent census marks an important symbolic step forward with respect to that of the 1960s, which, both severely flawed and never completed, yielded a vast underestimate of Argentina's indigenous population (39; Martínez Sarasola 604-11).

institutional prejudice, historically repressed forms of identification had finally risen to the surface. Yet multiple scholars have called into question such an essentialized understanding of identity. Raúl Mandrini has criticized the romantic tendency to see current manifestations of indigenous identity as a resurgence of ancient communities that had remained hidden, and he emphasizes instead the complexity of the process and the variety of paths that the indigenous have taken (272). In a similar vein, Gordillo and Hirsch argue that "las luchas y demandas aborígenes que han surgido con particular fuerza en las últimas décadas no han sido intentos por levantar un velo hegemónico que cubría una realidad separada de él" but rather have constituted "un diálogo crítico con las narrativas dominantes que moldearon a estos actores como sujetos sociales" (17). Indigenous identities have proved to be dynamic, exposing the fluidity of categories once thought to be rigid (18). Since the 1990s, for example, a strong identification with the Incas has given way to connections with pre-Incan communities (Karasik 269), and groups have claimed affiliation with cultures, such as the Atacamas and Omaguacas, formerly considered "extinct" (Gordillo and Hirsch 18). Opponents of indigenous mobilizations have attacked this process of identification, dismissing protesters as "indios truchos" (fake Indians). Indigenous leaders, however, have defended their choices by rejecting the idea that "sólo quienes hablan un idioma propio, viven en zonas rurales o son racialmente 'puros' pueden ser considerados como 'indígenas'" (31).

Despite the notable political achievements of indigenous groups over the past decades, the dominant conception of Argentine identity has persisted in many fora. Belvedere et al. have argued that school discourse in Argentina has its roots in the National Organization period of the late nineteenth century, through figures such as Mitre, Sarmiento, and Roca. Within this understanding of national history, the indigenous are "primitivos habitantes del territorio nacional,' configurando sociedades sin profundidad histórica e internamente indiferenciadas" (47). Accounts of the struggle for independence likewise either exclude the indigenous or include them as occasional secondary actors, a practice that tends to reinforce the idea that European-descended creoles were the protagonists of national history (47). In an analysis of Argentine textbooks, Belvedere et al. have found the "estereotipos presentes en el discurso hegemónico," in which "La naturalización de las diferencias, la despolitización y reduccionismo de la cultura y la atribución de identidades estáticas a los pueblos 'sin historia' se unen al evolucionismo más simplista" (47). Argentine textbooks tend to locate indigenous peoples in the past, associated with mythological conceptions of history, and to treat present indigenous communities as "survivors" of "lost" cultures (48). These beliefs have shaped the conduct of government officials. In his study of indigenous Argentina, Mandrini tells the story of a government official, supposedly an expert in cultural patrimony, who recently traced the history of Patagonia to the arrival of the first Welsh colonists (11). Belvedere et al. detect a similar phenomenon in their analysis of a 2002 parliamentary debate, in which politicians expressed a paternalistic view of indigenous peoples, based on the assumption that indigenous leaders were incapable of collaborating in government projects or of managing their own affairs (50-55). These attitudes also underlie the treatment of the indigenous in official national culture. Indigenous intellectuals and activists have denounced the "tratamiento ahistorizado, descontextualizado socialmente y despolitizado de los procesos y formas culturales indígenas, que sólo son abordados en tanto diferentes y subordinados a la

cultura oficial nacional" (Karasik 275). Inclusion, therefore, occurs only under terms dictated by the government, in such a way as to omit contemporary political struggles.

Questions of history, identity, and participation in the national community have held particular relevance in the Northwest. Although a long process of mestizaje has occurred in the region since the end of indigenous resistance to Spanish or Argentine control, significant identification with indigenous culture has taken place over the last decades, often in connection with immigration from neighboring countries. In Salta and Jujuy, for example, individuals who self-identity as "Guaraní" or "Ava-Guaraní" possess strong ties to Bolivia. Near the turn of the twentieth century, as their lands came under pressure from privatization initiatives, residents of the Bolivian Andes migrated en masse to Argentine territory, attracted by the demand for labor in the northwestern sugar industry (Gordillo 212). A similar phenomenon lay behind the emergence of another ethnic group, the Collas.⁷⁶ Scholars, government officials, and indigenous leaders have offered diverse definitions of Colla identity. Although all sources view the Collas as a synthesis of several groups, the cultures involved in this mixture vary with each observer. Guillermo Magrassi, for instance, defined the Collas as descendants of the Diaguitas, Calchaquíes, and numerous other cultures, while a 1973 national report used geographical criteria, describing as Collas the indigenous population of Catamarca, Salta, and Jujuy (Martínez Sarasola 495). Most recently, Martínez Sarasola has stated that "collas es la denominación genérica con que comienzan a conocerse a las comunidades herederas de la forma de vida original de nuestro Noroeste, portadoras a su vez de la

⁷⁶ I use this spelling, which is more common in contemporary Argentina, throughout the chapter. Some sources prefer "kollas" or "coyas." The term originates from Qullasuyu or Collasuyu, the "southern region" of the Inca empire, which spanned parts of present-day Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina.

tradición andina que los tardíos inmigrantes quechuas y aymaras enriquecieron" (496). However, as this author concedes, immigration from Bolivia has complicated strict identification between contemporary groups and original "Argentine" peoples (496). The 2001 national census revealed that the Collas were the second-largest indigenous group in the country and that Jujuy was the province with the largest percentage of indigenous households, with up to 75% in parts of the Puna region (Karasik 265). Within Jujuy, the label Colla "se ha usado durante mucho tiempo como gentilicio para indicar nacionalidad boliviana a secas, o como calificador cultural para marcar semejanza con los indios del altiplano de Bolivia, conservando en la actualidad su potencialidad insultante" (267).

Through their political activism and self-identificatory practices, both the Guaraní and the Collas have problematized traditional links between indigeneity and Argentineness. The Guaraní of the Northwest located their demands for land restitution within both the Argentine indigenous movements of the 1990s and the Bolivian Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (Gordillo 213). These individuals understood their local situation as part of a wider struggle, and "El lenguaje de la indigeneidad ... le proporcionó a la gente una narrativa que resonaba con su propia experiencia y que se transformó en una fuente de nuevas identidades" (213). These new identities evaded easy classification into national or ethnic categories. Protesters combined indigenous symbols with national symbols, such as the Argentine flag, but also displayed Bolivian flags and sang the Argentine national anthem in Guaraní, rather than in Spanish (227-28). Government officials responded unfavorably to this redefinition of the national imagined community. In Vinalito, provincial authorities delayed taking action on the indigenous groups' assertion of their territorial rights, questioning whether they were "indígenas argentinos" (221). Law enforcement in Salta Province went even further in 2003, when the police arrested indigenous protesters for occupying privatized land. Although the group had used markers of Argentine identity in its demonstration, agents accused them of being "bolivianos indocumentados," while the sugar industry representatives stated "Qué vienen a pedir esos inmigrantes. Que vayan a pedir tierras a Bolivia" (207). Exclusion from the national community served as a strategy to deny the legitimacy of indigenous groups' claims, despite their legal membership in the Argentine nation and their recourse to national and provincial laws that favored their petitions. During their dialogue with government officials, indigenous leaders have criticized the hypocrisy of a nation that presents itself as a community of immigrants. In response to Governor Fellner, who had characterized protesters as foreigners, the indigenous pointed out that "Fellner" was not an "Argentine" last name and that the true immigrants were the Europeans (228). This type of remark reveals the contradictions in the dominant understanding of Argentine national identity, which differentiates between "good" and "bad" immigrants. At the same time, the indigenous leaders define indigeneity in transnational and diasporic terms, thinking beyond the categories of "indígena argentino" or "indígena boliviano" (228).

The Collas of the Northwest have similarly undermined traditional notions of ethnic identity and national belonging. Like the Guaraní, the Collas have a long legacy of political activism. The participants of the 1946 "Malón de la Paz" were Collas, and Colla groups from San Andrés in Salta mobilized for land rights during the 1990s, extending their demonstrations to Buenos Aires (Gordillo and Hirsch 30). Frequently, however, Colla culture has occupied an ambiguous place in the national imaginary. In a semiotic

analysis of clothing, Gabriela Alejandra Karasik explains how certain forms of dress have marked inclusion or exclusion in local communities since the time of Inca occupation. Recent indigenous political movements have begun to change the perception of traditional clothing, previously excluded from provincial society because of its association with Colla and Bolivian heritage (259). At the same time, indigenous leaders have attacked the "asociación lineal de vestimenta e identidad" and have pointed out that those who self-identify as Collas dress in a variety of ways (274). Even so, clothing continues to mark the division between "formas culturales campesinas y no campesinas así como 'argentinas' y 'no argentinas'" (271). Conscious of the stigma against indigenous clothing, such as ponchos, shawls, and sandals, some residents of the Puna and Quebrada de Humahuaca regions dress differently when traveling to urban areas (264). The lines are far from clear, however, and even individual speakers hold varying opinions on the definition of local culture. It is possible both to value Bolivian folklore, food, and indigenous politics and to use "boliviano" as an insult or to complain about the access of foreigners to the Argentine public health system (279).⁷⁷ Depending on the context, therefore, a display of Colla identity may appear synonymous with Bolivian identity and thus offer justification for exclusion from the Argentine national community.

National and Provincial Government Tourism Publications: Continuity and Change in the Portrayal of the Indigenous

The ambiguous place of the indigenous in conceptions of Argentine identity is particularly clear in the tourism industry, in which the Northwest, primarily Salta, plays a

⁷⁷ For example, in Lucrecia Martel's celebrated 2001 film *La ciénaga*, which takes place in Salta, light-skinned Argentines insult their darker-skinned compatriots as "Collas."

crucial role. There are two main reasons why the national and provincial governments have presented Salta as an attractive destination for both Argentine and international tourists. On one hand, the province contains a wide array of landscapes, such as deserts, snow-capped mountains, salt flats, temperate plains, and sub-tropical jungles, along with a high degree of biodiversity. These natural features make Salta a logical site for ecotourism and, in recent decades, for extreme sports such as ziplining or mountain climbing. On the other hand, a mixture of cultures lends the province historical and anthropological interest. The presence of complex, sedentary civilizations in this region prior to Spanish conquest resulted in significant archaeological discoveries over the last century. Remnants of Inca dominion have further strengthened the appeal of the past, allowing the Northwest to depict itself as part of one of the "great precolumbian empires," with which the general international public is likely to be familiar. The discovery of mummified children, victims of a ritual Inca sacrifice, on Mt. Llullaillaco brought Salta worldwide attention, as the expedition featured a multinational team and received coverage on the National Geographic Channel.⁷⁸ Along similar lines, through reference to present-day indigenous cultural practices, the Northwest presents itself as an exception from the purportedly creole and European Argentine national identity. This strategy has proved especially effective among Argentine tourists, in particular those of

⁷⁸ Discovered in 1999, the bodies had been preserved by the low temperatures near the mountain's peak. The Museo de Arqueología de Alta Montaña (MAAM) in Salta City displays, one at a time, the Inca mummies as part of its exhibits. A loading screen on the institution's multilingual website (http://www.maam.gob.ar/) calls the discovery "el descubrimiento arquelógico más importante de la última década." Alongside popular science, popular literature has also drawn attention to the Inca children. María Belén Alemán's 2009 novel *Hasta volvernos a encontrar* imagines the story of the "Doncella," the eldest of the victims, and can be found, as of 2015, for sale in touristic venues across Salta Province.

the Buenos Aires metropolitan region, who see in the Northwest an opportunity to explore the nation's Andean "heartland" and to abandon the pressures of urban life for a supposedly picturesque and slow-paced rural idyll, in which crime is rare and the simple-hearted townspeople welcome visitors with open arms. Simultaneously, Salta's *mestizo* heritage allows the tourism industry to portray indigenous culture alongside that of the gauchos. Whereas the original peoples represent the nation's "pre-history," an emphasis on colonial-era architecture and clothing recalls Salta's contributions to the war for independence and, therefore, to the birth of the Argentine nation. Unique yet representative, peripheral yet central, Salta offers a fertile case study of institutional representations of indigenous cultures in twenty-first-century Argentina.

In order to determine how government-sponsored tourism has tended to portray the indigenous in recent years, I conducted an analysis of four tourism manuals published over the last decade. The involvement of federal organizations in creating and distributing these books reveals the economic and political importance of the Northwestern region. Two of the manuals--*Catálogo de distinguidos por regiones: Norte* (2012) and *Red argentina de turismo rural comunitario* (2012)--were published by the National Ministry of Tourism, while another--*Tilcara, Purmamarca: Destinos distinguidos* (2009)--was published by the National Secretariat of Tourism. The fourth book--*Salta, tan linda que enamora* (no date)--is an initiative by the provincial government and offers a glimpse into how local authorities are presenting their culture within the national tourism network.⁷⁹ I have included touristic publications on Jujuy,

⁷⁹ The book, though a polished product, contains no information on its date of publication, and the government officials with whom I met while performing research in Salta were unable to clarify the matter. Nonetheless, the book's introductory message

where the demographic and cultural presence of indigenous peoples is stronger, in order to determine to what extent representations of the indigenous in Salta correspond to a wider pattern.

In all four books, what would seem to be the basic features of the tourism genre often serve more than a mere promotional function. It would surprise no one, for example, that each manual contains a series of colorful photos, but these images also help to depict indigenous cultures as a function of the landscape. The Northwest appears as "un paisaje pleno de contrastes, desde las altas cumbres hasta la llanura, con salares y selvas subtropicales, en el que echó sus raíces la cultura latinoamericana" (Norte 13).⁸⁰ This conception extends into the present through descriptions such as "una armónica combinación de naturaleza, historia y culturas vivas, fuertemente arraigadas a la tierra" (13). A similar interpretation characterizes the province of Jujuy, where the Quebrada de Humahuaca, which UNESCO has named as a Paisaje Cultural de la Humanidad, "ofrece una interrelación única entre sus impactantes paisajes de altura y la cultura milenaria pero al mismo tiempo actual de su gente" (Destinos 7). In the volume dedicated to Jujuy, a picturesque description of the landscape, architecture, and festivals concludes with the statement that "los imponentes atractivos naturales se funden con la mística de su gente y su cultura" (13). Agriculture forms an important part of these connections between the indigenous and the land. In the Comunidad Kolla Tumbaya, for example, "se resguardan cultivos andinos ancestrales," "opciones culturales ... que están fundadas en su relación milenaria con la naturaleza" (Red 41). Tourists receive the opportunity to experience

from governor Juan Manuel Urtubey, whose first term began in 2007, provides a *terminus post quem* that will suffice for the purposes of this chapter.

⁸⁰ As citing by government organization would prove cumbersome, I use a shortened form of each work's title.

local cuisine, which includes "el maíz, insumo ancestral del período incaico y primer cultivo de la región" (*Destinos* 72). Descriptions of Salta follow a similar logic. A portrayal of the Comunidad Santa Rosa del Tastil suggests a deterministic view of culture: "En la Quebrada del Toro, el silencio hace una pausa para dar paso a la copla," (*Red* 49), as though the stillness of the landscape had given rise to this particular musical and poetic form. The provincial government echoes these ideas in its own publication, stating that "El espíritu de su gente se equipara con la belleza e inmensidad de sus paisajes" (*Salta* 5).

The local "spirit" acquires metaphysical significance in sections dedicated to "turismo religioso." In one example, photographs of religious celebrations accompany the explanation that "Los santuarios de altura, los sitios sagrados y sus increíbles paisajes hacen de Salta un lugar único para el encuentro con la espiritualidad andina" (16). These connections reappear in an even more emphatic form at the end of the book, where the trip package "El Espíritu de Los Andes" assures potential tourists that "La Puna, con sus sitios sagrados, su energía y sus mágicos paisajes, convertirá tu viaje en una experiencia única donde podrás conectarte con la mística espiritualidad andina" (82). The underlying assumption for these descriptions is that, as a result of the influence of the landscape, the Andean mindset differs from that of the rest of the nation. By visiting the Northwest, travelers can immerse themselves in a "mysticism" and "spirituality" found nowhere else in the world. The clearest example of the division between locals and outsiders appears in regard to the Pachamama, or "Mother Earth," celebrations that are common in the Puna region. In one manual, a note reading "Importante," with both a preceding asterisk and bold text, clarifies that "la pachamama no es un espectáculo" and that "para participar de ella hay que ser muy respetuoso" (*Destinos* 85). As no such explanations accompany the sections on Christian or syncretic festivals, it would seem that the book takes for granted a cultural difference--and potential lack of comprehension--between the locals and the intended readers, likely Argentine tourists or Spanish-speaking foreigners.

As part of this deterministic understanding of cultures, the tourism books often suggest that today's indigenous peoples are the bearers or the guardians of knowledge and beliefs that have remained "intact" or "pure" since the preconquest era. The Quebrada de Humahuaca contains landscapes in which "el pasado se conserva casi intacto y el arte precolombino está presente en toda su extensión" (Norte 20-22), the home of "ancestrales creencias" and "arte milenario" (Destinos 13). Local cuisine contains "sabores con esencia milenaria," "[p]latos y comidas que forman parte de la cultura de los pueblos originarios y que se han transmitido de generación en generación" (71). In an explanation of the UNESCO designation, one reads that "[1]a región Norte de Argentina es refugio de tradiciones, costumbres ancestrales, celebraciones y ritos paganos ... Son 10.000 años de cultura y tradiciones" (79). A discussion of vineyards mentions "un sitio privilegiado por su enorme riqueza natural y cultural heredada de la antigua nación Diaguita-Calchaquí del imperio Inca" (32). Similar language characterizes descriptions of individual communities. Members of the Comunidad Kolla de Valle Colorado appear as "Descendientes Milenarios" (Red 35), while the Comunidad Kolla Tumbaya "conserva intactos el respeto a la Pachamama y sus ancestrales cultivos y rebaños andinos" (40). Finally, the Comunidad Omaguaca Ocumazo holds "parcelas cultivadas trabajadas desde hace miles de años por la población originaria, según su saber y cosmovisión" (32). As before, the national government and the Salta provincial government reveal the same attitude toward the people of the Northwest. A section on the Pachamama festival follows an affirmation of the "espiritualidad y fe de su gente, devoción de antigua raigambre" (*Salta* 15), later reinforced by the clarification that "[1]a ceremonia a la Madre Tierra es una costumbre ancestral que llega hasta nuestros días" (84). This notion of deep-rooted beliefs reappears in the portrayal of San Antonio de los Cobres and Tolar Grande, whose residents "conservan costumbres ancestrales que se reflejan en manifestaciones culturales como la Pachamama" (82), and of Iruya, where the locals "han mantenido su tradición a lo largo del tiempo" (86).

Nonetheless, the same selection of tourism manuals also depicts the Northwest as a continuation of the colonial period, often as a means of tracing Argentine national identity to the struggle for independence. A section on Posta de Hornillas describes it as the "Cuartel General del Ejército de la Independencia," where "en una de sus habitaciones descansó el Gral. Manuel Belgrano tras las victorias de Tucumán y Salta" (Destinos 63). The same book, after summarizing the colonial history of Humahuaca, concludes that "[h]oy, sus angostas calles empedradas y sus casas de adobe con los antiguos faroles colgando en cada puerta, hacen del pueblo una verdadera postal de tiempos coloniales" (65). In another passage on the Quebrada, one reads that "[d]estaca sobre toda la simpleza de sus construcciones el grandioso Monumento a los Héroes de la Independencia y al Ejército del Norte, erigido en homenaje a los nativos de la Quebrada que jugaron un papel primordial en la lucha por la independencia" (Norte 24). The language here is ambivalent, as recognition of the role of indigenous groups in the fight for independence coexists with the binary of native "simplicity" and creole "grandeur." Depictions of Salta City place particular emphasis on colonial heritage. Together with frequent photographs of urban colonial architecture, the books include descriptions of "sus majestuosas iglesias, sus típicas casas coloniales, sus veredas angostas, sus museos llenos de tradición y sus monumentos a reconocidos Héroes de la Patria" (29).

Just as frequently, however, the tourism materials relegate the indigenous to a remote, unspecified pre-history, most often through past-tense verbs or through nouns and adverbs that imply separation from the present. In Tilcara, tourists can "conocer las costumbres y modos de vida del pueblo que habitaba estas tierras," "donde habitaron los antepasados y donde aún se conservan los rastros de la vida cotidiana del pueblo tilcara" (Destinos 19). This village, located in the "[a]ntigua tierra de los indios omaguacas" (13), contains "una población fortificada construida por los nativos omaguacas en épocas precolombinas" (Norte 23), while, in Salta, one finds "vestigios de los pueblos aborígenes que la poblaron inicialmente" (26) and learns that "Los primeros pobladores también han dejado sus testimonios" (Salta 13). A general guiding concept is that "[l]as provincias del Norte exhiben entremezclados vestigios precolombinos, ruinas de fortalezas y poblados indígenas y construcciones de la Conquista y de la Colonización" (13). Pre-contact architecture appears in the form of "vestiges" or "ruins," words that emphasize the temporal distance, whereas post-contact architecture appears through the neutral term "constructions." The notion of primitivism carries over into descriptions of present-day indigenous peoples, as seen in a factfile on religion in the Northwest, which states that "los pobladores de la región Norte de Argentina son fervorosamente creyentes" (Norte 16). Although the appearance of the term "pobladores" to describe the indigenous in two manuals may be mere coincidence, it is difficult to imagine a discussion of the "pobladores" of Buenos Aires or other urban conglomerations. In a further connection between the indigenous and the precarious inhabiting of the land, the "pobladores" of San Antonio de los Cobres appear as "gente que se adapta a las inclemencias de un clima seco y frío a más de 4.000 m. de altura" (28), with "adaptation" suggesting a primarily biological vision of the town's residents.

In a related rhetorical maneuver, the books portray the Northwest as a land where time has come to a halt. "El tiempo parece haberse detenido en el altiplano de la Puna" (13), remarks one manual, going on to repeat the phrase with respect to the Quebrada de Humahuaca (23). The same expression appears yet again, on two occasions, in regard to San Antonio de los Cobres (28, 34). Elsewhere, in the Comunidad Diaguita Quilmes, tourists receive the opportunity to look into "[u]na ventana al pasado" (Red 59). The provincial government of Salta uses the same terms to promote its villages. Cachi possesses "una esencia particular que lo distingue como un pueblo calchaquí detenido en el tiempo" (77), just as, in a curious turn of phrase, the steep streets of Iruya "simulan estar detenidas en el tiempo" (70), as though appearances were deceiving. In fact, this language hides the reality of most northwestern villages, in which "modernity," understood loosely as the presence of electricity, cell phones, and wireless internet, not only has arrived but is thriving. A clear example of this tension appears in a humorous contradiction near the end of segment on Salta. Having recently described San Antonio de los Cobres as a place where "el tiempo parece detenido," one of the manuals features a photograph of indigenous children and adults beneath the sign of the modern railway station. Time certainly has not stopped here: everyone is wearing contemporary clothing, power cables and electric lighting appear in the frame, and a modern pick-up truck sits in the background (Norte 44).

Each of the books tends to establish a "racial" division between locals and tourists, in particular when featuring landscapes, according to which locals are of indigenous descent while tourists are of European origin. The materials concerning Salta Province display this visual pattern most frequently. In contrast to the photograph of indigenous children at the San Antonio de los Cobres train station, in which the presence of indigenous children under the city sign provides an implicit definition of local society (Norte 44), a photograph in the same manual shows light-skinned tourists looking out the train window upon the landscape (35). This binary reappears in the Salta provincial government book, as a local indigenous guide appears in a rural landscape alongside a light-skinned tourist (Salta 17), while a similar logic governs a full-page photograph of an outdoor spa treatment (22-23). The same trend characterizes images in which tourists are shown by themselves: light-skinned tourists visit Salta City's main square (8), climb mountains (25, 29), kayak (30), and explore rainforests (72). Although exceptions exist, this pattern characterizes the great majority of images in the tourism materials, to such an extent that an "inside / outside" dichotomy quickly emerges and remains strong over the course of the books. There is, of course, a demographic reality behind this portrayal of northwestern communities, but a careful selection of photographs has also taken place. It would be possible to imagine, for instance, a similar set of images with different individuals, primarily in regard to the tourists, who constitute a diverse and international group. As they stand, however, the books' layouts suggest commodification of indigenous identity for consumption by light-skinned, middle-class tourists from the Buenos Aires metropolitan region, often as part of a package of "authentic experiences" in the nation's heartland.

At the same time, however, the tourist materials occasionally recognize a more fluid and flexible understanding of identity, in keeping with recent indigenous political movements. Most examples incorporate the familiar language of "survival" or "purity" but celebrate admixture with colonial or post-colonial cultural practices. In the Northwest, explains one book by the national government, "[1]a historia dice presente a cada paso desde decenas de pueblos y comunidades que mantienen vivos los ancestrales cultos nativos, en estado puro o fusionado con los traídos por los europeos" (Norte 13). As elsewhere, the Salta provincial government takes the same approach, through the description of "técnicas ancestrales, las cuales se enriquecieron con el aporte hispánica" (Salta 18). The strongest statements of this type characterize the Quebrada de Humahuaca, where, "en el marco de la revalorización de las costumbres y tradiciones más ancestrales," "una arquitectura responsable y comprometida" "enlaza el pasado con el futuro, y un pueblo con su tierra" (Destinos 41). In this passage, the implication is that the residents of the Northwest, rather than passively receiving an inheritance, have made a decision to connect themselves with the past by performing certain traditions. This idea underlies the description of the Comunidad Kolla Hornaditas, whose families "dignifican su territorio y sus costumbres a través de la práctica de sus ceremonias andinas" (*Red* 28), while, for the Comunidad Kolla de Valle Colorado, the stone steps of the Inca Trail "son huellas de la historia y son parte de la identidad actual de esta comunidad" (37). This language holds particular importance with respect to the Comunidad Kolla Punta Corral, which, "aferrada a sus costumbres ancestrales, encontró la fórmula para detener el tiempo" (44). The adjective "aferrada" connotes a conscious grasp on tradition, just as the idea of finding a formula suggests not only a deliberate search but also an opposition between the desires of the community and the pressures of the surrounding society. As though to highlight this victory over outside forces, the book tells tourists that "descubrir su arte preincaico, es sentir su amor por la identidad" (44). A surprising feature of two manuals, given their national scope and the involvement of the federal government in their publication, is the recognition of now-foreign sources of indigenous culture. A section on Tolar Grande in Salta explains that the community "[n]ace de las migraciones de familias kollas de ambos lados de la Cordillera de los Andes" (*Red* 53), a circuitous admission of Chilean and Bolivian immigration. One list of festivals includes Inti Raymi, an important affirmation of transnational Andean identity (22), later described as "de antigua tradición aymará" (24), a term that closely connotes "Bolivia" in contemporary Argentina.

Yet the celebration of indigenous culture, whether as an "ancestral" legacy or as a creative reappropriation of tradition, never acquires the political tones of *indigenismo* in the tourism materials. When discussions of the Northwest's past include specific interaction between the indigenous and Europeans or creoles, conquest and colonization appear as mere facts, free from injustices, suffering, or oppression. On the rare occasion when conflict does appear, it comes across as a struggle exclusively between native peoples and the Spaniards during the early colonial period, with no mention of viceroyal or national indigenous policies. For example, a section on "La historia" of the Quebrada de Humahuaca portrays Viltipoco as "el líder de la última rebelión contra los españoles," before remarking that "[a]nte la invasión y el sometimiento al régimen de encomienda, la población de la Quebrada disminuyó drásticamente" (*Destinos* 20). In like fashion, a section on the Comunidad Diaguita Quilmes explains that "[e]l viajero quedará

sorprendido al conocer cada detalle del último bastión de la resistencia aborigen ante la conquista española" (*Red* 61). Words such as "invasión" and "resistencia" express an indigenous perspective, avoiding and thus implicitly rejecting notions of "civilization" or "progress" as a result of European colonization. Even so, this conflict remains safely in the past, limited to a now-foreign enemy, with no involvement of the Argentine state. Argentina, as a national community, has no part in the battle: the books neither identify with the indigenous as proto-national citizens nor call attention to the nation's own legacy of mistreatment and prejudice.

The tension among competing conceptions of the role of indigenous peoples in Argentina figures prominently in the Salta Province manual. On one hand, as discussed in the preceding sections, indigenous heritage holds an important place in provincial history and the province's current identity. The book's cover sets the tone through an arid landscape of the Puna region, suggesting that the Andes, along with the indigenous peoples understood to reside there, provide the foundation of the province. Sections on pre-Incan and Incan archeology, autochthonous and syncretic religious ceremonies, and traditional cultural practices lend strength to such a reading. Nonetheless, the majority of the volume undermines that interpretation by focusing on Salta's colonial heritage and creole society. The book's first section, "Salta Auténtica," characterizes the province as "Tierra de gauchos" (6), a phrase that reappears in a paragraph that invites tourists to take part in an "auténtica experiencia" on estancias and fincas, strongly associated with postconquest Hispanic and Argentine society. A section on "Turismo cultural" explains that "Salta supo conservar las huellas de su pasado," (9) but the ensuing text focuses on the city of Salta and its neocolonial style, while the accompanying photographs display

Hispanic architecture and touristic presentations of gaucho life. It would seem, therefore, that the book considers Salta's "authentic" past to have begun with Spanish occupation, and these are the origins that authorities have "conserved" for national and foreign visitors. In fairness to the authors, one should note that the "Salta Auténtica" section contains information on indigenous cultures and that, in the list of tours that closes the book, gaucho culture is only one of six options. Nonetheless, the emphasis on creole history at the beginning establishes a tone that the following pages never contradict, while the dominant adjective "auténtica" appears only in relation to gauchos.

As a whole, the tourism books that I have examined illustrate both continuity and change. Although none of the manuals understands current manifestations of indigenous identity in Argentina as a resurgence of a supposedly repressed or extinct community, they all demonstrate a romanticized or exoticized view of the indigenous as bearers of "ancient" cultures, justifying the frustrations of Raúl Mandrini and other scholars (Mandrini 272). The books tend to portray the indigenous as products of the landscape, occasionally suggesting, through terms such as "adapted," a biological or geographical determinism of culture. Whenever current beliefs and cultural practices resemble those of the past, the tourism publications depict indigenous communities as guardians of tradition or as survivors of supposedly lost civilizations. Descriptions of these communities often entail the static conception of identities that Belvedere et al. have denounced in Argentine school textbooks (47). Along similar lines, the manuals situate indigenous society in the past, by means of preterite-tense verbs or nouns such as "vestige" or "ruin." Existing indigenous communities appear as "windows into the past" or as places where time has come to a halt. The ahistorical treatment of the indigenous is particularly clear in the

near-total absence of dates, as vague expressions such as "milenaria," "ancestral," and "cientos de años" trace a mythological, rather than historical, picture of Argentina's first inhabitants. On the few occasions when the books mention historical conflicts, the treatment again follows the standard of depoliticization that scholars have denounced. Indigenous leaders such as Viltipoco struggle against the Spanish, never against the openly racist Argentine government of the late-nineteenth century or, one might add, against the problematic official policies during much of the twentieth century. It would be unfair to expect a tourism manual of any ideological inclination to provide a detailed account of national history, but it is fair to point out the consequences of selecting certain events for presentation to tourists.

Despite repeating many of the stereotypes from the dominant narratives on indigenous participation in the national community, the tourism books also reflect more recent conceptions of indigenous identity, principally those that emphasize fluidity and flexibility over essentialism. The "asociación lineal de vestimenta e identidad" (Karasik 274), which indigenous activists have criticized as reductive and misleading, plays no role in the tourism materials, as residents of the Northwest, even in otherwise romantic or exotic portrayals, appear in a wide variety of traditional and modern clothing. Most books also recognize individual communities by name, even when groups are the products of recent identification with peoples considered to have disappeared, such as the Calchaquí or Omaguacas, or when groups have strong ties to transnational indigenous communities, such as the Collas. At no point do the books question indigenous ties to Argentina or suggest the presence of "indios truchos." However, this acceptance of contemporary indigenous identity claims, rather than expressing endorsement of ongoing political struggles, most likely responds to the tourism industry's focus on "authentic experience." It would prove counterproductive, regardless of the government agencies' stance on the issue, to delegitimize indigenous identity for tourists, as this identity provides a guarantee of "real" contact with Andean spirituality or the pre-colonial past. In that sense, the tourism materials bear resemblance to the soccer promotional materials discussed in chapter three of this dissertation. Just as the idealized, depoliticized portrayal of suburban Peronist communities in *La pareja del Mundial* caters to the fantasies of the middle-class, urban public depicted in "Argentinos," so too does the idealized, depoliticized portrayal of Northwestern indigenous communities cater to the fantasies of national and international tourists. The comforting representation of happy, peaceful, and fervently religious locals confirms the expectations of potential clients. Economic prosperity, not social justice, is the primary motivation for this type of publication.

Yet it would be a mistake to hold a Manichean, top-down view of the participation of indigenous communities in the tourism circuit. It is true that each book suggests that the national or provincial government has commodified indigenous culture for the consumption of dominant groups, while simultaneously erasing any evidence of past or present political struggles, but the tourism materials also hint at the affirmation of identity so as to take advantage of market opportunities. At times, the connections with local communities are less tangible, with no guarantee of local benefits, as in the shopping center in Jujuy that allows for "la adquisición de todo tipo de artesanías y artículos regionales que recuperan la tradición, la historia y la cultura de esta región" (*Norte 23*). Other examples, however, suggest that residents of indigenous communities have decided to reap the material rewards of identity politics, taking part in a two-way

process that defies simple classification as "selling out" or exploitation. In such cases, the tourism materials seem to use the language of dominant narratives in order to attract customers to small-scale indigenous businesses. For example, in the Salinas Grandes region, "ocho comunidades aborígenes enamoran al visitante al desnudar los secretos de la puna andina," and local markets offer "piezas de uso y decoración elaboradas por manos ancestrales" (Red 25). This description provides a compendium of stereotypes-romanticism, exoticism, and ahistoricity--, but the emphasis is on the local economy, in which shepherds, salt miners, and artisans "se convierten en guías calificados" to supplement their incomes (25). Salta Province, in keeping with its international aspirations, advertises "técnicas ancestrales, las cuales se enriquecieron con el aporte hispánico, [que] se conservan hasta hoy a través de generaciones de artesanos transmisores del saber popular autóctono logrando un producto de interés mundial" (Salta 18). As before, the language of the dominant narrative is the "packaging" within which local artisans sell their products in a global marketplace. The coexistence of--and possible collaboration between--official stereotypes and indigenous agency reveals an intricate process of interpretation and negotiation. In this regard, certain aspects of indigenous participation in the tourism industry reflect the complex and contradictory nature of contemporary identity politics in Argentina and throughout the world.

Portrayals of Salta Province in a Government-Sponsored Literary Anthology

Although tourism publications are an important medium through which representations of regional identity and, by extension, national identity reach a large audience, they are only one part of a vast cultural landscape. For this reason, in order to

complement my findings from the previous section, I also examined an anthology of literature compiled in Salta, *Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña* (2007). This anthology, first published in 1981 and updated in 2007, was sponsored by the Secretaría de Cultura de la Provincia de Salta, Dirección General de Acción Cultural. It is possible, therefore, to consider the publication a semi-official initiative and to bring it into dialogue with the tourism materials created by the federal government and that of Salta Province. My primary goal is to determine how the works chosen for the anthology represent provincial or national culture. Some of the anthologized texts were written before December 2001 and thus predate the crisis. Nonetheless, I find a close reading of such works to be valuable because they help to reveal which works the anthologists deemed worthy of including in a literary panorama of Salta Province in 2007, well into the post-crisis period. I argue that, in contrast to selections from previous generations, the most recent selections privilege abstract, universal themes. The twenty-first-century provincial literature that figures in the anthology tends to avoid "local color," pay little attention to landscapes, and lack references to indigeneity, national tradition, and gaucho life, marking a sharp contrast with the images that dominate the tourism materials. I suggest that this depiction of provincial literature has its precedent in Jorge Luis Borges's 1932 essay "El escritor argentino y la tradición," in which the author sets forth a broad, nonessentialist understanding of literature and national identity.

Literary anthologies can assume a variety of forms. Some anthologists view their work as a historiographical effort, in which the objective is to act as a repository or a mirror, gathering or reflecting the largest amount of texts possible so as to offer a complete picture of a time period, movement, or political unit. Although even this wide approach to anthologies necessarily entails making choices, other compilers place greater emphasis on the selection process. In this mindset, texts enter or remain outside the anthology to the extent to which they are "representative" or "unique" within a tradition, or "good" or "bad" in general terms, in accordance with the critical judgement and aesthetic criteria of the editor. At times, there is an explicit intention of canon formation, with the selection of texts meant to preserve a certain version of the past for future generations of students to appreciate. Other anthologies may seek to complement that canon, highlighting the work of lesser-known or minority authors, while still others take an anti-canonical stance, rejecting the choices of previous scholars. These competing interpretations, already important within a "purely" literary sphere insofar as they reflect cultural power struggles, gain even more relevance when linked to wider issues, such as "Feminist Literature," "African-American Literature," or "English Literature." In these kinds of cases, the creation of an anthology already begs the question of the existence of the object of study, as critics can immediately begin to debate whether any such entity as "English Literature," for instance, exists, which texts this label should encompass, and what consequences arise from thinking about literary production in this way. When discussing literary anthologies, then, the selection criteria and the goals of the editors are equally as significant as the texts themselves.

Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña consists of two volumes, each with its particular understanding of the function of anthologies and the nature of provincial literature. Volume one, edited by the poet and scholar Walter Adet, obeys a personal and aesthetically traditional logic. Adet denies that his work is an anthology, preferring instead to call it a "generosa recopilación," in that "hubo que dejar propósito crítico y

rigor selectivo de lado y hacer oídos sordos a los propios y personales rechazos y objeciones" (13). Nonetheless, he then describes himself as "cuidando sin embargo de mostrar, junto a las realmente grandes o mejores, páginas aceptables o cuando menos reveladoras de algún dominio de las formas" (13). Literary skill and value, therefore, provide the main criteria for this volume. Adet's interpretation of provincial literature combines "grandes nombres, definitivamente incorporados a la historia de las letras argentinas" with "un embalsamado cardumen de poetas pasatistas, turistas de la poesía o de la versificación," and he wonders about the strength of "una literatura que anduvo en manos de religiosos y familias principales durante casi cuatro siglos de vida intelectual" (11). These criteria, combined with Adet's professed "intento de repasar todas las letras de Salta y de resucitarlas o sobresaltarlas en su olvido" (11), suggest an aim to conserve the best or "acceptable" examples of provincial literature.

Volume two of the anthology, which covers the period from 1981 to 2007, takes an approach that appears similar but proves opposite to that of Adet. The editor, María Eugenia Carante, a professor of literature and cultural commentator, follows Adet in rejecting the term "anthology": "No nos ha regido un criterio antológico a la hora de revelar el material, pues no se ha trabajado sobre la base de tendencias académicas y, mucho menos, de gustos personales" (7). She likewise distances herself from the idea of a provincial literary canon, "término cuyo alcance resulta problemático" (7). Even so, Carante differs from Adet in adopting a more open or relativist view of literature. Her conception of literary creation depends on "intención estética," or authors' desires to publish and be read, and minimizes the role of "modas, gustos y sensibilidades" (7). Whereas Adet sought to preserve what seemed valuable, using the guiding metaphor of a scale to weigh the merits of authors, Carante aspires toward a complete repository. Mentioning that many texts had remained unpublished, while others had appeared in ephemeral media, the editor underlines the difficulty of including everything, which explains "algunas omisiones que han sido, desde ya, involuntarias" (7). This conception of the anthology seeks as complete a reflection as possible of provincial literary activity, limited only by the availability of texts.

The emphasis on literature in each volume of the anthology suggests, to the extent that such a distinction is possible, that political criteria played no role in the selection of works. There is, however, in the most recent edition, an implicit understanding that the editor's choices will frame provincial culture for diverse audiences and help to shape notions of local identity. In the "Presentación" that now precedes Volume one, Prof. Sergio Mariano Bravo, General Director of Acción Cultural, states that the anthology's content, "por la amplitud de criterio y su sentido de historicidad, delimita en alguna medida el corpus literario provincial" (7). The adverbial phrase "en alguna medida" concedes that no anthology can exhaust its source material and that other approaches would have been possible, yet Bravo strengthens his argument by expressing the Secretaría de Cultura's commitment to "Documentar, dejar fijada en la memoria, mantener entre las nuevas generaciones ese valioso patrimonio cultural [of Salta Province], as well as to spread "la obra de nuestros creadores" (7). Literature, then, is a defining feature of the province as an imagined community and must be preserved for future generations. The possessive adjective "nuestros" emphasizes this shared sense of belonging to a larger group, as though each member of the community benefited from the publication of the anthology. In a similar manner to the tourism materials, local identity

emerges with respect to a wider sphere of reference, insofar as "Salta ha trascendido sus fronteras a través de la literatura, y ésta le ha dado identidad" (7). Bravo does not clarify whether this identity is produced locally through literature and then transmitted elsewhere or produced outside the province, helping outsiders to form an image of the community. In any event, these comments reveal the interest of the provincial government in tracing a collective subject, a "nosotros" that encompasses writers, readers, educators, and public officials.

Carante's Prologue to Volume two, albeit to a lesser extent, draws upon the same notion of territoriality. The editor is careful to point out that "Los escritores no se están quietos. Traban vínculos con artistas de otras provincias, o de otras naciones" (10), an observation that implies a broad and fluid notion of community, but her closing remarks appeal once more to a rather static link between land and culture. After stating that the anthology will prove useful to researchers and teachers, Carante mentions "los coterráneos que reconocerán entre sus líneas una particular manera de estar en el mundo" and "todas aquellas personas que por sensibilidad o simple afición se sienten atraídas por esta tierra" (10). These comments display various facets of identification. Like Bravo, Carante first situates her work within an institutional context, expecting the anthology to familiarize future generations of students with their cultural heritage as members of the provincial community. The second part of the statement relies on the same feeling of belonging, this time taking into account those readers who already recognize themselves as part of the group. Finally, Carante makes a gesture toward personal affinities, as outsiders who take an interest in the culture may also benefit from perusing its literary achievements. In a curious similarity with the logic of the tourism materials, the

Prologue's conclusion implies a degree of geographical determinism. The emphasis on land, as seen in the words "coterráneos" and "esta tierra," posits shared feelings as a result of shared space, as though literature written in Salta, regardless of its content, secretly and unfailingly expressed a particular way of being in the world. Carante's accurate remarks on the international flow of information and the cross-border collaborations between authors indicate that the editor holds an unbiased view of cultural production. Nonetheless, her drawing upon the language of community resonates with the political motivation that, directly or indirectly, guides the government sponsorship of the anthology: the creation, preservation, and transmission of identity.

The description that Carante offers of each generation prefigures the selection of texts, creating expectations for a pattern of styles and topics. One result of this classification scheme is a division between writers of the late twentieth century and those who have just begun to publish their work. According to Carante, authors born in the 1930s and 1940s exhibit diverse characteristics, among which are "una intencionalidad de testimoniar el lugar propio, la región, sus habitantes, su perfil; con marcado realismo, o bien con visión idealizada y de cierto color local," along with an anthropological perspective on various local regions (9). Although these writers incorporate social issues in their work, Carante finds that those born in the 1950s and 1960s, facing "[1]a crisis del mundo contemporáneo," have turned their attention to new problems such as terrorism, marginalization, war, exile, repression, economic crises, and gender inequalities (10). The final group, which consists of writers born in the 1970s or later, bears the most general description, with attributes such as "libertad, audacia y ductilidad" attached to their youth and their use of different artistic and mass media (10). From this description alone, it is

clear that, in contrast to the portrayal of provincial life in the tourism materials, the most recent anthology selections call attention to the present, shunning the notion that "time has stopped" or that Salta provides a window into Argentina's pre-conquest or colonial past.

The works that the editor has included from earlier generations reinforce this chronological division. Although the selections explore a range of themes through a variety of styles, a recurring motif is a focus on northwestern geography and indigenous or creole cultures, which creates the feeling of local color that the government sponsorship would lead readers to expect. Ramón Nemecio Escobar's poem "Anta," for example, which takes its name from a department of Salta Province, corresponds closely with the language that characterizes the tourism materials. The speaker explains that "Para rescatar recuerdos / y andar el monte que canta ... evoco a mi pago de Anta," associating his homeland with "el ancestral sentimiento / de la copla calavera" (81). These verses connect the popular poetic form of the *copla* with the land and its ancient traditions, almost a verse rendition of the claim that, "[e]n la Quebrada del Toro, el silencio hace una pausa para dar paso a la copla" from the federal government manual (Red 49). At the same time, the poem defines Salta through references to its creole heritage, another familiar trait from the provincial tourism publication: "Un corazón en la mano / el mate que se convida, / potros y cueros de arreo / ¡Esa es mi tierra querida!" (Carante 81). That this entire poem uses *coplas* to convey these traditional images of provincial identity only strengthens the bond between literature, history, and the land.

An even more noteworthy example of local color appears in the poem "Habitantes del Noroeste" by Juan Carlos Fiorillo. As the title indicates, this work centers on

284

provincial identity, often through connections between geography and culture. Over the course of two free-verse stanzas, the speaker identifies with diverse aspects of Salta and proclaims his love for its nature and inhabitants. This personal devotion comes across in phrases such as "las fibras del terruño que me enamoran," "[r]econozco mi territorio," "me bautizo en el habla popular de mi pueblo," and "me vuelvo un amante impenitente / de mi región" (82-83). As in the previous work, a close correspondence emerges between the language of the poem and that of the tourism materials. The speaker observes that "un viejo aljibe atestigua en el tiempo / su lugar en las cosas / y su paso implacable por los silencios de la tarde" (82). In this image, an old well, already a symbol of history, serves as a witness to the passage of time, while the "silences" recall the silent landscapes that give rise to *coplas*, an idea that returns near the poem's conclusion through the region's "lenguaje vigencial de eternidades" (83). Another point of contact with tourism discourse is an emphasis on roots. Celebrating the "origen ritual y legendario de la raza," the speaker declares that "[e]s la más pura y tierra raíz fundadora / de todos las entrañas ancestrales" (83). This statement combines the mythological conception of indigenous identity with the notions of purity and of ties to the land that characterize official portrayals of the Northwest. All of these descriptions exist for an unspecified reader or interlocutor, as the speaker's lyrical reflections turn outward through the interjection "Contagiándote," appearing three times in the poem, always the only word in the line and with which the poem ends. It would seem that both the province itself and the speaker's devout reactions are intended to produce an effect upon the audience, a familiar theme throughout the tourism materials. From this perspective, the poem's "fibras del terruño que me enamoran" provide literary support for the title of the province's promotional book: *Salta, tan linda que enamora*.

Even when the work is deliberately "creole," the celebration of tradition can echo the notion that the Northwest provides a "window into the past." Fragments from Carlos Diez San Millán's Tras los pasos de Fierro, a volume of poetry that pays homage to Argentina's national text, depicts an appreciation of history as an antidote to the evils of the present. The speaker begins by condemning modern life: "El mundo anda boliao / no sabe ni pande ir / viven todos encerraos / en la selva de cemento" (77). These problems, argues the poem, have occurred due to a loss of identity, an identity understood in terms of continuity with one's origins. An opposition emerges between a true past and a false present: "no saben ya ni siquiera / cómo se llama su abuela, / sólo le importan los brillos / de lo que brinda el presente" (78). Stressing the importance of family in determining identity, the speaker exclaims "¡Pobre de aquellos pueblos / que reniegan de su sangre!" (78), going on to argue that "Al olvidar los ancestros / buscando lo que no es, / llega un momento tal vez, / que pierde la identidá" (79). This notion of identity depends on memory and respect for tradition, as though, by forgetting, it were possible to lose oneself. According to this view, identity is static, determined by one's ancestors. Even so, elsewhere in the poem, identity becomes equally rooted to geography. The speaker condemns those who abandon their families for the city: "No es una ley natural / dejar por ahí tiraos / a los tatas y a los criados, / yendosé para el poblao" (78). As part of an homage to José Hernández's canonical poem, these verses are natural: they closely resemble the advice of the protagonist to his children and, by extension, to all of Argentina in the Vuelta. As part of a twenty-first-century text, however, such verses

tighten the bond between land and identity used so frequently in the tourism materials. These ideas further exclude Salta from modernity, depicting the province as a shelter from the evils of the present.

Other selections convey a more flexible understanding of identity, such as Pedro Choque's "Seré coya hasta la muerte," which links indigenous culture to nature but points toward a transnational imagined community. Nearing death, the speaker calls out to Pachamama, the "Mother Earth" deity revered throughout the region, addressing her as "cósmica madre del Inca" (76). The work's religious tone continues through a reference to an apacheta, a stone formation, common in the Puna, at which travelers pray. An expression of indigenous identity, rather than regional or national affiliation, is the speaker's purpose. Identifying himself as "hijo de tus entrañas / Cordillera de los Andes," the speaker states his desire to "ver a mis hermanos con una patria más grande" (76). The poem's final lines, "soy coya de nacimiento / soy coya hasta la muerte" (76), express not only a defiant sense of identity in the face of death but also a broad understanding of community. These lines suggest that the "patria más grande" denotes a transnational indigenous group, most likely, given the historical origin of the Collas, an imagined community that encompasses citizens of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. Even if the "patria" is taken, in light of the speaker's final moments, as a reference to the afterlife, the phrase's location within a context of land-based indigenous identity transcends political definitions of belonging. In this respect, the poem's conception of group loyalty resembles that of the protesters studied by Gordillo, who refuse to confine themselves to a single national community.

Paulo Pedernera's "Inti-Raymi" offers a similarly complex view of identity. In a *costumbrista* style, the narrative fragment depicts the celebration of the Inca Sun Festival, observed in portions of the Northwest, and the "fulgores incaicos" that it promises (132). The focus on Andean rituals would imply, at first glance, a transnational perspective. Yet the actions that take place assign equal importance to the gaucho tradition emphasized in tourism materials. The narrator devotes most of the fragment to describing the appearance and actions of the gauchos, mentioning a *zamba*, a regional dance that plays an important role in displays of provincial culture for tourists. Identity production through the representation of a collective is one of the dominant traits of this work, as the narrator speaks of "nuestra Inti-Raymi," uses first-person-plural verb forms to highlight a sense of belonging ("necesitamos," "deseamos"), and points out a need to feel "todos astillas del mismo palo" (132). The group that emerges, nonetheless, reveals the blended character of the province: neither "pure" indigenous nor "pure" creole, neither exclusively transnational nor exclusively Argentine.

The selection of works from authors born in the 1950s and 1960s constitutes a bridge between periods, as local color continues to exist but diminishes in importance. Fernanda Agüero's short story "Tal vez en febrero" takes the exotic view of the Northwest found in the tourism materials. In fact, the protagonist is a tourist in search of "un camino que me saque de esta turbulencia urbana que empalidece mi sangre" (177). In a similar way to the previous works, the story portrays the city in negative terms, as a space that "guarda en sus entrañas los días tediosos de la viajera" and in which "los vapores ciudadanos tiñen indolentes de grises y opacos las casas y los pájaros, las calles y las almas" (177). It is for this reason that the protagonist's departure appears as a flight

from prison: "escapa como un ave ingrávida y solitaria que solo desea liberar su vuelo más allá de la tarde" (177). As in other works, the criticism of urban life provides a foil for the celebration of the countryside. When the tourist begins her journey, "[1]os dioses soplan entonces en su oído mágicas palabras ancestrales: tierra, ritos, pueblo…" (177). This compendium of dominant images from the tourism industry soon fuses with displays of local color. The tourist reaches "El Pueblo," capitalized throughout the story, which "parece descansar envuelto en un halo cristalino de luces doradas" (179). Her journey coincides with carnival, where she takes part in the similarly mythologized Comparsa and its "danza cadenciosa y milenaria" (179). By depicting the Northwest as a sanctuary and as a guardian of the spiritual energy that has disappeared from modern life, this story extends the same invitation to residents of the metropolitan area that one finds in the tourism publications. The work functions as a literary staging of those manuals, depicting a tourist who undergoes the magical experiences typical of the region, as a guarantee of "authenticity."

At other times, texts draw upon the same semantic field but adopt a more critical tone. Augusto Enrique Rufino's poem "Madre aborigen," as the title suggests, celebrates indigenous women and denounces social injustice. In one sense, this work follows the mindset of *indigenismo*. The speaker calls attention to suffering, addressing the indigenous woman as a "Madre sacrificio, madre silencio" in "el dolor mutilado de la selva," who produces art "que lucirán otras mujeres / de espacios lejanos, inalcanzables," presumably middle-class tourists from the cities (314). At the heart of the poem, the speaker denounces inequality through a series of questions, suggesting that the tourists are blithely unaware of their participation in an exploitative system. The most pointed of

these questions refers to the struggle for land and autonomy that has characterized indigenous movements over the past decades: "¿Sabrán que te vendieron tantas veces / junto a tu tierra sin preguntártelo?" (314). Nonetheless, this important intervention in contemporary politics repeats many of the dominant themes of the tourism industry. The speaker compares the woman's body to the hard wood of the *quebracho*, connecting her to the land. She appears as an "Innata poseedora de la magia / de convertir los frutos de la Pachamama" into works of art, and the speaker asks whether other women know about her "sueños ancestrales de libertad" (314). These images convey a static conception of indigenous identity, understood as a rigid product of tradition and of the environment, precisely the vision that scholars and activists are striving to overcome. Although the indigenous appear as part of an unjust system, the poem centers on the past and thus contributes to the notion that indigenous communities remain outside the "unreachable" modernity of the cities.

Yet this section of the anthology, on many more occasions, distances itself from tourist-industry portrayals of provincial culture. Given the abundance of examples, a brief survey will suffice to show the main trends. Teresa Alvarado's lyrical poems "Apología del deseo" and "Muero y sueño" use abstract language to express the speaker's feelings, referring to nature only in vague terms (185-86). Carlos Bonduri's short story "De San Ignacio a Tres Cerritos" takes place in an urban setting, Salta City, with a focus on daily errands and a maid's struggles to pay off her mortgage (192-98). Other works adopt a national perspective, such as Verónica Cánepa's poem "Noche misionera," which focuses on the jungles of the northeastern province of Misiones, and Roberto Salvatierra's poem "AMIA," a poignant reflection on the terrorist attack against the Jewish community of Buenos Aires in 1994. Just as frequently, selections in this portion of the anthology situate themselves within the broader Western cultural tradition. Iracema Da Silva's poem "Soy" begins with the question "¿Ser o no ser?" and mentions *Hamlet* (208), while Nancy María García's poem "Ebrios de penumbras" makes reference to Nietzsche and Borges (230). The most striking example of this international perspective is Eduardo Cordero's "Irak," which laments the warfare that has devastated the middle-eastern country (207-08).

The anthology's selection of writers born after 1970 takes this trend even further, as this last group of works rarely makes use of the images and interpretations found in the tourism materials. Much of the poetry here is abstract and philosophical, paying little attention to traditional ideas of regional identity. Even the seeming exceptions to this trend contain important differences from the preceding sections. In an untitled poem by Sergio Casimiro, the speaker connects himself with a natural setting, mentioning his "ganas / de curtirme sol a sol / hilvanando los hilos de la luna" (335). Significant words include "arcilla," "tiempo," "silencio," "recuerdo," and "raíces," all of which resonate with tourism discourse and the poems studied previously. In a further example of this pattern, the speaker comes into contact with "ancestrales horas" as a result of his surroundings (335). Nonetheless, the poem calls this identification into doubt by posing a series of questions, each of which undermines the identification between the speaker and the environment. Through the phrase "Qué sé yo," with which four lines begin, the speaker expresses uncertainty as to his origins, asking "Qué sé yo de dónde me crecen las raíces" (335). This uncertainty acquires cosmic proportions in the poem's final couplet, "Qué sé yo de este latido / si Dios me hizo por descuido" (335). In place of the religious fervor that, according to the Salta Province tourism publication, defines the residents of the Northwest, one finds here perplexity and a lack of confidence. Portraying himself as a mere accident, the speaker avoids any sense of geographical or cultural determinism.

Most of the poems in this section of the anthology move beyond their geographical confines, either through references to the Western canon or through attention to urban settings. Fernando Casiva's "Coloquio de las cosas" features an epigraph in French from Paul Valery on Zeno's Paradox, and the body of the work contains a series of abstract and metaphysical reflections that recalls the neobaroque poetry of José Lezama Lima. In similar fashion, Roque Arturto Rueda's "¿Qué somos?" treats the question of identity as a philosophical conundrum, mentioning Plato and Proteus while defining humanity as "fuego y barro, ideas, nada y todo, / "la luz y la oquedad de los deseos" (362). These conceptions of identity bear no resemblance to the local color and concrete cultural practices found in other works. Finally, Rodolfo Leandro Plaza Navamuel's poem "A lo lejos" marks a contrast by emphasizing the ugliness of a city. The text dwells on the image of a street sweeper tossing buckets of water onto the sidewalk and removing various types of filth from the "hendiduras de vetustas baldosas" (356). Negative images abound, such as "mugre humana," "desechos," "escupitajos," "miseria," and "indigencia" (356-57). It would be possible to argue that, through the titular adverbial phrase "A lo lejos," the poem indicates that this scene of urban misery is far from the speaker, who laments the drawbacks of modern life. This reading would bring the work closer to the denunciation of the "selva de cemento" that appeared in the previous texts. However, even if one views this poem as a criticism of urban life in general or of Buenos Aires in particular, the bleak portrayal of the city stands alone, rather than serving as a foil to a celebration of peaceful rural settings. By including this poem, the anthology suggests that Salta is a participant in the problems of modernity, not an exception or a solution.

The narrative selections in this portion of the anthology follow a similar pattern, as a number of works take place in an urban setting. An excerpt from Fernán Saravia Toledo's novel *Consecuencias* describes a lively city scene in which employees head to their offices while janitors clean the entrances to buildings (364). The protagonist, Nicolás Belloni, is a conservatory student who teaches his first music course, in which every pupil aspires to play a European instrument. In a departure from the linguistic *costumbrismo* seen in other texts, the characters here use the *voseo*, common in urban areas, as well as typical "Argentine" expressions such as "bárbaro" (369). Lucila Rosario Lastero's short story "Emociones truncas" offers an especially vivid portrayal of Salta's participation in wider Argentine culture. A third-person, omniscient narrator conveys the feelings of Tía Elisa as she anxiously follows the relationship between two young lovers. Problems emerge just months prior to their marriage, and Tía Elisa prays to the Virgen del Carmen for assistance. When the long-awaited reconciliation seems moments away from taking place, Tía Elisa pretends to crochet while spying on the couple, but her hopes come to nothing. Just as the lovers are about to embrace, "cuatro hombres con camisetas de un club de fútbol conocido se interponen entre la pareja, interrumpiendo el punto culminante de la historia de amor" (348). Tía Elisa, after a few minutes of confusion, understands that her husband has changed the television channel so as not to miss the soccer match between San Lorenzo and Racing. At this point, the reader understands that the preceding events, narrated as though they were occurring before the protagonist's eyes, formed part of a soap-opera. This story connects with wider Argentine culture on multiple levels. The author explores the blurred lines between illusion and reality, recalling canonical fantastic texts such as Julio Cortázar's "La noche boca arriba" and "Jorge Luis Borges's "El sur." At the same time, the protagonist's seeming difficulty in distinguishing fiction from fact, or at least her total immersion in the world of mass entertainment, echoes the novels of Manuel Puig. The intrusion of soccer with which the story concludes also represents a link with national society, as San Lorenzo and Racing, both teams based in Buenos Aires, have long been successful members of the Argentine first division. Finally, the narrator's gentle irony toward the protagonist's beliefs, in that she prays to the Virgen del Carmen for the well-being of fictional characters, draws a caricature of the supposed religious fervor of the Northwest. A clear contrast emerges with the previous texts: rather than to identify with Inca heritage or to recognize a spiritual connection with the land, Tia Elisa's prayers seek to influence the outcome of a soap-opera.

Taken as a whole, the anthology's selections of recent provincial literature trace a complex portrait of identity in Salta. Texts included from the earlier generations display three main tendencies. One group repeats, sometimes verbatim, the dominant themes of the tourism materials. The province appears as a heartland of the nation with strong indigenous cultures. Through connections with the land, spirituality, and "ancestral" traditions, the indigenous appear as bearers of a static identity or as remnants of a lost, "prehistoric" civilization. On rare occasions, contemporary manifestations of indigenous identity assume a transnational focus, looking beyond the province. A second group of texts focuses on the province's creole heritage, calling attention to gaucho culture and

images such as *mate* and *estancias*. These works sometimes reinforce the creole component through *costumbrismo* and popular language, which brings the local culture into the same sphere as canonical national works like *Martín Fierro*, thereby strengthening the notion that Salta is representative of Argentina's colonial and post-independence past. Finally, a third category of selections adopts a universal approach. These works contain either abstract language and philosophical reflections that transcend identification with any specific culture or, less commonly, references to the broader Western literary tradition.

In the portions of the anthology dedicated to the newest generation of writers, this third category eventually becomes so dominant as to render the other groups nearly invisible. Very few references to the indigenous or creole traditions of Salta Province appear among the writers born after 1970, and even the exceptions, as has been shown, contain details that differentiate them from the stereotypes of the tourism publications. It is not that the youngest writers of Salta have abandoned the traditional images of northwestern Argentina, nor that the authors included in the anthology ignore such themes in their other work, but rather that the editor has chosen to emphasize this aspect of literature. The anthology, like all anthologies, constitutes not a perfect compendium but only a selection, and this selection provides a particular representation of current cultural production. By examining the selections by generation, one receives the impression that the most recent writers have left behind the typical markers of identity and feel no desire to express their belonging to the ethnic or political collectives usually associated with the region. In this sense, the last portion of the government-sponsored literary anthology traces a portrait completely opposite to that of the governmentsponsored tourism materials. Whereas the tourism materials present Salta as a tranquil window into the past, the anthology looks out upon the world, implicitly arguing that today's writers are similar to those of any other region of Argentina or, in some cases, to those of any other country.

The differences within and among the sections of the anthology make possible a range of interpretations. A pessimistic interpretation of the anthology would argue that, by emphasizing texts with a "universal" focus, the editors have drawn attention away from the struggle for indigenous rights and the complex debates on indigenous identity that have taken place in twenty-first-century Salta. An optimistic interpretation would argue that, by avoiding the stereotypes of the tourism industry, the editors have given voice to a diverse array of interests and concerns that would otherwise have played no role in understandings of contemporary provincial identity. In light of the materials that this chapter has examined, however, it would seem more accurate to conclude that the anthology registers the tension and contradictions that have characterized the portrayal of Salta over the last decade. Just as the tourism manuals rely on the dominant readings of national identity but provide occasional space for revisionist readings, so too does the anthology, as a combination of official government initiative and personal aesthetic project, reflect the different ways of viewing the place of the Northwest in contemporary Argentina.

This intersection of nationalist projects and literary history has a well-known precedent in Argentine culture. As mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation, the canonization of gauchesque literature in the twentieth century by intellectuals such as Leopoldo Lugones sought to establish a national tradition. Proponents of this reading of

296

Argentine literature argued that, through references to local cultural practices and through the use of local language, the gauchesque writers had reflected what was authentic and original about the country. To a certain extent, the anthology's treatment of provincial literature inherits that mindset. The emphasis on "ancestral" indigenous beliefs and on the gaucho culture of the estancias points toward the notion of authentic national identity, as though Salta offered a refuge in which to discover Argentina's roots. Yet the frequent presence of abstract or universal themes, free from local color, especially in the recent selections, implies a different way of understanding identity, one that also has a precedent in debates on Argentine culture. In his 1932 essay "El escritor argentino y la tradición," Jorge Luis Borges set forth a broader, de-essentialized understanding of literature and identity. After considering the arguments of Lugones and Ricardo Rojas, Borges states that "[1]a idea de que la poesía argentina debe abundar en rasgos diferenciales argentinos y en color local argentino me parece una equivocación" (284). His first point is that nothing makes Martin Fierro more "Argentine" than any other work. Observing that European authors such as Shakespeare and Racine took their material from outside cultures, Borges attacks the hypocrisy of Argentine nationalists, who "simulan venerar las capacidades de la mente argentina pero quieren limitar el ejercicio poético de esa mente a algunos pobres temas locales, como si los argentinos sólo pudiéramos hablar de orillas y estancias y no del universo" (286). Borges proposes instead that the Argentine tradition is "toda la cultura occidental" and that Argentina, as a marginal nation, holds a privileged position that allows its writers to experiment and innovate (288). The problem of national identity, when viewed from this perspective, loses its importance. If Argentine writers follow the mysterious process of literary creation, Borges argues, Argentine literature will emerge automatically, "porque o ser argentino es una fatalidad, y en ese caso lo seremos de cualquier modo, o ser argentino es una mera afectación, una máscara" (289).

This is the logic that governs the portions of the anthology that feature universal themes. Although one could regret the absence of current indigenous political movements, which appears to corroborate scholars' denunciations of depoliticized official culture, the work that these selections carry out toward a non-essentialized understanding of regional identity nonetheless constitutes a political statement. Carlos Martínez Sarasola has called for an approach to indigenous Argentines in terms of "participación igualitaria, que concibe al indígena y su comunidad como parte de la sociedad nacional, entendiéndolo como un argentino más" (37). The author goes on to explain that "Se trata de entender a las comunidades indígenas en el contexto amplio de la cultura argentina ... como parte integrante de la forma de vida nacional" (37). By portraying recent literary production as universal, as avoiding local color, and as establishing a dialogue with the rest of the nation and the world, the anthology moves beyond static or deterministic conceptions of northwestern identity and implies that authors from Salta Province possess the freedom to explore any topics that they consider appropriate. To be from the Northwest, according to this perspective, does not necessarily entail considering oneself a guardian of a "millenary" tradition or a resident of a colonialera cattle ranch, and the stereotype of the indigenous as primitive "inhabitants" of rural landscapes consequently loses strength.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the ambiguous position of indigenous peoples in twenty-first-century Argentina, arguing that Salta Province offers a noteworthy case study for competing interpretations of regional and national identity. A sample of government-issued tourism publications revealed a close correspondence with the dominant narrative of Argentine historiography, according to which the indigenous either belonged to a national "pre-history" or exist today only as "survivors" of a lost culture and as bearers of ancient traditions, thus excluded from modernity. At the same time, however, these materials occasionally draw attention to the reimagination of indigenous cultures, expressing a fluid understanding of identity that reflects the efforts of indigenous political movements in recent years. Similar tension marks the governmentsponsored literary anthology *Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña*. Many of the texts that the editors have chosen, especially from writers born in earlier generations, repeat the dominant representations that characterize the tourism industry. These works tend to portray the indigenous as bound to the land or to the past, generally omitting contemporary indigenous struggles. Another set of texts, however, contains reflections on abstract, universal themes or engages with broader national or international concerns. Although explicit attention to ongoing debates on indigenous identity would have made a powerful political statement, one should note that, by featuring works that avoid local color, the anthology suggests a de-essentialized view of the Northwest and of its residents' position in the broader Argentine imagined community.

For all of these reasons, the government-sponsored representations of northwestern indigenous peoples and their communities offer a valuable example of the

299

interplay between continuity and change in twenty-first-century Argentina. Alongside conceptions of national identity with roots in the late nineteenth century, these materials give voice to notions of belonging that have gained increased visibility during the past decades. The economic and political crisis of 2001 may have urged Argentina to reconsider long-standing accounts of its origins and destiny, but new ideas have only slowly, and partially, replaced the old. The effects of the crisis suggest that social upheavals do not necessarily entail a dramatic break in deeply rooted patterns of thought. On the contrary, a variety of groups are struggling to define the national community, and only time can tell whether Argentina will be a land of continuity or of change.

CONCLUSION: RE-FOUNDING THE NATION

Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions* (1991), one of the most influential studies of Latin American literature, argues that Romantic novels were a central piece of the nation-building process. In the works that Sommer examines, heterosexual love and marriage lead to the creation of families, whose stability and productivity offer a model for the nascent national communities. The type of fictional union that each plot contains is equally significant. Sommer points out that some novels, such as José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851), which links the agricultural economy of the Argentine interior to the commercial interests of the Buenos Aires port, develop relationships that coincide with the real or desired patterns of political and social alliance (19-20). Failed romances likewise posit an interpretation of the national community, as in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841), whose enslaved black protagonist loses out to a blond English rival in the competition for his mistress's love (21). In all cases, the family is a symbol of the nation and a suggestion that the community be imagined in a particular way.

Sommer's findings provide an opportunity to reconsider the national families that have appeared over the course of this dissertation. With the exception of chapter one, which traced a historical outline of Argentine identity, and chapter five, which focused primarily on non-narrative texts, each of the preceding chapters has made reference to family structures. Chapter two explored the failed relationships of *Veneno*'s Enrique and the legacy of resistance that Pron's narrator discovers in *El espíritu*. Chapter three's discussion of *La pareja del Mundial* highlighted the interweaving of family ties and the Argentine soccer tradition, along with the hope for renewal through another World-Cup child. The work of Washington Cucurto, the subject of chapter four, uses sexual relationships as a means to reinterpret the national community. *1810* reimagines Argentina as the mixed-race offspring of San Martín and his African lover, while *Hasta quitarle*... emphasizes contact among Afro-Argentines, indigenous Argentines, and immigrants from neighboring countries. In the pages that follow, as a means of concluding, I will compare and contrast the functions of national romance in the works that I have studied, pointing out some of the implications for the Argentine community of the twenty-first-century.

Ariel Bermani's Veneno, like the nineteenth-century naturalist novel Sin rumbo, represents the failures of the nation through the failures of its families. There is a degree of determinism at work in the story. Enrique's parents hold low-paying, part-time jobs that place them at a disadvantage, while there is evidence that the protagonist's darker skin color likewise presents an obstacle to social ascent. Alcoholism, another tenet of naturalist fiction, affects multiple generations in the plot, as Enrique's mother spends most of her time drinking, while the protagonist appears inebriated at several points of the novel. Just as Enrique is born with vision problems, which prevent him from excelling at soccer and integrating himself into the local community, his son, Pablo, is born with unspecified developmental difficulties that lead Enrique to abandon his family. During the years that follow, Patricia, Enrique's first wife, invents a mythical biography for the absent father that underscores his failures to achieve the dreams of the Latin American revolutionaries. Even when Enrique fulfills his paternal responsibilities, he is a negative influence on those around him. Susana, his second wife, fears for her safety and that of the children whenever the protagonist falls into a fit of rage. The novel suggests that Enrique is emblematic of a wider problem. None of his mother-in-law's children has

finished a degree or begun a profession, and their marriages have joined them to people without a future. Having developed this series of defeated families, the novel introduces the possibility of redemption through Enrique's relationship with Stella, the female incarnation of national identity. The protagonist's literal failure to consummate this union closes off any chance of starting anew. Enrique, the Argentine everyman, is a failed "founding father," and the implication is that Argentina as a whole is equally destined for misery.

El espíritu, despite its lack of a romantic relationship, inverts the family structure of Veneno and presents an opposite reading of Argentine identity. In Pron's work, family is both a strength and the source of an alternative national tradition. The illness of the narrator's father is a catalyst for the journey of self-discovery, prompting the narrator to leave Germany and to revisit the Argentina that he had forsaken years earlier. At each stage of the narrator's transformation, a family member is by his side: images of his father at the museum trigger the protagonist's emotional breakdown, his siblings watch over his convalescence, and his mother provides information on the family's political activities. Unlike Veneno, where family heritage dooms the protagonist to failure, El *espíritu* traces a legacy of resistance and ethical commitment. The narrator's grandfathers fought against the oligarchy and military rule, while his parents kept up the struggle against the last dictatorship. In Pron's work, parents transmit knowledge and values. The narrator's father, by assembling materials and leaving a blank page, inspires him to continue the story, while his mother explains how to build a barricade and reminds him of the need to fight for one's fellow citizens. Whereas Veneno highlights the failure of family and, by extension, of the nation, *El espíritu* portrays the restitution of each group.

The narrator's discovery of his memories reconnects him with his parents and the alternative national tradition that they represent. At the same time, the efforts of the narrator's father to understand the Burdisso disappearance symbolize the effort to reconstruct the national community in the wake of the dictatorship, a plot detail that reflects the achievements of organizations such as Madres de Plaza de Mayo and HIJOS.

Family also occupies a central place in the Clarín.com miniseries La pareja del *Mundial*, which links soccer to a cycle of birth and national regeneration. The opening episode traces continuity between 1978 and 2010: just as the protagonist and Argentine everyman, Alberto Rizzuti, was born during the match that earned Argentina its first World Cup victory, so too will his wife, Valeria, give birth during a new instance of the tournament. In a certain sense, La pareja del Mundial complements El espíritu, inverting the only aspect of *Veneno* that Pron's novel omits. Whereas birth in *Veneno* serves only to perpetuate a legacy of failure, and the one potentially redemptive birth, the hypothetical child of Stella and Enrique, never occurs, *La pareja del Mundial* places all its hope in the newest member of the national community. Valeria, whose name contains the Latin verb *valere* (to be strong), appears as a source of prosperity. By choosing to name their son "Lionel," in honor of the Argentine soccer superstar Lionel Messi, the leading couple have associated success on the field with success in general. There is indeed a messianic logic behind this decision. During a scene in the protagonist's car, a sequence of shots reveals crucifixes and a statue of the popular religious figure El Gauchito Gil, followed immediately by a photograph of Messi. Such a connection between God and goals is common in Argentina: in recent matches, fans have displayed banners with images of Diego Maradona, Pope Francis, and Messi, alongside the paronomasiac phrase "Dios, El Papa y El Mesías." With so much at stake, Alberto's foreign rival, the Brazilian Edson, poses a dire threat to the family. Edson's adulterous interest in Valeria, expressed most prominently in his gift of *cuernito* pastries, suggests not only the risk of contamination from abroad but also the type of racial mixture that the miniseries, with its racialized coding of national identity, wishes to avoid. From this perspective, Alberto's eventual decision to give up his ticket and remain home for the birth of Lionel acquires even greater significance. The protagonist assumes his role as St. Joseph, presiding over the birth of the national savior and guarantor of European heritage.

It is precisely this Eurocentric understanding of Argentine identity that the relationships of Cucurto's protagonists subvert. In 1810, racial mixture forms the basis of the national community, as the fictionalized San Martín founds the Cucurto lineage with an African slave. The narrator insists on the continuity between that foundational romance and the Argentina of the twenty-first century. Cucurto, along with his relatives in the northwestern province of Tucumán and the suburbs of Florencio Varela, is living proof against the disappearance of the Afro-Argentine population. Yet the novel goes even further, suggesting, through its characterization of San Martín's Afro-Argentine soldiers, that all of Argentine literature, even its most canonical and Eurocentric texts, has African roots. In similar fashion, through the parodic story "El Phale," attributed to one of Cucurto's ancestors, the narrator depicts Jorge Luis Borges as an imitator of Afro-Argentine narrative. This reinterpretation of national identity centers on the present in Hasta quitarle..., whose Afro-Latin protagonist forms relationships with indigenous Argentines and immigrants from neighboring countries. In part, the narrator's sexual promiscuity symbolizes cultural promiscuity. Cucurto's idea of Argentina emerges from

the nightclubs of Once and Constitución, working-class Buenos Aires neighborhoods where cumbia, not tango, is the dominant musical style. At other times, however, Cucurto's characters take part in the same type of community formation that characterizes *La pareja del Mundial*. It is true that the protagonist's hopes of fathering a household full of indigenous children, upon meeting a Wichi woman, never come to fruition, but his language inverts stereotypes and rejects middle-class aspirations for stability. The series of comics that closes the volume returns to this idea, as the author presents himself alongside his Paraguayan partner and their infant son. In both of Cucurto's works, then, the mother is the source of racial mixture. Olga Cucurtú infuses the colony with African blood in *1810*, while the narrator's romances in *Hasta quitarle*... connect Argentina with the rest of Latin America.

The families discussed here reveal the great variety of ways to interpret the twenty-first-century Argentine national community. *Veneno* implies that Argentina is damaged beyond repair, condemned to a cycle of disappointment and failure. *El espíritu*, in contrast, expresses a cautious feeling of hope, viewing the narrator's family as the bearers of an alternative national tradition. *La pareja del Mundial* displays even greater enthusiasm toward the future, connecting soccer with the fate of the country, but Alberto Rizzuti's family repeats the entrenched idea of Argentina as an outpost of Europe in South America. Cucurto's families, in contrast to the preceding examples, suggest neither optimism nor despair. Although several portions of Cucurto's work attack the national government and lament the hardships of contemporary Argentines, the primary role of family structures is to contradict the dominant portrayal of the nation. Nonetheless, despite their apparent lack of interest in Argentina's future, Cucurto's texts provide the

most accurate suggestion of how the country will look in the years to come. Argentina is, and always has been, a nation of diverse traditions, but this diversity will only increase with the passing of time. Contemporary immigration from Africa, Latin America, and China--to name only the most visible examples--is a demographic fact in many regions of the country. Regardless of whether twenty-first-century Argentina keeps hold of its newfound stability or descends into yet another crisis, the nation as imagined by Cucurto is here to stay. It is impossible to predict, however, to what extent the shifting composition of society will produce a corresponding shift in portrayals of the Argentine community. As the struggle between change and continuity persists, Argentina will remain a fertile ground for the study of national identity in the age of globalization.

REFERENCES

Adamovsky, Ezequiel. *Historia de la clase media argentina*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009.

---. *Historia de las clases populares en la Argentina: Desde 1880 hasta 2003.* Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2012.

Adet, Walter, ed. *Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña*. Vol. 1 (1582-1981). 2nd ed. Salta: Del Robledal, 2007.

Agostino, Gilberto. "Nós e *Ellos, Nosotros* y Eles -- Brasil X Argentina: Os Inimigos Fraternos." *Memória social dos esportes. Futebol e Política: A Construção de uma Identidade Nacional.* Ed. Francisco Carlos Teixeira Da Silva and Ricardo Pinto dos Santos. Vol. 2. Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD Editora, 2006. 54-80.

Aira, César. La villa. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2001.

Alabarces, Pablo. "Entre la banalidad y la crítica: perspectivas de las ciencias sociales sobre el deporte en América Latina. *Fútbol-espectáculo, Cultura y Sociedad*. Ed. Samuel Martínez López. Mexico D. F.: Afinita, 2010. 69-101.

---. "Football Fans and the Argentine Crisis of 2001-02: The Crisis, the World Cup and the Destiny of the *Patria*." *Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer.* Ed. Rory M. Miller and Liz Crolley. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007. 94-111.

Alabarces, Pablo, and María Graciela Rodríguez. "Football and the Fatherland: The Crisis of National Representation in Argentinian Soccer." *Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions*. Ed. Gerry P. T. Finn and Richard Giulianotti. London: Frank Cass, 2000. 118-33.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* 1983. London: Verso, 2006.

Andrews, George Reid. *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*. 1800-1900. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1980.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Archetti, Eduardo. "Argentina 1978: Military Nationalism, Football Essentialism, and Moral Ambivalence." *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup.* Ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young. Albany: SUNY P, 2005. 133-47. ---. Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina. Oxford: Berg, 1999.

---. *El potrero, la pista y el ring: las patrias del deporte argentino*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001.

Assadourian, Carlos S. *El tráfico de esclavos en Córdoba de Angola a Potosí, siglos XVI-XVII*. Córdoba, Argentina: Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1966.

Assadourian, Carlos S., Guillermo Beato, and José C. Chiaramonte. *De la conquista a la independencia*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005.

Belvedere, Carlos, et al. "Racismo y discurso: una semblanza de la situación argentina." *Racismo y discurso en América Latina*. Ed. Teun A. Van Dijk. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2007.

Bermani, Ariel. Veneno. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2006.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "El escritor argentino y la tradición." *Obras completas.* Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2005. 282-89.

---. "El sur." Obras completas. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2005. 562-68.

Borges, Jorge Luis, and Adolfo Bioy Casares. "La fiesta del monstruo." *Obras completas en colaboración*. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1979. 392-402.

Borucki, Alex. "The Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata, 1777-1812: Trans-Imperial Networks and Atlantic Warfare." *Colonial Latin American Review* 20.1 (2011): 81-107.

Calabuig, Ernesto. Rev. of *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, by Patricio Pron. *El Cultural* 22 Jul. 2011. Web.

Cambaceres, Eugenio. Sin rumbo. Madrid: Cátedra, 1999.

Cantón, Darío, José L. Moreno, and Alberto Ciria. *La democracia constitucional y su crisis*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005.

Carante, María Eugenia, ed. *Cuatro siglos de literatura salteña*. Vol. 2 (1982-2007). 2nd ed. Salta: Del Robledal, 2008.

Censo 2010 Argentina: afrodescendientes. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2012. Web. 27 Aug. 2015. http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_afro.asp>.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. Don Quijote de la Mancha. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2004.

Chamosa, Oscar. "Criollo and Peronist: The Argentine Folklore Movement during the First Peronism, 1943-1955." *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity*

in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina. Ed. Matthew B. Karush and Oscar Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 113-42.

Chasteen, John Charles. "Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities." *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. Ed. Sara Castro-Klarén and Chasteen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. ixxxv.

Cirio, Norberto Pablo. "La presencia del negro en grabaciones de tango y géneros afines." *Buenos Aires negra. Identidad y cultura.* Ed. Leticia Maronese. Buenos Aires: Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2006. 25-59.

Cortázar, Julio. "Casa tomada." *Cuentos completos*. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Suma de Letras, 2004. 141-47.

Cucurto, Washington. Cosas de negros. Buenos Aires: Interzona, 2003.

---. Hasta quitarle Panamá a los yankis. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2010.

---. 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2008.

"De la crisis del 2001 a la esperanza del 2003." Clarín 22 Feb. 2004. Web.

De Riz, Lilliana. La política en suspenso: 1966/1976. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000.

Delamata, Gabriela. "Movilización colectiva y transformaciones de la ciudadanía en la Argentina reciente (1980-2007)." *Ayer* 73 (2009): 73-102.

Di Meglio, Gabriel. *Historia de las clases populares en la Argentina: Desde 1516 hasta 1880.* Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2012.

Drucaroff, Elsa. Los prisioneros de la torre: política, relatos y jóvenes en la postdictadura. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2011.

Duke, Vic, and Liz Crolley. "*Fútbol*, Politicians and the People: Populism and Politics in Argentina." *Sport in Latin American Society: Past and Present*. Ed. J. A. Mangan and Lamartine P. DaCosta. London: Frank Cass, 2002. 93-116.

Earle, Rebecca. *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930.* Durham: Duke UP, 2007.

Echeverría, Esteban. "La cautiva." *Obras escogidas*. Ed. Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991. 61-122.

---. "El matadero." *Obras escogidas*. Ed. Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991. 123-42.

Ferrari, Germán. Símbolos y fantasmas. Las víctimas de la guerrilla: de la amnistía a la "justicia para todos." Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009.

Frigerio, Alejandro. "'Negros' y 'Blancos' en Buenos Aires: repensando nuestras categorías raciales." *Buenos Aires negra. Identidad y cultura*. Ed. Leticia Maronese. Buenos Aires: Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2006. 77-98.

Gallo, Ezequiel, and Roberto Cortés Conde. *La república conservadora*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005.

García Canclini, Néstor. La globalización imaginada. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1999.

Gilbert, Abel, and Miguel Vitagliano. *El terror y la gloria: la vida, el fútbol y la política en la Argentina del Mundial '78*. Buenos Aires: Norma, 1998.

Gilbert, Alan. "From Dreams to Reality: The Economics and Geography of Football Success." *Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer*. Ed. Rory M. Miller and Liz Crolley. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007. 52-72.

Giulianotti, Richard. "Football, South America and Globalisation: Conceptual Paths." *Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer*. Ed. Rory M. Miller and Liz Crolley. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007. 37-51.

Giulianotti, Richard, and Roland Robertson. *Globalization and Football*. London: Sage, 2009.

Gnutzmann, Rita. Introduction. *El juguete rabioso*. By Roberto Arlt. Madrid: Cátedra, 1985.

González, Alberto Rex, and José A. Pérez. *Argentina indígena. Vísperas de la conquista*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2007.

Gordillo, Gastón, and Silvia Hirsch. "La presencia ausente: invisibilizaciones, políticas estatales y emergencias indígenas en la Argentina." *Movilizaciones indígenas e identidades en disputa en la Argentina*. Ed. Gordillo and Hirsch. Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2010.

Gorostegui de Torres, Haydée. La organización nacional. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000.

Gramuglio, María Teresa. *Nacionalismo y cosmopolitismo en la literatura argentina*. Rosario: Municipal de Rosario, 2013.

Grimson, Alejandro, and Gabriel Kessler. On Argentina and the Southern Cone: Neoliberalism and National Imaginations. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Guerra, Francisco-Xavier. "Forms of Communication, Political Spaces, and Cultural Identities in the Creation of Spanish American Nations." *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. Ed. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. 3-32.

Güiraldes, Ricardo. Don Segundo Sombra. Madrid: Alianza, 1982.

Halperín Donghi, Tulio. La democracia de masas. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000.

---. Revolución y guerra. 3rd. ed. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2014.

Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. 1-14.

Huberman, Ariana. *Gauchos and Foreigners: Glossing Culture and Identity in the Argentine Countryside*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011.

Ikenberry, G. John. "What States Can Do Now." *The Nation-State in Question*. Ed. T. V. Paul, Ikenberry, and John A. Hall. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. 350-71.

Johnson, Lyman L. Workshop of Revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776-1810. Durham: Duke UP, 2001.

Kaminsky, Amy. Argentina: Stories for a Nation. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008.

Karasik, Gabriela Alejandra. "Subalternidad y ancestralidad colla: transformaciones emblemáticas y nuevas articulaciones de lo indígena en Jujuy." *Movilizaciones indígenas e identidades en disputa en la Argentina*. Ed. Gastón Gordillo and Silvia Hirsch. Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2010.

Karush, Matthew B. "Populism, Melodrama, and the Market: The Mass Cultural Origins of Peronism." *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Ed. Karush and Oscar Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 21-51.

Karush, Matthew B., and Oscar Chamosa. Introduction. *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Ed. Karush and Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 1-19.

Keys, Barbara. *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Lenton, Diana. "The Malón de la Paz of 1946: Indigenous *Descamisados* at the Dawn of Peronism." Trans. Beatrice D. Gurwitz. *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Ed. Matthew B. Karush and Oscar Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 85-111.

López, Laura Cecilia. "Organización política y articulación con espacios locales-globales de los afrodescendientes en La Argentina en la última década." *Buenos Aires negra. Identidad y cultura.* Ed. Leticia Maronese. Buenos Aires: Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2006. 99-114.

López-Chávez, Celia. "Microhistoria de la esclavitud negra en el siglo XVIII: el caso de la residencia jesuita de San Juan de la Frontera." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 5.4 (1996): 181-94.

Ludmer, Josefina. *El género gauchesco: un tratado sobre la patria*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988.

Lynch, John. San Martín: Argentine Soldier, American Hero. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.

---. *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826.* 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1986.

Mandrini, Raúl. *La Argentina aborigen. De los primeros pobladores a 1910*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2008.

Marechal, Leopoldo. Adán Buenosayres. Madrid: Castalia, 1994.

Martínez Sarasola, Carlos. *Nuestros paisanos los indios*. Buenos Aires: Del Nuevo Extremo, 2013.

Meisel, Seth. "'The Fruit of Freedom': Slaves and Citizens in Early Republican Argentina." *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*. Ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006. 273-306.

Milanesio, Natalia. "Peronists and *Cabecitas*: Stereotypes and Anxieties at the Peak of Social Change." *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Ed. Matthew B. Karush and Oscar Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 53-84.

Miller, Rory M. "Introduction: Studying Football in the Americas." *Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer.* Ed. Rory M. Miller and Liz Crolley. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007. 1-34.

Ministerio de Turismo de La Nación. *Catálogo de distinguidos por regiones: Norte.* Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Turismo de la Nación, 2012.

---. *Red argentina de turismo rural comunitario*. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Turismo de la Nación, 2012.

The Nation-State in Question. Ed. T. V. Paul, G. John Ikenberry, and John A. Hall. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

Novaro, Marcos, and Vicente Palermo. *La dictadura militar: 1976/1983*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003.

Palmeiro, Cecilia. *Desbunde y felicidad: de la Cartonera a Perlongher*. Buenos Aires: Título, 2010.

Plotkin, Mariano Ben. "Final Reflections." *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Ed. Matthew B. Karush and Oscar Chamosa. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 271-86.

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

Pron, Patricio. *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*. Buenos Aires: Mondadori, 2012.

Rachman, Gideon. "Beautiful Game, Lousy Business: The Problems of Latin American Football." *Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer.* Ed. Rory M. Miller and Liz Crolley. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007. 161-73.

Rock, David. Argentina: 1516-1987. From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín. London: I. B. Tauris, 1987.

Romero, Luis Alberto. *La larga crisis argentina: del siglo XX al siglo XXI*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2013.

Salta, tan linda que enamora. Buenos Aires: Instituto de Promoción Turística - Ministerio de Cultura y Turismo de la Provincia de Salta, n.d.

Sarlo, Beatriz. "La novela después de la historia. Sujetos y tecnologías." *Escritos sobre literatura argentina*. Ed. Sylvia Saítta. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2007. 471-82. Sarlo, Beatriz, and Carlos Altamirano. "Prólogo." *Obras escogidas*. Ed. Sarlo and Altamirano. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991. ix-li.

Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino. *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de la La Matanza, 2001.

---. *Facundo, o civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta, 2000.

Sassen, Saskia. *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

---. *Territory, Authority, Rights: from Medieval to Global Assemblages.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.

Schettini, Ariel. "Las puertas del cielo." *Página/12*. 10 Aug. 2003. Web. 21 May 2014. http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/libros/10-684-2003-08-10.html.

Schijman, Agustina, and Guadalupe Dorna. "Clase media y clase media vulnerable. Evidencia empírica de la volatilidad intrageneracional de los sectores medios en Argentina (1996-mitad de 2007)." *Desarrollo Económico* 52.206 (2012): 179-203.

Secretaría de Turismo de La Nación. *Tilcara, Purmamarca: Destinos distinguidos*. Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Turismo de La Nación, 2009.

Shumway, Nicolas. The Invention of Argentina. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.

Solano, Francisco. "El lugar del hijo." Rev. of *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, by Patricio Pron. *Revista de libros de la Fundación Caja Madrid* 179:46.

Solomianski, Alejandro. *Identidades secretas: la negritud argentina*. Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2003.

Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.

Soriano, Osvaldo. A sus plantas rendido un león. Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 1996.

Soysal, Yasemin Nuhoğlu. *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.

Stepan, Nancy. "*The Hour of Eugenics*": *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. 1991.

Studer, Elena F. S. de. *La trata de negros en el Río de la Plata durante el siglo XVIII*. Buenos Aires: U de Buenos Aires, 1958.

Tomlinson, Alan, and Christopher Young. "Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Global Sports Event--An Introduction." *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup.* Ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young. Albany: SUNY P, 2005. 1-14.

Vela, María Elena. "Historia y actualidad de los estudios afroargentinos y africanos en la Argentina." *El negro en la Argentina: presencia y negación*. Ed. Dina Picotti. Buenos Aires: Editores de América Latina, 2001. 49-62.

Veredas, Recaredo. Rev. of *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, by Patricio Pron. *ABC.es* 25 May 2011. Web.

Yack, Bernard. "Nationalism, Popular Sovereignty, and the Liberal Democratic State." *The Nation-State in Question*. Ed. T. V. Paul, G. John Ikenberry, and John A. Hall. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. 29-50.