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CROSSING THE ATLANTIC:
ITALIANS IN ARGENTINA AND THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL CULTURE, 1880-1930

BY

LAUREN A KAPLAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

The City University of New York

2019

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT:

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC:

ITALIANS IN ARGENTINA AND THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL CULTURE, 1880-1930

Lauren A Kaplan

Advisor: Emily Braun

Between 1880-1930, Argentina took in millions of Italian immigrants, contributing to the largest voluntary diaspora in modern history. This dissertation examines how Argentina's open immigration policy dovetailed with the formation of a national artistic style, generating new perspectives on how immigrants, particularly Italians, proactively shaped Argentine culture while also becoming enmeshed in an intricate geo-political relationship that spanned generations and regimes. This project takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon research from anthropology, social history, political science, and nationalism studies in order to produce new insights about art and national identity in Argentina around the turn of the twentieth century.

Though Argentina is often considered the most "European" or "Europhilic" country in Latin America, scholars do not often discuss *which* version of Europe Argentines were looking at. For most upwardly mobile Argentines, "European" was synonymous with "French"—they called their capital the "Paris of South America," modeled their homes after Parisian *hotels*, and collected Impressionist paintings. However, many middle and upper class porteños (residents of Buenos Aires) were of Italian heritage. They embodied *italianità*—or Italianness—by default rather than choice, but often, it became embedded within other aspects of their *Argentinidad*—or Argentineness—making it hard to recognize. This dissertation aims to locate evolving strands of *italianità* within Argentine culture by looking first at migration trends, then the groups of artists

and organizations founded by Italo-Argentines (first generation Argentines born to Italian parents) in the 1880s and 1920s, and finally, at the political byproducts of these migrations.

Chapters 1 and 2 investigate why Italy promoted emigration and why Argentina became an attractive destination in the late nineteenth century. This discussion considers how the Italian government sought to culturally colonize South American countries like Argentina, which was a willing accomplice, as it desired European immigrants and needed to repopulate the plains left empty by government-sponsored genocide. Chapter 3 explores Buenos Aires's nascent art world circa 1880. A group of cultural elites known as the *Generación del 80*—white Argentines of Spanish descent—advocated for European immigration as a way to “civilize” the country. A key role model for politicians and cultural theorists alike was Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who posited that immigration and national art institutions were equally necessary to the cultivation of an Argentine culture. The *Generación* argued that art could act as a nation-building force, particularly in the form of landscape and history paintings that depict Argentina's origin story of “conquering the desert” and imposing modern industry on the land.

Chapter 4 examines the first mature generation of Italo-Argentine artists, like Emilio Pettoruti and Xul Solar, who traveled to Europe to learn about their heritage and see avant-garde art in the 1910s. Upon returning to Argentina, they imported French and Italian modern styles, but infused them with Argentine imagery and subject matter, such as Tango dancers. This privileged group could claim European culture as their own *and* claim to be authentically Argentine, allowing them to exist in two cultural spheres simultaneously. For them, Italian and Argentine identity became intertwined and mutually inclusive, and their work reflects this transnational hybridity. In 1924, a group of artists and critics, including many Italo-Argentines,

formed the journal *Martín Fierro* and an influential art organization, *Los Amigos del Arte*. Both the journal and the events organized by *Los Amigos* embodied an internal conflict—the desire to imitate European culture while also breaking away from it.

Finally, Chapter 5 considers Italy's escalating attempts to exert influence over Argentina following Mussolini's rise to power. Beginning in 1925, Mussolini used cultural diplomacy as a way to spread Fascism abroad. His efforts both succeeded and failed: they succeeded in that Argentina wound up developing its own brand of radical nationalism, *Nacionalismo*, but they failed in that *Nacionalismo* ultimately led a drop in immigration and the end of the symbiotic Italy-Argentina relationship that had persisted for decades.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, my thanks go to my advisor, Emily Braun, who has provided me with support and guidance for over a decade while I was a graduate student and a doctoral candidate. Countless fits and starts, long meetings, meticulous edits, and fruitful conversations have contributed to my creative process as I wrote this dissertation. Without Professor Braun's patient and attentive eye, I would never have arrived at this particular project with its unique methodology and scope.

The insights of my other readers have also made this dissertation stronger and more relevant. As a specialist on Latin America, and Argentina in particular, Harper Montgomery has offered invaluable feedback throughout the dissertation process, particularly at the end. David Aliano, a historian who has focused on connections between Italy and the Americas, also helped to check for historical accuracy and provide a necessary voice from outside the discipline of art history. Finally, Romy Golan, who came to the project late, encouraged me to think more deeply about specific works of art and inspect them more critically.

This dissertation was supported by a year-long fellowship from the Leon Levy Center for Biography, which allowed me to travel to Argentina for a summer. While there, I visited a number of archives, foundations, and libraries that hold publications and primary sources I could not access in New York. I am especially thankful to the Fundación Pettoruti in Buenos Aires, which opened its doors to me many times and allowed me to photograph countless photographs and letters, as well as the Fundación Espigas, an unparalleled resource on modern art in Argentina. I am also grateful to Jennifer Tobias, Chief Librarian at MoMA, who helped me

locate key sources here in New York and allowed me to stay at MoMA's library as long as I wanted, especially when it was blissfully empty. Finally, I give thanks to the staff of the New York Public Library's Wertheim Study, where I worked for two years with access to everything that the New York Public has to offer.

Innumerable conversations and encounters have informed my thinking over the six years that I worked on this dissertation, and also provided me with the motivation I needed to see the project through. In particular, I want to thank my colleagues and friends, both inside and outside of academia: Raffaele Bedarida, Paula Burleigh, Janna Shoenberger, Liz Donato, Kerry Greaves, John Maciuika, Lynda Klich, Jessica Backus, Ana Fitzner, Hollie Ecker, Sarah Mostow, Elena Fitzpatrick, Jodie Katzeff, and Ola Robbins.

Finally, I must give thanks to my family. My parents continually prodded me to finish the PhD—often to the point of frustration—but their assertiveness helped a lot. And of course, thank you to my partner Micah, who encouraged me to think long-term and see the value of completing this project, even when it seemed like an interminable task that would not bring immediate benefits. For that re-framing, I am endlessly grateful, and ultimately proud.

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CHAPTER 1:

Origins of the Italian Diaspora

Introduction: Bloodlines and Symbiosis:

On March 13, 2013, the Vatican shocked the world by electing its first Pope from the Americas, the Argentine Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Now known as the accepting and liberal-minded Pope Francis, Bergoglio was born to Italian immigrant parents in Buenos Aires, on December 17, 1936. After studying as a chemical technician, then intermittently teaching literature and psychology while serving as a priest for forty-four years, he moved to Italy to assume his new position of power at the age of seventy-six. Shortly after his arrival, Francis addressed a crowd of tens of thousands in Saint Peter's Square, humbly saying, "As you know, the duty of the conclave was to appoint a bishop of Rome. It seems to me that my brother cardinals have chosen one who is from faraway. . . . Here I am. I would like to thank you for your embrace."¹

Of course, Buenos Aires *is* geographically distant from Rome, but demographically and culturally, they are quite proximate.² Argentina is populated by many individuals who identify with Italian history and culture and are ethnically of Italian origins, like Bergoglio. In fact, Bergoglio is a dual national, since his parents are Italian, and Italian citizenship law is based on the *jure sanguinis* principle (citizenship by blood), which allows anyone with an Italian ancestor

¹ biography.com Editors, Pope Francis Biography, <http://www.biography.com/people/pope-francis-21152349> (A& E Television Network, November 21, 2016; date accessed: February 21, 2017). This quote comes from: Austen Ivereigh, "Is the Pope the Anti-Trump?" *The New York Times: Sunday Review*, March 4, 2017. (Accessed 3/6/17: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/04/opinion/sunday/is-the-pope-the-anti-trump.html?_r=0).

² To a certain extent, I am conflating the Vatican or Rome with Italy here, but the point is apt: clericalism is a central part of Italian culture and Argentine culture.

to own an Italian passport.³ The Pope's parents, Mario José Bergoglio and Regina María Sívori, were originally from Piedmont, and they left Italy in 1929 to escape the Fascist rule of Benito Mussolini. Though Bergoglio identifies as Argentine, he has long spoken Spanish *and* Italian, and he carries a European Union passport alongside his Argentine one.

After the Pope asked Italians for their embrace six years ago, he began to welcome individuals from all cultures into his home, tearing down both religious and cultural barriers. He has invited dozens of refugees into the Vatican, many of them Muslim. Three families were brought back to the Vatican when the Pope visited a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, in April, 2016, and two of these families still live with him. When asked why he took back Muslim families rather than Christian ones, his reply aimed to unite Christians and Muslims by highlighting their similarities: "I didn't make a religious choice between Christians and Muslims...These three families had their documents in order. There were, for example, two Christian families who didn't. ... All 12 of them are children of God."⁴ Next, he was quoted as saying that migration was not a *problem* for modern-day Italy, but a *challenge* that the all of Europe should welcome. This stance has pitted him against other global—and Italian—leaders who favor Nativist approaches to migration. "When there is this welcoming, accompaniment, integration, there's no danger with immigration," Francis says, "A culture is received and another

³ Italian citizenship laws are based on the principle of recognition of citizenship by blood regardless of the place of birth. This was designed to guarantee the children of Italian emigrants stay linked with the country of origin of the ascendants, introducing an important exception to the principle of recognition of only one citizenship. Article 7 of the law 555/1912 allowed the child of an Italian born in a foreign State who grants his citizenship according to the "jure soli" principle (the law of the soil) to retain Italian citizenship acquired at birth, even if the parent lost his Italian citizenship while his child was still a minor. Before 1948 only the father could pass along citizenship by blood, but since then both the mother and father than do so. For more on this, consult the Italian Embassy in Washington D.C. here: http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/ambasciata_washington/en/informazioni_e_servizi/cittadinanza-jure-sanguinis.html

⁴ Pope Francis is quoted in: Austen Ivereigh, "Is the Pope the Anti-Trump?" *The New York Times: Sunday Review*, March 4, 2017. (Accessed 3/6/17: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/04/opinion/sunday/is-the-pope-the-anti-trump.html?_r=0).

offered. This is my response to fear.”⁵ Perhaps this stance comes from being the product of immigration himself, but it also points to the open policy that Argentina, Francis’s birth country, promoted in the decades preceding his birth, when it took in millions of Italian immigrants. Indeed, Bergoglio’s parents left Italy at the tail end of the largest voluntary diaspora in modern human history, and they chose to relocate to Argentina, a country that received more European immigrants than all other Spanish-speaking American countries combined.⁶

According to anthropologist Jeffrey Bass, who conducted a study involving middle-class *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires) in 2005-6, although the descendants of European immigrants in Argentina have a strong sense of nationalism, they also deeply identify with their parents’ and grandparents’ countries of origin, and some of them lack a sense of Argentine patriotism altogether. “It could be said that some of these middle-class porteños see themselves as Europeans lost on a Latin American continent,” he writes.⁷ This transnational identity—one that extends beyond national borders, or in this case, an ocean—has spawned deep anxiety within Argentine culture today. Like Bergoglio, many Argentine descendants of Italians carry a second passport, and the vast majority have dual citizenship. This wide-spread phenomenon of identifying with a second country is also reflected in the important role played by foreign cultural associations in the lives of many Argentines. In Buenos Aires alone, there are more than

⁵ Ivereigh explains Francis’s overall motivations as going against global capitalism. For Ivereigh, Francis isn’t a globalist, but he is a universalist. He writes, “In Francis’s post-neoliberal future, the poor of the world act with the church and civil-society organizations to create an economy that serves human flourishing, while calling on states to receive migrants in solidarity.”

⁶ Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires 1850-1930*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10.

⁷ Jeffrey Bass, “In Exile from the Self: National Belonging and Psychoanalysis in Buenos Aires,” *ETHOS*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2006, 434. Bass is interested in how this so-called identity crisis in Argentina has led many Argentines to undergo psychoanalysis when they feel politically alienated. Interestingly, Argentina has a higher per capita rate of psychoanalytic treatment than any other nation in the world, which Bass links to a disillusionment with their national culture and/or their religion.

270 registered Italian cultural associations, primarily frequented *not* by Italian immigrants, but by their offspring.⁸ Though in the immediate postwar period of the 1950s, Italian connections were denigrated due to the legacy of Fascism and Italy's weak economy, by the late 1960s, when Argentina underwent its own political and economic crisis, Italian elements had begun to recapture a certain clout. As Arnd Schneider argued in 2000, national identities and hierarchies have only become more nuanced and confusing in recent decades: "Between the times of mass immigration and the present, Italy and Argentina have reversed positions. What was the poor emigrant nation is now amongst the world's top industrial nations, and what was a major immigration country is now part of the so-called 'Third World.'"⁹

Many Argentines have long highlighted their European connections. This explains the well-known Argentine joke: "The Mexicans descended from the Aztecs; the Peruvians from the Incas; but the Argentines, they descended from the boats."¹⁰ This witticism hints at an essential component of Argentine identity, or *Argentinidad*: European-ness. Argentine identity is sometimes seen as a fusion of the cultures of European immigrants and their descendants into a new society. Other Latin Americans often accuse Argentines of being self-important or arrogant, in part because they highlight their European connections rather than owning up to the fact that

⁸ Arnd Schneider, *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 263. According to Schneider, in 1984, Argentina had the largest number of Italian associations abroad—718 compared with the United States, which had only 702. FEDITALIA, a central organization with which all Italian federations in Argentina are affiliated, was founded in Buenos Aires, in 1912. This was considered the official institutional representation of all Italian immigrants in Argentina.

⁹ Schneider, 26. Schneider is most interested in this "inversion of roles" between Italy and Argentina. He is also fascinated by the paradox of Argentina's decline. Multiple times, he asks: how did one of the richest countries in the world a century ago become part of the developing world? Some economists argue that Argentina's economy began to slow down when it switched from an agrarian economy—producing wheat, beef and leather—to a more industrial economy.

¹⁰ This is quoted in: Guntram H. Herbrand David H. Kaplan, eds. *Scaling Identities, Nationalism and Territoriality*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 67.

they are located in South America. The other telling quip, which plays on the oversized Argentine self-esteem: *How do you fit ten Argentines into a Fiat Uno? You deflate their egos.*¹¹ It is not incidental that they are squeezing into an *Italian* car.

Indeed, in Italy, questions of personal or national belonging are just as fraught. In 2011, Italy celebrated the sesquicentennial of its national unification, but scholars still debate the meaning of the word “Italian.” Does the label require citizenship, genealogy, or is mere self-identification enough? Does strong regional identity obviate the possibility of feeling “Italian”? In fact, the modern Italian word for citizenship—*cittadinanza*—originally meant “loyalty to a city,” not a nation; similarly, *paese* can be used to mean country and village, pointing to the enduring legacy of regional identification in Italy.¹² Historian Aliza Wong recently wrote, “Although the Kingdom of Italy was founded in 1861, it is questionable whether the construction of an Italian national collective has yet been fully accomplished or stabilized.”¹³ Lucy Riall argues that, in the nineteenth century during the Risorgimento, nationalism was ultimately an exclusionary idea that applied only to elites who defined their *patria* in local terms. “‘Nationalism’ was a euphemism for ‘regionalism,’” she writes, and even though the idea of

¹¹ This is quoted in Bass, 442. He also cites a Spanish-language billboard in East Los Angeles, that advertised a Toyota Camry as spacious enough to “fit five Argentines...and their egos,” proving that the stereotype of arrogant Argentines is pervasive throughout Latin America and the Latino community in California.

¹² Donna R. Gabaccia mentions these linguistic oddities in the introduction of her text: Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 5-6. She will go on to argue that the tensions between loyalty to a national construct and loyalty to a specific village or area are at the heart of the Italian “problem.”

¹³ Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 1.

nationalism implied a public sphere, that sphere was still only available to those who were wealthy, literate, and male.¹⁴

These questions about nationalism, *Italianness*, transnationalism, and multiple identities, have become increasingly important as Italy, a country that exported millions of citizens a century ago, has now become a nation of net *immigration* rather than *emigration*. In fact, over the last five decades, as Italy's economy has become more stable and robust than Argentina's, it has taken in many Italo-Argentines. In 1988, Argentina's presidential candidate for the right-wing Liberal Party—the party initially responsible for opening the doors to European immigration in the late nineteenth century—used the slogan: “We brought your grandfather over here. Let's avoid your son having to leave.... [Your grandfathers] were attracted by the prospects of one of the most flourishing countries on earth.... Now our country is the victim of the saddest of all exports: the export of its sons.”¹⁵ This nationalist campaign, clearly meant to target middle-aged men and women of Italian (or European) descent, stoked fears of a potential drain on the nation's human resources. It also reveals the ways in which Argentina has fallen short of its promised economic potential: After World War I, Argentina accounted for half of all Latin American exports; in 2000, its production was surpassed by the single Brazilian state of São Paulo.¹⁶ This precipitous decline has created a reverse-migration. In the 1970s, Italy joined the ten wealthiest

¹⁴ Lucy Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society, and National Unification*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 75.

¹⁵ This campaign poster is quoted in Schneider, 258. The complete slogan reads: “We brought your grandfather over here. Let's avoid your son having to leave. The liberals who governed Argentina at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one opened the doors to immigrants. This is how our grandfathers arrived. They were attracted by the prospects of one of the most flourishing countries on earth.... Now our country is the victim of the saddest of all exports: the export of its sons. Very soon you will vote. Think of it: for whom would he (your grandfather) have voted? And if you are uncertain, ask your son.”

¹⁶ Schneider, 17-18.

nations in the world, and many Argentine grandsons and daughters of Italian immigrants began inverting their ancestors' journeys by relocating to Italy.

In the most high profile example of all, Pope Francis has moved *to* Rome, further illustrating the ongoing, symbiotic links between Italy and Argentina. Migration between the two countries has led to enduring political bonds, linguistic connections—many Argentines speak with an Italian lilt or accent, and many speak both Spanish and Italian—artistic exchanges, and complicated overlapping national identities. These convergences are the subject of this dissertation, which explores Argentina's burgeoning national identity through the lens of artistic representations and art organizations created between 1880-1930. During this period, Argentina took in millions of Italian immigrants, and this study cannot be considered complete without also looking to the simultaneously coalescing national identity in Italy, which was complicated by regional, economic, and cultural divisions from the outset. Given the profound Italo-Argentine relationship, it is ultimately not surprising that the Vatican chose a Pope from Argentina. Instead, the question is: *Why did it take so long?*¹⁷

Dissertation Structure and Methodology:

The complex and symbiotic relationship between Italy and Argentina has not been adequately analyzed within existing art historical scholarship, nor has Argentine art been properly contextualized within a broader history of mass migration. I believe that Argentina's cultural development and its immigration policy must be studied in tandem, as they have been

¹⁷ It is perhaps of note that the recent HBO series, *The Young Pope*, also focuses on a Pope from the Americas. The fictional Lenny Belardo, known as Pius XII, is from New York, another center of Italian immigrants and culture. Yet, in the series, Belardo is anything but pious, and one of the key tensions of the series is his lack of adherence to Catholic tradition and Italian ways of life—he prefers a diet cherry soda to actual food, he believes in abortion, he does not speak Italian or Latin—while those surrounding him in the Vatican are wedded to it.

inextricably linked ever since the ratification of the 1853 Constitution and the publication of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's (1811-1888) famous text, *Facundo*, in 1845, and its widespread dissemination throughout the 1850s and 60s. Sarmiento equated "European" with "civilized," and he argued that immigration was central to Argentina's cultural and economic development. By examining how Argentina's immigration policy dovetailed with the birth of a national style, as well as avant-garde art societies and journals, we can better understand how immigrants, particularly Italians, proactively shaped Argentine culture while also becoming more passively enmeshed in an intricate geo-political alliance that spanned generations and regimes.

Though Argentina is often labeled the most "European" or "Eurocentric" country in Latin American, the idea of "Europe" requires further parsing in this context. Which version of Europe were Argentines looking at around the turn of the twentieth century? For most upwardly mobile Argentines, "European" was synonymous with "French." The cultural elements that they aspired to incorporate into their lives were Parisian, as evidenced by the fact that they called Buenos Aires "the Paris of South America." They collected Impressionist and post-impressionist landscapes, modeled their residences after Parisian *hotels*, and some even learned French through imported books and journals. Since many middle and upper class porteños were of Italian heritage, they would not have aspired to be *more* Italian, especially because Italy was not considered as modern or sophisticated as France. They embodied *italianità*—or Italianness—by default rather than choice, but often, it became embedded within other aspects of their *Argentinidad*. Perhaps because it is so deep-seated and pervasive—and often transformed through Argentine translation—*italianità* has become hard to recognize. Its central role in

Argentine culture has been largely overlooked by art historians, eclipsed by the traditional reading that Argentines looked only to France.

In 2000, Argentine art historian, Diana B. Wechsler, edited the first and most comprehensive study on parallels between Italian and Argentine art, *Italia en el horizonte de las artes plásticas, Argentina siglos XIX y XX*, (Italy on the Horizon of the Plastic Arts, Argentina in the 19th and 20th Centuries).¹⁸ A few years later, Patricia M. Artundo published two general studies on the role of French and Spanish art in Argentina—*El arte francés en la Argentina: 1890-1950* (French Art in Argentina: 1890-1950) and *El arte español en la Argentina, 1890-1960* (Spanish Art in Argentina: 1890-1960)—but no analogous text on Italian art.¹⁹ My project fills a unique niche, focusing specifically on the Italian-Argentine relationship, but examining it in a more expansive way than Wechsler, Artundo or other art historians. Rather than inspecting art in a vacuum—or focusing on highly specific moments in Buenos Aires’s artistic development—I place visual art and artists in a wider frame of reference, using research from anthropology, social history, political science, and nationalism studies in order to produce new insights. In taking a broader view, I aim to better answer key questions about national identity in both countries, as well as the particular community of Italo-Argentines (first generation Argentines born to Italian parents) that coalesced around the turn of the twentieth century with robust ties on both sides of the Atlantic.

¹⁸ Diana Beatriz Wechsler ed., *Italia en el horizonte de las artes plásticas: Argentina, siglos XIX y XX*, (Buenos Aires: Asociación Dante Alighieri, 2000).

¹⁹ See: Patricia M. Artundo, *El arte francés en la Argentina: 1890-1950*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2004) and: Patricia Artundo and Roberto Amigo Cerisola, *El arte español en la Argentina, 1890-1960*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2006).

This dissertation argues that this community constitutes an early example of transnational artists. The term *transnational*—now ubiquitous in the age of global economies and ever increasing migration—here refers to a way of self-identifying that extends beyond national boundaries or cultures. Beginning in the mid 1800s, many Italian theorists and politicians contended that Italian culture need not be geographically constrained, and that immigrants could carry it with them wherever they moved. In a sense, this concept is nascent transnationalism. Later, when the children of Italian immigrants to Argentina traveled back to Italy or Europe—sometimes for decades at a time—they believed that their Argentineness traveled with them. While in Italy, they felt at home, because Italian culture had been instilled in them by their parents. In sum, they were neither fully Argentine nor wholly Italian, but a synthesis of the two. The national labels were not mutually exclusive.

In the 1990s, post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha wrote that many contemporary artists and intellectuals existed in the border zones between different societies; traditional binaries or designations failed to accurately define them. For Bhabha, the border, or the *in between*, is where identity begins, because “in between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”²⁰ The figures covered in this dissertation also existed in an interstitial space between Argentina and Italy. While Bhabha refers to the space as a stairwell, for them it was the Atlantic. They did not merely leave Italy or Argentina for a neighboring country, but they crossed an entire ocean. And in reaching across that ocean many times—with their bodies, through the consumption of

²⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, “Border Lives: The Art of the Present,” in *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

imported food, newspapers, and culture, with their politics, and through their art—they too, exist in the in-between of transatlantic exchange.

The writer Taiye Selasi—born to Ghanaian parents in England, in 1979, then raised in Brookline, Massachusetts—also exists in the in between, and she writes about the meaning of transnational identity in the twenty-first century.²¹ Selasi is a child of the African diaspora, which began in the 1960s, yet her comments are applicable to individuals of the earlier Italian diaspora, especially those from Southern Italy, who were derisively called “the Africans of Europe.” Eschewing the term *transnational*, she explains: “I’m not multinational, I’m not a national at all. How could I come from a nation? How can a human being come from a concept?... To me, a country—this thing that could be born, die, expand, contract, hardly seemed the basis for understanding a human being.... History is real, culture is real, but countries were invented.”²² Selasi privileges local human experience over passports or citizenship, and she refers to herself as an *Afropolitan*—“not a citizen, but an African of the world.” In an influential essay, “Bye-Bye Babar,” from 2005, she explained that, “Like so many African young people working and living in cities around the globe, I belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many.”²³ She traces the birth of this phenomenon back to the 1960s, when thousands of highly skilled Africans left the Continent to pursue higher education abroad, particularly in Canada, the United States,

²¹ Selasi is often described as “transnational” or “multinational,” which irks her. She was born in England and grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her mother was born in England, raised in Nigeria, and lives in Ghana. Her father, was born in the colony of Gold Coast, raised in Ghana, and now lives in Saudi Arabia. and her father was born in Ghana and

²² This quote comes from a TEDGlobal Talk that Taiye Selasi delivered in October of 2014. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/taiye_selasi_don_t_ask_where_i_m_from_ask_where_i_m_a_local?language=en#t-199295 (accessed February 25, 2019).

²³ Taiye Selasi, “Bye-Bye Babar,” *The Lip Magazine*, (Issue No. 5, March 3, 2005). This essay is sometimes known by the title, “What is an Afropolitan?”

and Britain. As some children of *Afropolitans* are now returning to Africa, many children of Italian emigrants eventually went back to Italy, proving that both places could be considered home.

The notion of “home” and belonging has been contested in Argentina from the outset. Following the overthrow of Spanish colonial power in 1818, the Argentine government waged wars of attrition against the indigenous tribes on the Pampas and in Patagonia. By the 1870s, the native population was largely decimated. Thereafter, the government began to promote immigration aggressively, believing that white, northern European, non-Spanish, blood would lead to a more “civilized” country. Argentina did attract millions of immigrants, but they were not the northern Europeans its government desired. Argentine officials hoped for German and French immigrants, who they considered industrious and productive; instead, millions of Italians, approximately half of whom came from the Mezzogiorno, the “land of the midday sun” stretching from Abruzzo to Lampedusa, flocked to Argentina’s shores. These southerners were the product of years of Spanish rule—just like the Argentines—and they were pushed to flee their homeland due to a lack of economic opportunities and enduring racial prejudice as the so-called “Africans” of Europe. And herein lies the paradox: Although Argentina highlighted its over-all *Europeanness* in an effort to seem culturally superior, many of the Italians Argentina assimilated were, at the time of mass migration (between 1880-1914), considered among the least culturally evolved population in Europe. They were the “barbaric” southerners, and as historian Nelson Moe argues, “Italy [as a whole] was a southern country in a century when the superiority of ‘the north’ was virtually beyond dispute.”²⁴

²⁴ Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

Yet, perhaps because this population from Southern Europe moved even *further* south, to the southernmost country in the Americas, at a moment of great economic opportunity, they were able to thrive. Whereas in the United States, Italians were scapegoated and viewed as lazy or uneducated, in Argentina, they eventually overcame these stereotypes. I believe this success can be accounted for in two ways: 1) In Argentina, where the power hierarchy was not yet solidified and cultural institutions were not yet built, Italian immigrants were not at the bottom of the social ladder. They were competing with creoles—of Spanish descent—for jobs and status at a time when Spain was viewed as even more backwards and less modern than Italy. 2) Italian immigration to Argentina coincided with Argentina's own process of self-identification, implicitly infusing Italian culture and heritage into Argentina's national story. Ultimately, Italians in Argentina became a central and enduring force, both culturally and politically.

This dissertation seeks to answer two central questions: First, How did these massive waves of Italian immigrants intersect with and influence Argentina's emerging art practices, patronage, and institutions? And second, how did the art produced by Italo-Argentines reflect Argentina's evolving national identity and ongoing dialogue with Italy? I will look first at larger migration trends, then groups of artists and the organizations they founded, first in the 1880s and then in the 1920s, and at specific artworks and artists that demonstrate the cultural links between the two countries.

In this first chapter, I will explore the factors that made Italy's unification particularly difficult, and how the ensuing nationalism constructed a disparity—and dual alienation—between North and South, leading many to leave in search of a better life. This introduction also considers how Italians—both northerners and southerners—conceived of themselves around the

time of mass migration, since these characteristics would soon be assimilated into the greater Argentine populace. Chapter 2 delves into the reasons for mass migration between 1876-1914, the push factors that led Italians to leave and the pull factors that drew them specifically to Argentina. This discussion considers how the Italian government sought to culturally colonize South American countries like Argentina, and how Argentina was initially a willing accomplice, as it wanted European immigrants and needed to populate its empty plains.

Chapter 3 explores Buenos Aires's nascent art world circa 1880, when the first major wave of immigrants arrived. Both the government and the cultural elites, a group known as the *Generación del 80*—white Argentines of Spanish descent—advocated for European immigration, believing that European blood would lead to a more “civilized” and culturally rich country. A key role model for politicians and cultural theorists alike was Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who posited that immigration and artistic development were equally necessary to the development of a strong national culture. The *Generación* argued that art could act as a nation-building force, particularly in the form of landscape and history paintings that depicted the young country. Yet, in order to construct Argentina's origin story, most of the *Generación* looked to non-Spanish, European models rather than anything related to the indigenous tribes' customs or the Creole population. So while Italian immigrants began traveling to Argentina in the late nineteenth century, members of the *Generación* enacted the reverse trip to study the painting and sculpture of Italy first-hand. These concurrent Atlantic crossings illustrate the early symbiosis between Italy and Argentina, and the role that Italian art played in the minds of the transnational elites who were developing the national style.

Chapter 4 examines the the first mature generation of Italo-Argentine artists. By the 1910s, several key figures of early Argentine Modernism were the children of Italian immigrants, who had become professionally established in Buenos Aires's expanding economy. Many of these parents, like those of Emilio Pettoruti, prospered by importing Italian products. Preceding the first World War, Pettoruti and others traveled to Italy to learn more about their personal and artistic heritage. Upon returning to Argentina, they imported French and Italian modern styles like Cubism and Futurism, but infused these languages with specifically Argentine imagery and subject matter, such as Tango dancers. This privileged group could claim European culture as their own, *and* claim to be authentically Argentine, allowing them to exist in two cultural spheres simultaneously. For them, Italian and Argentine identity became intertwined and mutually inclusive, and their work reflects this transnational hybridity. In 1924, a group of artists and critics, including many Italo-Argentines, formed the journal *Martín Fierro* and an influential art organization, *Los Amigos del Arte*. Both the journal and events organized by *Los Amigos* embodied an internal conflict—the desire to imitate European culture while also demonstrating independence from it. They serve as an example of what Andres Huyssen calls an “alternative modernity,” or a modernity that has existed alongside those of traditional western centers and exhibits a true dialogue between global and local sources.²⁵ More recently, Chica Okeke-Agulu has used the term “Postcolonial Modernism” to refer to a similar phenomenon in Nigeria.²⁶

²⁵ For more on this concept, see: Andreas Huyssen, “Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World,” *New German Critique*, No. 100 (Winter, 2007), 189-207.

²⁶ See: Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015).

Finally, Chapter 5 considers the relationship between Italian Fascism and Argentine Nacionalismo (or radical nationalism), and how changing political circumstances ultimately led to a reconfiguration of the bond between the two countries by the time of Argentina's military coup in 1930. The reason that Italy promoted emigration in the nineteenth century—to spread influence abroad as a sort of soft (and inexpensive) imperialism—returned to the fore with Mussolini, when he embarked on a program of “Fasci Italiani all’Estero,” or Fascism abroad. Throughout the late 1920s and 30s, as Italy pushed harder to culturally and politically colonize Argentina, Argentines asserted their autonomy, leading to a diplomatic break between the countries in 1943, and a (temporary) bifurcation of national identities after decades of convergence.

In conclusion, this is a project that focuses on two generations of Italo-Argentine artists, the art and organizations they created, and their contributions to Argentina's evolving national cultural identity. My periodization, from 1880-1930, is unique within Argentine scholarship. I see a clear through-line connecting three distinct phases in the Italy-Argentina relationship: 1) the beginning of mass migration in the 1880s and birth of a national style that looks completely European; 2) liberalization of art and politics during the 1910s and 20s, leading to the invention of a hybridic “transatlantic modernism”; and 3) Argentina's military coup of 1930, which resulted in a steep drop in international trade and immigration and the rise of conservative culture linked to Argentine *Nacionalismo*.

In order to understand both nations—and to reconsider the meaning of “colonization” and “colonizer”—we must return to Italy's Risorgimento. We will see that the drivers of emigration were inevitable in the project of the Risorgimento itself: As Italy was constructing its self-image

after breaking free from centuries of foreign rule, it furtively, then intentionally, excluded members who did not fit in, nudging them across the Atlantic, where they helped to build Argentina and its cultural landscape.

The Risorgimento and Italianità:

Concepts of *Italianità*, *civiltà italiana*, or Italianness, flourished during the Risorgimento, when people began to associate with a *country* rather than a town or region. Subsequently, just as the nation was coalescing, the rural poor, who felt increasingly excluded from political and economic activities, began to emigrate, carrying their *italianità* to other parts of the globe. Thus, from the outset, being Italian was not synonymous with living in Italy. As Silvana Patriarca has opined, “There is a feeling that Italy may not be a real nation, but there are still *Italians* and an *Italian character*... even if that character is just a mixture of defects.”²⁷ Patriarca goes on to explain that Italians often associate themselves with negative traits: cynicism, extreme individualism, opportunism, untrustworthiness, corruption, and dishonesty. She asks, “Why is it that so many Italians are so convinced that they have a national character, that this character is faulty, and that this faultiness even explains much of the social and political problems of their country today?”²⁸

²⁷ Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

²⁸ Ibid, 5. Patriarca here makes a clear distinction between national character and national identity. For her, national character is a set of “distinctive moral and mental traits of people (somewhat objective even if stereotypical), while national identity indicates more about self-projection into the world.” National character is more internal, how Italians see and talk about themselves to each other, while national identity is external, how they want to be seen by others.

This question, while provocative, ignores Italy's illustrious past and the positive associations that "Italian" carried for many centuries and does again today. As Donna Gabaccia writes, "In 1789...the term 'Italia' signified something quite concrete and positive in the west. Italian was not yet a noun for a human identity, people or nation. But it was an adjective that described a distinctive range of cultural products—both secular and religious—that the rest of the world found valuable."²⁹ Yet politically, Italy was weak; while other nations grew through colonial expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Italy was colonized by the Spanish in the South, the Austrians in the North, and the Papacy in the middle. In the early nineteenth century, Italy was largely ruled by Napoleon, and by the time the Risorgimento began in the 1830s, Patriarca maintains, it was nearly embarrassing to claim, "I am Italian," and this shame led to a widespread need for cultural regeneration and sovereignty.³⁰

Risorgimento means "resurgence," and the term referred to the desire to resurrect elements of a shared idealized past in the Italian imaginary. More concretely, the Risorgimento was a movement that aimed to end foreign and Papal domination, to create an independent, modern nation-state, and only thereafter, to unite a fractious, topographically and linguistically diverse geographical area that we now know as Italy. Much of Italy's nation-building campaign is consistent with other European countries, but the drive to unify discrete regions was unique.³¹ Various historians continue to believe that the Risorgimento in general, and unification

²⁹ Gabaccia, 22.

³⁰ Patriarca, 22. It should be noted, though, that really only a certain elite class might have used the term "Italian." Most peasants would have identified with a certain region or town instead.

³¹ Riall also notes that there were other factors unique to Italy: The rural poor was the most disenfranchised peasant population in Europe, and the state could not raise revenue through taxation because the nobility and the church resented it. She goes on to explain this and other particular factors on pp 11-12.

specifically, were not inevitable. As John A Davis states, “even after throwing out foreign powers and the collapse of the Pope’s dominions and the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, all of which had to precede unification (and may be considered responsible for it), there was still a debate about what that meant.”³² Given the intense regionalism pervasive throughout Italy, it would not have been surprising if the nation had bifurcated into North and South. When, in the plebiscite of 1861, the enfranchised public—only 2% of the total population—voted in favor of a consolidated Kingdom of Italy, and when Venice and Papal Rome were annexed in 1870, these events acknowledged that Italy’s different regions, particularly its North and South, were somehow interrelated and codependent.³³

At a fundamental level, the Risorgimento was fueled by a belief in a shared Italian character and a common desire to rid Italy of foreign powers. Napoleon invaded the Italian mainland in 1796-9, and over the next fifteen years, he consolidated various Italian states under his rule as satellites of the French Empire while weakening the iron grip of the Catholic church. Riall argues that consolidation under Napoleon led to the construction of connective infrastructure, which, in turn, created jobs and new sources of social mobility, ultimately planting the seed for later modernization and unification.³⁴ Napoleon was also the first common enemy in Italy, another amalgamating force. When he was ousted, in 1815, Lombardy and Venetia were returned to Austria, the Papal states went back to the Pope, and Naples and Sicily were returned

³² John A Davis, “Introduction: Italy’s Difficult Modernization,” in John A Davis, ed. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10.

³³ Davis notes how only 2% of the populace met the qualifications for suffrage in 1861. In order to vote, one needed to: 1) own property; 2) be literate; 3) be male. The fact that such a small fraction of the population met these criteria points to Italy’s intense poverty more than it does to the so-called “weakness” of the revolution that resulted in statehood. In 1888, suffrage was extended to all literate males, and by 1911, Italy had adopted universal male suffrage. Davis, 17-18.

³⁴ Riall, 12.

to the Bourbons. This quick power-shift, decided at the congress of Vienna, made Italians acutely aware of their lack of self-determination, and though Italy's Restoration Governments were analogous to those of other European nations, they were damaging for two reasons: 1) they abolished the centralized power structures and job opportunities that had been created under Napoleon; and 2) they raised taxes that benefited Vienna more than Italy.³⁵ Both of these factors led to economic crisis and unrest, sparking an eventual desire for self-government.

In 1831, Giuseppe Mazzini, a journalist and politician, founded *La Giovane Italia* (*Young Italy*), a publication for Italians under forty meant to agitate for a "conquest of independence, unity, and liberty for Italy."³⁶ *La Giovane Italia* succeeded in drawing readers together, in advocating for republican values and in discrediting Italy's Restoration governments. As Benedict Anderson argues, print media is key to developing a national consciousness, because it creates a condition in which everyone is reading the same story in the same language at the same time, thus creating an "imagined community" of people who share the same information. Though newspapers are ephemeral, they can also be short-lived bestsellers, and Mazzini understood this intuitively.³⁷ Davis argues that, though Mazzini was primarily interested in statehood as an anticlerical, pro-enlightenment, concept, he also had grand visions of Europe as a series of thriving democracies coexisting in harmony. He believed in Italy's divine destiny of statehood, but like Anderson, he saw the church as an impediment to nationhood, even though it was Italy's

³⁵ Ibid., 24.

³⁶ This tagline is quoted in Riall, 6.

³⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, Revised Edition 1991), 35-36.

greatest melding force amongst the peasantry.³⁸ And though Mazzini ostensibly supported peasant revolts, he refused to speak to the rural poor in a language they understood—meaning Catholicism, or their local dialects—and he focused instead on an educated class that could read his texts.³⁹ Raymond Grew contends that, overall, there was little outreach to peasants, and, at least initially, “little inclination to romanticize peasants as the carriers of quintessential Italian qualities...Culture was thought of as urban, and villages and towns imitated urban life.”⁴⁰ For Mazzini and others, nationalism was a new religion, and it was Italy’s destiny to become a modern nation-state without the help of the church or its adherents.⁴¹ Furthermore, peasant insurrections in the monarchies of Piedmont and Savoy, then later in Sicily, Abruzzi, Tuscany, Lombardy, and Bologna, always failed, making the strategy of popular insurrection less viable.

In one final push and on the coattails of the popular revolutions occurring throughout Europe, Mazzini and General Giuseppe Garibaldi together forced the Pope out of Rome and declared a short-lived Republic in 1848-49. Though ultimately unsuccessful, this brief Roman Republic helped turn Garibaldi into a national—and international—hero for his defense tactics and his embodiment of Risorgimento ideals. The Republic refocused liberal energies; they

³⁸ Anderson argues that nationalism is produced by the “erosion of religious beliefs. He doesn’t think that nations replaced religions of that the rise of the nation-state can be pinned on the fall of religion, but there does seem to be a loose correlation. (Anderson, 12)

³⁹ It seems that, in reality, Mazzini never had much interest in the rural poor. To quote Riall, “Italian nationalist movements had no interest in rural life, and the peasantry had no interest in nationalism.” (Riall, 73)

⁴⁰ Raymond Grew, “Culture and Society, 1796-1896,” in Davis, 224. One of the other factors that made Italian unification and nation-building more difficult than in other countries was the lack of a consistent language. The debate over which version of Italian to use—Tuscan or another dialect—was the one of the only questions that didn’t primarily concern the elites. Grew also explains that nearly all local dialects were considered provincial and were not spoken publicly by educated Italians after the 1860s.

⁴¹ For an interesting analysis of Mazzini, see: Enrico Dal Lago, *William Lloyd Garrison and Giuseppe Mazzini: Abolition, Democracy, and Radical Reforms*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2013). In comparing Mazzini and Garrison, Dal Lago explains how these two contemporary leaders drew parallels between abolition of slavery in the United States and defeating foreign rulers in Italy. This book is also useful for forging links between nineteenth century American and Italian liberalism.

evolved from being *anti*-Austrian to *pro*-Italian, broadening pan-European support for the Risorgimento as a movement about liberalism, education, science and economic growth.⁴² Two years later, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, known simply as Cavour, became Prime Minister of liberal Piedmont in a move that seemed far from revolutionary, but feasible to maintain. With help from the French army, the Piedmontese overthrew the Austrians in 1859 and joined with Southern Italy in 1861 following a plebiscite in the South. The Kingdom of Italy was declared with Turin as the first capital and Vittorio Emanuele II as its first King. In 1866, the Veneto was ceded to Italy following the Austro-Prussian war, and in 1870, Rome was occupied by Italian troops and declared the capital of Italy, albeit without the Pope's blessing.

After decades of fighting, Italy was unified not as a Republic, as Mazzini and his followers had hoped, but as a constitutional monarchy based in Piedmont. Due to this outcome, the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci has famously called the Risorgimento a “passive revolution” or a “revolution without mass participation.”⁴³ The fate of the nation was decided largely by middle and upper class men, most of them urban, well-educated, and politically liberal, at a time when the majority of Italy's population was still rural and illiterate. At the time of unification, the bourgeoisie was incapable of reaching out to the peasantry, amongst whom only ten percent comfortably spoke the Tuscan Italian, and only a quarter could read.⁴⁴ Gramsci argues that “the threat of popular revolution so alarmed the Italian Bourgeoisie that it led them to

⁴² This is Riall's assessment, 68-69. Grew also argues that Risorgimento Culture really began in 1848, and it was “vaguely liberal, allowed room for religion, emphasized the importance of education and science, and was attentive to economic growth.” pp 219.

⁴³ Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds and trans. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (London: International Publishers, 1971), 53.

⁴⁴ Grew, 225.

seek compromises with the existing power structure.”⁴⁵ This alliance with the wealthy further undermined the popular appeal of the revolution, stunted economic growth, and prompted the peasantry to feel left behind, particularly in the South, as we will see below.

Indeed, the Risorgimento was not led by peasants, but it must be at least partially understood as a result of class conflict, economic change, and land ownership shifts. For instance, in Sicily and Venetia, land was being wrested from the hands of the nobility, and in Milan and Turin, the church sold its land to merchants, bankers, and renters as a result of economic crisis.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, changes in land ownership laws led to the sale and regulation of land that had previously been open for grazing, water access, and foraging, a shift that deeply hurt the landless poor, exacerbating their feelings of disenfranchisement and unrest. Rapid and sporadic population growth throughout the nineteenth century put further pressures on the land, especially given the weak job market and sluggish movement towards industrialization.⁴⁷ Ultimately, torrents of social change bred political instability that created the Risorgimento; however, national unification did not solve any of the problems that preceded its adoption. As Riall explains:

The events of 1859-60, accompanied as they were by a foreign war, institutional collapse and popular upheaval, greatly intensified the same rivalries, conflicts and tensions that had led to the political instability in the first place. It is thus hardly surprising that the Mazzinian formulation of national unity and self-determination, which made Italy for the

⁴⁵ Quoted in Riall, 37-38.

⁴⁶ Riall, 34. Paul Ginsborg notes that the main noticeable distinction between landowners in places like the Veneto and the South was that some were trying to introduce more efficient, capitalist, modes of agriculture, while others continued to stick with older methods of farming and land use. A new, highly stratified system emerged wherein the most elite nobles separated themselves from the rising upper class merchants, leading to competition and enmity, especially in the South where powerful landowners hired bandits to steal cattle of the newly wealthy as a form of revenge, and these bandits took on an air of rural lawlessness and threat to civilized society.

⁴⁷ Most population growth was happening in urban areas, however. Milan's population grew from 139,000-189,000 between 1818-1848. Along with more people came more disease, including a cholera outbreak in 1835-37 and again in 1854-55, which the urban poor blamed on the government. There was also an increase in infanticide and infant abandonment, showing increased pressures on urban women. For more on this, see Riall, 40-44.

next sixty years such an example and inspiration to other aspiring nations, proved incapable of satisfying anybody in the country of its birth.⁴⁸

Both Riall and Davis focus on three key factors that made Italian nation-building more complicated than in other countries: First, the church pit itself against the nation when Pope Pius IX issued an encyclical, in 1870, saying that Catholics who participated in politics would be excommunicated, forcing people to choose between two institutions that were integral to the nation and its largest group of citizens.⁴⁹ Second, Italy failed to set up a true parliamentary democracy that allowed everyone to have a voice. And finally, the political revolution was not accompanied by an economic revolution, meaning that class differences—which largely corresponded with regional lines—persisted, and economic growth was sharply stunted.⁵⁰ This inequity produced a situation in which the rural poor, especially in the South, felt disconnected from the concept of *Italianità*. Perhaps writer and politician Massimo d’Azeglio put it best when he wrote in his memoirs of 1865-66, the now famous proclamation: “Now that Italy is made, we must make the Italians.”⁵¹

The North - South Divide:

⁴⁸ Riall, 75.

⁴⁹ The Church didn’t recognize a united Italy until 1929. Davis notes that small religious minorities—like Greek Orthodox and Albanian communities in the Mezzogiorno and Jews in central and northern Italy—had been active supporters of the Risorgimento, since they thought it would lead to greater religious tolerance. pp. 19.

⁵⁰ Riall summarizes these point, 76-77. Davis primarily agrees in his “Introduction: Italy’s Difficult Modernization,” though he focuses more on the economic changes, because for him, unification went along with modernization in Italy.

⁵¹ Patriarca, 52. According to Patriarca, d’Azeglio never uttered these exact words, but his point was well-taken: the goal wasn’t to create a uniform group of Italians, but rather, to “reshape moral and civic attitudes and behavior...to make them worthy members of their new *patria*.”

D'azeglio's statement accentuates its own near impossibility. Italy proved intensely challenging to unify because of strong regional loyalties, linguistic differences and no standardized Italian, because the church opposed the idea of a strong nation-state, and because of the widening gulf between the slowly modernizing North—including Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia—and the stagnant South—Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria, and Sicily. Davis argues, “what made the unequal North-South relationship in Italy unusual was not its political dimensions, but rather its longevity, which in turn reflected the continuing narrowness of the resources on which Italy sought to sustain the imperatives of modernization well into the twentieth century.”⁵² Entrenched backwardness meant a tiny electorate of elites was able to repeatedly make self-interested deals with its northern constituencies, bolstering their own standing but frequently diverting resources from the region, causing the South to become poorer as the North advanced. This chasm precipitated the great migration from Southern Italy to Argentina and other South American countries. Many Southerners were so stigmatized within their own country, and opportunities for advancement grew so scarce, that leaving became the only viable option, especially since it seemed like national leaders were happy to see them go.

Italy's largely Southern diaspora resulted from the combined effects of diminishing economic opportunities, low job growth, and intensifying vilification from outside the region. At the time of unification, most of Italy was reliant on an agrarian economy—particularly small, noncommercial farms with low production rates—and agriculture remained the largest mode of employment until World War I. Each part of the country had its own primary products, and after

⁵² Davis, “Introduction,” 22.

unification, it was easier for Italy to build national markets and establish trading networks.⁵³ But the combination of innate bounty and outdated production methods forced Italy to export raw materials and import manufactured products. Within this paradigm, the South was exploited for its natural resources, like wheat, olive oil, and wine, while most of the profits went to the northern merchants who exported them and the landowners who controlled the land on which farmers harvested these commodities. Systemic inequity was further exacerbated between 1870-1900 by changing property laws that consolidated land in the hands of even fewer wealthy families, who created ruinous lease agreements with tenant farmers. In the 1890s, the farmers of Sicily organized to negotiate better leases, but the government defended the land owners. After this crushing defeat, many tenant farmers left, launching the first major emigration wave from Sicily and the Mezzogiorno.⁵⁴ Even during Italy's main industrialization boom, which saw tremendous growth in the textile industry and silk production, the peasants of Southern Italy were drawn not to prosperous northern cities like Milan, Turin or Genoa, but to those across the Atlantic, where they faced less prejudice.⁵⁵

Though the South had often been viewed as an alluring, exotic land, during and after the Risorgimento, it was seen as a vexing region full of corrupt or ailing inhabitants. Massimo D'Azeglio expressed misgivings about including the South in the country: In a letter to Diomed

⁵³ Ibid., "Chapter 9: Economy, Society and the State," 235-7. Davis explains how, with low production rates and a booming population in the late 19th Century, the South in particular experienced a food shortage, which also became a major force pushing people to leave Italy.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 239-40.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 254. The textile industry was Italy's largest industrial sector until after the First World War, but most of the workers were women and it was more rural than urban. Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, connections between agriculture and industry also grew in the North as farmers began to rely on machinery and industrially-produced fertilizer, but this link did not develop in the South where agricultural production was lower, creating less incentive to industrialize quickly.

Pantaleoni, in October of 1860, he revealed his fears that contact with Naples would lead to the decay of the North. He wrote, “In all ways the fusion with the Neapolitans makes me afraid; it is like going to bed with a smallpox patient... We must pay attention that this ... annexation of Naples does not mark the beginning of the moral disintegration of Italy!”⁵⁶ Two months later, General Paolo Solari echoed d’Azeglio, while also questioning how the natural beauty of Naples and Campania failed to give rise to a different sort of Italian: “We have acquired a most evil land, but it seems impossible that in a place where nature has done so much for the terrain it did not generate another people.”⁵⁷ Finally, Count Carlo Borromeo, Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior, stated in December, 1860, “The cowardice, greed, venality that grow exponentially the more one descends towards the heel of the peninsula make a desperate effect...The entire Italian question is now in Naples. To succeed there is to make Italy.”⁵⁸

All three of these men contributed to entrenched prejudice by arguing that the health of the whole nation depended upon the efficacy of its so-called weakest, or sickest, link. For Italian statesmen, the “making,” or semi-homogenization, of Italy was cast as a civic and civilizing mission, a way of “saving” the South, or more accurately, of saving the country from the “barbarism” often blamed on the South. Niccola Marselli, an early Italian senator from Sardinia, stated, “Other than the virgin land to cultivate, the inhospitable roads to fix, there exists in Italy,

⁵⁶ Massimo D’Azeglio wrote this in a letter to Diomede Pantaleoni, on October 17, 1860. He is quoted in Wong, 19. It is perhaps not completely absurd that he refers to the South as “a smallpox patient,” as the region *was* full of health risks. Many peasants were afflicted with pellagra, a debilitating disease linked to a diet of strict maize meal (polenta) that affects the central nervous system and causes early death. Davis discusses pellagra, 250.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Wong, 18.

⁵⁸ Stated in a letter to Ferdinando Riccardi, a nephew of Luigi Carlo Farini, who will become prime minister of Italy in 1862-63. Farini would also make comparisons between the south and Africans, particularly Bedouins, and for him, the Neapolitan came out on the bottom: “The Bedouin, in comparison to these hicks, are the flower of civil virtue.” quoted in Wong, 15.

especially in the Mezzogiorno...entire social strata to redeem and to civilize.” Yet, he also urged his fellow statesmen to recognize that many of the characteristics associated with the south could also be found in the whole of Italy. For him, the whole country was a “southern country” with regards to the rest of Europe, so the concept of “amputating” the nation’s meridional limb was both ill-informed and futile.⁵⁹ Since Italy self-identified as the “South” of Europe as early as the eighteenth century, the negative traits of the South were somewhat interchangeable with the negative traits of the nation. As Emily Braun has argued, “the ‘southern problem’ became a synecdoche for the atavism of the Italian nation as a whole by comparison to Europe north of the Alps. Italy had not advanced alongside its western counterparts; progress had largely passed it by.”⁶⁰ And as a way to feel less inadequate when compared to other European powers, the North displaced the failures of the country onto the South.⁶¹

One of the chief ironies of the Risorgimento is that, at the moment the nation was being officially unified, cultural distinctions between various regions of the country were highlighted and underscored. Indeed, the South became the internal other of the nation, while Italy as a whole became the internal other of the continent; therefore, the issue of “southernness” became highly sensitive, and the fulcrum around which stereotypes were based.⁶² And, perhaps because

⁵⁹ Quoted in Wong, 35-37. Marselli argues that the south is just a scapegoat for the north so that it can feel superior, after many decades of being put down by the rest of Europe.

⁶⁰ Emily Braun, “Italia Barbara: Italian Primitives from Piero to Pasolini,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17:3, 2012, pp. 259-270. This quote is from p. 260. Braun explains that her term *Italia barbara* (literally barbaric Italy) is derived from two different texts: 1) *Italia Barbara contemporanea*, of 1898, by the criminal anthropologist, Alfredo Niceforo; and 2) *Italia Barbara* of 1926, by the Fascist-leaning journalist, Curzio Malaparte. Though the two texts both refer to Italy as “barbaric,” only the former one sees this as a drawback, while the latter one sees it as a possible strength. Interestingly, both of these greatly postdate the Argentine concept of “civilization versus barbarism,” laid out by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in his 1845 text *Facundo*. This will be a major topic of discussion in Chapter 3.

⁶¹ Wong, 6.

⁶² Self-othering here is defined as “self-objectification imbued with negative self-stereotyping.”

it was already derided by more northern nations, Italy took a defensive stance, ultimately becoming self-deprecating both about its austral status within Europe and its bottom half. Even as early as 1843, Vico Gioberti wrote *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, in which he set up a divide between Neapolitans and Piedmontese, stating that they each lacked opposing qualities: while the Piedmontese were deficient in imagination, the Neapolitans lacked in discipline. Interestingly, he saw the South not pejoratively, but as suited to distinct forms of work different from the North.⁶³ Carlo Lozzi, on the other hand, viewed Neapolitans as worse than “cannibals.” In articulating the North-South divide, in 1870, he called Neapolitans, “Devout and womanizers at the same time, chatterers, boastful and inert, ingenious and superstitious... careless about the future....”⁶⁴ Over time, as statements like these proliferated, these aforementioned characteristics became less mythical stereotype and more institutionalized.⁶⁵

Yet, this constant outsider status, or a feeling of falling behind, arose, in part, because Italy was constantly measuring itself against the imported norms of the rest of Western Europe. In fact, Italy seemed to lag behind only when compared to its northern neighbors; by 1900, Italy was the only Mediterranean country to have industrialized at all.⁶⁶ And as Braun notes, even the notion of the modern nation state was an imported, European, one—yet geographically, Italy is

⁶³ Vico Gioberti, *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, ed. G. Balsamo-Crivelli, Vol. II, (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1920), 145-50. This version of Gioberti’s analysis is based on the second revised edition published in 1844, a year after the original text. He writes “The Neapolitans are the opposite of the Piedmontese, and they err by excess, as the latter err by lack: in the former, imagination, courage, passionate enthusiasm, mobility, luxuriant thought, affect and style are present in great quality and are even too abundant. In the latter, they are often missing or scarce.”

⁶⁴ Carlo Lozzi, *Dell’Ozio in Italia*, Volume 1. (Turin: Unione Tipografico-editrice, 1870-71), 63.

⁶⁵ Patriarca touches upon these ideas in her introduction, mentioning how the south was always scapegoated. But she argues that, over time, the blame shifted from specific or concrete aspects of southernness to “the eternal Italian character” or a more “banal nationalism,” a sense of national distinctiveness built in a collectivity.

⁶⁶ Davis, 254.

as proximate to north Africa (which was still heavily colonized) as to France, or Germany, where theories of nationalism were developed. In fact, part of *italianità* was an inherent resistance to the rationalism and modernity of Northern Europe, and this opposition needed to be both cultivated and guarded against. If Italians were already thought of as indolent and effeminate—characteristics other European intellectuals used to describe Italians throughout the 1840s-60s—these were qualities Italians could embrace and highlight, using self-deprecation as a mode of self-defense.⁶⁷ Neapolitans were said to succeed due to sudden sparks of genius rather than diligent work ethic.⁶⁸ Where did these stereotypes come from, and how did they continue to be associated with Italians over time as they emigrated?

Italian Traits and Engrained Prejudice:

In 1807, Madame De Staël wrote, “In Italy, the men are worth much less than the women, for they have women’s faults as well as their own.”⁶⁹ Her words carried much weight, since her text, *Corinne, or Italy*, became an unofficial guidebook for Europeans traveling to Italy, yet her analysis of the region and its people was based on visits following the Napoleonic Invasions, between 1792-1802. French historian Sismonde de Sismondi, who wrote *Histoire des Republiques Italiennes du Moyen Age* in 1839, agreed that Italian laziness stemmed from centuries of foreign rule, during which hard work and innovation were not valued as they had

⁶⁷ Gabaccia explores these ideas in her first chapter, “Before Italians: Making Italian Culture at Home and Abroad,” pp. 22-33. Ultimately, she argues that these local associations are different from a modern concept of nationalism, though, because they come from a love of *place*, not of a people, who share a common genetic background or a specific ideology. We will see later that this connection to a place does play a key role in defining nationalism.

⁶⁸ Patriarca, 26.

⁶⁹ Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, Sylvia Raphael, trans. (Oxford, 1998), 97. This text was a sort of informal guidebook for many early nineteenth-century European travelers, so her words would have carried a lot of weight.

been during the Renaissance.⁷⁰ Furthermore, under Spanish rule in the South, *ciscisbeismo*—wherein a married Italian woman had an unmarried male escort, a *cicisbeo*, often a nobleman who was younger than her husband and served primarily to admire her—became common. This behavior persisted in Naples throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and may have severely undermined Italian masculinity. When the Risorgimento began, it had a gendered undertone, as one of the unofficial—yet oft-mentioned—goals of the movement was to restore lost Italian virility, and war became an obvious way to do this.⁷¹ Mazzini agitated for battle as a panacea to lingering feelings of powerlessness and subservience. “Insurrection cancels the imprint of slavery from the face of the insurgents,” he wrote, “and this type of guerrilla war educates the soul to independence and to the active and powerful life which makes peoples great.”⁷² It was seen as an almost literal process of “de-feminization and re-virilization of the country and its people” after centuries of indolence.⁷³

Mazzini feared the Italians suffered from an inferiority complex that was beginning to have lasting, internalized consequences. Years of political dependence had implanted feelings of impotence deep in the national psyche, and he feared that, ultimately, a “disposition of

⁷⁰ Sismondi wrote that during the time of the republics of the sixteenth century, work ethic was a distinctive quality of the Italians, but under foreign rule, “all kinds of work” were contemptuous in the eyes of the nobility, condemning Italians to “constant laziness.” (quoted in Patriarca, 39).

⁷¹ Linking nationalism with masculinity is not particular to Italy, of course, as national independence often comes through battle, and battle has historically been considered a masculine activity.

⁷² Giuseppe Mazzini, “Della guerra d’insurrezione conveniente all’Italia,” *Scritti politici editi e inediti*, vol. II, 1833, 230.

⁷³ Patriarca, 45. Similarly, Samuel Smiles, a Scottish writer and statesman, argued that sloth was a “condition of the soul” that stood in the way of doing good. His most famous text, *Self-Help*, of 1859, was translated into Italian with the title *Heaven Helps Those who Help Themselves*, giving it a more religious overtone. It was one of many etiquette and advice books published around this time, and it was widely read. In it, Smiles argues that national identity is a large indicator of success or failure in the international arena, and he champions hard work, thrift, and education. In fact, the text grew out of a lecture that Smiles gave on the *The Education of the Working Classes*. For more on Smiles, see: Peter W. Sinnema, “Introduction” in *Samuel Smiles, Self-Help* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

weakness” on a personal level might indicate a societal apathy, which could hinder Italy’s progress and the march of liberal democracy. He referred to his fellow statesmen as “serfs in their souls, serfs in their intelligence and habits, serfs to every established authority, to every petty, self-serving calculation...Reborn decrepit, we are bound up with the old chain, and the tracks of all the vices, all the weaknesses of the seventeenth century mark our soul.”⁷⁴

For Mazzini and others, restoring Italy to its former greatness would necessitate a complete reordering of the Italian character, especially since it was often imbued with a certain anti-Italianism, or self-criticality, which Patriarca refers to as an “inverted patriotism.”⁷⁵ Though these historical and social factors clearly contributed to this inverted patriotism, many nineteenth century nationalists sought out other, more intrinsic, causes of Italian difference and temperament. Pasquale Turiello, in *Governo e governati in Italia*, of 1882, asked: If the problem in Italy was foreign domination, how can we account for the fact that outsiders ruled both Naples and Milan, and the people in each city turned out differently?⁷⁶ Indigenous populations are full of embedded ethnic traits, he argued, and governments must take these into account in order to rule effectively.⁷⁷ Turiello faulted Italians for their own servitude, stating, “If Italy in the past was servile, weak, despised, Italians themselves were first of all to blame; because if peoples do not always have the government they desire, they certainly always have the one that they deserve.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Mazzini, “La questione morale,” *Scritti editi e inediti*, vol. LXXXIII, 195

⁷⁵ Patriarca, 6.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that *different* outsiders controlled Milan and Naples—the Austrians in the north and the Spanish in the South—so perhaps this question is a red herring. Still, it gets at deeper inquiries regarding acquired versus inherited traits, and what Italians were actually born with, as opposed to conditioned for.

⁷⁷ Pasquale Turiello, *Governo e governati in Italia. Saggio*, 2 volumes (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1882).

⁷⁸ quoted in Patriarca, 73.

This sort of finger-pointing belies a fundamental belief that there existed something inherently wrong with Italian men and women, rather than characteristics being an outgrowth of devout Catholicism, political circumstances, or unfair economic management.

Turiello's reading of Italian uniqueness—as well as the differences between northern and southern Italians—comes from theories of biology or race that were circulating around the time he wrote his text. Since the South was already considered sick, parasitic, or debased, it was not much of a leap to suppose that it was innately different from the North. In this interpretation, southern misery was not a result of misgovernment or exploitation, but instead, a biological or genetic condition.⁷⁹ In 1876, Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), became the foremost spokesperson for this biological explanation when he published the first of five editions of *L'uomo delinquente. In rapporto all'antropologia giurisprudenza e alle discipline carcerarie* (*Criminal Man. In Relationship to Anthropology, Jurisprudence, and Prison Discipline*).⁸⁰ Lombroso had begun his career as a military doctor during the wars of the Risorgimento. After studying soldiers, some of whom weathered battle well while others suffered from post-traumatic stress and violent urges, he became interested in linking noticeable physical traits to criminal behavior. Though Lombroso's text was ostensibly a guide to criminal punishment, the broader implications were clear: physical features could predict character, and those features differed from North to South, lending credence to the notion of Northern superiority and Southern deficiencies.

⁷⁹ Interestingly, the south was always more defined by being different from the north than vice versa; there were always discussions about “southern difference,” and never a northern equivalent.

⁸⁰ Lombroso went on to publish four more lengthy editions of *Criminal Man* in 1878 (746 pages), 1884 (610 pages), 1889) 1,241 pages split into two volumes), and 1896-7 (1,902 in three volumes, plus a fourth volume containing 57 pages of text and 102 plates). All five editions are included in the 2006 translation that I am quoting from, but they have been translated in abbreviated form.

Lombroso became Italy's first criminal anthropologist—one who applies scientific methods to the study of criminal behavior—and he evaluated one's threat to society by looking at his/her evolutionary development, which could be measured through physical malformations, which he called “anomalies.” He arrived at verdicts that now seem farcical and racist, but at the time, he was extremely influential. His research led to the idea of “born criminals,”⁸¹ as opposed to socialized criminals, and he argued that, because of biological peculiarities, these men and women lacked the agency to lead normal, crime-free lives. Their actions were not a product of poor decisions, but instead, were biologically predetermined. In one particularly famous instance, he found an arsonist named Giuseppe Villella from Reggio Calabria—at the southernmost tip of mainland Italy—who had an indentation in the back of his skull, a feature not typically found in humans but prevalent in apes. Lombroso therefore concluded that this cranial concavity was a primitive trait that could be linked to savage behavior. He writes:

At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.”⁸²

Over the course of three decades, Lombroso performed a series of anthropometric experiments on thousands of individuals, measuring various body parts like craniums, as well as

⁸¹ The term “born criminal” wasn't yet in use, and was only later coined by Enrico Ferri, Lombroso's student and the founder of the Italian School of Criminology, and then used by Lombroso. In his initial text, Lombroso calls all lawbreakers “criminals” or “real criminals.” At first, Lombroso was not interested in finding differences between law offenders—such as a murderer versus petty thief—but instead aims to find the chief distinctions between “criminals” and “honest individuals,” and between criminals and the insane. In later editions, he will go on to study different types of offenders.

⁸² Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, trans. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter with help from Mark Seymour. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). This is the first scholarly translation of Lombroso's text, complete with an editor's introduction and new commentary. Originally published as *L'uomo delinquente. Studiato in rapporto all'antropologia giurisdizione e alle discipline carcerarie*, *Criminal Man* was translated into French (1887), German (1887-90), Russian (1889) and Spanish (1899). Furthermore, Latin Americans became familiar with Lombroso's ideas through the 1899 translation, but also through Enrico Ferri's lecture tours in 1908 and 1910.

features like left-handedness and embellishments like tattoos, and then linking each element to specific behaviors.⁸³ He went on to provide statistics for 390 criminals from various parts of Italy throughout his original text from 1876. He quickly cemented his central argument: since criminal behavior was a holistic problem and biologically preordained, rather than fitting punishment to the crime, punishment should fit the criminal.⁸⁴ Though the vast majority of Lombroso's research has been debunked over the past century, the interest here is not in the validity of his study, but in how it influenced readers, social policy, and cultural production. Specifically, his notions regarding southern inferiority have had far-reaching effects on the Italian psyche.⁸⁵

Indeed, Lombroso considered race a key determinant of crime, and the "race" that most concerned him was that of the southern Italian. Like many Northern Italians of his day, he was preoccupied by the "Southern Question," and he obsessively studied the organized crime rings of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia, which became increasingly powerful in the years following unification. He allowed that consolidated land holdings by the southern elite and ineffective government policies had led to entrenched inequality, little upward mobility, and high rates of

⁸³ Lombroso, 53. He goes on to list very specific statistics on each characteristic, for instance, though hair color of criminals really reflects the standard hair colors of each region of the country: "Jug ears are found on 28 percent of criminals, but the proportion varies by region: 47 percent of Sicilian criminals have jug ears, as do 33 percent from Piedmont, 11 percent from Naples, 33 percent from the Romagna, 9 percent from Sardinia, and 36 percent from Lombardy."

⁸⁴ He writes: "It seems to me important to reconcile opposing views and to determine whether the criminal man belongs in the same category as the healthy man or the insane individual or in an entirely separate category. To do this and decide whether there is a force in nature that causes crime, we must abandon the sublime realms of philosophy and even the sensational facts of the crime itself and proceed instead to the direct physical and psychological study of the criminal, comparing the results with information on the healthy and the insane." This translation comes from Gibson and Hahn Rafter, 42. One of Lombroso's chief concerns was recidivism, which was quite high in nineteenth-century Italy.

⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that Lombroso was Jewish, so perhaps he had something at stake in scapegoating another group as a way of protecting against anti-semitism. When it came to discussing Jews, he refused to account for Jewish behavior in strict biological terms, but instead argued for more complex sociological underpinnings. He posited that Jewish behavior derived from centuries of religious and cultural persecution rather than innate characteristics. As proof that Jews were not less civilized, he cites the rapid movement of Jews into important political and academic posts once they had equal rights within various societies.

illiteracy and disease. Yet, despite these important social and environmental factors, for Lombroso, the key factor leading to violent crime remained biological. In part, he argued that, after being dominated by North African Arabs for many years, the South was made up of racially mixed citizens, who had a higher propensity for murder than their northern counterparts.⁸⁶ In *Edition 1*, Lombroso devotes an entire section to organized crime and looks specifically at the Camorra, which dominated Naples throughout the late nineteenth century (and later), and the *Mafiosi*, a younger ring of organized criminals.⁸⁷ But he also explains that:

Race shapes criminal organizations...The inhabitants of Palermo, which is the center of the Mafia, are descended from the ancient bodyguards of the nobles, and even further back, from the rapacious Arab conquerors of Sicily who were related to the Bedouins....All it takes is the survival of one family descended from a wicked progenitor, and the whole place will be corrupted.⁸⁸

The organized crime rings of Southern Italy have developed a different origin story, which goes back to three Spanish knights—Osso, Mastrosso, and Carcagnosso—brothers who fled Spain after avenging their sister’s rape. Together, they initiated a new system of justice based around mutual defense. According to the legend, Osso went to Sicily to found the Cosa Nostra, Mastrosso headed to Naples to organize the Camorra, and Carcagnosso landed in Calabria and established the ‘Ndrangheta, who still worship St. Michael the Archangel and perform rituals honoring him.⁸⁹ Lombroso’s story and the story the mafia tells are equally false; however, they both rely upon blood relation. Even today, the criminal rings of Southern Italy recruit exclusively through family ties— birth or marriage—as these links are the only ones they

⁸⁶ Explained in the Introduction, 18.

⁸⁷ Lombroso, 89. Lombroso says the key difference between the Camorra and the Mafiosi is that the younger ring was unable to keep secrets as well.

⁸⁸ Lombroso, 90.

⁸⁹ For more on this and the present-day dealings of these crime rings, especially the ‘Ndrangheta in Calabria, see: Alex Perry, “Letter from Calabria: Blood and Justice,” *The New Yorker*, (New York: January 22, 2018): 36-47.

trust. This focus on biology and heredity is not so distinct from the ideas Lombroso developed, but whereas the mafia saw biology as proof of loyalty, Lombroso saw it as a predictor of recidivism.

In the second edition of *Criminal Man*, Lombroso explains the influence of climate on crime: “The influence of heat explains why crimes...occur more often in southern areas, at least in Italy and France, than in the northern and central areas. In their sensitivity to heat, criminals resemble the insane.”⁹⁰ For Lombroso, climate and race were inextricably linked, because the racial makeup of the country differed based on geography, hence each race was subject to its own climatic influences, and climate determined culture and economics. As he quickly worked his way through areas of the country, he failed to move substantially beyond basic name-calling or labeling. His text is full of flippant declarations that evolved into local or regional stereotypes in the minds of his readers, most of whom lived in the North, where literacy rates were higher. But when it came to discussing the imprint of Arab culture on Sicily, his analysis grew more detailed. This is perhaps the passage that most shaped the way that northern readers would imagine southern Italy for the next few decades, as a land full of criminal activity, theft, and depravity:⁹¹

The Arabs are a race of greedy conquerors who are hospitable but cruel, intelligent but superstitious, and always restlessly in movement. Their blood must play a role in fomenting spontaneous and implacable insurrections and perpetuating

⁹⁰ Lombroso, 114. Lombroso goes on to cite statistics showing that violent crime is highest during the warm months of June, July, and August, in both Italy and England. Conversely, theft and forgery rise in the winter, perhaps because the need for food and materials that provide warmth increases in cooler months. In connecting criminals to mentally disturbed individuals, Lombroso argues that admissions to both prisons and mental asylums are at their peak in the summer months.

⁹¹ He gets even more detailed—and defensive—when it comes to discussing the comparative virtues of his own ethnic group, Italian Jews: “On the other hand, race clearly influences crime among Jews and Gypsies, although in opposite directions. According to statistics, in some countries the level of Jewish criminality is lower than that of their fellow citizens.” He also explains that, though crime is as hereditary among Jews as any other group, the crimes that Jews commit are almost always small, and Jews are hardly ever found guilty of murder. (Ibid., 118)

brigandage....Brigandage provokes neither horror nor revulsion in people of this area, as it would in groups with greater proportion of Aryan blood.”⁹²

Though it may not have been Lombroso’s intention, one outcome of his “scientific” racial thinking was that politicians, writers, and social and cultural critics alike, were able to blame the South’s seeming backwardness on phenotype rather than governmental policy or history, thus making it possible for the government to wash its hands of any responsibility.⁹³ Physiognomists grouped everyone south of Rome together, and described these areas as inhabited by an inferior race with an underdeveloped culture. Others, like Lombroso’s student, Giuseppe Sergi, would flip this idea of “southernness” on its head, arguing that Mediterranean peoples were, in fact, superior—more creative, if also more individualistic—but had trouble adapting to the collective mentality of the modern period. In 1909, Sergi published the English edition of *The Mediterranean Race*, in which he argued that the Nordic race had descended from the Mediterranean race (which, in turn, came from West Africa) and their skin had depigmented over time.⁹⁴

This notion of the individualistic southerner, versus the communally-minded and rational northerner, was further developed in the work of Alfredo Niceforo, another student of Lombroso,

⁹² Ibid., 118.

⁹³ Though Lombroso’s text helped to support conservative policies, he held some surprisingly liberal views: He argued for the legalization of divorce to allow women to escape abusive relationships, and he fought to reduce sentences for women convicted of abortion, realizing that many of those women were single mothers who did not want to have a child because of the stigma attached to unwed motherhood. For more on Lombroso’s personal beliefs, see: Gibson and Hahn Rafner, 17-20.

⁹⁴ In the preface to his English edition, he writes, “From the great African stock were formed three varieties, in accordance with differing telluric and geographic conditions: one peculiarly *African*, remaining in the continent where it originated; another, the *Mediterranean*, which occupied the basin of that sea; and a third, the *Nordic*, which reached the north of Europe. These three varieties are the three great branches of one *species*, which I call *Eurafrican*, because it occupied, and still occupies, a large portion of the two continents of Africa and Europe....” He goes on to argue that the Germans and Scandinavians are *Eurafricans* of the Nordic variety, not Aryans, who are of Asiatic origin. For more on this, see: Giuseppe Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race: a Study of the Origins of European Peoples*, (London: Walter Scott, 1901). The first editions were published in 1895 in Italian and 1897 in German, but the 1901 edition is more complete, with more complete anthropological conclusions.

who later became the president of the Italian Societies of Anthropology and Criminology and a professor at the University of Rome's School of Criminal Law. But, for Niceforo, there was also a fear that the barbarism of the South would overtake the North's fragile civilization, and that the unification of Italy would be equally damaging to north and south alike. "To bundle together two societies—one civil, the other less civil—like we did with the strict centralization [of the state] that suffocates us...on the one hand encumbers the free development of the more elevated and civilized areas...and greatly damages the less advanced provinces," writes Niceforo.⁹⁵

In fact, the identity of each region was seemingly imperiled by and dependent upon the other. The North only seemed modern and civilized in comparison to the South, so it was in the North's best interest to propagate negative southern stereotypes. At the same time, the folkloric character of the South acted as a bulwark against the cosmopolitanism of the North, and helped it to retain some of its unique mediterranean character, or *italianità*.⁹⁶ Yet, the South clearly got the raw end of this interpretation, and the real threat to national cohesion came when negative stereotypes made it increasingly difficult for Southerners to advance and assimilate into modern Italian society. As Eliza Wong writes, "At times, southerners were considered even worse than Africans...they were perceived as unable, and the nation itself ineffective, in making southern Italians Italian."⁹⁷ Even today, Silvana Patriarca has noted, some particularly proud northerners

⁹⁵ Alfredo Niceforo, *L'Italia Barbara Contemporanea*, (Milan: Remo Sandron, 1898), 297. This book was first published in 1898 and then again 1907.

⁹⁶ For more on this, see Braun, "Italia Barbara," 264.

⁹⁷ Wong goes on to explain that Southerners were not only imagined "as being African-like, they were actually akin to Africans, their very vicinity to the 'darker continent' had tainted these would-be Italians, their very history of contact and cultural interaction complicated the understandings of regional and ethnic diversity—the possibilities of racial intermixing, of miscegenation was not imagined, but in fact was written into the very history of the land itself." Ibid., 6.

believe that “Europe ends at Naples. Calabria and Sicily and all the rest are Africa.”⁹⁸ Given that they were already outsiders in their own land, Southerners began looking for opportunity elsewhere. The cleavage between North and South led to a gradual—then rapid—leaching of the southern population. By the outbreak of World War I, nearly a million southerners had left for Argentina and settled in the area surrounding Buenos Aires, where they spread *italianità*, replete with all of its splendor, complexity, and complications.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Patriarca, 13. There was also a similar quip that “Italy ends at the Garigliano River, which is located halfway between Naples and Rome, and which formerly separated the Papal States from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This statement has been attributed to Francesco Forti by the Umbrian historian Filippo Antonio Gualterio in 1850, but there is little proof that he actually said it. For more on this, see: Nelson Moe, 87-88.

CHAPTER 2:

Transatlantic Crossings and Unbroken Tentacles

Introduction: Italian Diaspora

The concept of *italianità* grew ever more significant as Italian emigration reached its apex in the late nineteenth century, lowering Italian unemployment rates, yet fracturing the nation's delicate sense of solidarity. Italians began heading to Argentina as early as the 1840s, and by the late 1850s, over 3,000 were living in the new country. Concurrently, approximately 1,000 Italians were leaving for the United States each year. By the 1860s, the numbers had risen dramatically: up to 100,000 people were departing from Italy each year, most of them heading to the Americas. Even though many of them returned, when the first national census was taken in 1871, it was determined that approximately twenty-seven million people could be considered Italian, with over 500,000 living abroad. By the 1880s, over two-hundred thousand citizens were emigrating each year, creating the greatest voluntary diaspora in recorded history. The largest unified group of expatriates settled in Argentina's Rio Plata region, right around Buenos Aires.

Italian immigration to Argentina started early, remained steady, continuing up through 1914.⁹⁹ By 1900, the Italian community in Argentina had ballooned to approximately sixty percent of the country's total immigrant pool, and because they arrived gradually—as compared to in the United States, where the slow stream of Italians turned into a deluge after 1900—they were more easily absorbed into the nation's social and economic structure, and they set down

⁹⁹ By comparison, the Italian immigration spike in Argentina was earlier than in the United States. According to Samuel Baily, more than 75% of all Italians who came to the United States between 1861-1915 did so in the last fifteen years of that period; whereas in Argentina, more than half of them came before 1900. For more see: Samuel L. Baily. *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City: 1870-1914*, (Cornell University Press, 1999).

long-lasting roots.¹⁰⁰ Even today, over sixty-two percent of the Argentine population—twenty-five million people—have at least one Italian ancestor.¹⁰¹ Argentina has received more European immigrants than any other country in the Americas besides the United States, and Italians made up a larger chunk than any other nationality. When one considers the fact that the country was so sparsely populated beforehand, it becomes clear what an outsized role Italian immigration has played in Argentina, both demographically and in terms of national identity. And as Donna Gabaccia argues, for Italians living in Argentina, “it is quite possible that [they] more often came to think of themselves as Italian while living abroad than at home,” merely because being outside of Italy highlighted their status as outsiders and Italians.¹⁰²

The first Italian Emigration Law of 1888 stated that emigration was a “private matter,” out of the state’s purview, leading to unprecedented border crossing and very little official record-keeping. During this period, Italian “emigration agents” brokered deals with shipping companies to pack the holds of their ships with human cargo for low prices. These agents came from a wide array of backgrounds—some were noblewomen, while others were lawyers, notaries, municipal employees, or teachers—and they served as indispensable intermediaries for illiterate Italians who wanted to leave the country but could not afford normal passage rates,

¹⁰⁰ Baily, 54. Baily states that, although twice as many Italians went to the United States as to Argentina, Italians made up a much larger percentage of the total immigration numbers in Argentina. Between 1861-1915, the period he studies, they only represented 14% of the immigrant pool in the United States, while they represented 47% of the immigrant pool in Argentina. The spike in immigration to the United States also happened much later than in Argentina, where immigration was slower and steadier over the period Baily studies.

¹⁰¹ This statistic is taken from a recent study produced by the Departments of Law and Political Science in the National University of La Matanza, in Buenos Aires Province. Departamento de Derecho y Ciencias Políticas de la Universidad Nacional de La Matanza, “Historias de inmigrantes italianos en Argentina,” available online at: http://argentinainvestiga.edu.ar/noticia.php?titulo=historias_de_inmigrantes_italianos_en_argentina&id=1432#.U2cKkYHa70s (accessed 2/13/18). This same article claims that ninety percent of Argentina’s population has some European blood.

¹⁰² Gabaccia, 45.

obtain passports, or access valuable information about employment opportunities abroad. Though necessary, these agents were often more concerned with their own bottom line than they were with the health and wellbeing of the emigrants, and because they were decreasing the shipping companies' per person profit margins, travel conditions only worsened.¹⁰³ This untenable situation changed when the new Emigration Law of 1901 prohibited the middle men, making shipping companies directly responsible for their passengers, and providing a legal basis for state intervention to protect emigrants. That same year, the *Comissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione* (General Commission of Emigration) was founded, and it began to collect statistics, albeit haphazardly, regarding the number of people leaving the country, where they were going, and whether they returned or sent remittances back to Italy.¹⁰⁴

The most intense period of migration occurred in the three decades preceding the First World War. Exact statistics vary widely from one source to the next, but they are all staggering. To cite a few examples: According to Aliza Wong, as many as 14,037,531 Italians left during this time, while historian Mark A. Choate claims closer to 13 million left.¹⁰⁵ In the single year of 1913 alone, 2.4 percent of the population emigrated, and the census that year recorded one-sixth

¹⁰³ Agents could be noblewomen, notaries, municipal secretaries and employees, hotel owners, lawyers, teachers, tax collectors, and people without any qualifications whatsoever. By 1900, there were over 7,000 agents in Italy alone, and many of them received approximately 20-50 lira per person, or half of the shipowner's net income for passage. Not much has been written on this somewhat shady group of individuals. To read more, see: Ercole Sori, "Emigration Agents in the History of European and Italian Emigration" Accessible at: <http://www.utvandrercenteret.no/doc/Ercoli%20Sori.PDF>. Accessed February 6, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Information about changing legal policies comes from Bailly, 32-33. Throughout his indispensable text, Bailly aims to deepen our understanding of migration through the use of a comparative study. analyzes the experiences of Italians in Buenos Aires and New York around 1900. He aims to systematically compare assimilation within the two cities, and to see how emigrants in each city coped with the respective circumstances. So, though I will not be focusing on New York here, it is still useful to see how conditions differed between New York and Buenos Aires.

¹⁰⁵ The higher figure comes from Wong, 113-114. The lower estimate is from: Mark A Choate, *Emigration Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2. Gabaccia's estimate is on p. 57. She breaks the figure down further: Between 1876-85, only about 1 million leave; between 1885-95, 2 million leave, 1896-1905, 4 million; 1905-1915 6 million apply for passports through not all receive one.

of Italy's population as expatriates.¹⁰⁶ In sum, between 1870 and 1914, roughly six million individuals left for other parts of Europe, four million for the United States and Canada, and three million for Brazil and Argentina.¹⁰⁷ Nearly two-thirds of those leaving were men between the ages of sixteen and forty-five; initially, most were peasants with agricultural skills, and later, men with artisanal specialties followed.¹⁰⁸ For every 100 women who moved, between 350-567 men did, though ultimately, the gender ratio was more even in Argentina than the United States.

Though emigration to Argentina originated in the industrialized North—between 1876-1885, Piedmont and Lombardy were the greatest sources of migration—by 1900, Sicily and Calabria were sending more people overseas. Ultimately, in the period of mass migration, approximately 17% of Italian immigrants to Argentina came from Piedmont, 10% from Lombardy, 13% from Calabria, 11% from Sicily, and 7.5% from Campania.¹⁰⁹ By comparison, those Italians who traveled to the United States were almost wholly from the South. It was rarely the poorest Italians who emigrated, but those who had some savings and connections in their new destination. Though approximately half eventually returned— either to fight in World War I out of patriotic duty, or because they had earned enough money to comfortably return to their families in Italy—millions remained abroad.

Samuel L. Baily, who focuses only on the two largest Italian immigrant communities, in Buenos Aires and New York City, calculated that, by the outbreak of World War I, those

¹⁰⁶ Choate, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Gabaccia, 58. In fact, these numbers may actually be deflated, because they only account for people who left officially, while many left unofficially so as to avoid paying for a passport.

¹⁰⁸ According to Baily, the gender ratio was nearly four to 1. For every 100 women who left, 350-567 men moved, depending upon where we look. This statistic is quoted on p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Baily, 60-63.

populations were roughly the same size: approximately 312,000 Italians had settled *permanently* in greater Buenos Aires and 370,000 had put down roots in New York.¹¹⁰ The distance to Buenos Aires was twice as long as that to New York, but the trip cost only a little more, and the long-term financial prospects were greater, since there was more room for overall economic growth in Argentina.¹¹¹ In general, more Italians stayed longer (or permanently) in Buenos Aires than in New York, for a variety of reasons: there existed greater career opportunities; Italians were by far the largest expatriate population, so they wielded considerable power as a faction; and Southern Italians were less stigmatized in Argentina than in New York or in Italy. Compared to New York, where assimilation was slow or nonexistent, “Buenos Aires,” Baily writes, “represents the polar case of rapid, effective, and relatively complete adjustment” over time.¹¹²

Indeed, crossing the Atlantic was seen as fundamentally different from merely crossing the Alps. The United States, Canada, and South America were all considered “La Merica,” as the term had come to signify any overseas land of opportunity, employment and sacrifice.¹¹³ In choosing the Americas over elsewhere in Europe, there were three important pull factors: 1) a labor shortage had been created by the abolition of slavery throughout the Americas, and Italians could fill this vacuum, taking on jobs others didn’t want; 2) there was plenty of open and affordable land; and 3) these nations, especially Argentina, desired Europeans. One observer in

¹¹⁰ Baily, 11. Baily’s text is most concerned with the ways that class, gender and ethnicity all come together to affect the experiences of specific immigrant groups. He also has an interest in showing that migration is a global, multidirectional phenomenon, rather than a unidirectional one. Baily seeks to allow for better understanding through a comparative analysis between two different cities.

¹¹¹ Baily, 50.

¹¹² Baily, 20. There are three other cases he mentions being in the middle: San Francisco, Toronto, and São Paulo. As in Argentina, Italians were the single largest population of immigrants in Brazil; however, the Italian government prohibited future migration to Brazil out of fears that Italians were being forced to do jobs that had previously been completed with slave labor. Brazil was the last country in the Americas to outlaw slavery in 1898.

¹¹³ Gabaccia, 70.

Argentina wrote, “The word *America* has come to mean wealth, prosperity, fortune. To justify their hard life, the Italians say that they came to America to *do America* and not to learn Castilian Spanish.”¹¹⁴

This quote is telling, for it underscores the feeling many Italians shared: they initially had no intention of truly integrating. In fact, the language that many Italians perfected abroad was not English or Spanish, but Tuscan *Italian*. The Italian government funded language classes for citizens abroad so that expatriate communities could communicate with each other in the official Tuscan dialect, even if they had spoken different dialects in Italy.¹¹⁵ This was a direct attempt by the state to make sure that an international community of Italians bonded, creating cohesive voting and communal blocks, and hopefully spread the influence of Italian culture, products, and values. Language was seen as the glue that would cement a greater Italy, and the Dante Society, founded in 1889 to promote Italian language and culture, employed language teachers aboard ships heading towards Argentina, while ship libraries also provided free patriotic texts in the Tuscan dialect.¹¹⁶ Yet, regardless of their early intentions to work and return home, many Italians wound up lingering in Argentina for generations to come. Even if they did not immediately learn Spanish, they set down roots and contributed to both the gene pool and the culture of their adopted country.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Choate, 23. Choate explains that America meant not specifically the Americas, but any overseas land of opportunity, employment and sacrifice. In general, the desire was to work, save and return to Italy, not become part of a local society.

¹¹⁵ In part because of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the Tuscan dialect became Italy’s most prominent one from 1300 on, and the Crusca Academy of Florence began publishing a standard Tuscan dictionary as early as 1612. Still, illiteracy was a huge problem: 68.8% of Italians were illiterate in 1871, and by 1911, the number had dropped nearly fifty percent, to 37.9%, due in large part to the efforts of groups like the Dante Society. For more on this topic, see: Choate, “Chapter 4: The Language of Dante.”

¹¹⁶ Interestingly, the Dante Alighieri Society was much more active outside of Italy than inside the country, thus proving that it was more about creating a global community of Italians than actually teaching the Tuscan dialect. For more on this paradox, see Choate, 110-114.

Why Argentina? Laying the Groundwork for Immigration:

Perhaps it is not surprising that so many Italians ended up staying in Argentina, given that Argentina and Italy shared several early historical parallels. Both Argentina and Italy suffered from foreign domination throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Spanish first came to Argentina in 1516, when they began searching for silver in the Rio de la Plata (Silver River) region. Even Argentina's official name comes from *argentum*, silver in Latin, despite the reality that there wasn't nearly as much silver as the Spanish predicted. Between 1516-1580, approximately sixty Spanish expeditions explored and conquered the land, though many Spaniards retreated when they realized the colony's natural resources were limited compared to neighboring countries like Brazil.¹¹⁷ Those who stayed settled in Buenos Aires, setting up the typical colonial organization of one dense center surrounded by a vast and underpopulated periphery.¹¹⁸

In 1776, Bourbon Reforms transferred Argentine territories that had previously been subject to Peru to the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, making Buenos Aires the capital, and further cementing the center-periphery power structure. The Viceroyalty was given resources to protect itself, including guards from the Spanish royal army, and Buenos Aires soon set up trade agreements with Brazil, Peru, and other colonies, challenging Spain's colonial grip and leading the crown to eventually prohibit trade with any country besides Spain. This ban irritated the local community and sparked early sentiments of revolt. When Spain went to war with Britain

¹¹⁷ Information on Argentina's early history is taken from the excellent text: David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Rock mentions that, out of the approximately 250,000 Spaniards who traveled to the Americas in the sixteenth century, only about 3,000 of them ever set foot in the Southern Cone (Rock, 32).

¹¹⁸ Taken across the entire country, there was an average of roughly two people per three square miles around 1700 (Rock, 33).

between 1796-1802, and then again between 1804-8, as part of the French Revolutionary Wars and later the Napoleonic Wars, continual blockades by the British navy restricted the amount of goods the Spanish crown could send to South America, weakening the crown's grip on its empire. In 1806, the British navy unsuccessfully attacked Buenos Aires, provoking a rebellion amongst Porteños (residents of Buenos Aires), first against the British, and then against their Spanish overlords.¹¹⁹ Four years later, just as the Napoleonic Wars led to the early rumblings of nationalism in Italy, in Argentina they precipitated to the eventual rejection of Spanish rule and the creation of the first locally-led government, *La primera Junta*, in 1810. After six years of fighting, on July 9, 1816, a congress of representatives from Argentina's various provinces formally declared independence from Spain in the northwestern province of San Miguel de Tucumán.¹²⁰

Yet Argentina's self-governance was nearly as fragile as Italy's unification. Almost immediately, a clash developed between the *Unitarists*, who believed in central power concentrated in Buenos Aires, and the *Federalists*, who wanted autonomous provincial control. Internal strife led to civil war, which resulted in the ascendance of the Federalist Juan Manuel de Rosas, who became governor of Buenos Aires in 1829. Once he rose to power, however, Rosas decided to unite the entire country under his rule—more in the vein of Unitarism than the

¹¹⁹ Though initially, Spain was part of the coalition forces fighting against the new French Republic and attempting to restore the Bourbon monarchy, it joined forces with France against the British in 1796. Thereafter, the British set up a blockade, restricting the amount of goods and wealth arriving in the colonies, greatly weakening Spain's control over its empire. After a brief truce in 1802, the British began attacking Spanish fleets traveling between the colonies and Cadiz as early as 1804. The British navy struck the strategically important Rio de la Plata region in 1806. For more, see: Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793–1815* (London: Penguin Global, 2014).

¹²⁰ For a detailed listing of the events following independence and their cultural ramifications, see the “Chronology” in: Idurre Alonso and Judith Keller, eds. *Photography in Argentina: Contradiction and Continuity*, (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017), 307-322.

Federalism he'd espoused—establishing an authoritarian regime called *Rosismo* for nearly twenty-five years. In 1852, Rosas was finally ousted at the Battle of Caseros, ending his dictatorship and establishing the Argentine Confederation and a national constitution, which abolished slavery. The province of Buenos Aires did not rejoin the Argentine Confederation until 1859. In 1862, only a year after the unification of Italy, Argentina was declared a Republic, with Buenos Aires as its capital and Bartolomé Mitre as its newly elected president. Mitre, along with the next two presidents, Domingo Sarmiento and Nicolás Avellaneda, established the basis for a modern Argentina by expanding railroads, creating universal and compulsory education, organizing a Supreme Court, and most consequentially, promoting European immigration.¹²¹ Thus, while a new Italy had to “make Italians,” given its lack of an organic identity, Argentina was undergoing its own nation-building campaign that was just as complicated and equally threatened by regionalism.

Over the next three decades, Italy searched for ways to stabilize its economy and expand its influence abroad, and Argentina hungrily courted European immigrants. In 1853, political theorist Juan Bautista Alberdi wrote his formative text, *Las Bases*, in which he outlined a detailed program for building a new, modern Argentina and coined the oft-repeated slogan, “To govern is to populate.”¹²² Alberdi associated all Europeans with hard work and good manners, and he believed that that European men could first lead the indigenous population by example, and then help to breed a stronger, more orderly Argentine race through intermarriage with Creole

¹²¹ Ibid., 308-9.

¹²² Juan Bautista Alberdi, “Immigration as a Means of Progress,” in *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Graciela Montaldo and Gabriela Nouzeilles (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 95.

women.¹²³ His text is full of rhetorical questions that all share the same answer: “Do we want to plant and nourish the qualities of English liberty, French culture, and the industriousness of European men?,” he asked. “Then let us bring the living exemplars of these attributes to our shores...Do we want orderly, disciplined, energetic work habits to prevail in South America? Then let us fill our country with people who have a profound grasp of such habits. Those who are well acquainted with industrial Europe will soon form industrial South America.”¹²⁴ Alberdi believed that education was an ineffective measure of progress unless it was also coupled with developments in industry, job opportunities, and a growing population. Overall, Alberdi remained convinced that Argentina—and South America in general—could not advance on its own; it required the help of European immigrants, and it needed liberal policies that would attract them to Argentina “spontaneously,” by making it easier to achieve financial success there than in their homelands.¹²⁵

Alberdi was instrumental in writing the first Argentine Constitution, signed following the 1852 overthrow of Juan Manuel de Rosas. Rosas was decisively xenophobic, but the Constitution brazenly encouraged immigration, as per Alberdi’s assumption that all Europeans would become productive members of Argentine society due to their Christian culture and white skin, and that, rather than assimilate to Argentine ways, they could be instrumental in improving

¹²³ The term *Creole* in Argentina does not usually connote someone of mixed race, though in today’s parlance it can. Back in the nineteenth century, it generally referred to a person of Spanish origins who has already lived in Argentina for a generation.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 95. For more on Alberdi and his role in Argentina’s immigration policy, see: Sam Schulman, “Juan Bautista Alberdi and His Influence on Immigration Policy in the Argentine Constitution of 1853,” *The Americas*, Volume 5, No. 1 (July 1948), pp. 3-17.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 97. Alberdi aimed to create something similar to the “spontaneous” movement to California, initiated by the possibility of getting rich quick through gold speculation. Alberdi also believed that the United States owed its own successes to immigration, which it had fostered even in the colonial period.

the country along European lines. Even in the preamble, the authors state that their goal is “promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves, to our posterity, and *to all men in the world who wish to dwell on Argentine soil.*”¹²⁶ Thus, the intention of attracting people to Argentina—both with economic incentives and democratic entitlements—was immediately clear. Article 25 of the Constitution states: “The Federal Government shall encourage European immigration, and it may not restrict, limit, or burden with any tax whatsoever the entry into Argentine territory of foreigners whose purpose is tilling the soil, improving industries, and introducing and teaching the sciences and the arts.”¹²⁷ Article 20 goes even further, giving all foreigners—not just European-born ones—identical rights as Argentine citizens and stating how relatively simple it was to attain citizenship within only two years:

Foreigners enjoy in the territory of the Nation all the civil rights of a citizen; they may engage in their industry, trade or profession, own, purchase or transfer real property, navigate the rivers and coasts, freely practice their religion, [and] make wills and marry in accordance with the laws. They are not obligated to assume citizenship, or to pay extraordinary compulsory taxes. They may obtain naturalization by residing two continuous years in the Nation, but the authorities may shorten this term in favor of anyone so requesting, upon their asserting and proving services to the Republic.¹²⁸

These liberal policies were highly effective: In 1855, only thirty-five percent of Buenos Aires’s population was foreign-born, but by 1869, that number had risen to fifty percent.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1. The italics are mine.

¹²⁷ The entire text of the 1853 Constitution is available in English at: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Argentina_1994.pdf?lang=en. (accessed 2/8/18). This text was published by Oxford University and translated by Jonathan M. Miller and Fang-Lian Liao. It should be noted that this article is limited to European immigrants, while somehow ignoring the possibility of immigrants from other parts of the Americas or further flung continents, such as Asia.

¹²⁸ Ibid. The following Article 21 also exempts naturalized citizens from mandatory military service for up to ten years; thus, foreign-born citizens are almost in a more advantageous position than their Argentine-born counterparts. This would come to be an issue during World War I.

¹²⁹ Alonso and Keller, “Introduction” to *Photography in Argentina*, 2.

Beginning with the 1868 election of Domingo Sarmiento as president, a rapid succession of legal changes, territorial shifts, and economic growth further encouraged European immigration. In this period, Argentina's modernization and nation-building began to mirror that of the United States more than Italy: both nations shared a similar frontier ideology of expansion and resettlement; both championed the cowboy, or the Argentine *gaucho*, as national symbols; and both relied upon the tenets of laissez-faire economics and a heterogeneous population of immigrants.¹³⁰ Argentina became one of the world's top five exporters of beef, wheat, and leather products in the late nineteenth century, and this booming export market meant myriad job opportunities as early as the 1860s.¹³¹ From 1860 to 1900, one of Argentina's chief exports was wool, which was sent off to European and North American factories for finishing. Much of this wool was cultivated by Scottish and Italian immigrants, who raised cattle on the Pampas, where land was slowly being fenced in to create grazing pastures.¹³²

In the Battle of San Carlos, in 1872, the Argentine Army defeated Mapuche Chief Juan Calfucurá, wresting land south of Buenos Aires from the indigenous population and creating more space for European transplants. In 1876, the Avellaneda Law (passed during the presidency of Nicolás Avellaneda, from 1874-80), granted European farmers easy access to land

¹³⁰ The comparison between Argentina and the United States has been made by many scholars, including, most recently, Idurre Alonso and Judith Keller, in their Introduction to *Photography in Argentina*, 1-5. They make the point that, while the United States referred to territorial expansion euphemistically, as "Manifest Destiny," Argentina was more straightforward in discussing the Conquest of the Desert.

¹³¹ The meat export market grew dramatically after the first successful shipment of frozen meat from Argentina to Havre, France, in 1877. Due to a collision en route, the ship took seven months to complete her journey, but the 5,500 mutton carcasses were still reported to be in 'in tip top condition' when the ship arrived. For more on the history of frozen meat and Argentina's role in it, see: James Critchell and Joseph Raymond, *A history of the frozen meat trade : an account of the development and present day methods of preparation, transport, and marketing of frozen and chilled meats*, (London: Constable & Company, 1912).

¹³² Arnd Scheider, *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity Among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*, (Bern: Peter Lang, AG, 2000), 62. Schneider makes the point that the enclosure of land by shepherds also made it more difficult for gauchos to continue their nomadic lifestyle.

that had previously belonged to native peoples. Three years later, General Julio A Roca's violent Conquest of the Desert in 1879 broke the remaining indigenous population's resistance, eventually leading to an opening of the southern pampas and Patagonia for resettlement.

The photographer Antonio Pozzo (1829-1910) was born in Italy and then immigrated to Argentina as a child and later became the official photographer of Roca's military campaign, which he chronicled in a two-volume album titled *Expedición al Rio Negro. Abril a julio de 1879* (Expedition to the Rio Negro, April to July 1879) [See Figures 1 and 2]. Images of the battle show horses galloping at great speed on the open pampas, expressing the sheer might of Roca's army, as well as the emptiness of the pampas. In fact, none of Pozzo's photographs show actual conflict; instead, they portray the land as open for the taking.¹³³ In *Jefe de la expedición General Roca y Estado Mayor General* (Head of the Expedition, General Roca, and Major Generals, 1879) [Figure 3], Roca and his generals are posed seriously, swords in hand, in front of a military tent, with horses and more soldiers in the distance. Given the lack of resistance shown in the other images, the large number of generals here seems almost comical, suggesting that Pozzo must have edited out the real clashes from his sanitized, propagandistic account.

We now know that Roca did not encounter as much resistance as he expected, yet he was certainly leading extermination campaigns against indigenous peoples, and Pozzo carefully concealed that aspect of the story.¹³⁴ When he did depict indigenous chiefs, it was in a Buenos Aires studio—an environment that already admitted defeat—in a staged manner that further

¹³³ For more on Pozzo and other official photographers of the Conquest of the Desert, see: See Héctor Alimonda and Juan Fergunson, "La Producción Del Desierto. Las Imágenes de La Campaña Del Ejército Argentino Contra Los Indios, 1879," *Revista Chilena de Antropología Visual*, no. 4 (2004): 17-28. Also see: Ana Tallone, *A Light in the Darkness: Argentinian Photography During the Military Dictatorship, 1976-1983*, (Phd Diss., The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2015), 28-30.

¹³⁴ Tallone, 30.

emasculated them. *Cacique Pincén*, Chief Pincén of the pampas [Figure 4], shows a chief who was brought to Buenos Aires as a prisoner of war in 1878. Indeed, Pincén appears truly exhausted. He holds a long lance that is not his own—it was taken from an anthropology museum in La Plata—and *bolas*, a weapon of weighted balls used to capture animals, are slung over his shoulder.¹³⁵ In essence, Pozzi's photograph shows the capitulation of the native population.

Europeans had begun to colonize interior territories as early as the 1830s. First, Scottish settlers arrived in Chascomús, a city in the south of Buenos Aires province, then Santa Fe province was colonized by Swiss immigrants beginning in 1856, and the Welsh settlement of Chubut in Patagonia was founded a decade later.¹³⁶ Each community was heavily documented through photographs that were produced by members of the communities themselves. The most extensive series was done by Ernesto Schlie (1866-1912), a child of German immigrants born in the colony of Esperanza, who had established his own photography studio by 1887. Schlie documented Esperanza and other nearby villages and compiled forty-eight images into an album titled *Vistas de la Provincia de Santa Fe* (Views of the Province of Santa Fe, 1889).¹³⁷ He then went on to document at least forty other colonies, villages and towns between 1888-1894.

Schlie was known as a chronicler of the “Pampa gringa,” the frontier towns of the interior. Interestingly, though many of his photographs highlight aspects of rural modernization or peaceful coexistence of indigenous and immigrant populations, closer inspection reveals

¹³⁵ Alexander and Priamo in *Photography in Argentina*, 244-45.

¹³⁶ These three communities are discussed in: Abel Alexander and Luis Priamo, “Photography of Views and Customs in Nineteenth-Century Argentina,” in *Photography in Argentina*, (236-249).

¹³⁷ For more, see: *Vistas de la provincia de Santa Fe 1888-1892 : Fotografías de Ernesto H. Schlie*, (Buenos Aires: El Litoral, 2000).

cracks in the myth he created. In *Estación Central: Primer Ferro-Carril del Chaco* (Central Station: First train in Chaco) [Figure 5], Schlie documents the expansion of the railroad through the pampas, but the central station is surrounded by horses, and there is no train in sight. Presumably, if the train had been running regularly, Schlie could have waited to capture its arrival. As it is, the image documents the existence of modern infrastructure rather than its use, while contrasting it with more traditional modes of transportation, like the horse. In *Casa israelita. Monigotes, Santa Fe* (Israeli Home, Monigotes, Santa Fe, 1889) [Figure 6], Schlie captures a Jewish family with two indigenous women, one of who is holding their child. Though the photographer may have aimed to show easy commingling between white and native people, the stern expressions worn by the native women tell a different story. It is unclear if they are providing childcare willingly or under duress. Still, *Vistas de la Provincia de Santa Fe* was selected by the Argentine government to travel to Paris for the 1889 Universal Exposition, where it may have enticed even more people to move to Argentina.

Ethnography Trumps Geography:

In his violent military campaigns, Roca had broken with the writing of Alberdi, who believed that, “to reduce a great mass of men to an eighth of its size in two hours by firing a cannon—that is the heroism of the past. In contrast, to multiply a small population in just a few days—this is the heroism of the modern statesman.”¹³⁸ Alberdi continued, “Our soil adopts men, it attracts and assimilates them and makes our land theirs.”¹³⁹ Yet, he also made it quite clear that

¹³⁸ Alberdi in Nouzeilles and Montaldo, 101.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 100.

he did not want immigrants to arrive and forget about their native cultures and customs; quite the contrary, he viewed Europeans as a catalyst for progress and economic growth, and they could most effectively help to refashion Argentina by *not* completely assimilating, but rather, by bringing their native customs and habits into Argentine society and leading by example. For Alberdi, cultural mixing was an intense and positive force. He admired cities like Montevideo, Uruguay, and Valparaíso, Chile—both full of Europeans—and nations like the United States, where one could observe that, even amongst people of different creeds and backgrounds, “the common man is one integrated race.”¹⁴⁰ Yet, the high-minded openness that Alberdi espoused had little in common with reality on the ground in Buenos Aires. While he discussed “victory,” “great races,” and cultural amalgamation, many recent immigrants experienced extreme hardships, both before and after their transatlantic crossing. Alberdi made a fatal miscalculation when thinking about *who* the immigrants would be: he pictured educated, well-read Europeans who could lift up the Argentine masses, but many of those who made the journey were financially scrambling (though not so poor they could not afford transatlantic passage), illiterate, and susceptible to being swindled by opportunistic middlemen.

Of the fourteen million Italians who emigrated between 1876 and 1915, 29% went to the United States, and 15%, or 2.1 million, landed in Argentina.¹⁴¹ Throughout these four decades, many more people abandoned Northern than Southern Italy—approximately 7 million left the North versus 5.5 million from the South, respectively—but while most Northerners elected to stay in Europe, ninety percent of Southerners headed to the Americas. Before 1880, many more

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹⁴¹ This statistic comes from Baily, 47.

northern than southern Italians emigrated to Argentina, simply because they had the means to go; however, demographics shifted throughout the 1880s and 90s. By 1900, the largest concentration of Italians heading to Argentina came from Calabria and Sicily.¹⁴² During the 1870s and 80s, most emigrants lacked family members or other points of contact in the Americas, so they relied upon labor agents and *Padroni*—patrons who paid for their transatlantic voyage in return for a percentage of their earnings abroad—for guidance. Ultimately, like the labor agent, the *padroni* leached off of emigrants, leaving new arrivals with little money to send back to Italy or establish a foothold in the Americas. Many migrants who employed these liaisons returned to Italy after only a few years. By contrast, Italians who relocated through “chain migration” — following existing groups of friends and family and relying upon them, rather than paid agents, for opportunities—were more likely to achieve economic security and social stability. Throughout the twentieth century, chain migration became increasingly prominent. Even by 1908, though, 98.7% of southern Italians entering the United States had a pre-paid ticket and an address of a friend or relative with whom they could stay upon arrival.¹⁴³ A similar statistic for Argentina has not been recorded, but it is likely comparable, since most Italian immigrants to Buenos Aires were moving to join existing communities abroad.

This community-driven relocation appealed to entire families, encouraging more women to move with their husbands. Both women and men integrated into communities comprised of individuals from their native Italian regions, fomenting a strong sense of *italianità*.

¹⁴² Bailly includes comprehensive statistics on emigration from different parts of the Italy between 1876-1915 in an extensive chart on pages 26-27. Before 1900, emigration from the North was roughly double that from the South; after 1900, emigration continued to increase in both areas, but the South grew exponentially, surpassing the north. Between 1900-1905, 231,300 people left the North each year, whereas 258,300 per year left the South.

¹⁴³ Gabaccia, 66.

Paradoxically, even if immigrants had specific regional identities, they still shared general characteristics that were recognizing as belonging to all Italians. By 1900, roughly twenty percent of Italian migrants were women: Those from the North usually arrived as unmarried workers, while Southerners came with spouses, even if many of them started working once abroad. Over all, there were more Southern female migrants, as the highest rates of emigration were from areas where subsistence farming was in the process of transitioning to commercial agriculture, leaving traditional farmers unemployed. In fact, in the early twentieth century, while Italian men usually took jobs in construction, mining, or on the railroads, Italian women formed the largest group of textile or garment workers in both the United States and Argentina.¹⁴⁴

Significantly, for many Italians, the United States was *not* the preferred destination in the same way it was for Europeans from other more industrialized nations. Many Italians found it easier to succeed in Argentina, where many established businesses were already owned by Italians, and where industries were less mechanized, more in-line with Italy's own slow and protracted modernization.¹⁴⁵ Also of consequence, Italians did not have to compete with as many northern Europeans for jobs, and were therefore able to become a dominant labor force fairly quickly. According to Samuel Baily, the Italians who went to Buenos Aires had a greater expectation of settling there permanently than those who traveled to New York. The gender and age composition of the Italian community in Buenos Aires indicated greater stability and longevity: there were more women and families, more elderly people, and more first and second generation children by the late nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶ Whereas in New York, there were roughly

¹⁴⁴ Gabaccia, 75.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 79.

¹⁴⁶ Baily, 66-67.

three men to every woman, in Buenos Aires, the ratio was closer to two to one, and by 1914, it was as low as 1.5 to one. Perhaps because Spanish and Italian are so similar, literacy rates in Buenos Aires quickly surpassed those in New York; by 1914, roughly seventy percent of Italian men in Buenos Aires could read and write in Spanish. Once they could read documents, many of these immigrants started to invest their savings locally rather than sending considerable sums back to Italy. This development prompted Italian politicians to question the long-ranging consequences of emigration.¹⁴⁷

From the outset, a debate erupted within Italy over emigration and its economic and political ramifications. On the one hand, it seemed to be a more sustainable and less costly alternative to colonial campaigns, a way for Italy to have a global presence without having to win any wars. Alberdi used similar language, arguing that, “The emigrant is a colonist; he leaves the mother country for the country of his adoption.”¹⁴⁸ In 1887, Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, an early proponent of emigration, argued that it could serve as a nation-building force:

Rather than draining the nation, emigration would expand Italy beyond its borders. The government cannot remain an indifferent or passive spectator to the destinies of emigrants. It must know exactly where they are going and what awaits them; it must accompany them with a vigilant eye...It must never lose sight of them in their new home...to turn to its advantage the fruits of their labor. Colonies must be like arms, which the country extends far away in foreign districts to bring them within the orbit of its relations of labor and exchange; they must be like an enlargement of the boundaries of its action and its economic power.¹⁴⁹

But Crispi also believed that, in order for emigration to work to Italy’s advantage, the government must be heavily involved in the “destinies of emigrants,” always accompanying them with a “vigilant and loving eye,” in order to guard against assimilation and make sure

¹⁴⁷ Bailly, 66-67.

¹⁴⁸ Alberdi in Nouzeilles and Montaldo, 100.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Choate, 29.

Italians “colonists” stayed connected to home.¹⁵⁰ Physiologist Angelo Mosso went further, vehemently defending emigration as late as 1906, calling it a “fatal need and a necessary form of life for Italians because it conforms to their character. Emigration is not bloodletting...but a corroborating remedy, not a damaging crisis, but a fever due to growth, like those youth from which the body exits stronger and more complex.”¹⁵¹ For Crispi, Mosso, and others, it was a possible solution to economic woes—high unemployment and food shortages, particularly in the South—and emigrants, many of whom earned two to three times as much as they could at home, *might* channel some of their newfound wealth back to Italy from abroad.

From a cultural standpoint, there were less obvious, but possibly far-reaching, benefits. As Choate explains, if emigrants could resist the pressures of assimilation, then emigration could be an effective and affordable way for Italy to spread *Italianità*, and the home government soon realized this. Choate uses the term “emigrant colonialism” to refer to the official policies and related private programs that foreign ministries developed in emigrant settlements. In fact, in an early analysis of Italian colonialism, from 1874, the word *colonia* is used to refer to both overseas land possessions, or “colonies of direct dominion,” *and* more “spontaneous colonies,” settlements of emigrants in a foreign country. By 1900, by nature and by design, there existed a veritable network of trade and exchange by Italians abroad, bolstered by the importation of products “made in Italy.” Italian officials referred to this as “greater Italy.” Choate also explains how emigration and trade, the key tenets of emigrant colonialism, went hand in hand: If Italian products were sold internationally, emigrants would continue to buy them and stay more

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Chate, 29-30.

¹⁵¹ Angelo Mosso, *Vita moderna degli Italiani. Saggi* (Milan: Treves, 1906), 53. He is also quoted in Wong, 116.

connected to the motherland. And if they were more bound to Italy, they would be more likely to send money back to Italy, stabilizing and strengthening the economy.¹⁵²

The Italian government viewed colonialism and emigration as intrinsically linked—both ways of spreading Italian identity and influence outside of the nation’s geographic confines. Though Italy was a relative late-comer to African colonialism, it did establish two small colonies in Eritrea and Somalia in the 1890s.¹⁵³ In 1896, Italy suffered a huge loss in Adwa, Ethiopia, thus cementing Ethiopian sovereignty and dealing a severe blow to Italy’s pride and its military might. At this point, Crispi and others proposed developing emigration to the Americas rather than continuing to fight in Africa and amassing massive casualties with little economic gain. Though Italy couldn’t legally control what happened on foreign soil, Crispi argued, it *could* funnel money through non-governmental organizations, like mutual aid societies, to gently (and not so gently) encourage support of, and identification with, “greater Italy.” He encouraged his supporters to use the term “Italians Abroad” to refer to Italian-speaking people in the Americas, (whereas before, this term had referred to Italians living in the Austro-Hungarian empire), and to think of Italy as an “ethnographic empire.” Physical geography was no longer as important as blood and heritage, and “an international commitment to Italians abroad could bring vigor and life to Italy.”¹⁵⁴ In fact, by focusing on emigrant colonies in the Americas, rather than colonies of direct dominion in Africa, Italy was not only saving face and money, but it was carefully

¹⁵² With over six million Italians abroad, approximately half a billion lire were sent back to Italy each year. For more on this, see “Chapter 1: From Africa to the Americas.”

¹⁵³ The Italian presence in Africa did expand under Mussolini in the 1930s. In 1936, Eritrea was merged with Somaliland and Ethiopia to become Italian East Africa. This colony was short-lived, lasting only until 1941, when Ethiopian troops pushed Italian forces out.

¹⁵⁴ Choate, 71.

fostering national pride around the globe and protecting its commercial interests. Italians already living in the Americas were concerned with Italy's international reputation, because it directly reflected upon their own standing. More failed colonial campaigns could result in embarrassment and damaging consequences: those living abroad may cut ties and end their support of the Italian economy.¹⁵⁵ Crispi maintained that it was in Italy's best interests to focus on the communities that already existed rather than fighting to start new ones.

In 1899, the politician and economist Luigi Einaudi published *A Merchant Prince: A Study in Italian Colonial Expansion*, in which he argued that cultural exchange and trade follow from open emigration, rather than political domination. According to Einaudi, the most effective form of colonization was not political or military, like British colonization, but cultural, and therefore more reliant on *italianità*. He cited Argentina's capital district as a prime example of an effective emigrant colony:

On the banks of the Plata River, a new Italy is rising, a people is forming which, though Argentine, will preserve the fundamental characters of the Italian people...We are showing the world that Italy can create a more perfect and evolved type of colonization. The peaceful conquest of the English settlers was always accompanied by military domination...but Italian colonization has always been free and independent."¹⁵⁶

Though Einaudi had political ambitions—and would later go on to be Italy's president between 1948-55—he was primarily concerned with the economic benefits of emigration. He believed that if Italians stuck together, they would continue to purchase Italian products and would convince other North and South Americans to do so as well. If, however, Italians assimilated, this would diminish Italy's international influence and wound its economy.

¹⁵⁵ Choate explores how Italians abroad were concerned with the fate of Italy's colonies, both from a personal and a national perspective. After Italy's defeat in Amba Alagi in December 1895, Italians in Buenos Aires organized their own chapter of the Italian red cross, pp. 48-49.

¹⁵⁶ Luigi Einaudi. *Un principe mercante. Studio sulla espansione coloniale italiana* (Turin, 1900), 22-23.

In 1901, the Italian Law on Emigration transferred power from the Ministry of the Interior to the Foreign Ministry, making emigration more about “international expansion than internal hemorrhaging.”¹⁵⁷ This was the first emigration law in Europe to try to capitalize on emigration and to intervene and defend expatriates against foreign governments when necessary. Also in 1901, Italy created an independent Emigration Commissariat with financial goals: 1) to fund hospitals for Italians abroad using money from an emigration tax; and 2) to set up a system wherein emigrants could easily transfer funds to the Banco di Napoli at a reduced rate. Ultimately, the Italian government was attempting to dissolve the distinction between place of birth and citizenship; anyone born to Italian parents abroad could be considered part of a global community of Italians with language and heritage as key unifiers. In short, ethnography trumped geo-political borders in the creation of “greater Italy.”

Indeed, perhaps even more than other Latin American countries, Argentina was most happy to be part of “greater Italy.” In the 1901 Italian study, *Emigrazione e colonie*, Argentina was listed as a “temporary colony.”¹⁵⁸ Most Italians did not bother to become Argentine citizens, given that citizenship granted them few advantages residency did not; even still, most of them stayed and set down roots.¹⁵⁹ Though nationalist tendencies existed among Argentina’s masses, elite policy makers, largely of Spanish heritage themselves, viewed European immigration as a

¹⁵⁷ Choate, 72.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Choate, 33.

¹⁵⁹ Argentina was the main destination for Italians in South American, until it was temporarily surpassed by Brazil following the abolition of slavery in 1888. At this point, major labor shortages resulted in the Brazilian government promoting and paying for the immigration of white European workers, mainly from Catholic countries like Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Statistics on Italo-Brazilians are fairly inconsistent, but between 10-15% of Brazil’s current population—or 20-30 million people—have some Italian ancestry. This is still a small number when compared to Argentina’s 60%. For more on this topic, see: Miguel Angel Garcia, “Immigrazione Italiana nell’America del Sud” Available at: <https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/view/14929177/italiani-sudamericapdf>

civilizing trend, one which could help to counter the perceived heathenism of the then dwindling indigenous population.¹⁶⁰ Even if their goal was to attract northern Europeans rather than Mediterranean ones, Italians were still seen as more “advanced” than much of the Creole population. In this sense, they were considered “bearers of civilization” by the majority of Argentina’s power brokers.¹⁶¹

Little Italies: Emigrant Communities in Buenos Aires:

Following the ratification of Argentina’s 1853 Constitution, European immigration was promoted primarily by mutual aid societies, organizations that provided benefits to their members when they became sick, disabled, or unemployed. Many early mutual aid societies in Argentina were started by Italian political exiles who had left Italy in the late 1840s, before the Risorgimento. In 1858, when Italians already made up over ten percent of the Buenos Aires population, the *Unione e Benevolenza*, the first Italian mutual aid society in Argentina, was founded by Giuseppe Mazzini’s followers who had left Italy for political reasons. Within just two years, the *Unione* had 2,800 members, and the next year, a second society was founded by other Italians living in Argentina.¹⁶² These societies would continue to be important in Argentina for many decades, but beginning in the mid 1880s, immigration was increasingly pursued from the Argentine end. This remained the case until 1911-12, when Italian leaders began to see

¹⁶⁰ Bailly discusses elite views on immigration in Argentina on pp 73-76. He discusses how some even hoped that miscegenation between immigrants and natives would create a more civilized population over all.

¹⁶¹ As we will see in the next chapter, one of the founders of Italy’s immigration policy, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was ultimately disappointed that immigrants came from Italy rather than Northern Europe, and he blamed Argentina’s very slow modernization on Italians as much as Argentines.

¹⁶² Choate, 173-4. Choate discusses how six of the seven original founders of the *Unione* came from Northern Italy, only one is Southern, meaning that the original immigrants in Argentina were coming from different places than those of later periods.

emigration less positively and enforced a boycott on Argentine products in order to compel Argentina to recognize its great dependence on Italian labor.

Just as Italy was aggressively pushing emigration through its policies, Argentina was doing everything it could to court Europeans. The first Argentine immigration agent in Europe was appointed in 1864, and by 1871, there were seventeen agents aiming to attract people to the underpopulated South American country. When immigrants arrived in Buenos Aires, in accordance with the 1876 Law of Immigration and Colonization, they received five days of free room and board in the capital, as well as transportation further into the interior of the country if they so desired.¹⁶³ For a time, Argentina even subsidized immigrants' transatlantic passage, and the government took steps to help newcomers find jobs by creating a placement service at the docks in the port neighborhood of La Boca, which had a disproportionately large Italian population by the 1880s. These government organizations were slowly replaced by private ones, such that by 1912, there were over fifty employment agencies, placing roughly 170,000 workers each year. Though Italians made up only 32% of the Argentine population, they comprised over half of the industrial worker population. In nearly all sectors of the workplace and the market, Italians were more influential in Buenos Aires than in New York.¹⁶⁴ This influence was a key factor in the continued appeal of Argentina to Italians. Above all other considerations, though, the fact that immigrants were not required to become citizens in order to have equal rights was particularly attractive to Italian officials and migrants, because it harmonized with the notion of

¹⁶³ Bailly, 77.

¹⁶⁴ These issues and others are discussed in Bailly's fourth chapter, "Fare l'America," pp. 99-101.

emigrant colonialism and the feeling that Italy could be anywhere; physical geography and residency were no longer as important as self-identification.

In 1888, Domingo F. Sarmiento, president of Argentina from 1868-74, who had vociferously promoted immigration, began to lament that it may have its downsides if immigrants formed their own enclaves and failed to assimilate. As he stated, “Buenos Aires is a city without citizens. The most industrious and progressive of its 400,000 inhabitants are strangers... Growing and expanding, we shall build, if we have not already built, a Tower of Babel in America.”¹⁶⁵ Similarly, *L'Italia Coloniale*, an Italian journal published between 1900-1904, which supported free trade and open emigration, deliberately blurred the lines between militarily enforced colonies and expatriate communities, making Buenos Aires sound like an Italian colony indeed. In 1900, the writer Gobbi Belcredi defined a colony in the pages of that journal: “A colony is constituted of [expatriates] not participating in local politics, not joining the local militia, having [their own] hospitals and banks and mutual aid societies and schools; while certainly not a *collective organization*, the colony marks a separation between the natives and children from other countries.”¹⁶⁶ By 1895, Italians were already the largest foreign group in Buenos Aires, and by 1914, more than one-third of them owned businesses, through which they employed people from their own regions of origin purchased Italian goods, thus

¹⁶⁵ Sarmiento is a major subject in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, which covers his extensive support of immigration as a way to fight the “barbarism” of the native population. But he ultimately will argue for the country to become stricter about forcing immigrants to assimilate, more like the United States did. He is quoted on page 78 of Bailly.

¹⁶⁶ Gobbi Belcredi, “Che cosa é una colonia,” *L'Italia Coloniale* 1/2 (1900): 50-51. The editors of *L'Italia Coloniale* believed that if emigrants continued to buy products “made in Italy,” these products would become more attractive to others in the new countries, thus supporting Italy’s growing export market. One major reason why Italian officials supported emigrant colonialism was that they thought it could ultimately be good for the Italian export economy. If Italians were seen as taste-makers abroad, and they continued to support the “Made in Italy” brand, this could make it more appealing to others as well.

creating something like a colony.¹⁶⁷ Even as second and third generation Italo-Argentines assimilated into Argentine society, this integration did not come at the expense of an Italian identity; rather the two cultures fused or existed alongside one another, creating a composite identity.

As Arnd Schneider explains, “Among Italians and their descendants, different identities co-exist at the same time.... Different claims to identity, such as the question of being Italian or being Argentine, seldom come into conflict with each other.”¹⁶⁸ Conflicts that did arise were more common among first generation immigrants than for their offspring. According to Schneider, being a ‘white’ porteño usually means having Italian immigrants among grandparents or great-grandparents, and boundaries between the Italian community and others have become increasingly thin over time.¹⁶⁹ Schneider sites the example of a second generation Italo-Argentine who was a life-long leader in Italian associations, yet so profoundly Argentine that he never visited Italy. He embodied the ideal immigrant in the Argentine constitution, since he imported European culture and civilization, and the ideal “colonist” in Italy’s eyes, for he maintained *italianità* without needing to physically see where it originated. His version of *Italy* was created entirely in Argentina: it was shaped by an Argentine context, and tied to a mythical notion of homeland.

¹⁶⁷ Bailly discusses this and other similar statistics in his fourth chapter, 115. Overall, a more fluid labor market in Buenos Aires than New York helped immigrants get a foothold faster. Bailly explains that, by 1904, Italians comprised 45% of all homeowners in the city.

¹⁶⁸ Schneider, 30 and 151.

¹⁶⁹ Schneider argues that, “The loss of Italian traditions or “italianess” is much more of a problem for the visitor or expatriate from Italy than for the descendant of Italians in Buenos Aires...Being Italian—displaying some kind of Italian identity—occurs in combination with other markers of distinction.” Schneider, 243.

Even if the ambitions of the Italian government in encouraging emigration were to ease unemployment, expand international markets, and foster nationalism through organizations abroad, for most Italians living in Argentina, the key concern was staying connected to family in Italy while garnering economic stability overseas. As Baily explains, “each individual in the neighborhood felt simultaneous ties and loyalties to family, kin and *paesani*, as well as to a variety of broader, non-village-of-origin social networks.”¹⁷⁰ In Buenos Aires, Italians generally settled in *paese*-based clusters, and unlike in Italy, where most people cohabited with large extended families, nearly seventy percent of Italians in Buenos Aires lived with only their nuclear families.¹⁷¹ The vast majority of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires arrived married, but those who arrived alone tended to form endogamous marriages once they were settled.

In fact, in 1913, the most popular Italian language newspaper in Argentina, *La Patria degli italiani*, published the “New Ten Commandments of Italian Emigrants.” The last, and perhaps most consequential, commandment was an order for Italians to only marry other Italians in order to “preserve in your children the blood, language, and feelings of your fathers and of your Italy.”¹⁷² The Commandments were equal parts culturally and economically motivated, in

¹⁷⁰ Baily, 161.

¹⁷¹ Baily notes how, traditionally within Italian farming communities, extended and complex families were more prevalent than strict nuclear families. In Buenos Aires though, approximately 70% of the Italian immigrant families were nuclear, while the remaining 20% were single and 10% in extended family units. Still, even within nuclear family households, there were often extra boarders who helped to pay the rent, and a handful of very wealthy families had servants. Baily argues that the average household in Buenos Aires likely had parents, two children, three boarders, and one servant. For more on this breakdown, see pp 147-50.

¹⁷² *La Patria degli Italiani* was first published as *La Patria*, in 1876, then *La Patria Italiani*, and finally, *La Patria degli Italiani* in 1893. The political leanings of the newspapers changed over the years with each editor leaving his own imprint on the newspaper’s identity. In the years leading up to the First World War, the paper became increasingly liberal, often siding with Socialists in various disputes. For more on the history of *La Patria*, see: Mirta Zaida Lobato, trans. Amy Ferlazzo. “*La Patria degli Italiani* and Social Conflict in Early-Twentieth-Century Argentina,” in Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser M. Ottanelli, eds. *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

an effort to control the way that expatriates considered—and interacted with—their Italian citizenship and identity. Also included were orders to: “Be proud to declare yourself always, everywhere and on every occasion, Italian in origin and in sentiment;” to “buy, sell, consume, and distribute goods and merchandise from your fatherland;” to “exalt in the glories of your Italy, which is one of the most ancient and noble nations in the world; ” and finally, to proclaim that “you shall love no other country as much as Italy.”¹⁷³ Embedded in this need for total loyalty was a fear that emigrants might like their adopted homelands more than the country they left behind. The Commandments, in general, bely a fear that Greater Italy may not be able to maintain its cohesion over generations, but they also agitated certain nativists in Argentina who wanted immigrants to invest in the Argentine economy and integrate into the local society, especially by learning Spanish.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, most Italians living in Buenos Aires were adhering to the main concepts espoused by the Commandments. They lived in clustered communities where they continued to speak their native dialects, and they interacted almost exclusively with other Italians, much like the informal colonies of Greater Italy Einaudi and others had envisioned. Strong Ligurian enclaves formed in La Boca, a busy port neighborhood, and nearby San Nicolás, a key business district full of cultural institutions.¹⁷⁴ Throughout the 1880s, 90s and early 1900s, La Boca’s Ligurian population grew so large and so isolated from the rest of the city—it is in the southernmost zone of Buenos Aires—that barely any Spanish was

¹⁷³ The Ten Commandments are quoted and translated in Choate, 73.

¹⁷⁴ In the late nineteenth century, movement within the city was high, but most families moved within twelve blocks of their previous residences, until the decade preceding the First World War, when there was fairly rapid movement to the outlying districts surrounding the city.

spoken there.¹⁷⁵ Nearly everyone in the community knew the local grocer, the pharmacist, and the doctor, paying for each service using a monthly tab, which prevented them from having to establish local bank accounts.¹⁷⁶ This provincial nature enabled people to move throughout their days entirely in Italian, and often the only community members who spoke Spanish were children, who learned it at school. This continued use of Italian helped people to stay connected to their Italian identities in a very concrete way.

Yet slowly, these isolated locales intermingled with the greater urban population. Italian men began marrying more Argentine women, and by World War I, half of the Italians in Buenos Aires province were based outside the city and living in communities that were more demographically mixed and largely Spanish-speaking.¹⁷⁷ So, when the Commandments were published a year earlier, in 1913, they reflected an anxiety over rapid assimilation and the seeming loss of Italian solidarity or *Italianità*.

Cultural and Economic Consequences: *Italianità* in Argentina:

As allegiances became increasingly fluid, connections to *Italianità*, either through newspapers, language, or the Catholic church, grew progressively important for the Italian state. These ties were crucial not just from a cultural, artistic, or political standpoint, but perhaps most

¹⁷⁵ Around 1890, 53% of La Boca was Italian born or of Italian heritage, and 83% of Italian immigrants were Ligurian up until the late 1880s, when other Italians started to arrive. By 1904, 63% of La Boca was Italo-Argentine. For more on these statistics, see Choate's "Chapter 6: Family, Household, and Neighborhood," particularly pp 165-70.

¹⁷⁶ Baily, 168-70.

¹⁷⁷ All of these statistics are taken from Baily's Chapter 5 (124-136). Baily mentions that, in 1895, 36% of Italians lived within the city core and 44% were in the core-periphery, but they are relatively evenly dispersed. Though each district of the city has between 10-20% of the Italian population, no single district had more than 8.7% of the overall population. By 1914, roughly half of the Italians in Buenos Aires province were based outside the city, and overall, Italians in Buenos Aires were more mobile than most Italians in Italy

significantly, from an economic one. National self-identification, it was believed, could drive consumer habits, namely, buying more Italian products and funneling money back into Italy's shaky economy in the form of remittances.¹⁷⁸ In fact, according to most studies, Italians sent home the most money during their second year abroad; during the first year, it was difficult to save, and by the third or fourth year, most migrants were either moving home, or bringing their families to their new adopted countries, both of which could result in a decreased contribution to the Italian economy.

Between 1880-1914, emigration played a complex and outsized role in Italy's economy. As Choate explains, there were two key, interlocking factors that could each have positive *and* negative impacts on the economy: 1) return migration; and 2) international market influence. Regarding the former, he argues, "Italy's tremendous economic advantages from emigration largely depended upon return migration," or at least the perceived possibility of a return. If emigrants didn't plan to go back, they were less likely to send money home in the form of remittances, and ultimately, they would begin investing in their new countries. Between 1880-1914, nearly half of all Italian emigrants eventually returned, a much higher rate than any other European country. Some emigrants moved to Argentina for two to seven years, made as much money as they could, and either returned to Italy with their savings or sent money home in the years that they stayed abroad. Other returnees were *golondrinas* (swallows), seasonal migrant workers who traveled between the two countries to work during the warm harvest seasons in each hemisphere: they toiled in Argentina during its summer, November through March, then

¹⁷⁸ Sometimes, a problem with remittances arose when emigrants only spoke dialects that foreign banks didn't understand, and they ended up using middlemen, called "swallows," who might rip them off. This is discussed in Choate, 80. Another issue was how much the local government cared about Italians supporting their own national economies—The United States, for instance, was much more bothered by a lack of investment in the American economy than Argentina was.

went back to Italy May through September.¹⁷⁹ In the early twentieth century, approximately 30,000-35,000 people worked two harvest seasons each year, in an exhausting annual cycle. These men were paid five to ten times more and ate better in Argentina, but they continued returning to Italy for cultural and family reasons.¹⁸⁰ Still, some of those who returned were individuals who failed to make it in the Americas and returned to Italy jobless and unemployable, a phenomenon emigration opponents referred to in Darwinian terms as “reverse selection,” which they believed could lead to the eventual “decline of the Italian race.” Overall, though certain parts of the Italian south were suffering from depopulation, the national population was still on the rise; organic growth outpaced the loss due to emigration.¹⁸¹ So, while return migration was overwhelmingly favorable for the Italian economy, it still had some deleterious consequences.

Many expatriates who stayed abroad became important tastemakers, middlemen who purchased Italian products and then intensified demand for them amongst the non-Italian population. Alternatively, some expatriates competed with Italy’s producers, making their own cheaper, adulterated versions of Italian products abroad and releasing them into the foreign market at lower prices. For instance, immigrants in the 1910s began making Parmesan

¹⁷⁹ Choate, 92. Between 1901-1910, a net average of 120,000 people left each year, but between 1911-20, partly because of World War I, the balance shifted, and a net average of 23,000 returned each year. In fact, Italy was the only country that gained in population during the First World War, and there was also a spike in returns during the immediate postwar years (1918-22), partly because Italy’s economy suddenly was stronger than Argentina’s, which was perpetually in a boom and bust cycle. By 1922, though, the United States had tightened its immigration laws, and fewer returned for fear of not being let back into the United States. Even still, many of those returning were unhealthy and unemployable, carrying tuberculosis or malaria across the ocean and making them burdens on the Italian economy. For more on this, see Choate, pp. 94-98.

¹⁸⁰ Schneider, 65-66.

¹⁸¹ Choate explains that, in raw numbers, there were more emigrants from the North than the South because northerners could afford to leave; however, per capita, there were more emigrants from the South. Between 1880-1914, the Veneto had the most emigrants, with 3 million; Campania had 1.45 million; Calabria, 870,000; Basilicata 375,000; and Sicily was the lowest, and the poorest. For more on these statistics, see Choate, pp. 30-33.

Reggianito, a less expensive, milder version of Parmesan Reggiano that required a shorter aging period. The Italian Chambers of Commerce Abroad, which had offices in Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina, were tasked with protecting the nation's export interests and making sure that no such products were given the "made in Italy" designation.

Ultimately, perhaps the most pertinent question here is not: *How did Italian emigration affect Italy?*, but rather, *How did Italian immigration affect Argentine society and identity?* Aliza Wong argues, "The poor peasants of the north and the south... have created the civilization of Argentina," and she refers to the La Plata region as one version of a new Italy overseas.¹⁸² Indeed, before World War I, Italians banded together in a variety of ways, building many of the lasting organizations and businesses in Buenos Aires. They started their own mutual aid societies, schools, labor unions, hospitals, and newspapers, making them a powerful and influential block throughout the capital region. Beginning in the 1870s, Italo-Argentines started operating as a pressure group seeking to gain influence through their own organizations. By 1880, the seven largest, wealthiest and most powerful mutual aid societies were established as national institutions open to all Italians, regardless of political bent. These societies lobbied Argentina's politicians to support open, unregulated trade and immigration between Argentina and Italy, allowing for easy movement of both products and individuals.¹⁸³

In the 1880s, twenty-one new mutual aid societies opened, many of which were peopled by southern Italians who were just beginning to arrive in droves; and by 1910, there were

¹⁸² Wong, 117. She goes on to say, "Italy is the only country that in its history... is an example of a true resurrection, after centuries of servility and decline." She sees Italy as reviving itself through emigration to places like Buenos Aires and New York.

¹⁸³ Bailly, 176. *Unione e Benevolenza* also organized its first women's branch in 1879.

seventy-five Italian mutual aid societies in Buenos Aires, with approximately 52,000 members in, leading to great combined political clout.¹⁸⁴ This didn't necessarily mean that the societies worked together, especially since many of them had specific interests and represented constituencies that spoke different dialects, even if they were all labeled "Italian." In 1902, the Italian journalist Luigi Barzini traveled to Buenos Aires and noted, "The Italians of the Plata are united in about three hundred different associations, which means they are perfectly divided."¹⁸⁵ Yet in the early twentieth century, first generation Argentines of Italian descent became more politically active. In 1912, the new electoral law mandated compulsory voting for all men over eighteen, which led to Italians participating heavily in politics, and soon, running for office, since they could easily be elected without support from any other communities.¹⁸⁶ Carlos Pelligrini, born in Argentina to Italian emigré parents, was elected Vice President, in 1886, and became President, in 1890. He was just the first of many to come.

Along with mutual aid societies, Italian language newspapers were an indispensable way for Italians to stay connected to Italy while also acculturating. Since the majority of the Italians who moved to Buenos Aires in the 1860s-80s were from the industrialized North, literacy rates in Argentina were higher than in many parts of Italy, even up through World War I. In 1914, sixty-four percent of Italians living in Buenos Aires, and seventy percent of male heads of household,

¹⁸⁴ Though most societies still had less than one thousand card-carriers, the seven largest had about half of the city's members, and seventy-one percent of the wealth. Baily explains how, in 1916, twelve societies joined with the largest one, *Unione e Benevolenza*, to form the *Associazione Italiana di Mutualità de Istruzioni*. Six more joined in later, consolidating eighteen in total. Baily, 193-4.

¹⁸⁵ Barzini is quoted in Choate, 128.

¹⁸⁶ Baily discusses the the increased political engagement of Italo-Argentine community throughout the early twentieth century towards the end of Chapter 8 (pp 197-200). Later, many Italians were elected to the provincial legislature of Santa Fe in 1912, and gained a number of offices by the start of World War II.

were literate in Italian, which was thirty percent higher than the literacy rates in parts of Italy.¹⁸⁷ Though some scholars have argued that Italian language papers hindered assimilation, because they furthered the use of Italian rather than Spanish, others, like Baily, believe that they facilitated assimilation by giving immigrants access to information about current events in Argentina, making them more interested and involved in their new country.¹⁸⁸ Though it is difficult to track the combined effects of these newspapers, it is clear that they were immensely popular, and they grew in circulation throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And as Benedict Anderson has argued, newspapers help to create the “imagined community” of a nation. Anderson asserts that, “the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life....creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations.”¹⁸⁹

Anderson discusses the significance of a shared language in Spanish America—Spanish language newspapers helped to unify the Creole population and agitate for independence in the early twentieth century, even before most European nation-states were formed. Anderson asks:

¹⁸⁷ Samuel L Baily, “The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893-1913,” *The International Migration Review*, Volume 12, Number 3 (Autumn, 1978), 324. Even though Italy purported to use “Dante’s Language” to hold people together abroad, literacy rates within Italy remained lower than the rest of Western Europe. Illiteracy within the whole country dropped to 38% by 1911, but it was much higher in the South: 58% in Sicily, 65% in Basilicata, and 70% in Calabria. Choate discusses this, 107. Choate also notes that, even if Italians abroad learned to speak the Tuscan dialect, they likely didn’t learn to read it, since they would be better served by learning Spanish (or English if in the United States).

¹⁸⁸ For more on Italian language newspapers in the Americas, and *La Patria degli Italiani* specifically, see: Samuel L Baily, “The Role of Two Newspapers.” Also see: Grazia Dore, “Un periódico italiano en Buenos Aires (1911-1913),” in *La inmigración italiana en la Argentina*, ed. Fernando Devoto and Gianfausto Rosoli (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1985), 127-140.

¹⁸⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, Revised Edition 1991), 36.

“Why was it precisely *creole* communities that developed such early conceptions of their nation-ness *well before most of Europe*? Why did such colonial provinces, usually containing large, oppressed, non-Spanish-speaking populations, produce creoles who consciously redefined these populations as fellow nationals? And Spain, to whom they were, in so many ways, attached, as an enemy alien? Why did the Spanish-American Empire, which had existed calmly for almost three centuries, quite suddenly fragment into eighteen separate states?”¹⁹⁰

He believes that literature and newspapers played a huge role. Local newspapers developed throughout Latin America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reporting on news within their local orbit. Since newspapers could not easily report on the entire Spanish speaking world; instead, they reported on their own separate administrative units (created by the Spanish), generating separate mental communities, which would later become nation-states.¹⁹¹ But, once immigrants began coming in large numbers, ethnic and linguistic diversity increased, Italian language newspaper proliferated, and the nation that many readers were imagining was not Argentina, but Italy.

Many Italian statesmen felt that a standard use of “Dante’s Language” was key to holding a global Italy together; therefore, many newspapers received financial support from the Italian government.¹⁹² In 1876, the Italo-Argentine publisher Basilio Cittadini began the liberal, anticlerical, *La Patria degli Italiani*, and within a decade, it had a larger readership than any other Italian daily in the Buenos Aires, a distinction it maintained until it ceased printing in

¹⁹⁰ Anderson, 50.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, 63. “Why did the Spanish-American Empire, which had existed calmly for almost three centuries, quite suddenly fragment into eighteen separate states?” Each of the new republics had already been an administrative unit beginning in the sixteenth century, so those divisions just persisted when newspapers were created, and later when geopolitical lines were drawn. He discusses these themes in Chapter 4, “Creole Pioneers,”

¹⁹² Though most second generation Italo-Argentines still understood Italian, it was not their primary language. Instead, they spoke Spanish or Lunfardo, an Argentine variant of Spanish that incorporates elements of Italian. *Lunfardo* originated as prison slang in the late nineteenth century so that prisoners could communicate without guards understanding them. Supposedly, the name comes from “lumbardo” (inhabitants of the region of Lombardy), where many Italian immigrants originated. Later, the dialect trickled up to people of all social classes.

1931.¹⁹³ Cittadini had a long history in journalism. He began as a foreign correspondent for *Il Secolo* from Florence and was sent abroad to Buenos Aires to become the editor of *La Nazione Italiana*. Between 1880-1914, as literacy rose, *La Patria* increased its circulation from 15,000 to 40,000 daily readers, making it the third most popular daily in the entire country, trailing behind only the Spanish papers *La Prensa* and *La Nación*.¹⁹⁴ Baily insists; however, that these circulation numbers are far lower than the actual readership of the paper. Many people didn't purchase the paper but would learn about its content either by reading a friend or family member's copy, or would hear about information printed in *La Patria* through word of mouth. Thus, the reach of the paper was far greater than the numbers indicate.¹⁹⁵

La Patria's content reflected its readership. It focused on Italy's domestic politics and foreign relations and on stories relating to the Italian community in Buenos Aires, as well as other Italian emigré communities in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, the United States, and the interior of Argentina. Much of the paper was also devoted to letters to the editor and advertisements for Italian products and businesses, including Italian steamship companies who publicized cheap tickets back to Genoa. Above all, *La Patria* existed to hold the Italian "colony" of Buenos Aires together, to act as its mouthpiece, and to advocate for its members. The paper announced meetings of Italian mutual aid societies and reported the outcomes of those meetings; it offered free legal services for all Italians and medical clinics for the paper's subscribers. In 1906-7, when

¹⁹³ Baily, "Two Newspapers," 326. Originally, *La Patria degli Italiani* was originally called just *La Patria*, then it became *La Patria Italiani* in 1877, and finally *La Patria degli Italiani* in 1893. Cittadini was only involved with the paper up until 1889, and then again between 1902-1912, after which point he moved back to Italy to stay.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 327.

¹⁹⁵ Baily insists that the "readership" was closer to 60,000 in the 1880s and 90s, which, if accurate, would be nearly one person in every Italian household. Baily, 328.

the Italian schools in Buenos Aires were in financial trouble, Cittadini urged the Italian government to step in and offer support.¹⁹⁶

The paper repeatedly defended Italians in Argentina against prejudicial or discriminatory treatment. In 1902, for example, *La Patria* railed against the recently passed Residence Law, the first law to curb Argentina's overly open and positive approach towards immigration and a harbinger of changes to come. The Residence Law allowed the Argentine government to deport individuals who were deemed a threat to public order and national security. The law was passed in order to weaken the growing power of the city's labor unions and anarchist groups, many of which were led by Italians, and *La Patria* repeatedly condemned the law as unfair and unconstitutional.¹⁹⁷ In a more general sense, the paper argued against regional loyalties and for a unified, global Italy, just as other Italian newspapers in the Americas did.¹⁹⁸ *La Patria* was both an influential defender of Italian immigrants and an important guardian of Italian language and culture. Given that many Italo-Argentines could read Spanish better than Tuscan Italian by the 1910s, and approximately half of the Italians in Buenos Aires read *La Patria*, this reflects not linguistic convenience, but loyalty to Italy, meaning that *La Patria's* aims were at least partly achieved.

There were other significant ways in which the Italian community left its imprint upon Argentine society, particularly its education system. The Italian government began founding

¹⁹⁶ Bailly notes that Cittadini was a powerful personality, who enjoyed unusual access to both the King of Italy and the President of Argentina throughout his tenure at the paper.

¹⁹⁷ For more on the 1902 Residence Law, as well as the evolution of Argentina's immigration policy from the late nineteenth century through the present, see: Barbara Hines, "The Right to Migrate as a Human Right: The Current Argentine Immigration Law," *Cornell International Law Journal*, Volume 43 (2010): 471- 511.

¹⁹⁸ Italian language newspapers proliferated all over the globe. At the Milan Expo of 1906, there were 472 Italian periodical abroad in total, and 60 dailies.

Italian schools in Argentina in 1896. Many of these were Catholic, partly funded by the church, making them affordable for students and families. These schools immediately became victims of their own success.¹⁹⁹ Within just three years, by 1899, there were over 4,000 pupils in Buenos Aires's Italian schools, but there were over 18,000 on the waiting list.²⁰⁰ By 1905, thirty-two Italian schools —still subsidized by the Catholic church or the Italian government—thrived throughout Argentina, but many remained oversubscribed and inadequately funded considering the number of students they served. Italians whose children were being shut out of the Italian schools began lobbying to make Italian language instruction mandatory in Argentina's public schools. In 1916, Argentina finally reformed its foreign language programs in its public schools, and the Italian foreign minister Sidney Sonnino pushed the Italian government to make Italian language an obligatory course instead of Spanish grammar.²⁰¹ As a result, even non-Italians learned some of the language, a fact that may account for the way that Argentinians pronounce specific words or letters with a slight Italian lilt or intonation today. More importantly, language was a way to keep Italy in the forefront of Italo-Argentina's minds.

These "Italy-first" organizations and their members were so successful that, by 1900, Argentine elites began to express concerns that the Italian community was cloistering itself—and its money—rather than properly assimilating. Yet, in reality, Italians in Argentina assimilated

¹⁹⁹ By contrast, in the United States, *all* of these schools were Catholic, since the U.S. government banned schools run by foreign governments, but it couldn't legally outlaw religious schools. There was also another approach championed in the United States, where Mother Francis X Cabrini argued that the church should help immigrants learn English so that they could get better jobs. Choate discusses these various approaches, 130-140.

²⁰⁰ Choate, 118.

²⁰¹ Previously, Argentine public schools had offered some Italian language instruction, but it was as infrequent as one hour per week, which was not enough to keep the children of Italian immigrants tied to Italy. As Choate notes, the goal with these programs, according to the Italian community, was "not to speak Italian well, but to speak well of Italy." (Choate, 123)

and succeeded faster than those in other immigration centers, like New York, São Paulo, Toronto, and San Francisco.²⁰² Choate, Baily, and Wong have all argued that Italians were more successful in Buenos Aires primarily because it was a city in the earlier stages of industrialization, thus major sectors of the economy, like the textile, meat, and shipping industries, could be developed and dominated by Italians, who could rise through the ranks and organize into powerful labor unions. In fact, the “southern question”—or negative stereotypes against southern Italians—recapitulated itself in the Americas, where many Italians were still viewed as somewhat less “civilized” and developed than their northern European counterparts. As Wong explains, “the discourses of meridionalism and emigration became intertwined, contesting and constructing one another.”²⁰³ I would like to take this argument one step further: If southerners were considered racially inferior within Italy, then better to arrive in a new nation that was waging a war of extermination against indigenous peoples that some statesmen rhetorically claimed were “barbaric”: southern Italians would inevitably be perceived as superior to those same sectors of the population. In fact, the economist and politician, Francesco Nitti, contended that Italians should go to South rather than North America, because it was “in large part populated by races truly inferior....and Italians in the new countries of South America can begin to belong to the

²⁰² Throughout his entire book, *Immigrants in The Lands of Promise*, Baily explores how Italians in Buenos Aires were more economically and culturally powerful between 1880-1914 than their counterparts in the United States, Brazil, or Canada.

²⁰³ Wong, 126. In the United States, Italians were called “The Chinese of Europe,” because they were willing to work for less. In Mississippi, the governor, Jeff Trully, stated on March 18, 1907, that Italians, “posed a danger and a menace to our ethnic, industrial and commercial supremacy....As governor of the State, I guarantee you that not even one dollar of the State will be spent to promote immigration of those people.” (quoted in Wong, 133)

category of dominant people....[Then] Italy will be able to say it has conquered one of the largest markets in the world.”²⁰⁴

Sea-change:

This notion that Italy could “conquer” parts of South America merely by populating them persisted until around 1910, when the Italian perception of emigration shifted. This sea-change was caused, in part, by the rise of a militant nationalist movement, headed by the writer and political leader, Enrico Corradini.²⁰⁵ In 1908-9, Corradini visited Brazil, Argentina, Tunisia, and Dalmatia as a correspondent for *Corriere della Sera* and a representative of the Dante Society. He was dismayed by what he found. He insisted that, even while international trade had expanded, emigration ultimately demeaned Italy’s reputation abroad. Above all, he believed, Italians were still seen as laborers, and emigration was an “anti-imperialism of servitude” which would forever keep Italy a proletarian nation rather than a world power. Furthermore, those who succeeded beyond the state of laborers were often torn between two identities. In 1910, he wrote *La Patria Lontana (The Faraway Fatherland)*, in which an Italian-Argentine wine producer embodies the conflict: He makes wine in Mendoza which competes with Italian imports, yet he employs many Italian immigrants in his vineyard. Therefore, in a way, he helps Italians (his

²⁰⁴ Francesco Saverio Nitti, *Scritti sulla Question Meridionale*, vol. 1, *Saggi sulla Storia Del Mezzogiorno Emigrazione e Lavoro*, (Bari: Laterza, 1958), 395-98. Nitti is translated and quoted in Wong, 135-7. Nitti brags that Italians have contributed far more emigrants to Argentina than other European nations, like Germany, France, and Spain, because they are more fertile, both at home and abroad, and in little time, “they will represent half the population,” of Argentina. He turned out to be right.

²⁰⁵ Corradini was a key founder of the Associazione Nazionale Italiana (Italian Nationalist Association), Italy’s first nationalist political party. The ANI was heavily in favor of irredentism as well as Italian imperialism. Corradini and his supporters backed the Italo-Turkish War of 1911, which led to the creation of Italian Libya, a colony of direct dominion, they type which earlier Italian leaders saw as a waste of time and resources. The ANI merged with the Fascist party in 1923. For more on Corradini and the ANI, see: Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

employees) but not the Italian nation or its economy.²⁰⁶ Though the wine producer defends himself, saying, “the more my business grows, the more work I will give to my compatriots,” the book’s protagonist, an imperialist who acts as a stand-in for Corradini himself, replies, “Yours, but not mine... The [expatriates] have placed themselves outside *italianità*... For them to remain Italians...the land on which they labor and enrich themselves would have to become Italian,” meaning that Argentina would need to be a true colony, and Italy an actual empire.²⁰⁷

In 1912, Luigi Rava, former president of the Dante Society, conceded that, even if Argentine schools taught Italian language, and even if Italo-Argentines consumed products made in Italy, the children of Italian immigrants were failing to preserve *italianità*. In the pages of *La Patria*, he published a distressing editorial, writing: “The emigrant fathers have kept alive and strengthened the love of their native land! But this affection often failed in their children.... They know nothing of Italy’s glories, economy, art, and beauties; they do not know the miracles and sacrifices of our political resurgence, nor the condition of our civilization. Our universities have not received them, and Paris has replaced Rome.”²⁰⁸ For Rava and Corradini, Argentina was never Italian enough. But certainly, at least in the mass migration period around the turn of the twentieth century, Italians exerted massive and complex influence over Argentine life. They constitute an example of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s notion of an *ethnoscape*, or a “landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers, and other moving groups ...[who] appear to affect the politics of

²⁰⁶ For more on this see, Enrico Corradini, *La Patria Lontana*, (Milano: Treves, 1911).

²⁰⁷ This text is taken from Corradini, 8-9.

²⁰⁸ Luigi Rava, “L’insegnamento dell’italiano nella Repubblica Argentina,” *La Patria* 1/4 (1912): 284.

and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.”²⁰⁹ Appadurai explains that, in every national situation, there are co-mingling forces of a stable population—that generally stays put—and a mobile group of transnationals, in this case, Italo-Argentines, who existed in Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “in between.” In the ensuing chapter, we will further examine this interplay by looking at the *Generación del Ochenta*—Argentina’s first generation of transnationals, who identified as both Argentine and European—to see how they influenced the evolving cultural landscape of Buenos Aires in the late nineteenth century.

²⁰⁹ Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Theory Culture Society*, No. 7, 1990, 297. In this seminal essay, Appadurai outlines five major forces that impact the global cultural economy: ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. All of these apply to the relationship between Italy and Argentina, but the first and the last are the most important for this particular study. *Ideoscapes*—defined as “images that have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it”—will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3:

The *Generación Ochenta* Imagines the Nation Through Topographical Violence

Introduction:

In 1883, the Argentine artist and cultural theorist, Eduardo Schiaffino (1858-1935), began working as a correspondent for the daily newspaper, *El Diario*. Writing under the catchy pseudonym *Zig-Zag*, the twenty-five-year-old quickly came to public attention when he published a series of articles that same year entitled, “Notes on Art in Buenos Aires: A Lack of Protection for Its Development.” The series was ostensibly about ways that the municipal government could help to bolster national art academies and institutions, and yet, it presented something more ambitious: a program for the future development of Argentina’s national cultural identity. Schiaffino argued that Buenos Aires was becoming a “huge body without a soul,” whose wealth was nothing but material. The antidote, he said, was art: “Art is the last component of great nations, that must act as a compliment to material wealth.”²¹⁰ Among other suggestions, Schiaffino insisted that the government sponsor scholarships for artists to travel and study European painting and sculpture first-hand, and he eventually advocated for the foundation of a national museum. He himself received funding to go abroad, and chose to live in Rome, Venice, Turin, and Paris for a total of seven years, between 1884-91. Schiaffino also argued that the

²¹⁰ Eduardo Schiaffino, “Apuntes sobre el arte en Buenos Aires: falta de protección para su desenvolvimiento,” *El Diario*: 18 IX, 1883. Schiaffino worried that the enormous Pampas, which stretch west of Buenos Aires, gave Argentina an illusion of grandeur, but given that they were vast and uncultured, they contributed to the nation’s overall sense of emptiness.

Argentine government should help cultivate artistic taste and educate the public by abolishing taxes on imported art, so that students could learn from copying European masterpieces.²¹¹

Schiaffino's views can be best summed up in his 1885 article, "The Study of Art in Paris II," in which he writes: "Just as material wellbeing cannot come from industry alone, moral wellbeing cannot exist without artistic production; which is to say... one cannot conceive of a civilization without art just as one cannot have art without advanced civilization."²¹² Schiaffino was perhaps the most outspoken cultural commentator to broadcast these notions to Argentina from abroad, and perhaps more than anyone else, he would become responsible for the institutionalization of art in Argentina in the later nineteenth century. In 1893, he began organizing annual salons in Buenos Aires, and two years later, in 1895, he helped to found the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. He was an integral member of a group of powerful intellectuals, politicians, and artists known as the *Generación del Ochenta* (Generation of the 1880s). The *Generación* became Argentina's first true class of cultural elites. Since they were men of Italian or Spanish descent who had either moved to Argentina from Europe, or had been born in Argentina (like Schiaffino) and then trained in Europe—they were able to identify as transnational, or transatlantic. Looking to Europe for examples, they all considered art imperative to a modern society that represents "advanced civilization."

Indeed, for the *Generación*, art, transatlantic cultural exchange, and national development were inextricably linked. Returning to the writings of Homi Bhabha, the *Generación* believed that existing in the "border zone" between Europe and Latin America—a conceptual space they

²¹¹ Schiaffino may have been aware that the United States had recently abolished its import tax on art, perhaps for a similar reason.

²¹² Eduardo Schiaffino, "El estudio del arte en París II," *El Diario: 10 VI*, 1885, 2. Decades later, in the 1910s and 20s, Schiaffino would go on to write a series of texts on the evolution of artistic taste in Buenos Aires.

occupied culturally and Argentina occupied demographically— might enable them to articulate what was unique about their society and shape its cultural voice. “It is in the emergence of the interstices,” writes Bhabha, “that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.”²¹³ He continues to ask, “How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where...the exchange of values...may be conflictual and even incommensurable?”²¹⁴ In this chapter, we will see how competing claims and conflictual values became the focal point of Argentina’s first national landscape paintings. Indeed, the *Generación* used images of the Pampas to help newly arrived immigrants and first generation Argentines develop a cohesive sense of identity, one that was pitted against the indigenous populations they were supplanting. How and why did the stories depicted in these paintings bring people together, and who was intentionally excluded? How did these paintings differ in tone and message from the documentary photographs discussed in the previous chapter?

To get to the heart of these questions, we must begin in the 1840s, when the Argentine-born writer and future politician, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, introduced his Manichaean vision of “civilization versus barbarism.” In the seminal text, *Facundo* (1845), Sarmiento presented art, education, and European immigration as markers of “civilization,” which could serve to keep the forces of “barbarism”—indigenous peoples, and *caudillismo*, or leadership by a

²¹³ Homi K. Bhabha, “Border Lives: The Art of the Present,” in *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 2.

strongman—at bay.²¹⁵ This implicitly racist binary was frequently cited by the federal government as a justification for confiscating land from indigenous groups and local leaders who were deemed biologically unfit to govern themselves.

Sarmiento's text became required reading for Argentine intellectuals while the violent struggle between autochthonous and migrated peoples played out on the Pampas. In Argentina, as elsewhere, bloodshed was a central element of early nation-building. Though, as we've seen, documentary photographs from the 1870s and 80s—many of which were intended to be shown abroad—often concealed or camouflaged violence, perhaps in an effort to entice prospective immigrants. Yet, paintings from the same decades, which were meant primarily for domestic viewers, proudly reflected brutal conflict, highlighting Argentina's military might and presenting indigenous tribes as the savage enemy. In paintings as well as photographs, the monotonous terrain of the Pampas became the site of the country's origin story, and by implication, its modernization process. The practice of aggressively taking control of the land—which I term “topographical violence”—involved the ruination of both native cultures and unspoiled nature, followed by an imposition of new technology, like agricultural machinery, silos, dams, bridges, roads, and railroad tracks.

The topographical violence of Argentina's history was depicted through large-scale paintings that were heavily promoted by members of the *Generación*. Works like Reinaldo Guidici's *Primer ferrocarril “La Porteña” cruzando la campaña* (*The First Train, “La Porteña,” Crossing the Countryside*), of 1881 [Figure 1], which shows a train nearly colliding

²¹⁵ Sarmiento uses the terms “civilization” and “barbarism” ad nauseum throughout *Facundo*. When used in this essay, I am referring to his historically specific meaning and definitions. For more, see: Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, trans. Kathleen Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

with a galloping gaucho, and Ángel Della Valle's *La vuelta del malón* (Return of the Indian Raid), from 1892 [Figure 2], which depicts a white woman abducted by a group of Mapuche men on horseback, were championed as nationalist propaganda. These works and others will be analyzed later, in order to show how each artist used a confrontation between peoples of different origins and ways of life to convince the viewer to side with modernity— or Eurocentric views of progress and civilization—and also to convince people to move to urban centers.

These visual representations specifically aimed to cement Argentina's "imagined community," by evoking a sense of shared indignation, power, awe, or fear. Benedict Anderson, who is most famous for his text, *Imagined Communities* (originally published in 1983), uses the term "imagined community" to refer to the mental construct that we call the modern nation-state. Like Taiye Selasi, Anderson calls attention to the artifice of the nation-state, but unlike Selasi, he still sees it as a useful concept, even if it is purely invented. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them," he writes, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." This community is "both inherently limited and inherently sovereign, with finite, if elastic, boundaries."²¹⁶ In Argentina, as in other South American nations, the imagined community was largely exclusionary, formed of white, European transplants and their offspring, not the indigenous peoples they displaced.

²¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

Framing the Debate:

One cannot understand the motives and thinking of the *Generación del Ochenta* without a deeper look at the formative text they all read and the man who wrote it. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento served as the seventh president of Argentina, from 1868-74, but his lasting influence derives from his 1845 text, *Civilización i barbeire: La vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga, i aspecto físico, costumbres, i ábitos de la Republica Argentina* (Civilization and Barbarism: The Life of Juan Facundo Quiroga, and the Physical Aspects, Customs, and Habits of the Argentine Republic), or simply *Facundo* to most readers. *Facundo* was named for Juan Facundo Quiroga, the ruthless caudillo who ruled rural Argentina throughout the 1820s and 1830s, and who, in Sarmiento's mind, was a negative role model for Juan Manuel de Rosas, president of Argentina from 1829-32 and 1835-52, when the book was published. Though Rosas was the true target of Sarmiento's scathing critique, for political reasons, he could only be attacked indirectly.²¹⁷ As such, Sarmiento inveighs against Facundo—a stand-in for Rosas—but his greater aim was to introduce what he determined to be the problematic clash of civilization versus barbarism, and Rosas' ineffective policies in their ongoing conflict.

As aforementioned, the dichotomy was central to Argentina's national consciousness throughout the nineteenth century, and it was used as a *raison d'être* by the *Generación del Ochenta* to “civilize” through education, and by force if necessary. To be sure, Sarmiento's convictions were based upon outdated, racist, and politically constructed notions of “civilization” and “progress,” which remained pervasive throughout Latin America during the colonial period and afterwards; however, they were also geographically specific. Sarmiento was among the first

²¹⁷ *Facundo* was first published as a serial in a local newspaper in Santiago de Chile, where Sarmiento was forced into exile by Juan Manuel Rosas, throughout the 1830s, before being compiled as a complete book in 1845.

to connect Argentina's topography to its cultural and political challenges and eventual development. According to him, Argentina's chief hurdle was the Pampas, vast empty plains that stretch west of Buenos Aires all the way to the Andes Mountains. Sarmiento postulated that "the disease from which the Argentine Republic suffers is its own expanse."²¹⁸ He argued that the spread-out, sparsely populated nature of the Pampas made them difficult to govern, inhibiting the creation of public space, schools, churches, and other Western markers of modernization.²¹⁹

Throughout his text, he is less concerned with the specific indigenous groups living in Pampas than he is with setting them all in opposition to cosmopolitan Buenos Aires province and the European immigrants who lived there. For Sarmiento, the tense coexistence of urban and rural, modern and traditional, European-born and indigenous, was crucial to Argentine identity, and it continued to captivate artists and theorists for decades to come. As Spanish Language Professor, Mary Louise Pratt, explains, it was not uncommon for the identity of a metropolitan center, like Buenos Aires, to be shaped by its relationship to the periphery, the Pampas. In her text, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), she explores the many ways that "America" was fashioned by Europeans and Creoles in the postcolonial period, creating a new form of colonialism in which the Americas—though politically independent from Europe—were still culturally linked to Europe, "retaining European values and white supremacy."²²⁰ Significantly, as Benedict Anderson points out, Spain failed to generate a permanent Spanish-American wide nationalism, probably because of a lack of technological and capitalist

²¹⁸ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 45.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

²²⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 175. For more on her discussion of Sarmiento, see: Chapter 8, "Reinventing América/Reinventing Europe: Creole self-fashioning," 172-200.

development as it related to the “administrative reach of the empire,” and also because local Creole populations had a desire to create their own ideas of a nationhood before most of Europe, and in fact, Spain was rarely a positive model.²²¹ According to Anderson, the independence movements in the Americas became “blueprints” for European nationalism later, a model that was available for “pirating” and reuse. “Out of the American welter came these imagined realities,” he writes, “nation-states, republican institutions, common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems, and the liquidation of their conceptual opposites: dynastic empires, monarchical institutions, absolutism, subjecthoods, inherited nobilities, serfdoms, ghettos, and so forth.”²²²

For Sarmiento and his followers, who were creating this reality, the Pampas were the identity core of the country, the natural habitat of the *gaucho*—a nomadic, creole cowboy—and a physical manifestation of Argentine freedom, but one that verged on recalcitrance. Though other writers would later discuss the gaucho in more romantic terms, largely as a personification of Argentine sovereignty, Sarmiento tied him to violence and military *caudillismo*, in which gauchos pledged to fight for a caudillo, much like the medieval system of feudalism in which vassals are loyal to a lord.²²³ Since caudillos often launched civil wars against the central government throughout the nineteenth century, those who lived on the Pampas were seen as opposing the federal rule of Buenos Aires. Sarmiento took this geographic division one step

²²¹ Anderson, 63.

²²² Ibid., 81. He continues: “...Furthermore, the validity and the generalizability of the blueprint were undoubtedly confirmed by the *plurality* of the independent states.”

²²³ The notion of the gaucho evolved throughout the nineteenth century. The gaucho as a civic hero and an object of nostalgia for simpler times can be found in José Hernández, *Martin Fierro* (La Plata: University of La Plata, 1872). For more on this, also see: Roberto González Echevarría, introduction to *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, trans. Kathleen Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1-12.

further, linking the Pampas to barbarism, provincial rule, and indigenous peoples, while Buenos Aires stood for order, modernity, and connection to Europe.²²⁴ In order to control the country and create a sense of cohesion, Sarmiento argued, Buenos Aires would need to tame the Pampas, not through force alone, but through education, culture, art, and *population*, namely a population of European immigrants.

In Argentina, the Pampas became not just a constructed space, but a backdrop upon which the struggle of the country could be projected.²²⁵ Latin American scholar, Claudio Canaparo writes, “the overriding need to ethnically and culturally empty the territory” should be understood as a desire to form and define the greater “space of the Republic” beyond Buenos Aires.²²⁶ General Julio Argentino Roca (1843-1914), who led the military Conquest of the Desert between 1878-85, was convinced that Argentine territory needed to be cleared of indigenous peoples in order to establish governmental control. As he waged wars of attrition in the Pampas and Patagonia, entire indigenous populations were murdered to create a blank slate for the new republic. Roca no doubt read *Facundo*. Sarmiento never went so far as to advocate genocide, but he did posit that Argentina should be settled and shaped primarily by European immigrants. He arrived at this thinking through years of self-directed inquiry and international travel. Since he was a chief architect of what later became Argentina’s cultural policy and profoundly influenced the *Generación del Ochenta* and the artists they supported, it is instructive to delve into his story

²²⁴ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 49.

²²⁵ Laura Malosetti Costa, “Land Transformed,” in *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic*. eds. Peter John Brownlee, Valéria Piccoli, and Georgina Uhlyarik (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 182.

²²⁶ Claudio Canaparo, “Marconi and Other Artifices: Long-Range Technology and the Conquest of the Desert,” trans. Peter Cooke, in *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture and the State in Latin America*, eds. Jens Andermann and William Rowe (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 242.

to understand the derivation and evolution and his ideas. How did the perceived battle between civilization and barbarism, a concept which had arisen for Sarmiento in his childhood, grow to become so all-encompassing, a subject that obsessed him throughout his adult life, during his travels, and throughout his entire political career?

Sarmiento and the Birth of Argentina's Cultural and Immigration Policy:

Sarmiento's ideas on nationhood were first developed in his early and teenage years, and they were later cemented through travel abroad. Born in Carrascal—a suburb in the eastern province of San Juan, near the Chilean border—on February 15, 1811, Sarmiento was the fifth of six children and the only son in a family that was nothing if not eccentric.²²⁷ His mother, Paula, was Sarmiento's greatest hero: her parents died when she was young, and though she neither attended school nor learned to read, she was industrious enough to pull herself and her family out of poverty.²²⁸ This strong female figure inspired Sarmiento's conviction in the power of women. His father, Clemente, fought in the Argentine War of Independence against the Spanish in 1816-17, and he enrolled Domingo in the province's first school, Escuela de la Patria, at age five. The school was overtly egalitarian—every pupil was referred to as *señor*; regardless of class or family background—which influenced Sarmiento's thinking, as he always believed in the equality of *educated* people and in the power of education to enable one to rise through the ranks of society. By age sixteen, he had begun to engage in politics, first fighting with his father in a

²²⁷ All early biographical information is taken from: Allison Williams Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), 29. Since Bunkley studied 15,000 unpublished letters to, from, and about Sarmiento, her text is invaluable for readers looking to learn about the vicissitudes of his public and private life.

²²⁸ Sarmiento, quoted in *Ibid.*, 29.

battalion of the provincial militia, headed—ironically enough—by Facundo. He was soon thrown in jail by one of Facundo's officers for insubordination, and after months of reading British and American political philosophy about the importance of federal control, he emerged a *Unitarist*, wanting central control in Buenos Aires, as opposed to the *Federalists*, like Facundo, who advocated for local autonomy in the provinces.²²⁹ Very early on, Sarmiento developed a simple, if vague, thesis: *fight the caudillo, educate the masses*.²³⁰ Yet, it wasn't until ten years later that he developed a more specific idea about how to do this.

While in exile in Chile between 1841-45, Sarmiento worked on *Facundo*, and his thinking evolved into a more coherent program that led him to promote immigration, and eventually, the arts. He began by defining what he opposed, namely president Juan Manuel de Rosas and his cult of personality. He blamed the problem on the Spanish history of autocratic leadership and Catholic repression, which he saw as endemic throughout Latin America. "Any form of government is impossible in South America," he wrote, "considering the fact that the Spanish race inhabits the continent."²³¹ In fact, Sarmiento blamed many negative aspects of Argentine society on Latin America's Spanish heritage: civil conflict, attachment to ritual, and a hostility towards progress, social control by clerical superstition rather than reason, and a lack of original thought. He believed that the way to eliminate Rosas and everything he embodied was to link him to Spain at a time when Argentina sought cultural independence. "Who do you think Rosas is?" Sarmiento asked. "Rosas is the political inquisition of old Spain personified. He was

²²⁹ Sarmiento, *Obras III*, (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1885), 182.

²³⁰ Ibid., 69. Facundo, the Aldaos, and Rosas, were the three major caudillos ruling the country at this time.

²³¹ Sarmiento, "Chile y la america del sur," *El Nacional*, April 14, 1841.

nursed on the milk of despotism, the hatred for civilization and the liberty that he saw born in his homeland.”²³²

Next, Sarmiento began to shift his focus by thinking more about what he *wanted*—a government focused on laws and principles, also known a *nomocracy*, rather than one focused on personality, or *personalism*. He believed that, in order to make progress, Argentina needed to break with Spain culturally and politically and become similar to the United States, which has defined itself *in opposition to* its colonizer, England. One way to dilute the “Spanish-ness,” he asserted, would be to encourage immigration from other parts of Europe. “European immigration is one of the elements of [North] American wealth, power, and industry,” he wrote. “Europe has an excess of men and a scarcity of bread; America has an excess of land a great scarcity of hands....We need a law on colonization that would give guarantees to the immigrants and create known agencies in Europe to attract them.”²³³

In his introduction to *Facundo*, he stated that his goal was to understand Argentine history through shortcomings of the title figure, and by looking to “national precedent, to the physiognomy of the land, to popular traditions and customs, and for the points where they are bound together.”²³⁴ To examine the roots of Argentina’s customs and tradition, Sarmiento turned back to Spain, with much consternation. For Sarmiento, Spain lay “somewhere between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century.” Even as the world became increasingly mechanized, Spain retained its cult of personality in the form of absolute monarchy, and this bled over into

²³² Sarmiento, “Quinta cara a Don Rafael Minvielle,” *Gaceta del comercio*, October 28, 1843.

²³³ Quoted in Bunkley, 186. Sarmiento was not interested in promoting immigration from Spain or Italy; rather, he wanted to bring in people from Northern European nations, which he associated more with industriousness.

²³⁴ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 32.

much of Spanish-controlled Latin America. The country became subservient to the charismatic (or not so charismatic) leader, and this leader gradually increased his sphere of influence to larger swaths of the country.

As Sarmiento's biographer, Allison Williams Bunkley, explains, Argentina experienced three periods of personalism: 1) *gauchocracy*, in which local leaders controlled small, fragmented areas; 2) *caudillismo*, or nascent centralized rule, starting in the 1820s; and finally, 3) *adaptation*, wherein the country reorganized itself along the lines of European nations, and began to install elections and some form of democracy. When Facundo rose to power in 1824, during the second aforementioned phase, he ruled the country with two other caudillos by force, and he was known as *El Tigre de los Llanos* (the Tiger of the Plains).²³⁵ The current situation was not the fault of any one person, argues Sarmiento, but a manifestation of systemic failure, and again, a consequence of history and geography:

In Facundo Quiroga I do not see simply a caudillo, but rather a manifestation of Argentine life as it has been made by colonization and the peculiarities of the land. ... Facundo, finally, being what he was not through an accident of character, but rather through inevitable causes apart from his own will, is the ... most notable historical character that can be offered for contemplation...a caudillo who leads a great social movement is nothing more than a mirror in which the beliefs, the needs, the prejudices, and the customs of a nation...are reflected in colossal dimensions.²³⁶

Ultimately, in order to become “civilized,” in Sarmiento's eyes, Argentina needed to overcome two central hurdles: one physical—its sparsely populated geography—and the other cultural and ethnic—its personalist Spanish heritage, as embodied through the election of Rosas.

When Rosas, the true subject of *Facundo*, became president on April 13, 1835—in an election that was likely rigged—he took power as a Unitarist, officially unifying the whole

²³⁵ Charles E Chapman, “The Age of the Caudillos: A Chapter in Hispanic American History,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* XII, no. 3 (August 1932), 281-82.

²³⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 38.

country under his rule. Yet, instead of the cosmopolitan-ness of the city overtaking the Pampas, as Sarmiento would have wanted, the Pampas encroached upon the capital. Rosas moved in and quickly wiped Buenos Aires clean of European elements, replacing them with those of the Pampas: the knife superseded the gun; tailcoats and elegant hairstyles were swapped out for less European styles like wide pants and ponchos; public universities were shut down since Rosas did not want to fund them.²³⁷ Red was the color of Rosas and the Federalists: Rosas painted the facades of many homes red, female supporters wore red ribbons in their hair, and men wore red jackets to show their support, a physical marker which Sarmiento likened to branding one's horses.²³⁸ I The city was broken, tamed, just like cattle on a Pampas estancia (Rosas himself was an estancia owner), and anyone who was well-educated and could afford to leave decamped for Montevideo. As Sarmiento wrote his text, *emigration* spiked, and he concluded with an awkward plea for more *immigration*. He writes: "The principal element of order and morality upon which the Argentine Republic relies today is the immigration of Europeans."²³⁹ He desperately believed that an increased European, non-Spanish population would lead to "civilization," for he saw many "causes of civilization" missing—schools, architecture, doctors, lawyers, judges—and felt that they could arrive with more immigrants from countries like France, Germany, and England.²⁴⁰ A few years later, he would write in his scathing anti-Rosas political treatise

²³⁷ Ibid., 208-26.

²³⁸ Jorge Myers, "Language, History, and Politics in Argentine Identity, 1840-1880," in Don H Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona, eds. *Nationalism in the New World*, (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 123-24.

²³⁹ Ibid., 248.

²⁴⁰ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes I: de Valparaíso a París* (Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1849), 82-83. Mary Louise Pratt also discusses Sarmiento's *Viajes*. See her *Imperial Eyes*, 189-95.

Argirópolis, “It is necessary to attract a population from other nations to augment our number and wealth and introduce the knowledge of the arts and sciences that we lack.”²⁴¹

When Sarmiento began traveling throughout Europe and the United States, he arrived at specific conclusions regarding the links between education, art and progress. Spain, which he visited in October of 1846, was seen as the negative example and a key to understanding Argentina’s political troubles. While there, he realized that, though the Bourbon monarchy was nominally in charge, Spain was truly ruled by military caudillos, much like Argentina. “It was an easy job to find in the Iberian Peninsula... the cradle of the barbarism inherited by the Hispanic peoples of South America,” he writes. Though attracted to the boldness of the Spanish national character, he ultimately felt that Spain’s greatness was in the past: “After major forces of intelligence, Spain had returned to a state of slumber since 1808,” and it was now out of sync with the rest of Europe.²⁴² As Jorge Myers explains, Sarmiento identified Spain with everything that was corrupt, arbitrary, and “antithetical to what was *American* in the culture of the Creoles” of Argentina.²⁴³

From Spain, he made his way to Rome, where he began visiting important sites of Classical architecture and representations of Italy’s former grandeur: the Colosseum, the Pantheon, Trajan’s Column. Further south, he experienced the ruins of Pompeii and the incredible museum of frescos in Naples, as well as numerous churches, like Santa Croce, and the Campanile, in Florence. All of these visits infused him with *italianità*, leading him to the

²⁴¹ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Argirópolis*, revised edition (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de cultura de la nación, 1994), 32. Sarmiento proposes a new path for Argentina and Uruguay by creating a joint capital territory Argirópolis—the Silver City—in the middle of the Parana and Uruguay Rivers.

²⁴² Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes II: España e Italia* (Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1849), 90.

²⁴³ Myers, 126.

conclusion that “art separates the savage from the civilized man.” and that Argentina suffered from a lack of high quality art or a national style. In May of 1865, Sarmiento sailed to New York, only months after the conclusion of the American Civil War. While there, he aimed to learn more about the country’s burgeoning public education system, which he saw as key to the social equality, economic mobility, and peaceful relations he hoped to encourage back home. Inspired by what he found, Sarmiento began an unprecedented presidential run while still abroad. He was elected—unbelievably, while sailing back to Argentina—as a candidate who championed culture, education, and immigration, and who sought to quickly modernize his country.

During his six years in office, Sarmiento aimed to “civilize the gaucho,” educate the masses, and bring in a new population from Europe, who might help to foster a national art movement. With the help of American education reformer Horace Mann, Sarmiento brought in teachers from the United States to run new schools, which he frequently referred to as “factories of citizens.” He created mobile schools for the small towns of the Pampas, and the number of educated children in the country increased three-fold, from 30,000 to 100,000. Simultaneously, he passed aggressive immigration reform: When he was elected in 1868, approximately 34,000 immigrants were entering the country each year; by 1874, the number had doubled due to increased job opportunities and cheap land, and numbers only rose from there. In sum, 280,000 Europeans moved to Argentina during his six-year term, and over half of them were Italian.²⁴⁴ Simultaneously, Sarmiento increased telegraph lines throughout the country, linking the capital to Europe through transatlantic cables; he extended railroad construction; and he built a national library system of over a hundred branches.

²⁴⁴ All statistics here are taken from: Bunkley, “The President: The Difficult Years,” in *The Life of Sarmiento*, 457-70.

On October 12, 1874, Sarmiento was voted out of office and replaced by Nicolás Avellaneda, who continued to aggressively court immigrants. He immediately passed the "Avellaneda law," making it easier for European farmers to acquire Argentine land that had been taken from indigenous populations in the Conquest of the Desert, led by Avellaneda and his army.²⁴⁵ Upon departure from the presidency, Sarmiento concluded that his program had failed to create lasting change, and he wondered how things would shift in the ensuing decades. In his twilight years, Sarmiento lamented his inability to enact meaningful reform in Argentina. He wondered if part of the problem was related to the particular type of immigration that had flourished in Argentina: though Europeans had arrived by the hundreds of thousands since the 1860s, they were not coming from the Northern European countries he considered to be industrious and socially advanced—Scandinavia, France, Germany, and England. Instead, they were drawn chiefly from Southern Europe, most notably the *mezzogiorno* (southern Italy), which he deemed nearly as backward and underdeveloped as Spain. Sarmiento's conviction of a perceived southern deficiency, especially within Southern Italy, came, at least in part, from the racially-charged research of criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso, who, as explained earlier, argued that southern Italians were closer to Africa, and were therefore less biologically evolved and more prone to violence.²⁴⁶ In some ways, Lombroso's opinions of Southern Italians were analogous to Sarmiento's views on the indigenous peoples of Argentina; yet still, by virtue of being European, Southern Italians were deemed superior to native peoples.

²⁴⁵ For more on the Avellaneda Law, see: Barbara Hines, "The Right to Migrate as a Human Right: The Current Argentine Immigration Law," *Cornell International Law Journal*, No. 43 (2010), pp. 471-511.

²⁴⁶ Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, trans. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Originally published as: Cesare Lombroso, *L'uomo delinquente. Studiato in rapporto all'antropologia giurisprudenza e alle discipline carcerarie* (Milan: Hoepli, 1876).

Once there, rather than identifying as “Argentine”—as American immigrants were expected to assimilate and become “Americans”—Italians remained disengaged from their adopted country, and instead, continued to associate only with other Italians. Sarmiento was particularly dismayed to see pictures of the King of Italy and maps of the country in Italian schools, as opposed to comparable Argentine examples. Yet, his fundamental logical flaw lay in importing outsiders without creating a nation-building program to hold them together. In 1884, four years before his death, he reflected upon the complex and confused Argentine identity:

What is America? This is perhaps the first time we shall ask ourselves who we were when we were called Americans and who when we called ourselves Argentines. Are we Europeans?... Are we Indians? ... Mixed? ... There are thousands who don't even want to be called Americans or Argentines. Are we a nation? A nation without an amalgam of accumulated building materials, without adaptation or cement? Argentines? Wither and whence: It would be good to come aware of this.”²⁴⁷

Indeed, Sarmiento was not the only one “aware of this.” Following his death, in September of 1888, the central question among the elites of Buenos Aires—many of whom were born in Argentina but of Spanish and Italian heritage— became not, “*How can we civilize Argentina?*”; but rather, “*How can we make this population, made increasingly of transplants, or people who identify as transnational, cohere as a nation?*” In this nation-building discourse, it is important to remember that it was Creoles of European descent and waves of Italian immigrants who were both the brainchildren and the subjects of the nation-building campaign. Immigration was still esteemed, so long as it continued to enrich—and not contaminate—Argentine culture. In the 1870s and 1880s, it became clear that the issue Sarmiento raised in his many texts had reached a critical point: the Argentine people lacked a coherent sense of identity, and increased immigration, while positive in many ways, exacerbated this problem. Years later, in 1924, Carlos

²⁴⁷ Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América*, Vol 1 (Buenos Aires: 1883), 1.

Nestor Maciel wrote *La Italianización de la Argentina*, in which he argued for restrictions on immigration from Southern Italy along similar lines to the United States's 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, which limited immigration based on country of origin after nativist lawmakers worried that "Americanness" was being diluted by immigration from the wrong places.²⁴⁸ Maciel opened his anti-Italian polemic with a series of questions about Argentine identity:

In order to progress morally and not to pervert democracy and liberties into the instruments of her own decline, Argentina cannot continue to be (as she has been) a conglomerate of the most diverse races of the earth. How can we avoid it? How can we recast... in one gigantic and homogeneous alloy, the incoherent social remnants which, day after day, arrive in our country and will add further to the already existing groups forearmed with their traditions and original customs? ²⁴⁹

Maciel's 1924 text proves that many of the questions plaguing Sarmiento four decades earlier remained a source of anxiety in the twentieth century, even though the *Generación del Ochenta* attempted to answer them.

The Generación del Ochenta Imagines the Nation:

Many key figures of the *Generación*, like critic Eduardo Schiaffino, who was quickly becoming known as an arbiter of taste, and the painters Eduardo Sívori, Reinaldo Guidici, and Angel Della Valle, were of Italian descent. They all maintained ties with Europe, as evidenced by the fact that each one trained in Rome or Paris, then returned to Argentina around the time of

²⁴⁸ In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge signed the Johnson-Reed Act, more commonly known as the 1924 Immigration Act. It determined the number of immigrants allowed entry through a national origins quota. The quota provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality already living in the United States as of the 1890 national census. It entirely excluded immigrants from Asia. For more on the history of American immigration law, and national origins quotas in particular, see: Tom Gjelten, *A Nation of Nations: A Great American Immigration Story*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

²⁴⁹ Carlos Nestor Maciel, *La italianización de la Argentina: tras la huella de nuestros antepasados*, (Buenos Aires: Librería y Casa Editora de Jesús Menéndez, 1924), 33. Maciel was one of the most outspoken critics of Italian immigration throughout the 1920s and 30s, and he urged Argentina to adopt immigration restrictions similar to the United States.

Sarmiento's presidency, hoping to develop the country's cultural landscape. Together, they consolidated power through the foundation of the Sociedad Estimulo de Bellas Artes (SEBA), or the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, on October 23, 1876 [Figure 3]. When the SEBA first met, they immediately began to address the need for a "national art."

In fact, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many popular press articles and small journals lamented the mediocre quality of the fine arts in Buenos Aires and, like Sarmiento, they argued for its improvement, precisely because it could be a positive way to unify the nation and cement its identity. *El Arte en el Plata* (Art in the Plata Region), organized and published by the SEBA in 1878, was the first journal dedicated solely to visual arts in Buenos Aires, and it was based on the assumption that painting and sculpture had a greater ability to foment national culture than the written word. Sarmiento's numerous texts failed to lead to "civilization," but painting could succeed, and later, museums would come to cement the "national grammar," to use Anderson's terminology.

As art historian Laura Malosetti Costa explains in her indispensable text, *Los primeros modernos: Arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX* (The First Moderns: Art and Society in Buenos Aires at the end of the Nineteenth Century, 2001), which studies the evolution of Argentina's national art between 1871-96, national identity was reflected through the formation of national museums and academies in the last decades of the nineteenth century.²⁵⁰ Argentina was among the last countries in Latin America to create its own national museum, the

²⁵⁰ Laura Malosetti Costa, *Los primeros modernos: Arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura, Economica de Argentina, 2001), 16. Parts of this chapter are indebted to Malosetti Costa's excellent research and analysis, but again, I aim to put her reading into contact with Sarmiento's "civilization versus barbarism" dichotomy, a connection she makes only cursorily.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, in 1896, and a national academy, in 1904.²⁵¹ As in other parts of the continent, these organizations contributed to the cultivation of an imagined nation and its accompanying physical image.²⁵² Anderson himself argues that “museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political” and an integral part of nation building.²⁵³ For Costa, the SEBA marks the initial crystallization of the project of cultural nation building, and it helped to shape the goals of the *Generación del Ochenta*.

These goals were four-fold: 1) to develop artistic activity in Buenos Aires and create conditions for its professionalization by implementing policies to improve available material and technical resources; 2) to elevate artistic activity to intellectual activity by encouraging collaboration with writers, poets, and historians; 3) to promote the formation of an audience and a market for the sale of works; and 4) to establish links with major international art centers, either through travel or through exhibiting Argentine works at Universal Expositions.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Latin American art academies were modeled off of developments in Spain, which were, in turn, based on the French royal academies founded in the 17th century. In the second half of the 18th century, the Spanish monarchy sponsored three royal art academies: San Fernando in Madrid (1752), San Carlos in Valencia (1768), and San Luis in Saragossa (1793). In all cases, the study and copying of European masterworks, classical statues and live models were central to training. Two academies were founded during the colonial period: The Real Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City, in 1783, (later reopened as the national academy in 1843), and the Academia de San Alejandro in Havana in 1818. Following independence, Brazil was the first country to establish an academy in 1826. For more, see: S. Deans-Smith: “‘A Natural and Voluntary Dependence’: The Royal Academy of San Carlos and the Cultural Politics of Art Education in Mexico City, 1786–1797,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol.29, No. 3, (2010), pp. 278–95.

²⁵² Interestingly, Argentina created its museum before its academy, whereas in other parts of Latin America, this order was reversed. Perhaps this because Italy was the model and it has some of the oldest museums in the world, beginning with the Capitoline Museums, which opened in Rome in 1471, followed by the Vatican Museums in 1506, and the Uffizi collection was given to the city of Florence in 1743. By comparison, the Museo del Prado in Madrid opened its doors to the public in 1819, around the time when a broader “museum culture” was established throughout Europe. To learn about the history of museums in the Americas, see the excellent anthology: Michele Greet, and Gina McDaniel Tarver eds. *Art Museums of Latin America: Structuring Representation*, (New York: Routledge, 2018).

²⁵³ Anderson, 180.

²⁵⁴ Malosetti Costa, 17-18.

One may note that, though these goals are much more focused, they contain echoes of Sarmiento's plan of "civilization," and again, they can now be more fully understood and analyzed through the lens of modern nationalism studies.²⁵⁵ In the words of Anthony D. Smith, a key founder of the field, our ideas of the *nation* and *nationalism* are "the product of an interplay between a technological revolution (i.e. printing), an economic revolution (capitalism) and the fatality of linguistic diversity."²⁵⁶ In order for nationalism to flourish, citizens must be able to read origin stories, see reproductions of iconic images, and discuss both of these in an organized fashion through a standard national language, which cannot emerge without printing, mass literacy, and free, public education, one of Sarmiento's central crusades. For Smith, culture is the fulcrum, and he defines a *nation* quite specifically, as "a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate shared myths, memories, symbols, values, and traditions, reside in and identify with an historic homeland, create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and common laws."²⁵⁷ Indeed, he writes, ethnic memories and (invented) traditions become most powerful—and most necessary—when there is a lack of national cohesion, and when there is a newly enfranchised population that needs to be swayed to vote in favor of the ruling class, (since enfranchisement will allow said population to ultimately threaten those in control).²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ For more, see: Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3-13.

²⁵⁶ Anthony D. Smith, "History and Modernity: Reflections of the theory of Nationalism," in *Representing the Nation: A Reader. Histories, Heritage, and Museums*, ed. David Boswell and Jessica Evans (New York: Routledge, 1999), 49.

²⁵⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation Made Real: Art and National Identity in Western Europe, 1600-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

²⁵⁸ This political aspect of nationalism is better explored by Czech philosopher Ernest Gellner: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1.

As a general rule, according to the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, nascent countries *invent* traditions, build monuments, and paint history paintings, in order to bring people together.²⁵⁹ Hobsbawm asserts that traditions arise somewhat organically, but are also gradually manipulated and cemented through repeated practice and education.²⁶⁰ Though Hobsbawm is referring to Europe, his ideas can easily be applied to Argentina. For Hobsbawm, *nationalism*—which he deems real—precedes the *nation*—which he considers a construct, much like Anderson and Selasi: “Nations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way round.”²⁶¹ But how is the nation constructed? In Ernest Gellner’s estimation, two individuals belong to the same *nation* if: “1) they share the same culture....and 2) they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation....It is their *recognition* of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes.”²⁶² As such, the awareness of belonging matters even more than the qualities that allow one to belong. Habitually, a trickle-down effect—from urban center to rural provinces, and from upper to working classes—can be found in the spread of national consciousness, and this was certainly true in Argentina. Ideas about nationality were fomented primarily in Buenos Aires among elites like the *Generación*, and they slowly fanned out from there, reiterating themselves in the provinces and encouraging middle-class identification.

When the SEBA began to codify a national iconography, it was with the goal of creating an “imagined community” out of diverse European transplants with disparate visual heritages. As

²⁵⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

²⁶⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions, Europe 1970-1914,” in *Representing the Nation*, 69.

²⁶¹ Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 10.

²⁶² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

cultural studies professor, Jessica Evans, explains, “Nations are best viewed as particular ways of ‘imagining’ bonds of human solidarity...The modern nation-state creates its identity through imagining that its people are bound to the same territory,” and that they can all recognize it through a sort of codified imagery or standard representation. “What it means to be and *feel* Australian, American,” she continues, “is bound up with the ways those nations ... are made tangible through repeated and recognizable symbolic forms, narratives and communicative styles.”²⁶³ Ultimately, Evans argues, national identity is created through carefully constructed cultural representations, which often simplify and dramatize foundational stories. Stories become increasingly important in a nation of immigrants, like Argentina, because the populace cannot be united through a shared ethnicity.

In *Nationalism in the New World* (2006), Don H. Doyle and Antonio Pamplona lament that the nationalist debate has long ignored the Americas, despite the fact that American nations predate European ones. Perhaps this omission can be explained by the fact that Latin American nations present a completely different (and more problematic) model than their European counterparts: Latin Americans are linked not through shared ethnicity, but through shared—voluntary and involuntary—migration stories. All of the Americas have a mix of European, indigenous, and African blood, so there was no possibility of unity coming from a shared past heritage; instead, “immigration underscored the voluntary nature of nationality,” Doyle and Pamplona write. “If nationalism tends to reify ethnonationalist identities elsewhere in the world,

²⁶³ Jessica Evans, “Introduction” in *Representing the Nation*, 2-3.

in the Americas, it typically strives to encompass plural ethnic identities.”²⁶⁴ And the fact that the entire Western Hemisphere now communicates in the four languages of the Americas—English, French, Spanish and Portuguese—is “testimony to the remarkable capacity of immigrants to assimilate a great diversity of citizens as well as the determination of American nation-states to impose some degree of cultural homogeneity upon their new citizens.”²⁶⁵ How should Argentine art be used to create this sense of cultural homogeneity?

To return to Anderson, he has argued that a nation emerges as a mode of molding and interpreting space by turning *terrain* into *territory* with its own cultural narrative.²⁶⁶ Indeed, he theorizes that the true basis of nationalism is *cultural*, and that it is a shared culture that enables people to fight—and even die—for their homelands. Along those lines, political scientist Michael J. Shapiro notes that the nation often generates an artistic oeuvre—in the form of landscape and history paintings— and a literary canon in order to represent itself.²⁶⁷ Shapiro refers to landscapes as “nationalization of nature,” or, more specifically, a codified way of depicting nature in order to point at certain national or territorial characteristics. And as art historian Katherine Manthorne posits, “Land is terrain, a physical entity; *landscape* is a cultural construct. Terrain becomes landscape when people project their hopes, desires and memories onto it.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Doyle and Pamplona, eds., 5-6. Doyle and Pamplona explain that, because “ethnicity was not an adhesive force, neither was it a cleaving force pushing people apart.” Compared with the rest of the world, conflicts rooted in ethnonational disputes in the Americas have been very rare, and initial uprisings against colonial rulers have to be understood as fundamentally different from ethnonationalist uprisings.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 10.

²⁶⁶ Benedict Anderson, 8.

²⁶⁷ Michael J. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 133-36.

²⁶⁸ Katherine Manthorne, “Land Icon Nation,” in *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic*. eds. Peter John Brownlee, Valéria Piccoli, and Georgina Uhlyarik (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 18-22.

Anthony Smith contends that art can help an ethnically diverse population visualize national character, particularly by helping them identify with a place. Landscape representations are perhaps the most literal form of national imagery—they depict the place that people feel connected to (especially if they know no other place)—but they often contain spiritual dimensions, like the inclusion of divine light, dramatic vistas, or a physical connection between land and (heavenly) sky. As artists became increasingly linked with national schools of art and came to identify more with the idea of a homeland themselves, the landscape was thought to reveal the inner self of the artist; and therefore, the inner self of the whole nation, argues Smith.²⁶⁹

In 1878, Santiago Vaca Guzman, the editor of *El Arte en el Plata* (Art in La Plata), wrote an article entitled “El arte” (The Art), which proposed that Buenos Aires was poised to become a major cultural hub, because the “Latin race,” meaning those from Spain, France, and Italy, had a predisposition towards all things aesthetic, and he further reasoned that, given the laws of cultural evolution, Europe was dangerously close to a point of decadence and decline, leaving South America to rise and fill the void.²⁷⁰ And herein lies the paradox: the paintings being created were meant to show Argentina as a developed nation, which in nineteenth century terms, meant that it needed to appear European. How could Argentine art show a united, modern nation, when in reality, the country was not yet industrialized, and the population was still highly factionalized? Perhaps the answer was to use art as an aspirational projection of the *imagined* nation, rather than a portrait of what actually existed. Or, more accurately, it could show a nation

²⁶⁹ Smith, *The Nation Made Real*, 108.

²⁷⁰ Santiago Vaca Guzman, “El Arte,” *El arte en el Plata*, May, 1878, 3. Guzman bases his optimism on three factors, “race, milieu, and moment,” derived from the French critic and historian, Hippolyte Taine, in his 1865 text *Philosophie de l’art*, which was translated into English and Spanish in the 1870s.

in the process of becoming through struggle. As Peter Brownlee, Valéria Piccoli and Georgina Uhlyarik write in *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting from Tierra de Fuego to the Arctic* (2015), “While landscape painting had, for centuries, functioned in Europe to express the ideological outlook of royalty and, gradually, the landed elite, the prospect of purportedly open and available land in the Americas shifted the demographics of who owned and worked the land, as well as who was displaced or evacuated from it.”²⁷¹

In Argentina, as elsewhere, forceful displacement of indigenous peoples was a core part of the nation’s origin story and a precondition to modernization. When painters began to portray the Pampas, they used the vast, open land as a neutral space upon which to depict either physical confrontation or the building of new infrastructure. In the United States, landscapes were painted with Manifest Destiny in mind, showing that it was the nation’s divine right to control all of North American, from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. The journalist John L. O’Sullivan coined the term in an 1845 issue of *The Democratic Review*, writing: “[It is] our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence, in the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”²⁷² In so doing, the United States could bring a more enlightened way of life to Native Americans who already lived on the land, by imposing democracy, capitalism, and new technologies.

Railroad development in the United States led to the commissioning of a plethora of landscape paintings, as if portraying the land was a way to legitimize its possession. Malosetti Costa argues that, in promoting movement to places that were previously considered “nowhere

²⁷¹ Piccoli Brownlee and Uhlyarik, “Introduction: Landscape Painting Across the Americas: An Inquiry,” *Picturing the Americas*, 13.

²⁷² Quoted in Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest design: American Exceptionalism and Empire*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 255

or damned,” works by artists like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran had as much influence as the laying of the tracks themselves. Perhaps the most famous—and heavy-handed—image of Manifest Destiny is *American Progress*, a 1872 painting by John Gast [Figure 4] which depicts America as a giant, classically dressed, blonde woman carrying all of the markers of progress: an oversized school book in one hand, telegraph wires in the other, and trains follow behind her. As she floats westward full of determination, she leads pioneers, farmers, miners, and wagons, while forcing Native Americans and buffalo to move out of her way.²⁷³ The original painting was commissioned by George Crofutt, a publisher of American Western travel guides, but it became known to most people through widely disseminated chromolithograph reproductions. Crofutt himself described the painting as follows: “a beautiful and charming female ... floating westward through the air, bearing on her forehead the ‘Star of Empire’ . . . In her right hand she carries a book ... the emblem of education and ... national enlightenment, while with the left hand she unfolds and stretches the slender wires of the telegraph, that are to flash intelligence throughout the land.”²⁷⁴ Crofutt makes no mention of the fleeing Native Americans in the lower left of the image, but this conflict is conspicuously defanged; as Progress comes in, they leave without any show of resistance. A true clash is not depicted as it was in Argentine images from the same time period, perhaps because the United States government did not want to own up to its brutal methods of displacement, whereas the Argentine government considered bloodshed a proud part of its national mythology.

²⁷³ Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-7.

²⁷⁴ This quote comes from the online catalog entry of the Autry Museum, where the painting now resides. For more information about the specifics of this painting, see the Autry Museum Website: <http://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M545330;type=101>

Moreover, in Argentina, perhaps because the railroad united previously formed centers, areas already considered civilized, rather than developing the open territory in between, it did not become a frequent symbol of progress as it did in North America. Similarly, the first Argentine railways were controlled by British interests, and many Argentinians were initially wary of steam engines, which created so much rumbling that people feared they might cause buildings to collapse.²⁷⁵ Finally, due to a strong public relations campaign, the great plains of North America seemed to represent promise, while the Pampas were, in the public imagination, merely inhospitable. “In the United States, the prairies were conceived as precursors to the greatness of the empire,” Costa writes, “while in Southern American countries such as Argentina, the empty Pampas had a negative connotation, representing barbarianism, loneliness and death.”²⁷⁶

Even in the 1880s, the Pampas remained truculent and resistant to change, but the *Generación* took a different approach than Sarmiento. Rather than trying to subdue the people of the Pampas through education, many (though not all) of the artists associated with the group created work intended to turn the audience away from this land and towards metropolitan centers like Buenos Aires, which was physically and psychically closer to Europe. Unlike North American landscape artists who depicted the American West romantically, convincing people to move to the prairies and the mountains in order to realize “Manifest Destiny,” many Argentine painters showed the nature as barren and inhospitable, and the people who inhabited it—primarily the gaucho—as brutish or outmoded. The goal of the *Generación* was to pit the rational city (where all of these artists resided) against the wild Pampas, and to force the audience to

²⁷⁵ For more on the history of trains in Argentina, see: Dhan Sebastián Zunino Singh, *The history of the Buenos Aires Underground, A cultural analysis of the modernization process in a peripheral metropolis (1886-1944)*, PhD Thesis, Institute of Historical Research (School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2010).

²⁷⁶ Malosetti Costa, *Picturing the Americas*, 182.

chose the urban, Europhilic, path, or to at least see its ascendance as inevitable. At the same time, the Gaucho came to personify a way of life that was becoming outmoded and obsolete.

Depicting Conflict as a Mode of Unification:

One highly effective image is Reinaldo Guidici's *Primer ferrocarril "La Porteña" cruzando la campaña* (*The First Train 'La Porteña' Crossing the Countryside*), from 1881, in which he shows an awkwardly galloping gaucho in the foreground nearly intersecting with a speeding train in the background [Image 3]. Though they are in different spaces—the gaucho is much closer to the viewer, and the train is passing through with no sign of stopping—it appears that the train is about to plow into the gaucho's head and torso, acting as a heavy-handed metaphor for the triumph of modernization over the native-born cowboy and his ways of the past. The fact that the painting is titled after the train, even though the gaucho is more prominent, highlights the significance of the new technology, which had been introduced in Argentina in the late 1850s. The pictured locomotive, *La Porteña*, was the first train to run in Buenos Aires province and eventually head west across the Pampas. Built by the British firm, E.B. Wilson and Company, in Leeds, England, and installed on British manufactured tracks, it was yet another imported, European marker of civilization, forcing the native gaucho down into the mud, nearly knocking off his hat with a furious gust of speed-induced wind.²⁷⁷

The gaucho—often presented as a victim of modernization and an object of nostalgia by late nineteenth-century Argentine writers—is depicted with a high degree of pathos. His horse lurches inelegantly into swampy ground, seeming to slip with its front right hoof, sinking

²⁷⁷ For more on the history of trains in Argentina, see: Dhan Sebastián Zunino Singh.

irredeemably, while the cowboy holds onto his hat and satchel as if they might slip away. Finally, the agave plant on the right side of the composition is in bloom—a flowering which only happens once in the agave’s lifetime, making it a rare and fleeting event—but its thorns look as though they are about to prick the gaucho, making it an obstacle. This symbolism all points at the tragic fate of a dying way of life, one that had previously been labeled “barbaric” by Sarmiento, but was, by 1881, seen as part of Argentina’s foundational mythology, something to be memorialized now that the rowdy cowboy was safely a relic of the past.

Like the gaucho, Guidici himself was a complicated figure, and the clash within the painting may have reflected his own internal conflict. Like many Argentine artists of the 1880s, Guidici had a transnational story. Born abroad, in Lenno, Italy, in 1853, Guidici emigrated to Uruguay with his family in 1861 and eventually moved to Argentina, in 1876, where he studied with the famous genre scene painter, Juan Manuel Blanes, before receiving a scholarship to study in Italy for two years. While there, he came into contact with many realist artists who portrayed disenfranchised people, and this social conscience comes through in his work.²⁷⁸ Though he officially settled in Argentina, he spent much of his career traveling back to Italy, and perhaps because of this transatlanticism, his painting blends elements of European-made modernity—the train—with Argentine terrain and characters. Though the landscape is nondescript, it is also regionally accurate; the topography is completely flat, with a low horizon line and an enormous, cloudy sky. The low-lying shrubbery, the agave, and the ombú tree, all the way to the left, are all characteristic of the region.²⁷⁹ Since the painting emphasizes the confrontation between the train

²⁷⁸ For more on Guidici and his motifs, see: Aldo Ramella Opazo, “Reinaldo Guidici, *The First Train*, ‘*La Porteña Crossing the Countryside*, 1881,’” in *Picturing the Americas*, 200-201.

²⁷⁹ Ruth B. Phillips, “Indigenous Lands/Settler Landscapes: Art Histories Out of Joint,” in *Picturing the Americas*, 92-99.

and the gaucho rather than the depiction of a place, the work functions as an allegory or a national mythology, one that Argentine viewers could easily identify. Indeed, Guidici's painting is more emotionally manipulative than it first appears: he first makes viewers empathetic towards the awkward, unvirile gaucho, but this feeling inevitably turns to pride over the charging, government-funded train.

In other propagandistic images, the challenges of the Pampas were shown through battle, rape, and conquest. Scenes of a white woman attacked, robbed, or abducted by indigenous men (usually on horseback) were common throughout Argentine art and literature, and they came to represent not only the conflict between European-born and indigenous populations, but also the broader national struggle between civilization, as personified by the white woman, and barbarism, depicted through the native man. These multivalent images contain erotic overtones while also provoking outrage in the likely white viewer and highlighting an "us" versus "them" mentality, thus heightening the fear of miscegenation that some European-born Argentines felt. Furthermore, Costa argues, the myth of the woman being abducted by a *malón*, a raid of Mapuche men, shows the Creoles as the rightful owners of the land and Mapuche as usurpers or "contaminators." According to Malosetti Costa, the woman's body is an incarnation of the land through which she is being carried, and through contact with the Mapuche raiders, the woman is transformed from a heroine to a victim to a woman who will not be able to reinsert herself into white culture. She is conceived as the point of intersection between the "civilized world" and the "land of barbarians," and she helps to justify the unjust conquest on ideological grounds.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Laura Malosetti Costa, "El rapto de Cautivas Blancas: un aspecto erótico de la barbarie en la plástica rioplatense del siglo XIX," in *Arte, historia e identidad en América: visiones comparativas*, vol. II, eds., Gustavo Curiel, Renato González Mello and Juana Gutiérrez Haces (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1994), 297-314.

Though Malosetti Costa's analysis is key to understanding these works, she does not adequately tie it back to Sarmiento's theories, which offer a more complete understanding of the *Generación's* sources and motivations.

Ángel Della Valle's *La vuelta del malón* (The Return of the Indian Raid), from 1892, is a painstakingly rendered, paradigmatic example of the "civilization versus barbarism" dichotomy, and one of the first Argentine paintings exhibited publicly abroad [Figure 2]. Inspired by a historic raid on an unnamed village led by Chief Cayutril, the painting, like Guidici's, is more a general exploration of major themes circulating at the time than a record of any specific event. *La vuelta del malón* was painted for the Argentine Pavilion of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and it was brought to the Exposition by ophthalmologist Pedro Lagleyze, a friend of the artist, who received a miniature version of the painting to keep for himself. Before being sent abroad, it was shown in the Nocetti y Repetto hardware store—which occasionally showcased paintings on Buenos Aires's cultural and commercial thoroughfare, Calle Florida. While there, it was part of the city-wide celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's transatlantic voyage, which was important for both Spanish and Italian communities as a way of highlighting the ongoing connections with Europe. As the newspaper, *La Nación*, explained: "Today is the 400th anniversary of ... the first contact between Europe and America, allowing a new life to surface, and establishing between the New World and the Old a current of ideas, civilization, and progress that has increasingly provided us a great many gifts."²⁸¹

One of those gifts may be Della Valle, the son of Italian immigrants who arrived in Argentina in the 1840s. Della Valle had trained in Florence, between 1872-73, with the Swiss-

²⁸¹ Editors, *La Nación*, October 12, 1892, Buenos Aires, p. 1. The translation is mine.

Italian neoclassicist Antonio Ciseri. He was also exposed to work by Risorgimento painters as well as the Macchiaioli Group, who painted landscapes in natural light as well as historic battle scenes.²⁸² *La Prensa* referred to *La Vuelta* as “an expression of Italian training, and the best that has been made by one of our national artists.” The article goes on to explain that, although all of the most respected artists in Buenos Aires received government-funded training in Europe, none of them exposed the Argentine public to European techniques as well as Della Valle.²⁸³ Indeed, given that Argentina was made up of European immigrants, its national art should also include imported styles and motifs, and it should wear these elements proudly.

At the same time, though Della Valle looked at many Italian examples, no Italian painter depicted expanses as gigantic and open as the Pampas, because no part of Italy was as flat, desolate or underpopulated. Works by the Macchiaioli always include mountainous elements, buildings, or a large human or animal presence; the land never seems to overwhelm them, and violence is not a key theme. For example, even in a military image like Giovanni Fattori’s (1825-1908) *The Italian Camp at the Battle of Magenta* (1861) [Figure 5], which Della Valle may have known, figures take up the bulk of the frame, and no violence is pictured. By comparison, the Argentine painter Eduardo Sívori’s *Estancia (Country Estate)*, of 1895 [Figure 6], likely shows as many horses as Fattori’s painting, but they take up far less space proportionally. Though Fattori was painting a military camp and Sívori depicted a cattle ranch, the difference in vantage point is key: While Fattori brings us close to the action, focusing

²⁸² It is also possible that he traveled to Paris and saw works by Eugene Delacroix, such as *The Abduction of Rebecca* (1858), which resembles *La vuelta* both thematically and stylistically. Delacroix depicts a scene from Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. The Jewish heroine, Rebecca, who had been trapped in the castle of Front de Boeuf, is suddenly kidnapped and carried off by two Saracen slaves commanded by the covetous Christian knight, Bois-Guilbert. The slaves are dark and exotic, with their turbans and shadowy faces, and Rebecca is pale and illuminated, slung over the back of a horse and sleeping peacefully, completely unaware of the tumult surrounding her.

²⁸³ Editors, *La Prensa*, 19. VII, 1892, p. 6. Translation is mine.

primarily on people, Sívori zooms out, making the cows appear small and engulfed by the plains. Their horizontal grouping echoes the horizontality of the land, the rooftop of the estancia, and the outcropping of trees in the center. A lack of diagonal or vertical elements seems to imply that this space goes on forever, making it less approachable or relatable to urban viewers. Even Della Valle's *Apartando* (Separation), from 1900 [Figure 7], which shows an innocuous scene of gauchos galloping on horseback and separating cattle, appears rough and aggressive. Della Valle did not endeavor to make the Pampas attractive; he wanted to show a harsh way of life outside the city. In sum, a focus on the vastness of the land, violent conflict, or a combination thereof, made the Pampas landscape a uniquely Argentine genre.

This singularity was also recognized abroad. When *La vuelta* traveled to Chicago, it became the first Argentine painting to win a prize at an international exposition. Hence, it became even more celebrated by the Argentine press, and Schiaffino specifically, as the first “genuinely national work of art.”²⁸⁴ Years later, in his text, *La Evolucion del Gusto Artistico En Buenos Aires* (The Evolution of Artistic Taste in Buenos Aires) of 1910, Schiaffino repeatedly refers to Della Valle as a national hero with a “vigorous talent,” and a role model for his younger peers. He calls Della Valle “the ill-fated painter, who died relatively young... struggling to exalt the art of his country.”²⁸⁵ Indeed, Della Valle died at fifty-one, having painted relatively few large works, making this one all the more valued.

²⁸⁴ Laura Malosetti Costa discusses the initial reaction to the piece in her article “La vuelta del malón,” for Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires. Accessed October 26, 2018: <http://mnba.gob.ar/en/the-collection-highlights/6297>. Costa cites a number of articles from the 1892-3, from *El Diario*, that praise the painting.

²⁸⁵ Eduardo Schiaffino, *La Evolucion del Gusto Artistico en Buenos Aires*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bellas Artes, 1910), 121. The translation is mine.

Images such as *La Vuelta* helped Argentine leaders to recast genocide as a territorial war. Though the captive woman is illuminated in the foreground, she is not nearly as viscerally powerful as the overriding sense of Mapuche raiders' new physical strength, arrogance, and speed, along with the dramatic coloring of sunrise, an expansive sky, and the muddy, endless plains. The fact that the woman is not the obvious focal point makes it different from other paintings of captives, or abducted women, that Della Valle would have known. Juan Manuel Blanes, who had also trained with Ciseri in Florence in the 1860s, painted many versions of captive women, including *La Cautiva* (The Captive) of 1880 [Figure 8], and another painting of the same title from 1881 [Figure 9].²⁸⁶ In each image, Blanes places the white, female captive — a symbol of innocence and purity—front and center. In the tamer 1881 image, the captive stands close to the viewer clothed in a loose skirt and a shirt that falls off her shoulder, nearly exposing her breast and perhaps suggesting sexual violence. She rests her head on her hand, and though we cannot completely see her face, she has an air of despair and pain. In the middle distance, two Indian men look on with seeming curiosity mixed with indifference: the figure on the right has his hands behind his head, as if casually relaxing while this woman suffers in front of him.

In the earlier *La Cautiva* [Figure 8], the captive is practically naked, sitting on the flat ground of the Pampas and staring up at the heavens as an Indian chief looks on beside her. Her expression is pained and beseeching, and he almost seems seduced by her helplessness. Though she is still and statuesque, dynamic action unfolds behind her: the Indian men have returned from yet another raid victorious. In Blanes's paintings, the captive is clearly the focus; Della Valle, on

²⁸⁶ Juan Manuel Blanes (1830-1901), was a Uruguayan painter who spent much of his life and career working in Argentina. He was commissioned by the Argentine president Justo José de Urquiza (1854-60) to paint a series of allegorical portraits and landscapes in 1857, and then he trained with Ciseri in Florence in the 1860s. Along with many captive scenes, he has also painted many portraits of Gauchos, as well as his very famous "Conquest of the Desert" from 1889, which was only seen privately at the time it was painted.

the other hand, paints the raid, the dramatic event that precedes the quiet moment of despair. Yet still, Della Valle's choice to include a female captive is significant and signals the role of allegory over ostensible reportage: It shows a point of connection between the wild world of the Pampas and the cultivated world that it threatens, reflecting the struggle between civilization and barbarism.

In *La Vuelta*, the Mapuche men raise long spears as they charge forward. The cross that one of the Mapuche men raises in his left hand, which then draws the eye to chalices, censers, and other tools of worship, indicates that the *malón* may have raided a church. Given that most viewers at the time would have been Christian, Della Valle seems to be intentionally riling up his audience and engendering fear that tribal religions and value systems might encroach upon the refined Christian world. The severe depiction of brutality—skulls strewn over the saddles of some of the horses, along with the lances, and finally, the semiconscious woman—is meant to the white audience, thus hammering home the idea that indigenous peoples were “barbaric,” and must be wiped out in order for the nation to move forward, and for white women (and men) to be truly safe.

In fact, images of raids and captives were used to validate and commemorate the Conquest of the Desert. At the Columbia Exposition, *La vuelta* served to connect Argentina's acts of genocide and territorial expansion with those of other nations involved in the fair, like the United States, thus suggesting that bloodshed was a common, even necessary, step towards statehood. Costa even argues that, it “implicitly suggests the extermination campaign [in Argentina] as the culmination of the conquest of America in relation to the 1492 celebrations.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Costa, “La vuelta del malon”

In fact, at the Exposition, *La vuelta* was hung in the manufacturing pavilion, full of sacks of Argentine exports, like wool, grain, and cowhides. Many international visitors understood it as an illustration of the difficulties that the country had surmounted in order to become a successful agricultural exporter (which it was by this time). Taken a step further, the painting and the surrounding exports could, together, draw a through-line, showing how the country had aggressively expanded into the Pampas, and was now stretching its commercial reach abroad.

When the painting returned to Buenos Aires in 1894, it was put on display at the *Salon Ateneo*, the first perennial exhibition of Argentine art, organized by Della Valle, Guidici, and others, and then transferred to the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes after its founding in 1896. When it was seen by an audience made up largely of white Argentines, *La vuelta* took on a difference valence: to underscore the “we versus them” sense of unity. Though other artists had painted raid or captive scenes before, *La vuelta* was the first one shown to a large public—both inside and out of the country—making it particularly powerful. As a wide array of viewers inspected the image, they came together in amazement at Della Valle’s technical bravura and in outrage over the position of the innocent, unconscious white woman. As such, it became one of the earliest examples of a work that helped delineate the *imagined* community of Argentineans in the 1890s as white, of European descent, and in agreement with Sarmiento’s aforementioned notions of progress and civilization.

Conclusion: Topographical Violence:

When Della Valle passed away unexpectedly in 1903, Schiaffino, by then the Director of the fledgling Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA), which he had helped found in 1896,

requested the painting from the artist's family, hoping to officially make it a national treasure.²⁸⁸ Interestingly, the family opted to instead donate it to the Sociedad Estimulo de Bellas Artes, which later sold the painting to the MNBA in return for the creation of an endowed painting award named after the artist.²⁸⁹ This award secured Della Valle's artistic status and guaranteed him a place in the minds of future generations as both a gifted painter and teacher, but also as a nationalist warrior and protector. For Schiaffino and his peers, *La Vuelta* was an indelible symbol; it represented a link to European techniques, and a portrayal of Argentina's history, but more importantly, it stood as a seminal point in the development of Argentina's imagined community of *civilizers* who were working together to combat forces they saw as threatening their new nation. This conflict had been first defined by Sarmiento, then heightened by waves of European immigration and the Conquest of the Desert, and was finally depicted visually by artists like Blanes, Guidici, and Della Valle.

In the works of each artist, we find representations of what I have termed "topographical violence": violence done *to* the land through the construction of modern industry, and violence enacted *upon* the land through Indian raids, which were in turn pictured to validate the violent killing of indigenous peoples on the same land. I argue that the artistic portrayal of violence was a way of showing the nation coming into being through arduous struggle on and for land that made up the national territory. Unlike in the United States, where the plains and mountains of the West were shown as fecund, exciting, and inviting, the Argentine Pampas were barren, making them intractable, and the violence of these images shows a desire to subdue and master them.

²⁸⁸ Costa, "La vuelta del malón." Costa notes that the SEBA sold the painting to the MNBA for \$5000 in 1909.

²⁸⁹ Schiaffino, *La Evolucion*, 122. Schiaffino goes on to explain all of the specifications of the prize, and how it must be awarded to an alumnus of the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, in order to show that it has gone to someone with the highest form of national training.

This trope had a specific nation-building function—backed by the *Generación*, the Argentine government, and the MNBA—of bringing a community together to celebrate Argentine hardship and victories over a common enemy. More so than images of beautiful reclining nudes, like Schiaffino's *Reposo* (Repose) of 1889 [Figure 10], or Ernesto de la Cárcova's *Sin pan y sin trabajo* (Without Bread and Without Work) of 1893-4 [Figure 11], which illustrates the woes of the working class, these images of topography and violence defined Argentina's national style at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹⁰

Significantly, all of the paintings discussed in this chapter were created by artists upon their return from training trips to Italy, and many of the artists were of Italian descent themselves. Each work was shown to an educated bourgeois audience at the annual exhibitions of the Salon Ateneo, organized by Schiaffino between 1893-96, before he succeeded in founding the national museum.²⁹¹ And many of them were also shown internationally: In a follow-up to the Columbian Exposition of 1893, where *La Vuelta* won a medal, *Sin pan y sin trabajo* traveled to the Saint Louis for the 1904 Worlds Fair, where it received the Grand Prize and much international attention before going back on the walls at the MNBA. As Schiaffino had argued back in 1885, artistic production is necessary to the founding of any great nation, and it needs the proper environment in order for it to be properly protected and cultivated.

In 1891, an editorial in *La Nación* stated, "The fine arts are the daughter of spiritual peace and the exemption of all anxiety of daily life. They are the florescence of the moral economy, the

²⁹⁰ For more on Schiaffino and Ernesto de la Cárcova, see Malosetti Costa's *Los Primeros Modernos*. *Sin pan y sin trabajo* was painted immediately after the painter returned from a study trip to Turin and Rome, and he began making sketches for it while still in Italy. De la Cárcova presented it at the second Salón del Ateneo in Buenos Aires upon his return in 1894. The work reflects his politics and sympathy for the working class, especially after having just joined the recently created Centro Obrero Socialista, a predecessor to Argentina's socialist party.

²⁹¹ For more on the Salones Ateneo, see Malosetti Costa's Chapter 9: "Pintores y Poetas II: El Ateneo" 329-389.

superabundant culture of a city. And how can we manifest this florescence if the tree doesn't have proper nutrients at its roots?"²⁹² By 1900, Argentina had all of the pieces in place to spawn a burgeoning national culture, yet its art was full of imported elements, much like its citizenry. In the next chapter, we will examine paradigm shifts in the 1910s and 20s: artists continued to travel to Europe for training and inspiration, many of them on government-funded scholarships like Schiaffino proposed, yet they returned with a goal of creating something more modern, multifaceted, and transatlantic.

²⁹² *La Nación*, 4.1 1891, p. 2. Quoted in Malosetti Costa, *Los Primeros Modernos*, 331.

CHAPTER 4:
Inventing a “Neo-Creole Avant Garde”:
Emilio Pettoruti, Xul Solar, and the “Martin Fierristas”

Introduction:

The painter Emilio Pettoruti (1892-1971) was born to Italian parents in La Plata, Argentina, and he spent twenty-nine years of his adult life in Europe. Curiously, he never relinquished his Argentine passport for an Italian one. In his memoir, entitled *Un Pintor Ante el Espejo* (A Painter before the Mirror), which he published in 1968 while living in Paris, he proclaimed: “I could have easily obtained an Italian passport, which would have been useful at times. However, I wish to point out that it didn’t even cross my mind. I am *not* a dual citizen.”²⁹³ Perhaps, like the writer Taiye Selasi, mentioned in Chapter 1, Pettoruti did not want to adhere to nation or citizen-based labels. But his statement from the twilight years of his life— long after the fall of Benito Mussolini and the rise of Juan Domingo Perón—seems to contradict his art and writing of the 1910s and 20s, which demonstrate a robust connection to Argentina *and* Italy and a deeply rooted transnational identity. For the younger Pettoruti, Italianness was embedded within his Argentineness, and technically, he was already considered an Italian citizen by virtue of having two Italian parents.²⁹⁴ Indeed, Pettoruti was fluent in Italian and he lived in Italy for

²⁹³ Pettoruti was a prolific writer. In addition to numerous exhibition reviews and articles, he published an introspective, if self-serving, autobiography three years before he died. This quote comes from the end of this personal memoir: Emilio Pettoruti, *Un Pintor Ante el Espejo*, (Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette, 1968), p. 238. This text has been translated into English. See: Emilio Pettoruti, *A Painter Before the Mirror*. Translated by Cristina Soares Gache (Buenos Aires: Fundación Pettoruti, 2006).

²⁹⁴ The Italian Citizenship Law of 1913 stated that any child born to an Italian father abroad was considered a citizen unless he or she renounced his/her citizenship, something Pettoruti never did. Furthermore, any emigrant who had gained foreign citizenship was eligible for Italian citizenship if he or she returned to Italy. This policy largely grew out of an impending need for soldiers in World War I, and it was coupled with a mandatory conscription law. For more on this, see Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 207.

over a decade, he carefully highlighted his Italian ties throughout his memoir, and he enthusiastically assimilated various Italian techniques of the Renaissance and Modern periods into his artistic output. Ultimately, declaring dual citizenship was unnecessary and even redundant.

Furthermore, Pettoruti's decision may also be read as an act of defiance, indicating his desire to be culturally autonomous, a goal shared by many Latin American artists of his generation. Thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic believe Pettoruti achieved a level of fluidity that makes him difficult to classify. His friend, the Argentine critic Jorge Romero Brest, wrote in 1942, "Emilio Pettoruti eludes all definition based on schools of art, because his indomitable creative energy and his anarchistic individual position...carry him by paths little trod to independent absolute expression."²⁹⁵ Seventeen years later, the Italian writer and architect Alberto Sartoris conceded that, though Pettoruti was certainly influenced by the theories of his time he was also "a champion of cultural independence and individual creativity."²⁹⁶

On the one hand, Pettoruti was fiercely nonpartisan when it came to affiliations with artistic movements [Image 1]. His identification as a self-sufficient loner, as evidenced in his paintings of solitary harlequins and musicians--figures long associated with loneliness in the field of art history by painters from Antoine Watteau to Pablo Picasso--lent him an air of integrity that allowed him to greatly alter the artistic landscape of Argentina. Throughout his seventy-nine years, he was never a member of any artistic movement. While living in Italy, he twice spurned the Futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's invitations to join the Futurists,

²⁹⁵ Jorge Romero Brest, introduction to *Emilio Pettoruti of Argentina*, Latin American Series, No 2. (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1943), 11.

²⁹⁶ See: Alberto Sartoris. *Emilio Pettoruti: Paintings 1914-1959*, Exhibition Catalog: Molton Gallery, London, 1959-60.

and although he engaged in total abstraction later in life, he rebuked the Argentine abstract movements of the 1940s and 50s, like *Arte Concreto Invención* and *Madí*.²⁹⁷ This reluctance to align granted Pettoruti the potential to exist alongside—rather than within—the dominant artistic trends of the era. He was never fully one thing, but always a synthesis of many. He inhabited Homi Bhabha’s “in between” interstitial space.

On the other hand, Pettoruti was never truly an island. He corresponded with numerous Italian and Argentine artists of the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, and for sixteen years between 1930 and 1946, he served as Director of the Museo Provincial del Bellas Artes in La Plata, a post that required him to have collegial relationships with national and international cultural leaders. Yet, in the most comprehensive English-language study on Pettoruti to date, art historian Edward Sullivan defines Pettoruti in exclusively Latin American terms. Though Sullivan briefly surveys Pettoruti’s early years in Italy, he largely focuses on his time in Argentina, arguing that his career mirrors the development of Buenos Aires as an artistic center: “Pettoruti’s significance as a cultural force in Argentina after his return from Europe cannot be denied.”²⁹⁸ Perhaps taking his cues from the artist himself, Sullivan and his co-authors consider Pettoruti an Argentine, not a Italian-Argentine, artist.

With these issues of classification and self-determination in mind, this chapter seeks to re-position Pettoruti—and others of his generation—as a transnational artist, neither fully Argentine nor Italian, but one whose identity rested on Italianità filtered through the Argentine

²⁹⁷ In his autobiography, Pettoruti writes, “Great artists have never needed to sign a proclamation or a theory in order to make art. A painter of genius creates and imposes himself, with neither theories nor declarations of rights.” See Pettoruti, *Un Pintor*, 57 for more on this subject.

²⁹⁸ Edward Sullivan, “V: Return to Argentina” in *Emilio Pettoruti* edited by Edward Sullivan, Nelly Perazzo, Mario H. Gradowczyk and Patricia Artundo (Buenos Aires: Fundación Pettoruti, Asociación Amigos del Museo de Bellas Artes, 2004), 95.

experience. A close reading of his memoir and his work demonstrates that Pettoruti's "Italianness" was an integral component of his self-determined Argentine character. But he wasn't alone in this. He was part of a generation of artists, all first-generation Argentines born to parents from Italy, who built upon the work of the *Generación Ochenta*. While the *Generación* created a national visual language that focused on depicting the land and emphasizing the "civilizing" efforts of white, European-born Argentines on the indigenous populations, Pettoruti and his colleagues—like the artist Xul Solar (1887-1963)—were more interested in questions of pan-American identity, transnational modernism, transatlantic dialogues, and hybridity. Rather than painting the mythical pampas, Pettoruti, Solar, and others portrayed modern life in Buenos Aires, emphasizing the capital's importance as a center for the new, and creating a point of connection with European cities on the other side of the Atlantic.²⁹⁹

In what follows, I use Pettoruti as a case study, examining his background and the first phase of his career, consisting of eleven years of self-immersion in Europe's artistic centers, where he met Solar in 1916 and eventually returned to Buenos Aires with him in 1924. Upon their homecoming, Pettoruti and Solar found a city that was far more cosmopolitan than the one they had left roughly a decade earlier. The simultaneous formation of two cultural forces within months of their reappearance irrevocably altered Argentina's cultural landscape. First, the journal *Martín Fierro*, devoted to the reportage and support of avant-garde Argentine art and literature, was first published in February, 1924. Next, the Asociación Amigos del Arte (Amigos), an avant-garde art space funded by Buenos Aires's cultural elite but accessible to everyone, opened its

²⁹⁹ As Jeane Delaney explains in "Imagining *la raza argentina*" in *Nationalism in the New World* (143-161), Argentina in the 1920s became a foil to countries like Germany, which wanted to keep out foreign influences. Germany ran a guest worker program, but didn't allow citizenship; Argentina made it easy for immigrants to become citizens, in part because it wanted the foreign gene pool and European cultures. This led to a more inclusive notion of nationhood that was not based on ethnicity.

doors on the fashionable Calle Florida in June. Taken together, the return of Pettoruti and Solar, combined with the creation of *Martín Fierro* and *Amigos*, caused a sea-change in Argentina's art world. Suddenly, Buenos Aires was a major stop on lecture tours and exhibition circuits, putting it into an important dialog with major European centers, and highlighting its status as a city full of European transplants. As the Argentine statesman Juan Maria Gutierrez had said in the 1870s, "We, who are the citizens of a country of *immigration*, are affected by those customs and interests. In Paris, everything is French; in Madrid everything is Spanish. To Buenos Aires *everything* has come, is coming, and thank God, will continue to come."³⁰⁰ This generation of artists who rose to prominence in the 1920s agreed with him; they believed in cultural importation and the assimilation of foreign sources, in part because they reflected their own transnational identities.

Pettoruti and Emigrant Colonialism:

Pettoruti's artistic evolution should be examined against the backdrop of the complex geopolitical relationship between Italy and Argentina. As we have seen in earlier chapters, this relationship was shaped by the phenomenon that historian Mark Choate terms "emigrant colonialism," a practice through which the Italian government sought to extend its global influence by supporting emigration in the Americas and elsewhere.³⁰¹ Pettoruti's parents and

³⁰⁰ Gutierrez is quoted in Jorge Myers, "Language, History, and Politics in Argentine Identity, 1840-1880" in Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona, eds. *Nationalism in the New World*, (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 133.

³⁰¹ Choate uses this term to signify the official policies and related private programs that foreign ministries developed in Italian emigrant settlements. One of his main arguments is that, for Italy, colonialism and emigration were intrinsically linked; many officials did not think that a colony could be successful unless Italians populated it. For more information see the first chapter of Choate's, *Emigrant Nation*.

grandparents were among the two million Italians who settled in Argentina between 1876-1915.³⁰² Realizing that emigration could be beneficial, the Italian government passed a number of laws facilitating transatlantic movement while also ensuring that emigrants abroad remained culturally and legally linked to the homeland.³⁰³ As historian Donna Gabaccia explains, these settlers became part of a “greater Italy,” and as they crossed geographic borders, they spread *civiltà italiana*, a global and cosmopolitan culture born in Italy, so it became more important for them to think about their specifically Italian heritage than a broader European culture.³⁰⁴ In 1899, when Pettoruti was seven, the liberal theorist Luigi Einaudi published *A Merchant Prince: A Study in Italian Colonial Expansion*, in which he argues that cultural and economic trade follows from open emigration rather than political domination. He cites Argentina’s capital district as a prime example of an effective emigrant colony, where *civiltà italiana* thrived.³⁰⁵ Throughout his long career and perhaps without even realizing it, Pettoruti became involved in this newfangled form of “free and independent colonization.” Particularly during the 1910s and 20s, he acted as a transatlantic, transnational conduit, bringing various artistic trends from Italy to Argentina (and at times from Argentina to Italy), much as his father and grandfather had done before him.

From the very beginning, Pettoruti was culturally and even economically linked to Italy. Pettoruti’s father, José, ran a business importing Italian oil and wine to La Plata. By ensuring that

³⁰² Donna R. Gabaccia cites these statistics in her excellent study: *Italy’s Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 3. It is important to note that many (over half) of these emigrants did eventually return to Italy or become seasonal migrants.

³⁰³ See: Choate, 10.

³⁰⁴ See: Donna R. Gabaccia, 5.

³⁰⁵ Luigi Einaudi. *Un principe mercante. Studio sulla espansione coloniale italiana* (Turin, 1900), 22-23. Einaudi is translated in Choate, 50.

Italians abroad continued to buy products with the “Made in Italy” designation, José proudly contributed to “emigrant colonialism.” His profession proved useful during the artist’s birth, on October 1, 1892. As Pettoruti recalls, “At my grandfather’s request, the umbilical cord barely cut, I was bathed in one of the most exquisite wines from Italy,” thus consecrating his relationship to the motherland from the outset.³⁰⁶ Whether this anecdote is true or apocryphal, it is significant that, at age seventy-six, Pettoruti chose to relay it at the beginning of his autobiography. By mentioning the Italian wine, Pettoruti deliberately marks himself as a member of greater Italy, accentuating this part of his genealogical makeup and asserting it as a central part of his Argentine identity.

As Pettoruti tells it, he began elementary school at La Plata’s Escuela Italiana, one of thirty-two schools in Argentina still directly funded by the Italian government to ensure that children of immigrants learned to speak “Dante’s language” and engendered a love for Italian culture. As mentioned in previous chapters, these schools sought to prevent assimilation at a symbolic and emotional level; the aim was “not to speak Italian well, but to speak well of Italy.”³⁰⁷ These schools were so popular that, by the time Pettoruti enrolled in 1897, they serviced over 4,000 pupils while roughly 18,000 were stuck on the waiting list. Even public school students were required to learn Italian for at least five hours per month, and by 1916, conversational Italian was an obligatory course in most Argentine schools at a time when Argentine history and geography were elective classes. By comparison, in the United States--

³⁰⁶ Pettoruti, 5. The celebration surrounding Pettoruti’s delivery was so grand that his name and time of birth were not properly filed in the time allotted by Argentine law, causing his birth certificate to read October 3, two days after his actual birthdate.

³⁰⁷ Choate discusses these developments on pp. 119-24.

home to even more Italian immigrants—in the name of national cohesion, teachers placed greater emphasis on American history and culture than on foreign languages.³⁰⁸

Another constant reminder of Italian heritage was Pettoruti's maternal grandfather, José Casaburi. Since Pettoruti was the eldest of twelve children, he often sought respite from domestic conflict at his maternal grandparents' nearby home. Casaburi had moved with his wife and daughter, Pettoruti's mother Ana, from Polla, Italy to La Plata, Argentina, in the early 1880s, just as the city was being constructed and many Italians were flocking to its spacious and affordable streets. La Plata was founded to act as the regional capital of Buenos Aires Province when the city of Buenos Aires was turned into the federal capital in 1882. La Plata was designed rationally to emblemize order and modernity by the urban planner Pedro Benoit.³⁰⁹ Pettoruti spent his first twenty-one years there. He writes, "Above all there is one [city] I feel deeply attached to, imbued with memories that are very dear to me; it is La Plata, my country's youngest city, a square urban plan crossed by open diagonals, situated on an endless plain on the banks of the widest river in the world. ... The colors and forms that I observed as a child I took along wherever I went."³¹⁰ In particular, he recalls the city's verdant squares and its eucalyptus forest in the midst of the central park. Yet, it was La Plata's wide diagonal boulevards, based off of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's Paris, which provide breathing space and earned La Plata the

³⁰⁸ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 119-24.

³⁰⁹ La Plata has been considered a modern city even since it was awarded the title "City of the Future" at the Universal Exposition of 1889. It was the first Latin American city to install electric street lighting in 1884, and the University of La Plata, founded in 1897, is one of the oldest and most renowned in the nation. It also boasts many important buildings by an international cast of architects: the Neo-Gothic cathedral is the largest in Argentina, and the Casa Curutchet, Le Corbusier's only structure in Latin America, was built in La Plata for an established Dr. Curutchet. For more on the history of the city, see: David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987).

³¹⁰ Pettoruti, 5.

nickname “la ciudad de las diagonales” (city of diagonals), that truly lingered in the artist’s mind. Perhaps these avenues unconsciously inspired the slanting lines that would populate both his late and early compositions, or were even an intentional reference.

Pettoruti began painting when his grandfather enrolled him in La Plata’s Academia Provincial de Bellas Artes (Academy of Fine Arts) at age fourteen. In 1909, the Academia Provincial was taken over by the Italo-Argentine artist Atilio Boveri, who had recently returned from Florence. Boveri encouraged students to draw from the Classical and Renaissance casts in the school’s collection, a common practice in cities that lacked authentic antiquities. Pettoruti was especially adept at drawing and painting from observation, and this skill soon gained him recognition and support from his superiors. While he was copying Greco-Roman examples, he also began sketching his sister Carolina and other local figures. In 1911, when Pettoruti was eighteen, he was granted a small exhibition of drawings--mostly portraits and caricatures--in a La Plata gallery. He received generally positive reviews and was praised for his hard work, “confident lines, and precise facture” in the daily Spanish language newspaper, *El Argentino*. The unnamed critic went on to note that the artist “dominates the pencil” as an astute observer, but sometimes verges on caricature by repeating certain types throughout the exhibition.³¹¹

While he studied drawing from the world around him, Pettoruti also began seeking out newer artistic trends emerging from Italy.³¹² In 1910, he encountered Impressionism, particularly as it was practiced by the Argentine artists Martín Malharro and Fernando Fader, both of whom exhibited at the *Exposición Internacional del Arte del Centenario* (International Exposition of

³¹¹ “Exposición Pettoruti,” *El Argentino*, July 19, 1911. This review and others from the same exhibition are in the Pettoruti Foundation archives.

³¹² Edward Sullivan and others chart Pettoruti’s development in Argentina before heading to Italy. For more information, see: Sullivan, *Emilio Pettoruti*, 30-31.

Art of the Centenary), which celebrated the hundredth anniversary of Argentine independence from Spain. That same year, the journal *El Diario Español* disseminated Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's recently published "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," throughout Spain and Argentina. The manifesto disavowed tradition and called for a new, revolutionary form of art in keeping with a modern, industrialized Italy.³¹³ It soon became obvious that Pettoruti would need to study abroad, and with Boveri's help, he obtained a government-funded travel scholarship. Although many Latin American artists elected to study in Paris or Madrid, Pettoruti chose the country of his parents and grandparents, his former teachers at the Escuela Italiana, and his current mentor at the Academia. He left for Florence on August 7, 1913, an event that was heavily publicized by the local Spanish and Italian language press.³¹⁴

First Atlantic Crossing: Moving to Italy

During his early days abroad, Pettoruti immersed himself in Italy's unparalleled artistic heritage, and this became the lens through which he identified with the country, not its current state of economic backwardness and inferiority with regard to other European nations. His initial days in Florence were filled with wonder. He recalls: "The city itself was a work of art and its monuments and palaces entranced me. My first formal visit was Lorenzo the Magnificent's tomb, where I stumbled upon Michelangelo's marble blocks. ... I was overcome by emotion, for

³¹³ Marinetti first published his manifesto in *Le Figaro*, a French daily newspaper. As Marjorie Perloff and others have noted, this was an interesting choice. By publishing the foundational manifesto of an Italian movement in a French newspaper, Marinetti was signaling an attack on France's dominance of the modern art world. Furthermore, by publishing it in a newspaper rather than an art journal, he was announcing it to a wider readership and attempting to merge art and life. For more on Marinetti's strategies, see: Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, (University of Chicago: 2003).

³¹⁴ Since Pettoruti's scholarship was government-funded, it was covered by local newspapers, and since the artist opted to study in Italy, this choice was heavily reported in Italian language publications like *Il Giornale d'Italia*, and *La Patria degli Italiani*. All pertinent articles are in the archives at the Pettoruti Foundation in Buenos Aires.

it was the first time in my short life that I stood face to face with the originals.”³¹⁵ [Image 2]

1913-14 were formative years both artistically and socially. Though he confessed that, “shyness had always plagued” him, Pettoruti quickly inserted himself in the local expatriate art scene, meeting other Argentine artists, such as Arturo Dresco, Pablo Curatella-Manes, and Domingo Candia, all of whom were also bilingual, living in Rome, and identified as transnational. He also came into contact with major Italian figures, like the Futurist painter, Giacomo Balla. Photographs from 1914, which he carefully labeled and sent home to his mother, show him grinning broadly, even mischievously, next to his contemporaries.³¹⁶ Other shots of him posing throughout the city, particularly at the Piazza della Signoria, show a handsome and cosmopolitan figure, self-assured and comfortable leaning against a Michelangelo-like centaur sculpture. [Images 3 and 4]

Pettoruti sent photographs and news not only to his mother, but also to Spanish and Italian newspapers in La Plata as well. Since he was in Europe on a government-funded scholarship, his artistic progress was ostensibly of interest to the local community. As he was exposed to myriad influences, he sent news of his encounters to publications back in La Plata, including *El Argentino*, where he was frequently featured in a column titled “Notas de Arte.” In so doing, he not only fostered cultural links between Italy and Argentina, but acted as a tireless self-promoter, maintaining his celebrity and a narrative that he was progressing while abroad. In choosing to send these updates to local newspapers rather than art journals, he was likely mimicking F. T. Marinetti’s use of the mass media to reach the widest possible audience, as well

³¹⁵ Pettoruti, 17.

³¹⁶ Nearly all of Pettoruti’s personal photographs are housed and cataloged by the Fundación Pettoruti, located at 794 Calle Paraguay, in Buenos Aires. The Foundation was extremely generous in allowing me to look through all of the artist’s personal materials from the 1910s, 20s, and 30s.

as his penchant for exaggeration. In an article from February of 1914, *El Argentino* reported (with the artist as its source), “Pettoruti’s first works have been accepted in the artistic circles of Florence,” when in truth, this would not be borne out for at least two years.³¹⁷

Pettoruti’s letters home were self-congratulatory (in an effort to prove that his scholarship was well deserved) but not complete fabrications. His first six months in Italy were productive, not least because of his ability to digest information and incorporate diverse styles and techniques into his own work. The eclecticism of the art he confronted—and the dialectic between tradition and modernity—in Italy is reflected in the heterogeneity of the work he produced. As art historians Edward Sullivan and Nelli Perazzo contend, “The significance of the impact of Italy as an encyclopedic source of artistic inspiration cannot be stressed enough in any assessment of Pettoruti’s career.”³¹⁸ Upon his arrival in Florence, Pettoruti began making frequent visits to the Brancacci Chapel in the Church of Del Carmine to paint Masaccio’s frescoes, to Santa Croce to see Giotto’s work and to the Hall of Prints and Drawings at the Uffizi, where he obtained a special permit to copy works by Fra Angelico [Images 5 and 6]. He identified a proto-modernist impulse in Renaissance masters who reduced painting to a legible system. “More than once,” he wrote, “I told myself that, had they been born in our century, they would have been avant-garde artists.”³¹⁹

Throughout October and November of 1913, Pettoruti apprenticed with a mosaicist, a stained glass artisan, and a fresco painter, always exchanging his time and labor for free

³¹⁷ “Notas de Arte: los becados bonaerenses,” *El Argentino*, February 19, 1914. This article and similar ones are located at the Pettoruti Foundation.

³¹⁸ Sullivan and Perazzo also argue that the influence of Italy and Italian sources carries throughout Pettoruti’s entire career, see pp. 40-41.

³¹⁹ Pettoruti, 33.

instruction.³²⁰ The following spring, he visited Ravenna and Venice, where he saw medieval and Byzantine mosaics, and observed the manner in which light reflected off the tesserae as he moved around in front of them. “Every stone or glass fragment is equivalent to one or more brushstrokes...and the light that enveloped the work produced an impression of change whenever the spectator moved about.”³²¹ Upon returning from this trip, he began making his own free-standing mosaics on iron stretchers with wire netting, thick cement, and colored enamel. Two of the resulting works, *Primavera* and *Meditación*, were sent to Buenos Aires to be exhibited at the National Salon of 1914, and today they hang in the National University of La Plata.³²² [Images 7 and 8] Perhaps because they were inspired by the mosaics of the sixth century Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, with its curved walls and domed ceilings, Pettoruti’s mosaics undulate—their surfaces are not flat, but instead comprised of varied topography.

Sullivan contends that Pettoruti’s attraction to mosaics expresses his inherent interest in fragmentation, but these works also show his fascination with light and motion.³²³ His mosaics are full of concavities and convexities, making light dance on their surfaces as the viewer passes. At a time when Pettoruti sought to emulate the crisp clarity of Quattrocento painters, he brought clean lines to an inherently messy and fractured medium. While the Byzantine mosaics at San Vitale are busy and confrontational--the Emperor Justinian and his army stare down the viewer--Pettoruti’s are serene, each showing a single seated female, quietly communing with nature, the

³²⁰ Ibid, 26.

³²¹ Ibid, 44.

³²² Pettoruti’s mosaics were covered in the Argentine press throughout the 1910s. In 1919, *El Argentino* published a long article on these works, defending the artist’s lengthy and expensive government-funded trip by arguing that Pettoruti was mastering decorative arts that can only be learned in Italy. For more, see: “La obra de un artista platense en Italia, Emilio Pettoruti y sus mosaicos,” *El Argentino*, November 10, 1919.

³²³ Sullivan, 42.

curves of her body mimicked in the contours of the mosaic itself. The flatness of his compositions works against the three-dimensionality of the mosaic's surfaces. In *Primavera*, for instance, the sitter's hand nearly becomes one with the grass upon which she lounges, and in *Meditación*, the figure's arms are barely distinguishable from her torso and legs. This intentionally flattened pictorial space and anti-naturalistic palette (mountains are never this kind of cobalt blue), separates Pettoruti from his sources, making him as a modernist intent on emphasizing the reality of the picture plane and the autonomous communicative power of color and form. Thus he underscored the secular religion of nationalism or at least the non-religious aspect of Byzantine mosaic techniques. This undermines his occasional claim that, "the only masters that guided my artistic career...were the great Italian artists of the Quattrocento and the Etruscans," and suggests that he was inspired by other sources as well.³²⁴

Brushes with Futurism:

While absorbing the work of artists from centuries past, Pettoruti was also confronting recently-published monographs on three major postimpressionists: Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. And, fortuitously, while leafing through books and magazines at Ferante Gonnelli's Libreria Gonnelli, he stumbled upon *Lacerba*, a biweekly arts and culture journal edited by Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici, which published Futurist writings and

³²⁴ Pettoruti says this in his memoir, p. 54. The artist's connection to Quattrocento painters was noted by critics before he wrote about it in his 1968 memoir. In 1959, he had his first show in London, and J.P. Hodin, of the Molton Gallery wrote "What [Pettoruti] has aimed for throughout his career, though unconsciously perhaps, is art as absolutely defined and classic as that of the Florentine Renaissance in an idiom which is of our age." See J.P. Hodin's Foreward in: *Paintings 1914-1959, Emilio Pettoruti*, (London: Molton Gallery, 1959). This blend of new and old will become a recurring theme of Pettoruti's own writing as well as that of his supporters. Yet, it should also be noted that Pettoruti's interest in mosaics predates a return to wall painting in the 1920s and 30s in Mexico, the United States, and in Italy.

art. He was especially captivated by Issue 18, published on September 15, 1913, with an abstract drawing by Carlo Carrá and a reproduction of Umberto Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Cyclist*, which depicts a cyclist moving rapidly through space, muscles pulsing and back hunched, and his legs a blur of curves and vectors [Image 9]. "What an exciting discovery!" he muses in his memoirs, "So much audacity seemed incredible to me."³²⁵

When the *Esposizione Futurista Lacerba* opened in Florence on November 30, 1913, Pettoruti attended the inaugural event and experienced an almost violent response: "It was the first time in my life that I was exposed to avant-garde work...I left the exhibition with a splitting headache and experienced a spiritual turmoil difficult to explain. It was as though everything were spinning inside."³²⁶ Upon one of his many subsequent visits to the exhibition, he met Marinetti, who invited him to the "Grande Serata Futurista," an anarchic event held at the Verdi Theater on December 12, 1913. The performers aimed to startle and amuse the audience through a variety of tactics: littering the ground with dust, causing people to sneeze; selling multiple tickets for the same seat and encouraging people to argue over it; throwing garbage and food in all directions. Pettoruti later described the event with equal parts disgust and delight:

I don't believe I have ever witnessed such an uproar, nor seen anything that absurd. ... Students, workers, professors, officials, bourgeois, aristocrats, perfectly level-headed when working at the office or resting at home, had become a mad pack of dogs...Everyone was standing, hurling abuse from the balconies, boxes or stalls. They whistled and uttered angry curses, while tomatoes, cabbage, eggs and cooked noodles were flung onto the stage with the ferocity of a machine gun's rattle. It was chaos. I watched the mouths of the orators move with boiling rage, yet could not hear a single word they were saying.³²⁷

³²⁵ Pettoruti discusses his first encounter with *Lacerba* in his memoirs, p. 22, and also in Sullivan, p. 217-18.

³²⁶ Pettoruti, 29.

³²⁷ Ibid, 31.

Pettoruti was thrilled by the energy of the movement and even identified some of his works in this period as “futurist.” Yet, when Marinetti asked him to join the Futurists in 1914, he declined. When Pettoruti reflected upon the invitation years later, he wrote: “I did not agree with most of Marinetti’s methods, [like] the constant need for innovation...I wanted to conciliate the old and the new, to create quality painting expressing the new times through fresh and solid forms....I did not feel Futurism fulfilled my aspirations.”³²⁸

This rejection may have been somewhat particular to the Futurist invitation, but as noted earlier, Pettoruti was generally put off by the notion of signing a manifesto, especially one that was so jingoistic given that he identified with two nations. Though Marinetti was not affiliated with the Fascist party in 1914 when he invited Pettoruti to become a Futurist, and Mussolini did not emerge as a formidable force until 1919, Pettoruti wrote his memoirs with the benefit of hindsight, well after Marinetti’s Fascist ties were well-documented. Marinetti, in his *Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), followed by the artists Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá, Luigi Russolo and Gino Severini, in their *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* (1910), argued that modern art must join with modern technology in order to strengthen Italy. One of the reasons for their war on “pathetic” and “fossilized” traditions was their belief that the nation’s history was preventing it from becoming a legitimate cultural rival to France.

Even though he failed to sign the manifesto, Pettoruti shared many of the Futurist painters’ aesthetic interests, namely abstraction, the representation of speed and movement, expressive color, and the play of word and image in collage. At the same time, he was also deeply engaged with the findings of Cubism, which he discovered through various art journals,

³²⁸ Pettoruti, 54-65.

before eventually traveling to Paris in 1923.³²⁹ His central focus between 1914 and 1915 was the depiction of light, which served as both common ground and a point of departure from the Futurists, who represented electricity as a symbol of modernity and used light to dematerialize form and show the effects of speed. Pettoruti instead painted what he called “autonomous” light, which reveals the self-referential nature of the picture plane. “Logic told me that if natural light suited forms in nature, that same light would seem artificial when applied to invented forms,” he wrote. “It was necessary to invent autonomous light that matched the autonomous object: the light of the invented painting.”³³⁰

Pettoruti’s approach may be related to vision problems which apparently plagued him throughout early adulthood and his first years in Italy. His eyes were extremely sensitive to light, and for that reason, it became an unusually powerful force in his daily life. Even in childhood, Pettoruti considered light more mysterious and enticing than darkness, and it became a focus of his work throughout his entire career.³³¹ Furthermore, Pettoruti’s repetition of the word “autonomy” when discussing light may be linked to his longstanding preoccupation with independence—a way of stylistically distinguishing his work from that of the Futurist painters. As Nelly Perazzo explains, rather than dissolving light or showing it penetrate objects, Pettoruti

³²⁹ Pettoruti had initially planned to go to Paris in 1914, a few months after arriving in Florence. First, he delayed his trip because he loved Florence and didn’t want to leave. He wrote that Florence “held a special attraction for me. I was drawn to its history, its gentle tranquility, and truly believed there was no better place to study.” Then, World War I broke out, and he was not able to go. Italy did not enter the war until May 22, 1915, so he stayed in neutral territory. For more, see: Pettoruti, 21.

³³⁰ Ibid, 34-5.

³³¹ Pettoruti discusses his fascination with light and the sun many times throughout his memoirs, but he wrote about it most towards the end of his book. “Mystery exists in light,” he wrote. And later, he attempted to capture light “with the sun as an *active form*,” a project that took him many decades to complete, which he worked on later in his career even through the 1960s. Quoted, pp. 194-5. For more examples of paintings centering on light, see: Fèvre, Fermín. *Emilio Pettoruti*. (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo, 2000).

paints it as a tangible solid, much like Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla.³³² This focus on luminosity comes through in his abstract charcoal compositions of 1914, *Armonia-movimento-spacio*, *Dinamica del viento* [Images 10, 11], which look very similar to Balla's *Speeding Car and Light* from the same year [Image 12]. But in *Composizione futurista* (1914) [Image 13], Pettoruti's opaque bands of white light cut across yellow, blue, and purple shapes, becoming solid rings, as opposed to Balla's translucent white layered on top of other colors, leaving the shades underneath still visible.

Pettoruti's spirals and vectors are also central to his early cubist collages of 1914, in which he responded to stylistic innovations by Paris-based artists like Pablo Picasso, Gino Severini, and Juan Gris, who he likely saw reproduced in *Lacerba*. Significantly, all of these artists were Spaniards or Italians living in Paris, making them expatriate transplants, much like Pettoruti himself. In *Città-Paese* of 1914, [Image 14] collaged postcards, like one of the Ponte Vecchio in the upper right, are employed to piece together a composition of upended houses and confused perspective using concrete planes of white light and tan shade. The work is indebted to Picasso and Braque's early Cubist landscapes, such as Picasso's *Houses on a Hill, Horta de Ebro* (1909), but they both modulate light and shadow in a more naturalistic manner. In fact, the composition is more similar to Juan Gris's *Landscape with Houses at Céret* (1913) [Image 15]. Though Pettoruti's color palette is far more restrained—perhaps a result of seeing Gris's work as a black and white reproduction—the extreme diagonals (none of which are parallel), jumbled buildings, intermingling of sky and structure, and solid white light are all reminiscent of Gris.

³³² Pettoruti considered Balla, who he met in Rome in 1915, the “only true painter among the Futurists.” He respects Balla more than others because he is the only one who was established enough to give up a more stable, traditional path in order to become a Futurist. Balla told Pettoruti in 1915 that “the secret of happiness consists in ‘facing adversity with courage.’” (Quoted in Pettoruti, 65) It seems that Pettoruti takes this to heart later in life.

In *El Sifón (Lacerba)* of 1915 [Image 16], we again see a solid shaft of light cutting diagonally through the siphon and glass on the left side of the composition, illuminating the collaged clipping in the background. Though many artists, such as Picasso and Gris, frequently cut out the title of mass circulation dailies like *Le Journal* (sometimes shortening it to read “Le Jou”—the game) or *Le Figaro*, Pettoruti stuck with the art and literature journal *Lacerba*, which acted as a Futurist mouthpiece. Incorporating clippings of *Lacerba* situated Pettoruti squarely in the realm of high culture rather than politics, but it also allowed Pettoruti to make reference to the Futurists without joining the movement, yet another example of him existing beside, rather than inside, a particular group or designation.³³³ In a rare example from the spring of 1914, *Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Vieux Marc* [Image 17], Picasso also included *Lacerba* in his work, and this may have been the inspiration behind Pettoruti’s *El Sifón*. Both works use angled light (drawn at nearly the same angle, no less) to highlight the journal’s title, and both look simultaneously down and head on at a table, while also referencing the space behind it. Picasso uses wallpaper to place us indoors, while Pettoruti incorporates a postcard of Florence’s Duomo, situating us outside at a café or next to a window overlooking the city.

Though he loved Florence, Pettoruti left for Sicily to avoid being conscripted when Italy entered the war in 1915. There, his presence went unrecorded, while Italian men between the ages of 18-40 were subject to the military draft, and many Argentine men born to Italian parents fought in the war. For instance, the Italo-Argentine artist, Lucio Fontana (1899-1968),

³³³ The Futurists were extremely jingoistic, as evidenced by the thundering language of their many manifestoes. Marinetti, in his *Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), followed by the artists Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá, Luigi Russolo and Gino Severini, in their *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* (1910), all discuss how modern art must combine with modern technology to strengthen Italy. One of their goals was to wage war on “pathetic” and “fossilized” traditions, which they believed were weighing down the nation and preventing it from becoming a chief cultural force that could rival France. All Futurist manifestos are available and translated in: Umbro Apolonio, ed. *Futurist Manifestos*, (New York: Viking Press), 1973.

voluntarily enlisted. Fontana was born in Rosario, Argentina, but spent his early years in Milan, and he held dual citizenship. Letters reveal that he felt much more connected to Italy than Argentina throughout his adult life, and this was reflected in his decision to fight during World War I.³³⁴ Conversely, Pettoruti avoided the draft at all costs and was later able to get a medical exemption because of his vision problems, allowing him to evade combat entirely.³³⁵ He did not want to fight, not only because he was a pacifist, but also because he did not completely identify as an Italian national.

Meeting Xul Solar:

A year later, Pettoruti was back in Florence, where he struck up a close and enduring friendship with another Argentine expatriate, Oscar Agustín Schulz Solari, who would become Pettoruti's most ardent supporter in Europe and Argentina [Image 18]. The two men met the day that Solari arrived in Florence from Paris, in July 1916, and their lives remained professionally and personally intertwined for at least the next decade. Born in Buenos Aires province in 1887 to an Italian mother and a Latvian father, Solari had been brought up with an array of cultural influences. He was a polyglot: he learned Italian from his mother, German and Russian from his father, and French, Latin and English in school. From his grandfather, the composer Alexander Schulz, Solari had inherent musical talent, and he quickly became an adept violinist, pianist,

³³⁴ Tellingly, in any database, Pettoruti is always listed as an Argentine artist, while Fontana is listed as an Argentine and Italian artist. For more on Fontana and his artistic and political ties to Italy, see: Emily Braun, "The Juggler: Fontana's Art Under Fascism," in Iria Candela, ed. *Lucio Fontana On the Threshold* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018).

³³⁵ Children of Italian citizens were legally considered Italian, even if born outside of the country's geographic borders, so they could still be drafted if they were in the country. Explained by Pettoruti, 50.

organist, and zither player, and he frequently referred to himself as a musician in his journal.³³⁶ For just two years, between 1905-7, Solari enrolled in architecture classes.³³⁷ These early forays into language, music and architecture would continually inform Solari's art production, making him idiosyncratic and difficult to pin down, especially since he was never trained as a visual artist, and he is sometimes seen as existing outside of typical constructs of modern art. Xul himself expressed fears of dabbling in everything while mastering nothing. In late January 1912, Solari wrote anxiously that, "two arts are one too many, that one should redirect oneself...that I should practice one art and earn my money with it.... In a word, if I don't change at heart, I'll be a complete failure. I should remember this and strengthen myself through work."³³⁸

Perhaps it was his fear of failure that compelled Solari to leave Argentina for Europe on April 5, 1912, when he boarded an English cargo ship with a second class ticket and disembarked in London. Patricia Artundo posits that Solari's Atlantic crossing grew out of a sense of crisis, but also a desire to fit into a more global community of creators. He felt a need to have a greater understanding of the world outside of Argentina and Latin America, so he set out on a twelve-year-long journey through Europe's artistic centers.³³⁹ After arriving in London, he lingered for only a few days before traveling first to Paris, then to Turin, where he stayed for a few months and encountered a copy of the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, published by Vasily Kandinsky

³³⁶ Patricia Artundo, "Working Papers: An Introduction to a Xul Solar Retrospective," *Xul Solar: Visiones y Revelaciones*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA, Colección Constantini, 2005), 191.

³³⁷ There are many excellent sources on Xul Solar's biography. A particularly useful one is Teresa Tedin's "Biographical and Artistic Chronology" at the end of Patricia M. Artundo, *Xul Solar: Visiones y Revelaciones*, pp. 244-251.

³³⁸ Oscar Alejandro Schulz Solari, unpublished diary entry titled "End of January 1912." Solar's unpublished writings are held by the Fundacion Pan Klub. Parts of them have been translated by Patricia M. Artundo and appear in "Working Papers: An Introduction to a Xul Solar Retrospective," pp. 191-199. Even after writing this, throughout his career as a painter, Xul continued to dabble in other things, always having a hard time restricting himself.

³³⁹ Artundo, 192.

and Franz Marc a year earlier in 1911. This reading reassured him greatly, for it showed him that he had been working in much the same vein as Kandinsky, who used expressive colors, linked painting to both music and spirituality, and approached complete abstraction. He wrote to his father, “I’m extremely satisfied as I see how I, all on my own, without any external inspiration... have worked along the lines of what will be the dominant trend of higher art in the future.”³⁴⁰

A few months later, in April of 1913, Solari’s mother and aunt (to whom he refers in his diary as his “mamas”) arrived in London to accompany the artist on his European adventure. Together they traveled between London, Paris, and Zoagli--the mamas’ hometown--for roughly a year. Solari then set out for a nine-month sojourn in Paris throughout much of 1915. While there, he began creating watercolors in an Expressionist style; using non-mimetic colors, floating figures, and agitated brushwork, Solari seems to have been inspired by early Kandinsky works from 1908-10. While studying this Russian-born German transplant, Solari became associated with a group of Italians, Spanish and Argentines living in Paris, including Picasso, Amadeo Modigliani, and Argentine artists Luis Falcini and Alfredo Guttero.³⁴¹ Of course, it helped that they could all converse in Spanish and Italian together, but these men also bonded over their shared expatriate experience.

Though he socialized regularly with these men, Solari also engaged in activities to demonstrate his uniqueness as a Latin American, such as meandering through town in a striped

³⁴⁰ This letter is quoted in Tedin’s “Chronology”, 243. Xul also shared an interest in theosophy with Kandinsky, but he tended more towards occultism. While in London in 1912-13, he got in touch with Austin Osman Spare, a painter and leading figure of English occultism, who introduced Solar to the Astrum Argentinum (Silver Star) doctrine, founded by Aleister Crowley in 1909. Later, while in Germany in 1923, he met Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the Anthroposophical Society. He also thought about designing non-denominational religious spaces, which he called “cathedrals,” and he wanted to stage mystical puppet-theater for adults.

³⁴¹ Artundo, 192.

sky-blue and white poncho, reminiscent of the Argentine flag.³⁴² To most, Solari was an enigma. It wasn't until he traveled to Florence in July of 1916 and met Pettoruti that Solari found a figure who would act as both a creative partner and a true platonic companion. For both, going to Europe symbolized a return to the land of their parents and yet an experience that heightened their awareness of their shared "Americanness." Finding each other opened up new expressive possibilities that highlighted their difference while also integrating elements of European modernism. Almost immediately, they recognized that for both of them, "Italianness" was encapsulated in their Argentine identity. They began discussing how they might revolutionize the Argentine art world by bringing elements of Europe with them when they eventually returned home.

In 1917, with Pettoruti's prompting, Solari adopted the pseudonym Xul Solar, and by 1918, he used it nearly exclusively. The element of light, once again, was a key factor in the choice of this sobriquet: Xul sounds like Solari's middle name Schulz, but it is also an inverse of the Latin word for light, "lux," and Solar is both the artist's surname without the final letter and a reference to the sun.³⁴³ Playing with language was nothing new for Xul, a polyglot who was already interested in the indigenous languages of Guaraní and Nahuatl. In the late 1910s, upset by the fact that many Latin Americans abroad stopped speaking Spanish, he began to use an invented language, Neocriollo, which combined Spanish with elements of these indigenous

³⁴² Ibid, 243.

³⁴³ For more on the derivation of his name and his first interactions with Pettoruti, see: Jacqueline Barnitz, *The "Martinferristas" and Argentine Art of the Twenties*, (Ph.D. Dissertation: City University of New York, 1986), pp. 351-7.

languages, but in a way that was easy for Spanish-speakers to comprehend.³⁴⁴ In order to stay connected to their homeland, Xul and Pettoruti corresponded nearly exclusively in Neocriollo between 1917 and their eventual return to Buenos Aires in 1924.

During this seven year period, they joined forces in a number of exhibitions throughout Europe's major art centers. Though Pettoruti was usually the featured artist, Solar's connections and support were integral to Pettoruti's development and growing reputation. Pettoruti showed his admiration for Solar by painting him [Image 19], and Solar showed his admiration for Pettoruti by writing about his work. Solar's portrait starred in Pettoruti's 1916 solo show at the Libreria Gonnelli, the Florentine bookstore where Pettoruti first encountered *Lacerba*. This exhibition, the artist's first one-man showcase in Europe, included thirty-five works: nine drawings, fifteen paintings, and eight mosaics. They sold poorly, prompting Pettoruti and Solar to relocate to Milan, where there was a better art market, especially for modern paintings.

Along the way, they stopped in Rome, where they met the painter and collector Mario Broglio, and his friend, Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), who had lived throughout Greece, Italy, and France, making him an exemplary European transnational. At the time, de Chirico was working in a representational style that highlighted the mysterious qualities of objects and questioned the solidity of classicism. Though many of his paintings from the 1910s take place in vaguely Italian settings—with running arcades, and neoclassical architecture—they also include objects displaced from their normal contexts—bananas and classical sculptures on a rooftop, for

³⁴⁴ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 88. As Montgomery explains, one of the key elements of Neocriollo is that Q becomes K, so the word *que* (what) becomes *ke*, and *aquí* (here) becomes *aki*, for example. In a letter dated April 1917, Xul complained to Pettoruti: "It bothers me a great deal that there are not creoles here and that if there are they no longer speak Spanish."

example——confusing lighting, and multiple perspectives [Image 20].³⁴⁵ Known as *Pittura Metafisica* (metaphysical painting), this style both connected to and undermined traditional Italian Renaissance painting.

Though the term “metaphysical” historically refers to another world, a world after death, or experiences that extend beyond the senses, art historian Keala Jewell argues that, in the work of de Chirico, “metaphysical” evokes the Mediterranean tradition of culturally produced imaginary worlds.³⁴⁶ She explains that, for de Chirico, the world was constructed by humans, and artists must frame it so as to highlight its strangeness. As de Chirico himself wrote, “Art... constantly shows us the way and it counsels us more than ever the *framing*...of the universe. The sky must be closed into the rectangles of windows and the arches of city porticoes so that we may wisely draw milk from the vast mammaries of the traitorous sky.”³⁴⁷ De Chirico often employed this strategy of framing vast nature with manmade structures—or even turning nature into architecture—as a way of transforming and mastering it. Conversely, when he placed manmade objects like pencils, artichokes, and classical busts in past times and nonsensical

³⁴⁵ Due to his enigmatic approach to realism, De Chirico became a major source of inspiration for both the Surrealists and the Neue Sachlichkeit painters in Germany. The Surrealists discovered de Chirico through André Breton, who first saw the artist’s painting *The Child’s Brain* hanging in Paul Guillaume’s gallery, in 1918. Intrigued, he jumped off the bus to get a closer look and found what he believed to be a “model for painting dreams.” Breton and Paul Eluard soon began to collect early de Chirico’s and Eluard even traveled to Rome in 1923 to court de Chirico and purchase paintings from the artist himself. For more information on de Chirico’s complicated relationship with the Surrealists see: Karen Kundig, “Giorgio de Chirico, Surrealism and Neoromanticism” in *Giorgio de Chirico and America*, pp 97-106. For a more thorough history of de Chirico forgeries see Paolo Baldacci and Wiland Schmied, *Giorgio De Chirico: Betraying the Muse, De Chirico and the Surrealists*, (London: Finarte, 1994).

³⁴⁶ For more on De Chirico’s use of this term, see: Keala Jewell, *The Art of Enigma: The de Chirico Brothers & the Politics of Modernism*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2004). In particular, Chapter 1, “Metaphysics as Culture,” is useful here. Jewell’s approach to the de Chirico brothers is important, since she studies their desire to salvage Mediterranean myth and history, and looks at how they relate to contemporary Italian cultural politics. She explains that de Chirico felt humans must believe that alternative worlds are not distant, but nearby, and also that artists must heighten the human experience of the world through framing.

³⁴⁷ Giorgio de Chirico and Fagiolo dell’ Arco, *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, 73, Quoted in Jewell, 37.

contexts, he did it to make them seem enigmatic, and hence, metaphysical. “Metaphysical art calls into question our ability to know any object on the basis of mere appearances,” writes Emily Braun.³⁴⁸ In de Chirico’s compositions, the object becomes so estranged from its context that it is incapable of emanating any graspable meaning.

In 1918, Broglio founded and edited the art journal *Valori Plastici* (Plastic Values), published in Rome between November of 1918 and early 1922. Published in both Italian and French, *Valori Plastici* covered new developments in both countries and was one of Pettoruti’s main sources for new tendencies in French art, especially the particular Cubism championed by art historian and collector Léonce Rosenberg, including artists like Braque, Picasso, Gris, Albert Gleizes, and Fernand Leger.³⁴⁹ Broglio and his writers also promoted *Pittura Metafisica* and they turned against more challenging modern movements, like Futurism. Unlike the Futurists and others who aimed to bury the past, *Valori Plastici* writers, along with de Chirico and his adherents, believed that tradition—or classical subject matter—could be reinterpreted and put in to dialogue with the present.³⁵⁰ This concept deeply impacted Pettoruti, encouraging him to once again look back at the roots of his Italian cultural patrimony, reassessing the balance, clear

³⁴⁸ Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics Under Fascism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 78.

³⁴⁹ Rosenberg was an early and ardent advocate of Cubism, beginning in 1911, and lasting throughout the 1910s, 20s, and 30s. He first discovered the style through the Salon des Independants and Picasso and Braque’s exclusive dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. By the outbreak of World War I, he had amassed quite a collection, which he began to show in his gallery, Galerie de L’Effort Moderne, in 1917, around the time of the founding of *Valori Plastici*. For more on Rosenberg, see the “Léonce Rosenberg Papers: Correspondence Relating to Cubism,” in the Museum of Modern Art Archives.

³⁵⁰ *Valori Plastici* published on a wide array of artists and topics, ranging from Byzantine painting to Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Titian, as well as developments in African, Chinese and Mexican art, and a series on modern art from the 19th century to the latest developments in Cubism and Expressionism. For more, see: P. Fossati: *Valori Plastici*, 1918–22 (Turin, 1981).

perspective, and cold clarity of quattrocento painters, and the flatness of their Byzantine forebears.

As Pettoruti and Solar moved from one city to the next, their styles evolved, and they continued to experiment with a variety of techniques they saw around them. Curiously enough, while Pettoruti was assimilating various modern European strategies--collage, cubist faceting, Futurist light penetration, de Chirico's framing—his subject matter turned increasingly Argentine. No one, including Pettoruti himself, has commented on this development, but it may have been a result of his Argentine identity being highlighted while living in Europe, coupled with his close association with Xul and their shared desire to return to Argentina and forge a new movement there. In *Mi Ventana in Florencia* (My Window in Florence) of 1917 [Image 21]—which takes much inspiration from de Chirico's skewed perspectives and “framed” skies—the masthead from an Argentine newspaper *La Nación* (which his mother regularly sent him from Argentina), and an ad for *Gath & Chaves*, a department store in Buenos Aires, are pasted onto the left side of the canvas.

In *Bailarines* (Dancers) of 1918 [Image 22], we see Tango dancers, the quintessential symbol of modern, cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, for the first time in Pettoruti's oeuvre. This composition blends both modern and classical elements in an idiosyncratic manner.³⁵¹ The dancers are built from synthetic cubist splinters, making them appear flat; at the same time, the checkered pattern on the ballroom floor lends the painting the illusion of depth, even while the perspective is very steep, recalling Cézanne. The dancers appear as though they might slide off

³⁵¹ Sullivan argues that Pettoruti's artistic production between 1913-20 was “remarkable for its eclecticism,” for he was willing to make unusual choices and combine unlike elements in a way that most other artists were not. See: Sullivan, 42.

the painting into the viewer's space—the woman's dotted dress actually extends beyond the edges of the floor. At once, Pettoruti has married the intersecting figures, dynamism, and reference to sequins of Gino Severini's *Blue Dancer* (1912) [Image 23], with the clean lines, overlapping rectangles of solid light, and fractured but legible faces of Juan Gris's *Madame Josette Gris* (1916) [Image 24]. Pettoruti has thus created a melting pot on canvas: he has blended Renaissance, postimpressionist, and cubist techniques to depict a singularly Argentine subject.³⁵² This work, inspired by seeing Solar dance the tango in a mansion in Florence, exemplifies how both artists attempted to bring Argentina and Italy into a dialectical relationship. Importantly though, they learned the Tango not in Buenos Aires, but in Paris and Florence. In fact, it was the European interest in American culture—and Tango specifically—that exposed Pettoruti to the new dance technique and may have spurred him to focus on this subject. At the same time, Xul began incorporating Aztec birds into his compositions as a way of embodying his Americanness, as we can see in *Reptil Que Sube* (Reptile that Soars) of 1920 [Image 25]. And like Pettoruti with Tango, Xul came into contact with this symbol because of the European fascination with pre-columbian culture in the 1920s.³⁵³

The late 1910s were filled with myriad successes for Pettoruti, as he finally found the acceptance he claimed to have achieved during his first months in Florence. In the fall of 1918, he joined Milan's *Famiglia Artistica*, a prominent organization founded in 1873 to support avant-garde art, music, and literature.³⁵⁴ There he met Carlo Carrá, Margherita Sarfatti and Mario

³⁵² Pettoruti is not the only Latin American artist who blended European pictorial strategies with subjects from home. Diego Rivera, who lived in Paris between 1912-20, often employed similar techniques. His *Zapatista Landscape* of 1915 uses synthetic cubism to construct a composition that depicts of a revolutionary Mexican hero morphing into the topography of his country.

³⁵³ For more on this, see: Harper Montgomery, 92-93.

³⁵⁴ The certificate commemorating Pettoruti's membership in the *Famiglia* is in the archives of Fundación Pettoruti.

Sironi (whose work he had seen earlier), who were beginning to build on de Chirico's *Pittura Metafisica* and the concepts of *Valori Plastici*, particularly the notion that elements of Italy's past, like Classical iconography and myths, could be used to revitalize the nation.³⁵⁵ Pettoruti, who had long sought inspiration in the sharp lucidity of Quattrocento masters, sympathized with this idea.³⁵⁶ The influence of these artists can be found in Pettoruti's sober, naturalistic portraits from the mid 1920s, such as a portrait of his sister, Carolita of 1925 [Image 26]. When in 1921, he mounted a solo show with the *Famiglia Artistica*, Carrá wrote the preface to the exhibition, calling Pettoruti's work "beautiful and noble" and linking it to Italian traditions.³⁵⁷

That same year, Pettoruti also showed at Herwarth Walden's modern Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin, alongside other international artists like Paul Klee, Alexander Archipenko, and Kurt Schwitters. These other artists failed to impress Pettoruti; he found Schwitters's use of discarded objects vulgar, and generally disliked the exaggerated painterliness of many German Expressionist works.³⁵⁸ Though Xul was very inspired by Paul Klee--and their works of the late 1910s and early 20s are very similar--Pettoruti considered him a lesser version of his Argentine colleague. Regardless of his low esteem for his co-exhibitors, this exhibition was likely Pettoruti's greatest achievement while living abroad. He showed thirty-five works and sold three,

³⁵⁵ But while de Chirico used fragmented sculptures and distorted classical iconography in order to show that tradition was irretrievable, Sironi would attempt to resurrect it. For more, see: Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics Under Fascism*.

³⁵⁶ Eleven years later, once back in Buenos Aires, Pettoruti curated a show of the *Novecento* group organized by Sarfatti. This early contact in Italy made him a trusted colleague, but Pettoruti did not approve of the group's Fascist affiliation, which would begin in the 1920s. Pettoruti did not support this political affiliation. The *Novecento* and its politics will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

³⁵⁷ The exhibition, simply titled "Emilio Pettoruti," received much press in Italy and was critically acclaimed, but Pettoruti's work did not sell well. The preface to the exhibition is now at the Fundación Pettoruti.

³⁵⁸ Pettoruti had disdained Klee and the German Expressionists for about two years by this time. He first encountered works by Klee and various Expressionists when he traveled to Munich with Solar in 1921. He particularly disliked the erotic content and thick impasto of many of the paintings. This is all recounted in his memoirs, 102.

one of which went to Mrs. Walden, the gallery owner's wife. Of the show, the Italian critic Vittorio Orazzi wrote, "Pettoruti's work possesses the characteristic signs of our race: equilibrium, discipline, clarity, simplicity of means... a sense of volume, vivacity and intensity of color and order.... Born in La Plata to an Italian father, Pettoruti has spent much time in Italy, which has shaped his taste and his culture."³⁵⁹

Though Orazzi, whose review in the Futurist journal *Noi* was titled "Our Pettoruti In Berlin," claimed the artist as Italian, Xul wrote about Pettoruti as *Neo-criollo*, highlighting his Latin Americanness, while still mentioning his Italian heritage. Xul's 1923 essay was meant to accompany Pettoruti's show at Der Sturm but never made it into the catalog. He wrote:

He is, however, proud of his pure Italian blood—for the racial flexibility too—and wants to be a creole, as creole for us as a feathered Indian, like the vast, distant unexplored pampas, our legacy.

Neo-Creole people will gather all that remains from the old nations of the Southern Continent, not the dead remains but those which are alive and which will be dressed in different clothes; we contribute with the experiences of this age, and with what we were taught by eclectic cultures, and above all with the individualist spiritual restless vigor of the Aryan people, the majority of us....

We are and we feel new people, old and foreign paths don't lead towards our new goal. Let's differentiate ourselves. We are grown people and we still haven't ended our wars for independence. So much for the Europe's tutelage. Let's assimilate what is digestible, let's love our masters; but let's not love any more our unique Meccas overseas. In our brief past there are no artistic geniuses able to guide us (or tyrannize us)...

To this tired world, let's contribute a new meaning, a more varied life, and a higher mission for our race which is in the ascendant. Each nation should not be something closed, xenophobic, mean, but should just be like a specialized department of HUMANKIND, in which kindred spirits cooperate to build the future and faraway land, in which each man—now superhuman—SHALL BE COMPLETE.

Because we are an aesthetic race, with art—and its mother, POETRY—we will start to say a new thing that is ours and ours alone.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Vittorio Orazzi, "Mostra Pettoruti A Berlino," *Noi* Roma, 1923. Translation by the author.

³⁶⁰ Xul Solar, "Pettoruti y Obras," dated "Munich June 1923," Collected in *Entrevistas, artículos y textos inéditos*, edited by Patricia Artundo, 96-98.

According to Solar, Pettoruti's identity, particularly in the 1920s, was elastic. As an artist of Italian blood, he embodied a fluid, geographically dynamic version of *Civiltà italiana*, which he could stretch across the Atlantic. At the same time, he was able to be the "feathered Indian," who could play a central role in creating a "Neo-Creole Avant-Garde" incorporating elements from the "old nations of the Southern Continent," meaning those elements of indigenous culture that still remained in South America, and mixing them with European modernism. For Solar, his and Pettoruti's Aryan status gave them the authority and "individualist spiritual restless vigor" to be leaders of a new and independent Argentine movement, one that didn't overly imitate European masters or "Meccas overseas." He argues that there were no specific examples to "guide" or "tyrannize" them; they would need to build something new that was open, inclusive, complete and international, rather than "closed, xenophobic, or mean." Xul's transnational or pan-American vision—though based on outdated and racist stereotypes—expanded definitions of cultural identity for Pettoruti and his European-American contemporaries. He conceived of a world where national boundaries were pliant, unnecessary, and even damaging. Like Selasi, he preferred to think of himself as both a "local," connected to specific cities rather than nation-states, and a global citizen. At the same time, he existed in Bhabha's "border zone," making it impossible for him to take on a single identity—he felt like an American while in Europe, and a European in America.

Second Atlantic Crossing: Return to Argentina and the Witcomb Exhibition:

As Donna Gabaccia notes, many emigres and their children only viewed themselves as *Italian* when living outside of Italy.³⁶¹ Though Pettoruti and Solar thought of themselves as “American” or a mixture of European and American while living in Europe, they developed a new relationship to their Italianness when they sailed from Hamburg to Buenos Aires in 1924.³⁶² Upon their arrival, they inevitably found the art world decades behind Europe. The most popular artists were still working in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist modes, and Pettoruti and Solar immediately set about to show the Argentine public what they’d seen abroad.³⁶³ Harper Montgomery argues that Pettoruti and Solar “drew on the values of what we now call modernism to question the cultural authority of Europe.” For them, she asserts, “modernism became an anti-colonial stance...a means of expression that called into question not only the long-standing cultural authority of Europe but also the value of modernization itself.”³⁶⁴ The tools of modernism learned abroad could be used as a weapon against the source itself, in order to generate or reformulate new and oppositional forms of artistic expression. Paradoxically, while in Europe and the United States, avant-garde movements focused on breaking with the past, in Latin America, where academic institutions were still in nascent forms and less entrenched, artistic experimentation was more linked to nation building and cultural sovereignty. According

³⁶¹ Gabaccia, 5.

³⁶² Evidently, both artists thought this homecoming was temporary. Pettoruti left many belongings in Paris, where he had been living for nearly a year, and Solar had done the same in Munich. In the end, Solar never made it back to Europe, and Pettoruti only did so over twenty years later.

³⁶³ Sullivan writes: “Pettoruti’s significance as a cultural force in Argentina after his return ... cannot be denied.” 95.

³⁶⁴ Montgomery, 1-2. In fact, the artists were motivated to return partly based on what Argentina was showing at the Venice Biennale throughout the late 1910s—landscapes and genre scenes that looked passé. Though they started talking about a return as early as October of 1919, the process kept getting delayed by Pettoruti’s various exhibitions at Der Sturm and elsewhere. They were both including in a group show of Latin American art in Paris in 1924. For more on this, see Montgomery, 97-98.

to Montgomery, because Pettoruti and Solar were of European descent, they could both lay claim to European forms of modernity and use them in a new, Argentine context. Their transnational status allowed them to legitimately “co-opt the authority of European culture—and, significantly, bloodlines—while remaining geopolitically Latin American.”³⁶⁵

In fact, only three months after their Atlantic crossing, Pettoruti and Solar decided to capitalize on their unique status of returning to Argentina as native transmitters and interpreters of European avant-garde culture. Together, they launched a show at the Galeria Witcomb, one of the oldest and most established galleries in Buenos Aires. Founded by Alejandro Witcomb (1825-1905), a British photographer, in 1878, the Witcomb initially showcased new photography, then later it expanded its exhibition program to include Spanish and French Impressionism and the French Barbizon School.³⁶⁶ In Witcomb’s gallery and elsewhere, “Impressionism” was used to describe many disparate styles even as late as 1924.³⁶⁷ Other competing terms were vague and broadly applied; many critics used phrases like *nuevas tendencias* (new tendencies), or *vanguardia* (vanguard) to refer to a variety of new and imported trends coming out of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, without really understanding the difference between movements.³⁶⁸

The Witcomb exhibition was initially meant to showcase work by Pettoruti *and* Solar, but Pettoruti convinced Solar that he should get a solo show, arguing that his critical acclaim in

³⁶⁵ Montgomery, 78.

³⁶⁶ Alejandro Witcomb started the gallery on February 15, 1878 with Roberto Mackern. Though it began as a photography gallery, it soon expanded to show painting and sculpture as well. For more on the history and founding of Galeria Witcomb, see: *Memorias de una Galería de Arte: Archivo Witcomb 1896-1971*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2000).

³⁶⁷ Two exhibitions, in 1909 and in 1912-13 respectively, highlighted German Expressionist work at Müller Gallery on Calle Florida. For more on this, see: Jacqueline Barnitz, 36.

³⁶⁸ Barnitz discusses the use of general, imprecise terminology in her second chapter, “The Isms in Argentina.” She mentions that many of these terms came from Spain, where a number of Argentine artists lived during World War I. See pp. 67-68.

Europe would lend credence to this Argentine debut, paving the way for Xul to show in the near future.³⁶⁹ In fact, Pettoruti even thought he might be able to sell his works on the booming Buenos Aires art market and then return to Paris, where he was promised representation by Leonce Rosenberg.³⁷⁰ It is unclear whether Solar was offended by his ultimate exclusion, as he still went on to write an extremely favorable review, but the show might have acted as a stronger statement of a new national style had both artists been included. The exhibition—comprised of eighty-six works, ranging from mosaics to set design sketches, to cubist portraits—was spectacularly controversial [Image 27]. The central goal was to introduce a sophisticated Porteño public to abstract art made by an Argentine artist, in the hopes of proving that abstraction need not be considered foreign, and Argentine art need not be representational or conservative.

Though the exhibition was heavily publicized before it opened, the initial response was riotous and mob-like. The Argentine president, Marcelo T. de Alvear, who Pettoruti describes as a “friend of the arts,” attended the exhibition, and told Pettoruti that he hoped he “would not need the municipal health service this afternoon!” after the angry crowd gathering outside entered the gallery.³⁷¹ At exactly five o’clock in the afternoon, Witcomb opened its doors, and hundreds of people tumbled in, “turning the gallery into a madhouse.” Pettoruti wrote that, “the throng was so wound up” by the art, and the space was so full, that “had people wanted to punch each other, there wouldn’t have been enough room: we were squashed like sardines.”³⁷²

³⁶⁹ For more on Solar’s response: see Barnitz, 387.

³⁷⁰ Montgomery, 80. She also notes the power of French opinion within Argentina: Many collectors only wanted French artists, or Argentine artists who had already achieved commercial and critical success in Europe. For instance, the painter Pedro Figari’s landscapes were initially spurned by the Porteño elites, but when Parisians began to buy them, they suddenly became much more desirable.

³⁷¹ Pettoruti, *Un Pintor*, 137.

³⁷² *Ibid*, 138.

Agitation only grew until everyone was eventually forced out by the gallery director, for fear that the paintings might be damaged by the commotion. In many ways, the spectacle surrounding the Witcomb exhibition was reminiscent of a Futurist *serate*, intentionally or not, and the response was not dissimilar to the one Pettoruti himself experienced upon first seeing the *Lacerba* show eleven years earlier.

The preface to the exhibition catalog, written by the critic and architect Alberto Presbich, another transatlantic modernist who Pettoruti had previously met in Paris, claimed: “It is not much of a leap to predict that the public will be disconcerted by this exhibition. The works here constitute, in effect, a break with our entire visual education to this point.”³⁷³ As Pettoruti himself tells it: “I knew that from an artistic point of view, communication was practically impossible... There was no connection between one way of thinking and the other.”³⁷⁴ According to Nelly Perazzo, Pettoruti’s show shocked and upset members of his audience because it made them feel uneasy and embarrassed; they were satisfied with their outmoded art scene and didn’t need to be reminded they were out of touch. This assessment seems accurate; it wasn’t that they disliked imported trends, but they weren’t ready for such a violent break.

Solar, however, applauded his friend as a new breed of artist. In the recently-formed avant-garde art and literature journal *Martín Fierro*, Solar made his first contribution as a critic rather than a painter, and Pettoruti became the first artist to get front-page billing [Image 28]. Solar refrained from using art-speak or “isms” to describe his friend’s work, an approach in line with the journal’s other critics, like Alberto Prebisch and Ricardo Güiraldes, who assiduously

³⁷³ Presbich’s original text of this catalog is included in *Memorias de una Galería de Arte: Archivo Witcomb*, 214-15. The translation is mine.

³⁷⁴ Pettoruti, 148. Even the director of the National Museum of Fine Arts, Dr. Cupertino del Campo pledged “not one square centimeter of a Pettoruti will enter the premises [of my museum].”

avoided academic terminology or jargon that derived from European movements.³⁷⁵ Solar celebrated Pettoruti as “one of the Creole avant-garde moving toward the future. ... [He] is one of the only artists who is consciously fighting for our spiritual independence,” he wrote, “These ample perspectives, this serious effort by Pettoruti, dissident at last, brings us relief and liberation. The courage of this painter will set an example.”³⁷⁶ Though he definitely claimed Pettoruti as Argentine, calling him “*our* Pettoruti,” he again used Pettoruti’s European connections as a form of legitimization, mentioning that he spent ten years in Florence, Rome and Milan, ultimately growing to “know Italy like few Italians and as many Italians as few foreigners.”³⁷⁷ He highlighted Pettoruti’s friendships with Picasso, Gris, Archipenko, Chagall and others in Paris. Finally, he explained, almost defensively, that Pettoruti was admired throughout Europe, even if he was not yet in Buenos Aires.³⁷⁸ In other words, international recognition was critical for the reputation of Argentina’s artists: they had to be part of the larger avant-garde or risk parochialism. By emphasizing Pettoruti’s European network, Solar also stressed the dialogic reality of Argentina’s cultural—and demographic—origins.

³⁷⁵ For example, in reviewing a recent retrospective of the popular painter Pedro Figari (1861-1938), who was born in Montevideo but based in Buenos Aires, Güiraldes wrote, “Figari lives in the world with love and intelligence. This is what he gives us. Does he not have the ‘metier’ of Velazquez?...Undoubtedly no, but Figari has the ‘metier’ of Figari. He paints like Figari, and appears like Figari, for the simple reason that he can encounter everything on his own terms without losing himself to his neighbors.” Barnitz claims that Figari acted as more of a precursor to modernism than as a modernist himself. Born to Italian immigrants in Montevideo, he traveled extensively throughout Europe, and then relocated to Buenos Aires for four years, between 1921-25, at the age of sixty. He became one of the only *Martín Fierro* artists to focus on Creole themes, specifically the customs of rural Argentina and Uruguay, including *candombes*, traditional black Uruguayan dances which date back to the colonial epoch, and the land itself. While some critics viewed Figari’s subject matter--domestic interiors, traditional dances, and landscapes--as mundane, Güiraldes praised it as distinctly Argentine. For more, see: Ricardo Güiraldes, “Don Pedro Figari,” *Martín Fierro*, no. 8 (Buenos Aires: August, 1924): 6-7. Translation by the author.

³⁷⁶ Xul Solar, “Pettoruti,” *Martín Fierro*, Number 10 and 11 (Buenos Aires: October 9, 1924).

³⁷⁷ Solar, 7.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

This two-pronged desire to highlight *and* break with European links was one of the principal paradoxes of *Martin Fierro* and its overarching project. Solar, Pettoruti, and the *Martin Fierristas* wanted to have it both ways: they used European ties to bolster their reputation within Argentina, but simultaneously, they want to be considered independent from the Old World. In essence, they adopted the quintessential avant-garde stance of opposing the status quo, but rather than fighting against academic trends within Argentina, they vocally challenged modern movements from abroad (even while still using some of their most effective techniques). Solar's review of Pettoruti foregrounds this janus-faced approach. According to Solar, Pettoruti took many of his strategies from European avant-garde circles--an "architecturalizing of abstract forms" or a "well-defined tendency towards simplicity of means," for instance--but he simultaneously offered "relief and liberation" from imitation, and in that way, he provided an example for future Argentine artists.³⁷⁹ In a sort of call to arms, he concludes: "In America, we have not finished fighting our wars of independence. In the arena of art, one of our strongest champions is Emilio Pettoruti."³⁸⁰ Is there not something specious to Solar arguing that Pettoruti should be esteemed in Argentina because he was valued abroad, while also asserting that Pettoruti is paving the road for an independent art? ³⁸¹

In his catalog essay for Pettoruti's exhibition, the critic Alberto Prebisch chose to focus not on European elements, but on the spiritual and physiological effects of the artist's images,

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 1 and 7.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 8.

³⁸¹ Pettoruti was reviewed again by another (largely unknown) critic, P.V. Blake, in the following issue of *Martin Fierro*. Blake's review focuses more on Pettoruti's specific works and his process (particularly his mosaics) and it is less grandiloquent overall. For more, see: P.V. Blake, "Pettoruti," *Martin Fierro*, no 12-13 (October-November 1924) : 7-8.

arguing that what made them modern and fresh was their lack of anecdotal or figurative qualities and their concentration on pure esthetic (or plastic) values.³⁸² Having just returned from two years in Europe himself, Prebisch almost certainly would have encountered the art and theories of Vasily Kandinsky, who advocated spiritual aims in art and emphasized the emotional impact of color. “It is the eye that first receives the impression of color and transmits it to the spirit, provoking a determined emotional state. This double phenomenon of adaptation, first visual then spiritual, must be realized slowly.”³⁸³ He also echoed Kandinsky and other Blaue Reiter painters, as well as modernists like the Viennese Secessionists, Le Corbusier, and the Futurists, when he stated, “The work of art which truly moves us should be the product of its era. The work of Pettoruti reveals the spirit of an artist who is bravely open to the winds of his era, an era of fighting between contrary principles.”³⁸⁴ Upon their return, Pettoruti, Solar, and other Italo-Argentines joined forces with Argentines of Spanish descent to create a new community of transatlantic artists and writers. Together, they helped to nurture a new form of Argentine modernism, based on dialogue rather than strict definitions or national boundaries.³⁸⁵

³⁸² Alberto Prebisch. “Emilio Pettoruti,” in *Exposición Pettoruti: Catologo de los Caudros* (Buenos Aires, Salon Witcomb, 1924).

³⁸³ Ibid, translation by the author.

³⁸⁴ There was a belated acceptance of Pettoruti’s work. Not only did Pettoruti become a key figure as both an educator and a critic throughout Argentina, but a number of his works from the 1910s that were included in the Witcomb exhibition were eventually purchased by the national Museo de Bellas Artes, in 1969. For more on this, see “Nuevas adquisiciones para el Museo de Bellas Artes” *La Nacion*, (June 7, 1969).

³⁸⁵ For more on the official salon in Buenos Aires, see: Diana Beatriz Wechsler, “Salones y Contro-Salones,” in *Tras los pasos de la norma: salones nacionales de bellas artes (1911-1989)*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Jilguero, 1999, pp 41-98.

Martín Fierro Champions a Dialogic Modernity:

In 1921, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), and his sister, the painter and illustrator, Norah Borges (1901-98), returned to Buenos Aires after seven years in Europe with their Spanish-British parents, to find the Argentine capital lagging far behind the places they had lived abroad, including Geneva, Paris, Barcelona, Seville, and Madrid.³⁸⁶ Almost immediately, they sought to modernize the city's cultural landscape through the formation of two journals— *Prisma* and *Proa*—both of which raised awareness about new types of poetry and visual art.³⁸⁷ Literary and art journals were essential in pushing Buenos Aires into a fruitful interchange with European artistic centers, and they were often the best sources for up-to-date criticism and reproductions of works of art. *Prisma*, which existed primarily in the form of a broadsheet posted in public spaces, only ran for two issues, in December 1921 and March 1922, but it helped raise awareness about new types of poetry and visual art. Simultaneously, they co-founded another journal, *Proa* (“the prow”), which ran from August 1921 to July 1922 and focused on literary theory. In fact, it was in the pages of *Proa* that Herwarth Walden, founder of *Der Sturm*, first published a Spanish version of his 1924 text *Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism*, translated by Jorge Luis.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Jorge Luis and Norah Borges were born into an educated middle class family in Palermo, then a suburb of downtown Buenos Aires (and now a part of the city). Their mother was of Spanish descent from Uruguay, and her father had been active in the Argentine War of Independence in 1818. Their father had been of Spanish, Portuguese and English descent. Jorge Luis and Norah were home schooled, and they became bilingual in Spanish and English before the family moved to Europe, in 1914, when Mr. Borges retired from his legal career due to failing eyesight. The family stayed in Europe until 1921, and in their even years abroad, the Borgeeses learned French and German, and the family ultimately settled in Spain for three years, between 1918-21. There, Jorge Luis became an integral member of the short-lived literary movement, Ultraism, which argued for clear, direct writing, against the flowery style of *Modernismo*. For more, see: Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: a Literary Biography*, (New York: Paragon House, 1988).

³⁸⁷ For more on this, see: Barnitz, 45-50.

³⁸⁸ Barnitz, 54.

Though *Prisma* and *Proa* preceded it, *Martín Fierro* proved far more successful in promoting a modern Argentine artistic and literary style, in dialogue with its European counterparts. Borges would define *criollo* writing as a marriage of “silence and fatalism,” calling the Creole a “joker, distrustful, disillusioned beforehand about everything, and with such little stomach for verbal grandiosity that he only tolerates it in a few and celebrates it in none.”³⁸⁹ This style would be practiced—in varying ways—in the pages of *Martín Fierro*.³⁹⁰ During its three-and-a-half-year run, between February of 1924 and November of 1927, *Martín Fierro* produced forty-five issues and its circulation peaked in the middle of 1925 with 20,000 subscribers.³⁹¹ In the first four issues, *Martín Fierro*’s editors attacked the Pope and Argentine Catholics, Spanish immigrants from Galicia, and famous poets of the “old generation”—upsetting many readers—but by its fifth issue, all discussion of religion and politics was pushed aside in favor of art and literary criticism.³⁹²

The journal’s tone remained satirical, clearly meant for an erudite readership of European descent. Many readers were Italo-Argentines, who were comfortable with avant-garde art, because they had seen it in *Lacerba*, which had been circulating in Argentina’s Italo-Argentine

³⁸⁹ Jorge Luis Borges, “Inquisitions” (1925), in *On Argentina*, Alfred Mac Adam, ed. (New York: Penguin, 2010), 25.

³⁹⁰ Many of the same figures who were involved in *Proa* were later contributors to *Martín Fierro* (*MF*). Though both *MF* and *Proa* began as literary journals, *MF* ultimately became more committed to visual art beginning with its fourth issue. The journal started small: it was founded and edited by poet Evaristo González, known by his pseudonym Evar Medez, with writers Samuel Glusberg and Oliverio Girondo. It grew quickly; however, and by the end of its first year, its group of contributors, stockholders, collaborators, and “sympathizers” had increased to roughly eighty individuals. For more on this, see the introduction to Janqueline Barnitz’s dissertation.

³⁹¹ A handful of *Martín Fierro* publications were double issues, so though there were 45 numbers, they were published on only 38 dates throughout 1924-27. Though *Martín Fierro* was usually produced in a newspaper-like format, occasionally it would be released as a glossy journal. For more on the history of the journal, see Chapter 3 of Barnitz’s dissertation.

³⁹² See: *Martín Fierro*, No. 1-4, February-April, 1924.

community since 1913. Furthermore, many first generation Argentines born to Italian parents identified with the overall stance of *Martín Fierro*, as they themselves were cultural hybrids. From the outset, *Martín Fierro* allied itself with modern trends on the other side of the Atlantic. And through its title, the journal linked the 1920s to a period of Argentine history about fifty years earlier, when the original *Martín Fierro* text was conceived and the country was heavily courting new immigrants.

As any contemporary Argentine reader would have recognized, the journal took its title from an epic poem, *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, written by José Hernández (1834-86) in 1872, during the first wave of massive immigration, mainly from Italy.³⁹³ In his work, Hernández recounts the plight of the eponymous gaucho-come-outlaw, originally tasked with defending the pampas from the “barbarous” native population, yet while protecting his country, his way of life was slowly destroyed by transplanted modernity. When Fierro eventually deserts his military post, he returns home to discover that his farm and family are gone. In its original context, Hernández’s poem was understood as a protest against the military dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas, who controlled Buenos Aires Province and the pampas between 1835-51; however, it soon grew to be seen as an allegory, not just for the suffering of the Gaucho, but of all disenfranchised people displaced by political, economic, or technological change.³⁹⁴ The 1924 journal was hardly the first to co-opt the title *Martín Fierro* to invoke a sense of independence from political or cultural tyranny. As Jacqueline Barnitz explains:

³⁹³ The original 1872 poem was titled the *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, while the sequel, published seven years later, was appropriately named, *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (The Return of Martín Fierro). The poem was first translated into English by the State University of New York, Albany, in 1967, but a 2008 revised version is now available at : <http://sparrowthorn.com/>.

³⁹⁴ For more on the symbolism of the Gaucho, see: Catherine E. Ward, “Epic of the Gaucho,” *Journal of the Pan-American Union*, Volume 17, No. 11, (Washington DC, November 1965).

The fact that the gaucho, known for his illiteracy and hostility to European culture, should have become the symbol of a magazine for which European culture was one of its important features, may seem paradoxical. But while the gaucho symbolized Argentina's 'homegrown' traditions, for the poets, he also symbolized a liberation from past poetic rules [and political affiliations].³⁹⁵

Much as the early avant-garde movements of Europe had done previously, *Martín Fierro's* staff—writers and critics largely between the ages of twenty and twenty-five—advocated a new type of modern art for the modern age. Between 1924-27, the journal published a articles written by European theorists such as F.T. Marinetti, Ramon Gomez de la Serna, Le Corbusier, Waldemar George, and Herwarth Walden, and reproductions of artworks by Georges Braque, Paul Gauguin, Fernand Leger, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Carlo Carra, and Umberto Boccioni, to name only a few.³⁹⁶ Hence, the journal juxtaposed work from the late nineteenth century with artists of the moment. It was diachronic rather than synchronic.

In May, 1924, founder Oliverio Gironde solidified the journal's stance in a manifesto, which he circulated both in its fourth issue and as an independent handbill. His language is playful and stinging, poking fun at the "funereal solemnity" with which Argentines approach high culture, which he deems "more stagnant than a retired bureaucrat." Though he aimed to capitalize upon the fact that the journal was formed by a group of young writers, he criticized the youth of the nation for being unoriginal and "incapable of contemplating life without consulting library shelves."³⁹⁷ Finally, in the declamatory section of his manifesto, he outlines the journal's aims, clearly emulating the Futurist Manifesto of 1909: [Images 29-30]

³⁹⁵ Barnitz, 88.

³⁹⁶ Barnitz, 95-6.

³⁹⁷ *Martín Fierro*, No 1. February 1924. All translations are by the author.

Martín Fierro feels the inescapable necessity of making its position clear and of calling on all who are capable of perceiving that we are in the presence of a new sensibility and of a new comprehension, which we have agreed, have discovered for us unsuspected panoramas and new means and forms of expression. ...

Martín Fierro knows that ‘everything is new under the sun’ provided everything is seen with today’s eyes and expressed with a contemporary accent.

Martín Fierro finds itself, for this reason, more comfortable in a modern transatlantic than in a Renaissance palace, and maintains that a good Hispano Suizo is a much more perfect work of art than a Louis XV sedan chair.

[The Independence movement]...Does not however signify that we must renounce, nor much less pretend to ignore the fact that each morning we use a Swedish toothpaste, towels from France and English soap.³⁹⁸

Girondo proudly laid bare Argentina’s commercial and cultural ties to Europe, which he believed could be furthered by a “transatlantic modernism.” By highlighting imported luxury items like French towels and English soap—rather than more inexpensive Italian products, like olive oil and wine—Girondo placed the journal in an elevated class of consumer culture and trade.³⁹⁹ Though some scholars have criticized *Martín Fierro* for being derivative, any lifted European aspects were intentionally cultivated, both by Girondo and the artists and writers profiled in the journal’s pages. Girondo himself had studied in Paris and England, and had been deeply influenced by his time abroad.

By choosing the handbill format for the manifesto and passing it out on the streets of Buenos Aires, Girondo paid homage to Marinetti, who circulated his “Founding and Manifesto

³⁹⁸ This translation comes from Jaqueline Barnitz in Chapter 3 of her dissertation, titled “The Journal Martín Fierro, its Genesis and Ultraismo.” (pp. 88-89).

³⁹⁹ As historian David Rock explains, Argentina had robust trade relationships with Europe. Roughly ninety percent of its exports were farm goods from the newly consolidated Pampas, and more than eighty-five percent went to western Europe. While Britain was the leading trade partner, Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and Brazil were also important economic allies. In 1915, the dairy industry, flour milling, sugar and beer production all expanded, but beef reigned supreme; by the early 1910s, Argentina had replaced the United States as the major beef supplier to Britain. For more, see: David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1897: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 164-68.

of Futurism” in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, in 1909, and orchestrated the dropping of the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture” from the cathedral bell towers in Piazzzo San Marco in 1912. Marinetti’s original manifesto was translated into Spanish and published in the Florentine journal *Lacerba*, which circulated throughout Argentina in the 1910s, so Gironde would have known it, as would the Italo-Argentine community reading *Martín Fierro*. Gironde declared the journal’s goals in short, forceful sentences, always highlighting the title in bold capital letters, in the manner of Futurist typography (itself appropriated from advertising). In a final attempt at shameless self-promotion, again in the vein of Marinetti, Gironde concluded with a call to write in and subscribe: “Do you sympathize with **Martín FIERRO**? Contribute to **Martín FIERRO**! Subscribe to **Martín FIERRO**!”⁴⁰⁰

Gironde also imitated Marinetti when it came to tone and word choice. More than once, he highlighted the fact that the journal was generated by “the most brilliant intellectual youth of Argentina,” just as Marinetti had claimed that, “the oldest of us [the Futurists] is thirty.”⁴⁰¹ Incidentally, both Marinetti and Gironde were elders in their respective communities: each man was thirty-three when he launched his movement. Furthermore, both authors disparaged the burden of history. Marinetti pronounced the death of museums; Futurist painters Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá, and Luigi Russolo insisted that, “the future shall be swept free of mummies,” and “the dead shall be buried in the earth’s deepest bowels.”⁴⁰² Finally, when

⁴⁰⁰ “Manifesto de *Martín Fierro* Periodical quincenal de arte y critical libre” *Martín Fierro*, Volume 1, February 1924. Translation by the author.

⁴⁰¹ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” originally published in *Le Figaro*, February 20, 1909. Republished in Gunter Berghuas, ed., and Doug Thompson, trans. *F.T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 11-17.

⁴⁰² Boccioni, Umberto, Carlo D. Carra, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto,” originally published in *Poesia*, April 11, 1910. Republished in Charles Harrison, and Paul Wood eds., *Art in Theory: 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 150-52.

Girondo wrote, “a good Hispano-Suiza is a much more perfect work of art than a Louis XV sedan chair,”⁴⁰³ this phrase hearkened back to Marinetti’s statement, of 1909, that “a roaring car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath--a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot--is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.”⁴⁰⁴

The choice of the Hispano-Suiza (literally Spanish-Swiss), a luxury automobile popular in Argentina throughout the 1920s and 30s, was not immaterial. Just as Marinetti chose a recognizable Hellenistic masterpiece to symbolize Italy’s dead Classical past from which Futurism could rise, the Hispano-Suiza was a near perfect embodiment of *Martín Fierro*’s overriding ideology of a hybrid art: the high-tech car and aviation company originated in Spain, then moved production to France, and eventually set up a factory in Buenos Aires, in 1925. As such, the car was a crossbreed, imported yet slightly altered to fit Argentina’s needs and market. Girondo’s call for a new type of art, not dependent upon earlier models but admittedly derived from European examples, was consciously similar to Marinetti and the Futurists’ message.

Yet, not content to be inspired only by the Italian version of modernism, Girondo’s language is also reminiscent of the famously polemical Le Corbusier, whose treatise *Vers une architecture* (translated as *Towards a New Architecture*), was published in 1923, with a section devoted to determining the style of the era.⁴⁰⁵ Though Le Corbusier’s text was not translated into Spanish until 1939 (in Buenos Aires, no less), Girondo and his colleagues read French and were

⁴⁰³ “Manifiesto de *Martín Fierro*.”

⁴⁰⁴ Marinetti, “Founding and Manifesto”

⁴⁰⁵ For more on the Futurists’ rhetoric and strategies of publicizing their movement, see: Marjorie Perloff. “Violence and Precision: The Manifesto as Art Form,” *Chicago Review*, Volume 34, No. 2 (Spring 1984): 65-101. Also see: Claudia Salaris, “The Invention of the Programmatic Avant-Garde,” in Vivien Greene ed., *Italian Futurism 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe*, Exhibition Catalog (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2014): 22-49.

almost certainly familiar with the original version. Only one year earlier than Gironde, Le Corbusier asserted that, “Style is a unity of principle animating all the work of an epoch, the result of a state of mind which has its own special character. Our own epoch is determining, day by day, its own style.”⁴⁰⁶ Just as Gironde returned to the theme of travel and movement many times over, Le Corbusier frequently made connections between homes--which he termed “machines for living in”--and cars, airplanes, and ocean liners, machines which he felt had evolved more quickly and fully by 1923. In the steamship, Le Corbusier contended, one finds “the first stage in the realization of a world organized according to the new spirit,” a spirit of mass-production, but the steamship, or the “modern transatlantic” that Gironde referred to, is also a mode of crossing the ocean to connect Europe and the Americas.⁴⁰⁷

In many ways, *Martín Fierro* was in line with other movements coalescing throughout the Americas in the 1920s. Gironde’s manifesto was an Argentine analog to the Brazilian *Manifesto Antropofágico* (Anthropofagite Manifesto), written by Oswald de Andrade and published in the iconoclastic *Revista de Antropofagia* in May of 1928 [Image 31]. *Anthropofagism*, which loosely translates as “cannibalism,” plays off the notion that indigenous tribes in Brazil practiced carnal cannibalism as a sacred rite, but de Andrade’s cannibalism was cultural. While Gironde admitted that Argentina *consumed* European goods like soap and cars,

⁴⁰⁶ The particular translation of Le Corbusier’s text is taken from the newest edition: *Toward an Architecture*, translated by John Goodman, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007), 95.

⁴⁰⁷ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Frederick Etchells trans. (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 103. Le Corbusier insists that architects should study and revolutionize housing design in the same way that engineers had analyzed the chassis or the airplane, to eventually “construct mass-production houses. In this specific instance, he argues that, “if the problem of the dwelling...were studied in the same way that a chassis is, a speedy transformation and improvement would be seen in our houses. If houses were constructed by industrial mass-production, like chassis...a new aesthetic would be formulated with astonishing precision.” p. 133.

de Andrade argued that, in order to be modern, Brazilian artists and writers should aggressively devour the influences of their former European colonizers, take the best parts, and infuse them with indigenous elements, colors, and subject-matter. He opened the Manifesto by “cannibalizing” Shakespeare: “Only anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically. The one and only world principle. ... Tupi, or not tupi, that is the question.”⁴⁰⁸ He inflected the whole manifesto with references to Brazil’s history of colonialism, the power and appetites of indigenous tribes—which were more numerous and vibrant than those remaining in Argentina—and a desire for cultural independence. Colonizers were described as “fugitives from a civilization being eaten by us, because we are strong and vengeful as a Jaboti;” and he proclaimed that “we want the Caraíban revolution...The gold age proclaimed by America.”⁴⁰⁹

The *Manifesto Antropofágo* was illustrated with a drawing by de Andrade’s wife, the painter Tarsila do Amaral, who returned to Brazil in 1924—the same year as Pettoruti and Solar—after four years of training in Paris, where she worked with Fernand Leger among others, and declared, “I want to be the painter of my homeland.”⁴¹⁰ Her drawing, titled *Abaporu*, meaning “person who eats” in the indigenous tongue, Tupi Guarani, was initially made as a birthday gift for de Andrade [Image 32]. It shows a tan, seated man with a giant, weighty foot and a minuscule head, crouched next to a cactus and burning sun, all depicted using the colors of the Brazilian flag. Of the image, she reflected:

⁴⁰⁸ For more, see: *Revista de Antropofagia*, n.1, year 1, May 1928, São Paulo. Translated from the Portuguese by Adriano Pedrosa and Veronica Cordeiro. Also see: D’Alessandro, Stephanie, and Luis Pérez-Oramas. *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018).

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁴¹⁰ Tarsila to her family, April 19, 1923, in Aracy Amaral, *Tarsila: Sua obra e seu temp*, (São Paulo: Edusp e Ed. 34, 2003), 101. This quote has been reused many times, including in the 2018 MoMA exhibition.

I wanted to make a picture that would startle Oswald, you know? ... The little head, the skinny little arm supported by an elbow, those enormous long legs...a cactus that looked like the sun, as if it were a flower and the sun at the same time. So when he saw the picture Oswald was extremely startled and asked "But what is this?... This is like a thing, like a savage, a forest thing." So I wanted to give the painting a wild name too, because I had one of the Jesuit priest Montoya's dictionaries. There were definitions for everything it in. "Aba"—person... "Puru"—one who eats human flesh.... And the name stuck.⁴¹¹

Aboporu's pose recalls that of the central woman in Eduard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass*, who meets our gaze directly, and Tarsila would have seen the work during her time in Paris. Just like in Argentina, the consensus was not to ignore European influences and examples, but to assimilate—or digest—them and spit them back out in a Brazilian context. Though the Anthropofagite movement was short-lived, stifled by the Military Junta of 1930, it did succeed in launching a unique and modern Brazilian art in 1928, and its legacy was further explored after artistic freedom was restored in the late 1950s.

De Andrade, Tarsila, and their followers, argued for a distinct Brazilian style that reflected Brazil's multifaceted heritage and genetic make-up: European pictorial strategies, like Cubism and Surrealism, should be blended with Brazilian themes, flora, fauna, and colors. Unlike in Argentina, where the indigenous tribes were largely decimated and slavery was outlawed by the Constitution of 1853, Brazil's tribes continued to thrive in the interior of the country, and slavery persisted until 1898, resulting in a distinctive mix of European, African, and indigenous influences long into the twentieth century (and up to the present).⁴¹² In Argentina, where the African and indigenous populations were very small, primarily European and Creole

⁴¹¹ Leo Gilson Ribeiro, "Interview: Tarsila do Amaral," *Veja* 181 (February 23, 1972), pp. 3-6, Translated by Stephen Berg. In *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018, pp. 162-65.

⁴¹² Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1898. By contrast, Argentina began abolishing slavery as early as 1813 with the Free Womb Act, which "freed" all children born to slave mothers. This was in part a reaction to the fact that many slaves had helped Argentina in the War of Independence in 1818. The first Constitution of Argentina abolished slavery in 1853, but this did not apply to Buenos Aires, as it was not a part of the Confederation. Once Buenos Aires joined the Confederation in 1861, slavery was completely abolished throughout the entire country.

elements intermingled. Gironde realized that the relationship to Europe had to be framed differently, and Argentina might face distinct challenges from countries like Brazil or Mexico, where indigenous influences more visibly persisted.⁴¹³

A survey published in the fifth issue of *Martín Fierro* addressed this issue of authenticity with two questions: 1) *Do you believe in the Existence of an Argentine sensibility or mentality?* and 2) *If so, what are its characteristics?* Gironde's own answer explicated that the initial question was merely rhetorical, because he assumed anyone reading the journal would answer affirmatively, as he elaborated: "The characteristics of an [Argentine] mentality don't depend on anything or anyone concrete or specific. ... I believe in our own idiosyncrasy, because I see it in my own existence and I don't need intellectual force to recognize or define these manifestations."⁴¹⁴ However, not everyone *did* answer that question in the affirmative. The writer Samuel Glusberg, a founding member and regular contributor to *Martín Fierro*, stated that he "did not believe in the existence of an Argentine sensibility," and he went to great lengths to forge concrete parallels with European movements. Ultimately, these conflicting opinions point to the complicated nature of establishing a national style in this particular immigrant nation, with its pervasive Italo-Argentine community that possessed a unique transnational identity and widespread cultural influence.

This survey was comparable to others circulating elsewhere in the Americas throughout the 1920s. In September of 1928, for example, the Havana-based *Revista de Avance* published a

⁴¹³ Harper Montgomery argues that the *Martín Fierristas* used their Eurocentrism as a way to counter the influences of the United States, which was considered vacuous and overly focused on capitalism. One way to become modern was to focus more on universal themes of the city, but find ways to make it specifically Argentine, rather than depicting the Pampas and Gauchos. For more, see: Montgomery, pp 83-85.

⁴¹⁴ *Martín Fierro*, No. 5-6, May 15-June 15, 1924 (p.39). The translations are mine. Other responses to the questionnaire vary widely.

four question survey addressed to artists and writers throughout Latin America, titled “What Should American Art Be?” Here however, the questions focused on a pan-American style rather than a national one, and they included things like, “Do you believe that the work of the American artists should reveal an American preoccupation?” and “Do you believe in the possibility of common characteristics shared by the art of all the nations of our Americas?”⁴¹⁵ Of the sixteen published responses from readers throughout Latin America, many of them insisted that artists and writers should resist the cultural influence of Europe and the United States. This was a markedly different stance from that of the *Martín Fierristas*, who emulated European cultural leaders in their writing and dissemination tactics.

When in 1927, Madrid’s *La Gaceta Literaria* argued for a hispanic sensibility throughout Latin America, *Martín Fierro* denied Spain’s influence—just as Sarmiento had done in his own writing decades earlier—but instead proposed Italy’s. The editors wrote, “In neither Montevideo nor Buenos Aires does there exist Hispanic sympathy. There is; however, an Italian one. There is no such thing as an Argentine banquet without Italian ravioli.”⁴¹⁶ This comfort in identifying with Italy over Spain is telling: not only does it prove that many of the *Martín Fierristas* felt a stronger connection to Italy—either because of familial or stylistic ties—but it also shows that identifying with Italy did not pose a threat to Argentina’s cultural autonomy to the same degree

⁴¹⁵ This questionnaire is discussed in Harper Montgomery’s “Chapter One: Circulation: Latin American Art in *Amauta*” in *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), pp 10-11. The full list of questions includes the two mentioned here and: 2) Do you believe that Americanness is a question of optics, content, or medium?; 4) What should the American artist’s attitude be toward European art?

⁴¹⁶ *Martín Fierro*, No. 42, June 10, 1927. This debate between *La Gaceta* and *Martín Fierro* is also cited in the introduction to: Diana Beatriz Wechsler ed., *Italia en el horizonte de las arte plásticas: Argentina, siglos XIX y XX*, (Buenos Aires: Asociación Dante Alighieri, 2000), 9-10.

that acknowledging Hispanic ties might. Even a century after independence, the legacy of Spanish colonialism still made an admission of Spanish influence loaded and problematic.

In 1928, the cultural journal *Nosotros* published a poll asking artists and writers to assess Italy's influence on Argentine culture. One wrote, "Argentina, like most countries, receives intellectual inspiration from writers all over the world. If I'm not ill-informed, neither Italy nor Spain has exclusive rights to talent."⁴¹⁷ Pettoruti highlighted the clear importance of Italian art within Argentine culture, writing: "In the beginning, Argentine painting and sculpture were Italian, but later, artists turned their sights on France, Spain and Germany," neglecting important figures from Italy.⁴¹⁸ Now, in the late 1920s, Pettoruti was committed to staying in Argentina, but he aimed to make Italian artists better-known through critical texts and exhibitions.

A Home for the Avant-Garde: Amigos del Arte

The battle for a distinctive Argentine modernism being waged in the pages of *Martín Fierro* was also fought within the elegant confines of the Asociación Amigos del Arte (Amigos), clearly modeled on city-based amateur societies like the Famiglia Artistica Milanese, which began in 1873 and preceded state funding for art within Italy. Amigos was founded on June 15, 1924, when fifty-five members of Buenos Aires's upper crust met at the socialite Elena Sansiñena de Elizalde's grandiose residence. This heterogeneous group--consisting of intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, collectors, writers, and artists--constituted the first

⁴¹⁷ "Italia y nuestra cultura," *Nosotros*, No. 227, April, 1928, 78-79. *Nosotros* was in circulation from 1907-1943, and was popular not only in Argentina but throughout Latin America.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

assembly of the organization, and the Board of Directors was elected that very day.⁴¹⁹ As most Argentine scholars conceive of Amigos, though, its life truly began when it opened its headquarters at 940 Calle Florida a month later, on July 12, 1924. According to its own by-laws, Amigos was established to “support and facilitate the work of Argentine artists and to organize art exhibitions, lectures, courses, and activities related to music.”⁴²⁰ Its more specific goals, outlined in Articles 1 and 2 of the by-laws, were to encourage the creation and diffusion of Argentine art, to enhance the material wellbeing of Argentine artists, and to “lend its halls to artists on the most favorable terms.”⁴²¹ As such, the organization’s aims corresponded with those of the recently-formed *Martín Fierro*, and the two developed a symbiotic relationship. Until the journal opened its own office in 1926, the editors held meetings at Amigos headquarters, and *Martín Fierro* closely reported on the activities of Amigos, thus granting it free publicity. The journal referred to Amigos as “an institution of undoubtable and vibrant vitality” and “our house,” thus highlighting the strong connection between the two.⁴²² Furthermore, many key figures were involved in both *Martín Fierro* and Amigos.

In some ways, Amigos proved more influential—and certainly more enduring—than *Martín Fierro*, because it was, after all, an institution. As Eduardo F. Constantini, the founder and current chairman of the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA) states,

⁴¹⁹ Much has been made of Amigos immediate internal unity and general cohesion as a subset of the ruling oligarchy. However, Marcelo E. Pacheco makes a case for a more diverse and fractious group. It wasn't until the thirties that the organization's solidarity was truly tested, but when it was, the sense of harmony proved quite fragile, leading to much infighting. For more on this, see Pacheco, "Chronological History of Amigos del Arte, 1924-1942, *Amigos del Arte, 1924-42*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA & Fundación Constantini, 2008), 313.

⁴²⁰ Patricia M. Artundo cites the by-laws in her essay “Institution, Art, and Society: The Asociación Amigos del Arte,” in the thorough exhibition catalog, *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, 273.

⁴²¹ Quoted in Artundo, 275.

⁴²² *Martín Fierro* ran a long article titled “La ‘Casa del Arte’ y los artistas jóvenes” (The House of Art and Young Artists) on the formation of Amigos del Arte in its seventh issue on July 23, 1924.

those involved in the Amigos sought to educate the public by sharing the global, cosmopolitan culture that had previously been cloistered in private homes.⁴²³ And since Amigos were initially self-funded by wealthy members, they were not beholden to state money, regulations, or changes in official taste.⁴²⁴ Therefore, they were free to support and show the art they desired, and they raised additional funds through the sale of exhibited artworks and small membership fees.⁴²⁵ Though the organization did generate a profit, all of the money was poured back into future programs, such that Amigos was seen as a largely unbiased philanthropic organization, dedicated more to expanding access to culture than to forwarding a specific agenda (as many felt the opinionated staff of *Martín Fierro* was).⁴²⁶

The organization was remarkably varied and egalitarian: they paid homage to late nineteenth century European and Argentine masters, helped to spark the careers of emerging artists who had recently returned from abroad, like Pettoruti and Solar, and hosted European and American leaders for well-attended lectures. Yet, while Amigos supported the so-called “Florida Group,” which consisted largely of European-trained artists who came from relatively privileged backgrounds, including Pettoruti and Solar, it also devoted time and space to central members of the “Artistas del Pueblo,” who had neither the funds nor desire to travel to Europe. The Artistas

⁴²³ Constantini, “Introduction,” in *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, 271. This 2008 exhibition was extremely important, for it was the first to highlight the history of Amigos directly rather than talking about the institution through the figures who were involved with it. Most know it as the body who brought in Le Corbusier, José Ortega y Gasset, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and F.T. Marinetti for talks, but they don’t know much about the body itself.

⁴²⁴ Though Amigos was self-funded for their first three years, between 1927-31 Amigos received a large public subsidy of \$80,000 annually, which was very high for the time. Between 1931-33, the subsidy was cut down to \$27,000 per year, and in 1934, the funding stopped entirely. Artundo discusses this on page 278.

⁴²⁵ Most galleries at the time took a roughly 20% commission, so this was quite generous. Amigos also assumed exhibition costs, while galleries did not. For more on this comparison, see Pacheco, 315.

⁴²⁶ Even with its myriad exhibitions (anywhere from sixteen to thirty-five per year), Amigos always saw themselves more as funders of short and long-term projects, like artist fellowships, than as an exhibition space.

del Pueblo—working class artists who were usually the children of Italian immigrants and lived in the port neighborhood, La Boca—focused on working class subjects, like urban laborers, and often exhibited their works in nontraditional spaces like factories and union halls, thus combining a bourgeois model with a Futurist one.⁴²⁷

Though most have viewed the Amigos as connected with the Buenos Aires elite, the relationship with the Artistas del Pueblo creates a “point of conflict for the conventional analysis,” according to curator Marcelo Pacheco. Instead, Pacheco asserts, this was a reciprocal relationship: Amigos provided a space in which the Artistas del Pueblo could show their work, and this connection made Amigos seem as though they had a “selfless interest” in promoting all kinds of art.⁴²⁸ This collaboration also reflects the occasional cooperation between different groups within the Italian immigrant community—the Artistas del Pueblo were often first generation Italo-Argentines, while the *Martín Fierristas* and Amigos were second or third generation—wherein more established émigrés helped recent arrivals integrate and succeed in Argentine society.

The Amigos exhibition season ran from April through December annually. In an average year, the organization hosted roughly twenty shows and ten lectures or concerts; in periods of particularly strong financial support, these figures doubled. Exhibitions ran the gamut: In 1926 alone, Amigos organized a conservative show of French Impressionism from the collection of Doctor Francisco Llobet *and* the first demonstration of complete abstraction by the Italo-

⁴²⁷ For more on the Artistas del Pueblo, see: María Teresa Constantín, “Italia en la *nebbia*. La Boca como residencia,” in Diana B. Wechsler, ed. *Italia en el horizonte de las artes plásticas*, pp. 191-219.

⁴²⁸ Pacheco, “Chronological History of Amigos del Arte, 1924-1942,” 317-18.

Argentina artist Juan del Prete, which caused quite an uproar.⁴²⁹ In 1929, Amigos commenced the Nuevo Salón, which highlighted new artistic trends, and became nearly as popular as the government-run salons. But according to historian Gonzalo Aguilar, Amigos were most important as a “platform for lectures,” and the aim of the lecture was to catalyze cultural debates in line with those occurring on the other side of the Atlantic.⁴³⁰ “It could be said that Amigos was an active mediator,” writes Aguilar, “permitting the construction of a space where these transformations were made evident and put on center stage.”⁴³¹

On this stage, many lectures supposedly felt more like dramatic performances than intellectual gatherings, thus appealing to a wide and varied public. As we’ll see in the next chapter, Marinetti gave a series of lectures at the Amigos in June of 1926, where he recited *Parole-in-libertà* style poems and lectured on Futurist architecture, music, poetry, fashion, and sports.⁴³² In 1931, Spanish writer, dramatist, and media darling Ramón Gómez de la Serna delivered a series of eight talks, in which he proceeded to take one ridiculous object after another out of his unusually small briefcase. He then engaged in a conversation with a wax mermaid, and used his “lecturer’s hand,” a giant cardboard cut-out hand, to gesticulate toward the crowd,

⁴²⁹ For a complete listing of Amigos exhibitions, see “Actividades Asociación Amigos del Arte” in *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA & Fundación Constantini, 2008), 226-35.

⁴³⁰ Another big area of promotion for Amigos was cinema. In fact, by 1930, Argentina was one of the great film capitals of the world in terms of consumption. For more on this, see Fernando Martín Peña’s essay “Friends of Film,” *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA & Fundación Constantini, 2008), 301-305.

⁴³¹ Gonzalo Aguilar, “Lectures at Amigos del Arte: An Intellectual Arena in Buenos Aires,” *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA & Fundación Constantini, 2008), 295.

⁴³² Marinetti’s trip to Argentina and Brazil will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. There was also an exhibition honoring him to coincide with his lectures. For more, see: Harper Montgomery, “Futurist Confrontations and Other Modes of Registering Modernity: Buenos Aires, 1924– 26” in *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, Vol. 7, Special Issue: Futurism in Latin America,” (Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 60-85.

showing that the organization kept up with recent trends in Futurist and Dada performance.⁴³³ Two years later, Spanish writer Federico Garcia Lorca and revolutionary Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros also visited. Garcia Lorca's program was so popular that only the press could attend, and his talks were broadcast on the radio. Many speakers also lectured at the University of Buenos Aires, traveled to smaller towns in the interior of the country, and then published excerpts of their lectures in the newspaper, *La Nación*. Because of Amigos' influence and vast capabilities, Buenos Aires became a major stop on the international lecture circuit throughout the 1920s.

Indeed, Buenos Aires in the 1920s was full of optimism, dynamism, and open borders. Alongside immigrants who had permanently and seasonally relocated to the country, political luminaries, and influential writers and artists also flocked to the River Plate region. The city seemed to have carved out a singular place in the evolving transatlantic network of cultural centers, but its character and sovereignty was still tenuous. As Hispanic Studies professor, Adriana J. Bergero, notes in her engaging text, *Intersecting Tango: Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires, 1900-1930*, the rapid and uneven modernization of the capital as compared to the rest of the country, and the melting pot of Buenos Aires itself, "produced profound identity dislocations of all kinds."⁴³⁴ These feelings of "dislocation" —and a national identity that was still in flux— were demonstrated in the art of Pettoruti, Solar and their colleagues, debated in

⁴³³ Serna (1888-1963) published over ninety works throughout his lifetime, but he became best known for "Greguerías," a form of short poetry that vaguely approximates the comedic one-liner. He was vehemently opposed to Francisco Franco, and after visiting in 1931, he returned in 1933, stayed throughout the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing Franco Regime, eventually dying in Argentina in 1963. Serna's lectures are discussed in Gonzalo Aguilar, 293-94.

⁴³⁴ Adriana Bergero, trans Richard Young, *Intersecting Tango: Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires, 1900-1930* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 5-6. Bergero uses different spaces within Buenos Aires, such as the elite Jockey Club, palatial private residences, theaters and cafés, and public parks and plazas, to explore the different social, economic, and psychological interactions of the city's inhabitants.

cultural journals like *Martín Fierro*, and exhibited in the halls of Amigos throughout the 1920s. By 1930, the city—and the nation as a whole—would have to reassess its cultural and geopolitical relationship with European powers, particularly Italy, as both countries underwent major governmental shifts.

CHAPTER 5:

“A Gigantic Extended Arm”: Italian Fascist Culture in Argentina

Introduction: “Wherever there is an Italian... there is the *Patria*”:

1930 marked the first time since the signing of Argentina’s 1853 constitution that a legitimately democratically elected president—Hipólito Yrigoyen—was ousted by a military coup, led by General José Félix Uriburu. Before and since then, Argentina’s history has been partially shaped by a series of violent military actions: the brutal dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-52), the Conquest of the Desert in the 1870s, the coup that brought Juan Domingo Perón to power in 1943, and another one in 1976, which overthrew Isabel Perón (Juan Perón’s third wife). Indeed, the army has often been a centralizing power in unifying the state and silencing rebellions. To quote a revealing statistic, between 1930 and 1983, Argentina experienced twenty-one years of military rule emerging from coups d’états, and over fifteen years of elected governments with presidents of military origin.⁴³⁵ These decades of militant leadership, particularly after other periods of liberalism, have deeply affected the national psyche, creating what Adriana Bergero, refers to as “destabilizing and interconnected sorts of identitary coups,” or crises.⁴³⁶

As political scientist Leslie Andersen contends, “moments of extreme authoritarianism and violence tell us something about culture. They highlight patterns in ways that more moderate moments cannot....They are the historical baggage a developing democratic culture must slough

⁴³⁵ Victoria Itzcovitz, “La ideología golpista antes de 1930: Los escritos de Leopoldo Lugones,” in *El Bimestre Político y Económico*, (Buenos Aires: 1986), 6.

⁴³⁶ Adriana J. Bergero, trans. Richard Young, *Intersecting Tango: Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires, 1900-1930* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2008), 301.

off and a standard against which to measure the democratic progress made.”⁴³⁷ Andersen asserts that, from a twenty-first century vantage point, Argentina does not appear to have a particularly robust history of freedom or Republicanism; it has long been ruled by personalist leaders who established cults of personality.⁴³⁸ Though she touches upon the period between 1880 and 1930—the years covered in this dissertation—she does not delve into this half century of relatively progressive reform, open borders, artistic growth, cultural mixing, and internationalist policy-making. These trends all came to a close in the 1930s, in part because of pressures from Fascist Italy, which entered the country under the guise of cultural diplomacy and education. This chapter investigates the wide-ranging affects of this infiltration, and how it relates to the rise of Nacionalismo, Argentina’s own brand of radical nationalism.

Preceding the overthrow of Yrigoyen and his party, the Union Civica Radical (UCR), Argentina enjoyed fourteen years of leftist, democratic rule. The UCR, founded in 1890 under the leadership of Leandro Alem, Yrigoyen’s uncle, initially drew deep support from Argentina’s new and rising middle class, made largely of Italian and Spanish immigrants. When these men won the right to vote in February of 1912 with the passage of the Sáenz Peña Law, which established universal male suffrage, they swiftly dethroned the nation’s conservative land-

⁴³⁷ Leslie F. Andersen, “Of Wild and Cultivated Politics: Conflict and Democracy in Argentina,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Fall, 2002), pp. 99-132. Andersen investigates the formation of democracy in Argentina and asks, “Can a wild, violently conflictual, and nondemocratic culture gradually metamorphose toward restrained, democratic methods of political interaction and conflict resolution?” She argues that societies with diverse populations, in which differences reinforce each other have a harder time maintaining peace during periods of transition than those in which there are “cross-cutting” ties of interactions, belonging, and loyalty. For her, Argentina is a society with reinforcing boundaries, making it more prone to violent conflict.

⁴³⁸ Andersen emphasizes Sarmiento’s role as a personalist, and a leader who was willing to use military force to quash opposition. Even though he was a reformer, he was also authoritarian in some respects, and though he believed in the importance of education, he wanted to use it in way to impose order and civilization rather than truly enlighten the public. For more, see Andersen, 111-113.

owning clique and put Yrigoyen in power in the election of October, 1916.⁴³⁹ Yrigoyen served as president between 1916-22, and again between 1928-30, and Marcelo T. Alvear, another UCR leader, served in between, from 1922-28. Throughout the presidencies of Yrigoyen and Alvear many historians trace the roots of the 1930 coup back to the 1916 election, which left conservative elites feeling disempowered and bitter, ultimately leading them to organize and support Uriburu later on. Andersen argues that, during his eight years in office, Yrigoyen led with his own brand of personalist autocracy, thus failing to establish a grass roots movement and a more institutionalized party, and leaving him vulnerable to usurpers.⁴⁴⁰ Not incidentally, the 1930 coup coincided with an abrupt decrease in immigration for the first time in fifty years, and Uriburu and his followers, the Uriburistas, worked to keep elite Creole families in power, an approach that was anathema to the progressive goals of Argentina's early leaders, including Sarmiento and the *Generación Ochenta*.

Uriburistas argued for "Christian values," and they placed emphasis on the fatherland, religious faith, family, blood, and tradition, echoing Mussolini and Italian Fascism, but adding a new clerical dimension. Uriburu himself envisioned a link between the church and military power, and according to historian Federico Finchelstein, he viewed Italian Fascism as "an example but not a template."⁴⁴¹ For Uriburu, Argentine clerical fascism was "the political expression of God"—making it holier than Italy's secular Fascism, especially given Mussolini's fraught relationship with the church—and Catholicism could be used to legitimize violent

⁴³⁹ For more on the history of voting in Argentina, the significance of the 1916 election, and the overall liberal climate in Argentina in the 1910s and 20s, see Bergero.

⁴⁴⁰ Andersen, 112. She says Yrigoyen intervened against uprisings in the interior provinces nineteen times, more than any other president before or since.

⁴⁴¹ Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, (Duke University Press: 2010), 69.

behavior as the political expression of the sacred.⁴⁴² The church never became a pawn to Nacionalismo; rather, the relationship was synergistic. Nacionalismo was the political expression of the church and Catholicism gave the movement a moral dimension. “Nacionalismo and Catholicism are united in a single idea: saving the patria morally and materially,” wrote one reporter in the right-wing, antisemitic journal *Clarín* in 1937, “God is using the nacionalistas to implant his kingdom on earth.”⁴⁴³ This link with clericalism stands as the chief difference between Nacionalismo and Italian Fascism, and it presents the strongest evidence that Nacionalismo was not a wholesale adoption of Mussolini’s ideas. Nacionalistas viewed other forms of Fascism through their own lens, believing that true Fascism was inherently Catholic.

Though Nacionalismo began as an elite movement in the 1920s, throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, it became more middle and working class.⁴⁴⁴ In 1931, Uriburu created the Legión Cívica Argentina (LCA), a Nacionalista paramilitary organization, which grew to incorporate 50,000 members, including many working class Italian immigrants living in La Boca, Buenos Aires. Between 1933-40, the number of Nacionalistas in the country grew from 100,000 to 300,000, roughly one per cent of the national population. Many of the new members were the descendants of European immigrants, and they joined the movement as a way to show just how Argentine they were.⁴⁴⁵ For Finchelstein, Nacionalismo coalesced into a powerful ideological force only *after* Uriburu died of cancer in 1932. He was succeeded first by Agustín P. Justo (president from 1932-38) and then Roberto M. Ortiz (president from 1938-42), both of

⁴⁴² Ibid, 123-25. Finchelstein mentions that a small minority of Argentine Catholics objected to this conflation, but most of them went along with it.

⁴⁴³ Quoted in Finchelstein, 123.

⁴⁴⁴ Finchelstein, 61-62.

⁴⁴⁵ Finchelstein notes that this is more followers than Mussolini had when he marched on Rome, proportionally.

whom came to power through fraudulent elections.⁴⁴⁶ Finchelstein writes, “The death of Uriburu...left a political vacuum, which was filled by a mobilizing myth.”⁴⁴⁷ In his absence, Uriburu became the embodiment of an ideology he had never truly supported, and because he was gone, his supposed central principles— sacrifice for the state, love of God, and violence against dissidents—could not be refuted and could be liberally interpreted and enacted in his name.⁴⁴⁸

One of the most extreme factions of Nacionalismo, a group called Aduna (Afirmación de Una Nueva Argentina), founded in May of 1933, claimed to be born out of Uriburu’s ideals— mainly the tenets of Italian fascism adapted to the Argentine condition, which lacked the external enemies that Fascists faced throughout Europe, but instead, had to fight an enemy from within. As Father Gustavo Franceschi, editor of the Argentine Catholic journal *Criterio*, explained in 1933, “The external enemy would not be in itself the cause of an Argentine nationalist movement; the probability of an aggression on the borders is practically nil. But this is not the case with respect to the internal enemy, and its importance amply justifies in our country the sudden shock of patriotism called Nacionalismo.”⁴⁴⁹ Nacionalistas imposed a culture of terror on anyone who was not Catholic, which was to say, not Argentine. Anyone who was not Catholic— Jews, Communists, and radicals—all became the internal enemy, and to rid the country of them was regenerative and necessary. As Leopoldo Lugones Junior, police chief and architect of torture under Uriburu, explained in 1934, “I do not attack Botana (antifascists) for being Botana,

⁴⁴⁶ For more on these elections, and the identity crises that followed the 1930 coup, see: Bergero, 300.

⁴⁴⁷ Finchelstein, 70.

⁴⁴⁸ Finchelstein notes that violent acts would be undertaken in Uriburu’s memory, with nacionalistas shouting “Viva Uriburu!” in the streets while torturing dissenters.

⁴⁴⁹ Gustavo Franceschi, *Criterio*, (Buenos Aires: September 21, 1933).

in the same way I do not smash a cockroach for its condition, but because of the danger of infection.”⁴⁵⁰

This notion of the internal enemy hearkens back to the “civilization versus barbarism” construct discussed in Argentina from the 1840s through the turn of the twentieth century. It presents Nacionalismo as yet another twist in a long line of xenophobic and racist ideas, making it homegrown, rather than imported. In *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, Finchelstein argues that, though Italian Fascism was based in a specific situation and locale, it was also “an ideology for export,” centered around the key binary of the national collective versus the individual.⁴⁵¹ Finchelstein eschews the idea of European versus Latin American characteristics, instead arguing that fascism “resists standard geo-historiographical categories;” instead, it could be appropriated and reinvented by politicians, just like European modernism was refashioned by artists.⁴⁵² In order to fully understand the Argentine road to Nacionalismo and its effects on high culture and national identity, we must examine how it connects to Mussolini’s carefully crafted campaign of cultural diplomacy abroad, which was fought with particular zeal in Argentina, where he saw the Italian emigre community as ripe for domination.

On March 30, 1923, Mussolini gave his first speech focusing on emigration. “For better or worse,” he stated, “emigration is a physiological necessity of the Italian people. We are forty

⁴⁵⁰ Quoted in Finchelstein, 75. Lugones was known to use techniques like water boarding and he created the *picana*, an electrical prod that was used to shock victims in sensitive areas like the genitals, nipples or mouth. The *picana* was unique in that it delivered high voltage, low current shocks, meaning that they were strong but not likely to kill a victim, enabling longer torture sessions.

⁴⁵¹ Finchelstein, 6.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 7-9. It is important to note; however, though Mussolini viewed Nacionalismo as an Argentine version of Italian Fascism, the Argentines did not see it this way. For them, it was something they created on their own.

million people enclosed in our narrow peninsula that has too many mountains, a land that cannot feed everyone.”⁴⁵³ Like Italian leaders before him, Mussolini understood the power of emigration as an economic safety valve and as a way to spread Italian influence overseas. While some of his contemporaries saw emigration as an admission that Italy could not support its children, he felt that it could be used to build an informal empire without borders, as long as Italians abroad kept the *patria* close to their hearts. The next day, his defense of emigration was published as a strongly-worded article titled “Il problema dell’emigrazione” (“The Problem of Emigration”) in *Il Popolo d’Italia*. In it, he referred to emigration as expansion, and declared that Italy would look out for all of its expatriates:

Italian expansion in the world is a problem of life or death for the Italian race. ... Expansion in every sense: moral, political, economic, demographic. I declare here that the government intends to protect Italian emigration: it cannot be indifferent to those who travel beyond the ocean, it cannot be indifferent because they are men, workers, and above all Italians. And wherever there is an Italian, there is the tricolor, there is the patria, there is the government’s defense of these Italians.⁴⁵⁴

A few weeks later, he followed up with another article, in which he justified the need to focus on emigrants: “The government does not make its appeal to its citizens in vain because it knows that distance makes love for the *patria* more alive and cogent...Italy to the Americans is like a gigantic extended arm...enabling [its distant sons] to participate ever more in its pain, its joy, its work, and its glory.”⁴⁵⁵ Rather than spreading an amorphous and largely innocuous *civiltà italiana*, as liberal Italy had done in earlier decades, Mussolini aimed to harness the strength of emigrant communities to expand the reach of Fascism, making emigrants “ambassadors of a new

⁴⁵³ The speech was transcribed in an article that Mussolini published the next day in *Il Popolo d’Italia*. For more, see: Benito Mussolini, “Il problema dell’emigrazione,” *Il Popolo d’Italia*, April 1, 1923. Quoted in David Aliano, *Mussolini’s National Project in Argentina*, (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), p. 25.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 192.

⁴⁵⁵ Benito Mussolini, “Agli italiani del nord e sud America,” *Popolo d’Italia*, April 19, 1923.

Italy,” according to historian David Aliano.⁴⁵⁶ He understood that, in order to succeed in influencing foreign communities and governments, he would need to infiltrate Italian organizations abroad.

During his first five years in power, Mussolini was too busy consolidating power at home to greatly influence the lives of Italians living in South America. He maintained the Commissariato Generale dell’Emigrazione, founded in 1901, putting it under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signaling the diplomatic importance of emigration. Monthly *Bolletino dell’Emigrazione* provided readers with updates from Italian embassies abroad and articles on specific emigrants.⁴⁵⁷ Simultaneously, he and his party embarked on a campaign of *Fasci Italiani all’Estero*, or Italian Fascism abroad.⁴⁵⁸ He asked the eight million Italians living outside of Italy to put their Italian identity first, eschewing any allegiances they had developed to their adopted homelands. In 1928, he took his first major step towards regulating the activities of emigrants by enacting the Statute of Fascists Abroad, which prohibited Italians from participating in foreign politics or even voting in local elections while living overseas. In particular, Mussolini targeted Argentina.

As Finchelstein explains, “The links between Argentina and Italy, Mussolini often said, were ... ‘arterial links’ of blood. From the very beginning, Italian fascism proclaimed itself to be a global ideology, extending naturally into Argentina.”⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, Argentina was often

⁴⁵⁶ Aliano notes that, while many felt that Liberal Italy had not done enough to impact its emigrant colonies, that may not be true. In fact, 32, 430 Italians had returned from Argentina to fight in World War I, which shows that they still felt a strong tie to the motherland. (p. 55)

⁴⁵⁷ Aliano, 30-31.

⁴⁵⁸ For more on the history of the *Fasci Italiani all’Estero*, see: Luca de Caprariis, “‘Fascism for Export’? The Rise and Eclipse of the Fasci Italiani all’Estero, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 151-183.

⁴⁵⁹ Finchelstein, 10.

presented as a “natural receptacle for Fascism” because of its large Italian population, and because the Argentine government had never resisted Italian influence before.⁴⁶⁰ After the United States began restricting immigration in 1924, Giovanni Borsella wrote about Argentina’s value as a home for Italians: “One could say that Argentina is the great nation best suited for our emigration...especially if one wanted to establish a position for themselves.”⁴⁶¹

Realizing that Argentina might be the most fertile ground for fascism, Mussolini and his party funded dozens of Fascists schools in Argentina, hoping to indoctrinate children from a very young age. Students studied Italian and used readers illustrated by Mario Sironi, which linked present-day Italy to the Roman Empire, and teachers were obliged to take an oath “to instill in their students love for our country and deep devotion to the King and to the *Patria’s* institutions.”⁴⁶² These schools were restructured versions of the earlier Scuole Italiane all’Estero — Italian elementary schools that were founded in Argentina as early as 1899—and throughout the late 1920s and 30s, they became highly politicized. Mussolini’s goal in funding these schools was clear: to “preserve the national character of emigrants across the ocean” while also presenting Argentina as a mere colony of “greater Italy” and Italy as the true *patria*.⁴⁶³

At the same time, Mussolini and his followers also orchestrated a more nuanced offensive in the realm of high culture, with a succession of three key events leading up to the 1930 coup. First, between February and September of 1924, a large ocean liner, the *Nave Italia*, visited every

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶¹ Quoted in Aliano, 56. Borsella notes that, especially after the United States closed its doors to Italian immigrants, Argentina was a particularly desirable choice.

⁴⁶² Aliano, 34.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 35. Argentine officials would eventually realize the treasonous nature of these schools and force them to close in the late 1930s, as we will see later in the chapter.

Latin American city with a substantial Italian community, including Buenos Aires. The ship carried industrial and artisanal Italian products, along with five hundred artworks by commercially successful but aesthetically—and politically—conservative artists. The goal of the voyage was ostensibly to strengthen commercial ties between Italy and Latin America, but the inclusion of art turned it into a transatlantic exhibition meant to spread Italian culture and politics overseas.

Two years later, in 1926, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, traveled to Buenos Aires, where he visited the Amigos del Arte to lecture on the modernizing impacts of Futurism and Fascism as part of a larger South American tour. This two-month-long trip, while financially motivated, also gave Marinetti the opportunity to spread his ideas to areas where he thought they would fall on sympathetic ears, meaning cities with large Italian populations throughout Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. The journal *Martín Fierro* reported on the tour with much enthusiasm, and impressive tickets sales indicate Marinetti's enduring popularity in the region, even once he was deeply entangled with Mussolini.

Finally, between 1927-30, art critic Margherita Sarfatti organized an international exhibition of the *Novecento Italiano*, a group of painters and sculptors who employed Fascist rhetoric, as she herself aimed to have her organization and artists recognized as the official state art. The show traveled to Buenos Aires in the fall of 1930, where it was curated by Emilio Pettoruti. In an act of defiance, Pettoruti refused to include Adolfo Wildt's bust of *Il Duce*, hinting at Argentina's growing resistance to Mussolini's imperial aspirations.

This chapter explores these three examples of cultural diplomacy together with Mussolini's Fascist program abroad. Significantly, though the *Nave Italia*, Marinetti's tour, and

the *Novecento Italiano* show all visited multiple Latin American cities, their combined impact was perhaps greatest in Buenos Aires. The outcomes; however, were not what Mussolini had predicted, and certainly not what he desired. Ultimately, the core tenet of Fascism—putting Italy above all else—was at odds with Argentina’s growing desire to build national cohesion and an independent culture. The newly “imagined community” of Argentines in the 1920s viewed itself as Republican, democratic, and increasingly independent from European cultural influences. The significant breakthroughs of the early to mid 1920s—the founding of *Martín Fierro* and *Amigos*, and Pettoruti’s Witcomb exhibition among them—pushed Porteños to think of themselves as more autonomous from Italy, making them more resistant to cultural colonization, even if they were not immune to the rising tide of Nacionalismo from within their ranks.

The Fasci Italiani all’Estero: Targeting Adults and Children:

In late 1923, Ottavio Dinale, a Fascist propagandist dispatched by Mussolini, went to Buenos Aires to establish Fascio, or local branches of the Fascist regime. Initially, he had little success. By 1924, there were 124 local Fasci organizations in the United States and Brazil (out of a total of 315 worldwide), but only eight in Argentina.⁴⁶⁴ Why did the country with the largest percentage of Italians—a country with many Italian founding fathers—lag so far behind in its embrace of Fascism? Luca de Caprariis posits that Fascism was initially less appealing in Argentina for two reasons: first, the Italo-Argentine community was already quite established and highly organized through different community groups, especially when compared to the emigrant community in Brazil, where Fascism spread quickly since people craved a sense of

⁴⁶⁴ Luca de Caprariis, 9.

belonging.⁴⁶⁵ Second, the Fascist message was too militant in a country that was, throughout the 1920s, highly pro-democracy and led by a liberal party.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, many members of the Italian community in Buenos Aires actively organized against Fascism in the 1920s. Ultimately, Mussolini and the Fasci Italiani all'Estero (FIE) made inroads in Argentina by moderating their message and focusing less on politics and ideology, and more on love of country, faith, and morality. When Buenos Aires Fasci cells did start to gain popularity, they emphasized the “organization had worked to cement all fellow nationals with love, educating the community to respect the Motherland,” a major departure from the more militant image the Party displayed elsewhere.⁴⁶⁷

In 1928, Piero Parini took over the FIE, and he devoted special attention to Argentina. Under Parini's auspices, Vittorio Valdani, an Italian engineer who had arrived in Buenos Aires in 1899 and became a Fascist proselytizer, created *Il Mattino d'Italia*, the first Fascist Italian-language daily in Argentina, which would become the mouthpiece for the regime. The mainstream Argentine press, such as *La Prensa*, *La Nación*, and *La Razón*, were all fascinated with Mussolini throughout the 1920s, and gave him significant unsolicited coverage, even if they

⁴⁶⁵ Even though the Italian populations in Argentina and Brazil were roughly equivalent in 1924—1,883,953 in Argentina, and 1,837,887 in Brazil—the Argentines had created 412 registered community associations, with 146,000 members, while Brazilians had only 192 associations, with 22,500 members. This statistic comes from: Commissariato Generale all' Emigrazione, *L' emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924-1925* (Rome: 1926), 271.

⁴⁶⁶ As Adriana J. Bergero explains, though Argentina experienced rising unemployment and labor strikes in the late 1910s, it then saw a series of legal and social reforms in the 1920s, many of which helped the working class, as well as women. The Feminist Center of the Socialist Party of Argentina was founded in 1918, and they fought for women's rights in the work place. In 1924, Law No. 11.317 restricted a woman's work day to eight hours, granted limited maternity leave, and outlawed night shifts for women under eighteen. In 1926, the Reform of the Civil Code gave married women the same rights as their husbands, single mothers were given parental authority, and widows gained control over property. For more on these and other reforms: see Bergero, “Chapter 14: New Alliance—Old Causes” in *Intersecting Tango*, pp. 261-75.

⁴⁶⁷ Quoted in de Caprariis, 162-63. De Caprariis also mentions that Fascist cells in South America did not conflict with Masonry Lodge membership, even though in Italy, the Fascist party had waged a violent campaign against Masonry.

did not support his politics.⁴⁶⁸ Though *Il Mattino* never rivaled *La Patria degli Italiani*—the most widely-read Italian language daily in Argentina—in circulation, Parini declared *La Patria* unpatriotic and un-Italian for coming out against Fascism. In 1931, the FIE bought out *La Patria*'s creditors, took control of the paper, and shut it down to channel its assets back to *Il Mattino*.⁴⁶⁹ At this point, *Il Mattino* became the most important Fascist daily abroad, with a clear propagandistic function. In 1934, the newspaper began collecting the signatures of Latin American Italians who claimed to stand behind Il Duce; all told, they amassed over 100,000 names. This allowed Mussolini to claim that he had substantial support abroad, leading to the creation of the Roma Press in Buenos Aires—a news service that provided daily briefings based on official telegraphs from the Italian embassy and the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture in Rome—which was subsidized by the Italian government.⁴⁷⁰

In an effort to create a new generation of Mussolini-supporters, the FIE began to target children and young adults in the late 1920s. In 1928, Mussolini ordered Italian representatives abroad to focus on the Fascist youth movement, organizing new sections of the Opera Nazionale

⁴⁶⁸ Finchelstein, 61. He explains how *La Razón* had long been an objective newspaper, until it was purchased by the Fascist regime in the late 1930s, only to break away and become anti-Mussolini after 1943.

⁴⁶⁹ Aliano, 67-68. *La Patria* had always stayed out of politics, until it began to take an anti-Fascist stance in the mid-late 1920s. This led another paper, *Il Legionario* to declare on January 11, 1930, “*La Patria* is no longer an Italian newspaper, but an antifascist Argentine paper written in Italian.” For more on the history of *La Patria*, see: Samuel L. Baily, “The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893-1913,” *The International Migration Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), pp. 321-340.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 69-70.

Balilla (ONB), or youth paramilitary, focusing on boys between the ages of eight and fifteen.⁴⁷¹ They did not wear the typical black shirts of the squadristi, and they were referred to as “Young Explorers” rather than Balilla, vaguely camouflaging their true aims and making it more difficult for the Argentine government—at the time still run by Yrigoyen—to shut them down.⁴⁷² In 1932, though, Parini began a summer camp program for foreign-born Italian children in the “Young Explorers” movement. Over 4,000 children traveled to Italy, received basic military training, met the Duce, and had their photos taken for posterity. Since Italy’s summers coincided with South American winters, few Argentine children were able to make the trip, so in turn, Italian summer camps came to Argentina—first to Cordoba, then Mendoza and Bahia Blanca. As one visitor remarked, “It was as if one of Italy’s borders came alive and miraculously flew over the ocean to distant lands of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, allowing young children the chance to breathe in Italian air and feel its spirit.”⁴⁷³

Perhaps most influential on the minds of young Italo-Argentines—even more so than the the Young Explorers movement or the summer camps—were the Scuole Italiane all’Estero (Italian Schools abroad), which became vehicles of Fascist education in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. These schools predate Mussolini’s rise and were initially founded to

⁴⁷¹ The term Balilla takes its name from Giovanni Battista Perasso, a Genoese boy who, according to local legend, started the revolt of 1746 against the Habsburg forces that occupied the city in the War of Austrian Succession when he threw a stone at an Austrian official. He was nicknamed Balilla and was chosen as the inspiration for the Fascist youth because of his revolutionary activity. In addition to the Balilla, the Fascists also constituted the Avanguardie (15–18-year-old boys), and the Piccole Italiane for girls. The aim was always to organize and educate a new, ‘Fascist’ generation loyal to Mussolini; however, they had to compete against the power of the Catholic Church and its own youth movement. For more, see: Alessio Ponso, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015).

⁴⁷² Parini made it clear to his operatives that the different uniform and name were just for show to avoid upsetting the Argentine government. In essence, he stated, these groups must be veritable sections of the ONB. For more, see Aliano, 71-2.

⁴⁷³ Quoted in Aliano, 73.

promote Italian language and culture with no political agenda. Over time, the Italian embassy put increasing pressure on schools to support the Fascist agenda, pulling funds from schools that did not and firing teachers who refused to espouse party rhetoric. Other teachers left in protest, and many of the more liberal schools closed due to lack of funding or low enrollment. Thus, by the end of the 1930s, Aliano explains, the schools had “effectively become vehicles for the regime’s promotion of a new Italy,” aimed to show that “to be an Italian abroad meant also being a Fascist.”⁴⁷⁴ By 1939, there were 3,374 students in government controlled schools, and 7,000 in after school programs, nearly a 50% increase from 1930.⁴⁷⁵ The pupils at these schools used new government-issued textbooks, convincingly illustrated by Mario Sironi to entice children to preserve Italian language and culture, resist assimilation, have nostalgia for their homeland (which most of them had never visited), foment pride in Italy’s heritage, and most importantly, love Mussolini.⁴⁷⁶

First and second grade texts for the Scuole Italiani all’Estero were the most direct in their messaging.⁴⁷⁷ The first grade reader, *Lecture classe prima*, begins with innocuous images of animals, landscapes, and beatific children hugging their parents, but a number of references to Italian patriotism were interspersed throughout: On page 9, a young girl pulls a toy train behind her shouting, “A Roma! A Roma!” (To Rome! To Rome!) [Figure 1], as if she can’t wait to move there. Twelve pages later, a sentimental boy holds a map of Italy to his heart, exclaiming, “Italia,

⁴⁷⁴ Aliano, 76.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, 77. This is still a very low number if we remember that the Italian population in Argentina was over one million.

⁴⁷⁶ Aliano, 86. For more, see the textbook: Clementina Bagagli, ed. *Lecture classe prima: Scuole italiane all’estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933).

⁴⁷⁷ The first grade reader, published in 1933, was more blatantly Fascist than the second grade reader, from 1929, written before Uriburu seized power. Perhaps the shift from Yrigoyen to Uriburu emboldened the writers of these texts to become more heavy-handed in their content.

terra mia, ti amo molto! Tutti ti amiamo” (Italy, my land, I love you very much! We all love you!) [Figure 2].⁴⁷⁸ Vittorio Emanuele III, king of Italy, is referred to as *my* king, and in another image, a stone-faced boy wearing a Balilla uniform gives the Fascist salute and prays for God to help him become a “good Italian” [Figure 3].⁴⁷⁹ The second grade reader includes a section on saluting the flag, explaining that all “Youth of the Fatherland” greet the Italian flag with “love and respect,” because it fought bravely during the First World War.⁴⁸⁰

The latter part of the first grade text turns more conspicuously imperialist, discussing Fascism and Mussolini, and the role of children in increasing Italy’s strength around the globe. In a short section title “La colonia” (the colony), the text asks children to consider why there are so many Italian children in their school, even though they live in another country, and it answers that their fathers were forced to look for work abroad. But instead of admitting a lack of opportunity in Italy, the text presents Italy as expansive and Italians as omnipresent: “In every big city in the world there are hundreds and hundreds of [us]. In each of these cities, Italians meet, help each other, love each other, form a large family: In the colony....[The Italian] feels his homeland less distant because so many Italians live near him.”⁴⁸¹ This rhetoric of the colony, imprinted on the minds of six-year-old children, turns Italy into a powerful empire, connected

⁴⁷⁸ Clementina Bagagli, ed. *Lecture classe prima: Scuole italiane all'estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933). The girl is illustrated on page 9, and the boy on page 21. Later, a section on Rome explains that Rome is the heart of Italy and the most stunning of Italian cities, but that, of course, all Italian cities are beautiful.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 44.

⁴⁸⁰ Giuseppe Fanciulli, ed. *Lecture classe seconda: Scuole italiane all'estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1929), 100-101.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 86.

through books—like the ones they are reading—and newspapers, which are discussed in the next section, as a way for parents to stay connected to the “distant homeland.”⁴⁸²

The final sections explain that the fascio is a symbol of “harmony, union, and love, courage and strength,” and that “All Italian children love Mussolini...He loves them, because children are the most beautiful hope for Italy; if they grow up strong, hardworking, and good, Italy will also be strong, powerful and happy.”⁴⁸³ [Figure 4] In a section on the Balilla, Mimmo—a generic Italian boy—joins the movement, his mother sews his uniform with ardor, and he understands that he is now “a small soldier of Italy, and like all soldiers, he must always be strong, loyal, and courageous.”⁴⁸⁴ [Figure 5] In this careful wording, the task of maintaining Italy’s greatness is passed on to Mimmo, thus endowing the young readers with great responsibility and a sense of fulfillment.

In some ways, these textbooks were not vastly dissimilar from other countries’ official textbooks—they told a heroic national tale—but in this case, the story belonged to a nation that the students did not reside in. The young readers were not sophisticated enough to understand the subversive nature of their schooling, which encouraged them to become more familiar with Italy’s geography and origin story than Argentina’s. At the Scuola Italiana Vittorio Emanuele III, in La Plata, the principal even admitted, “I can tell you that [Fascist] propaganda is the principal

⁴⁸² Ibid, 87. The text gets highly emotional here, turning Italy into a family and anthropomorphizing it: “Father loves the country as a family and therefore reads the newspaper with the same pleasure with which he reads the letters of his loved ones.”

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 89.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 95.

aim of our instruction.”⁴⁸⁵ Herein lies the inherent contradiction of the Fascist campaign in Argentina, a conundrum that ultimately led to its downfall: Italo-Argentine children (and their parents) were asked to divide their allegiances—while living in Argentina, they were expected to be faithful to a motherland that almost none of them had ever seen. As Aliano puts it, “a patriotic program designed to inspire loyalty to [Italy], became a seditious agenda undercutting loyalty to [Argentina].”⁴⁸⁶ By the late 1930s, the Argentine government decided that these schools were violating Argentine sovereignty and accused them of being traitorous, leading to their eventual closure.

This schools’ broader mission was expanded to adults in the form of propagandistic films and pamphlets. Parini wrote a handbook in 1937, *Norme di vita fascista all’estero* (Norms for the Fascist Life Abroad), in which he encouraged Italian emigrants to think of themselves as Italian first and to speak Italian, forgetting their countries of residence or any type of regional differences:

Mussolini’s Italian who lives beyond Italy’s borders is like all of the Italians living inside the kingdom. He is a citizen, a soldier, a worker; his personal life must be a model and a mirror of the traditional values perfected and refined by the Fascist education...Il Duce watches over all Italians, and no one is closer to the Duce than you who seem so far away.”⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in Aliano, 105. Interestingly, schools in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area, including La Plata, were more successful, perhaps because the Italian community still had new arrivals who felt connected to Italy. Further inland, most Italo-Argentines had been in the country for at least a few decades by 1930, so children would be born to parents who had developed allegiance to Argentina by this time.

⁴⁸⁶ Aliano, 87.

⁴⁸⁷ Parini, *Norme di vita fascista all’estero*. This text was published by the Segreteria generale dei fasci all’estero, but Aliano claims that it is Parini’s writing. He quotes from it on page 89.

Most adult Italo-Argentines experienced some level of internal conflict in identifying as both Argentine and Italian Fascist.⁴⁸⁸ In these cases, a softer message—focusing more on Italian culture and values, or *Italianità*, and less on Fascism—could be used to foment fealty and love of *Patria*.

The Nave Italia and Exporting Latinità in 1924:

As we've seen, Mussolini was hardly the first to attempt an exportation of *Italianità* across the Atlantic. In fact, the whole notion of “Latin America,” and the term itself, is based on a concept of *latinità*, a common heritage and Latin-based language, shared by Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, and Latin America.⁴⁸⁹ As Walter Mignolo explains, the term “Latin America” was first used by a French intellectual, Michel Chevalier, in 1836. It was then taken up by Creole elites throughout the Americas in order to forge lasting bonds with Southern European countries. The term implicitly excludes indigenous and African populations, focusing instead only on people of white European descent, and therefore, ascribing cultural superiority to countries with whiter populations, like Argentina and Uruguay. Furthermore, it bifurcated the Americas, separating Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries from the English-speaking United States and Canada, as if to distance South and Central America from the influence of

⁴⁸⁸ In some ways, this dissonance was exacerbated by multivalent symbolism. For example, while in Italy, the *fascio* represented a unified Italy, in Argentina it also symbolized the Republicanism of the French Revolution. Another example is Giuseppe Garibaldi: While in Italy, Garibaldi represented only the unification of Italy, in South America, where he had lived in exile from November of 1835 through January of 1848, Garibaldi was also a revolutionary hero who fought against the tyrannical leader, Juan Manuel de Rosas in the 1840s. For more on the life of Garibaldi and his time in South America, see: Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: The Invention of a Hero*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Chapter 2, “In Search of Garibaldi,” deals with his time in South America, and also shows how Young Italy aimed to recruit within Latin America in the 1830s, drawing a historical parallel with Mussolini's mission a century later. One exception is the Scuola Dante Alighieri of Rosario, which was a model of success.

⁴⁸⁹ For more on the concept of *Latinità* or *Italianità*, see: William Giovinazzo, *Italianità: The Essence of Being Italian and Italian-American*, (Staffordshire: Dark River, 2018).

Great Britain (and later, the United States). At face value, Mignolo insists, the term seems innocuous, but secretly, it has political ramifications and hints at empire: it was used as a justification for European cultural domination well into the twentieth century.⁴⁹⁰ Building on Mignolo's argument, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo also critiques the notion of "Latin America," arguing that it is obsolete and racially-based, a term that should have vanished in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹¹ And as Laura Moure Cecchini explains, "Latin America was considered the perfect space for cultural colonization: appropriately similar to Italy for the latter to be able to influence and mold it, but also sufficiently underdeveloped to admire the motherland and be willing to imitate it."⁴⁹²

Between February and September of 1924—contemporaneous with the founding of *Martín Fierro*, *Los Amigos*, and Pettoruti's dramatic debut at the Galeria Witcomb—Fascist Italy made an initial concerted attempt to spread *latinitá*, when Mussolini and his staff sent the *Nave Italia (Italia)* to Latin America, with Italian products and art on board. The germination of the *Italia* dates back to the 1880s, when the Genoese importer-exporter, Goffredo Canepa, envisioned a traveling exhibition of Italian merchandise to spread commerce throughout the Americas. It ultimately came to fruition in the 1920s when Alessandro Mondolfi, secretary of the *Sindacato Finanziario Italiano* in Venezuela pushed to make it happen, arguing that such an enterprise could be mutually beneficial to Italy and Latin America, if it ultimately fostered

⁴⁹⁰ See: Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005). Chevalier was perhaps the term to cement ties with French colonies in the Caribbean, after having lost Quebec in the 1750s.

⁴⁹¹ For more, see: Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁴⁹² Laura Moure Cecchini, "The *Nave Italia* and the Politics of Latinitá: Art, Commerce, and Cultural Colonization in the Early Days of Fascism," *Italian Studies*, Volume 71, No. 4, November 2016, 465.

expanded transatlantic trade for everyone involved.⁴⁹³ Mondolfi's efforts, combined with Mussolini's focus on emigration throughout 1923, led to the trip finally coming to fruition in 1924.

The combination of commercial and artistic exchange embodied by the ship demonstrated that Italy was superior to its rivals for influence in the region: it was less economically single-minded than the United States, and more modern and industrialized than Spain.⁴⁹⁴ Regulations on the ship stated that "only artwork that, after rigorous scrutiny, will be considered worthy of representing Italian art abroad" would be shown.⁴⁹⁵ Scattered amidst hundreds of commercial products, five hundred paintings were displayed on the ship's stern deck, hung on portable walls, allowing them to be brought inside in case of inclement weather. The works rotated at each seaport, and all of them were for sale.⁴⁹⁶ Styles varied from neoclassical to Pre-Raphaelite to Symbolist, and there was a clear theme of militarism, as at least sixty battle scenes painted by Giulio Aristide Sartorio during World War I were showcased.

Other subjects included daily life in the Italian countryside, bucolic landscapes, portraits of national heroes, and figures in old-fashioned regional dress. Though no catalog from the *Nave Italia* exists, Moure Cecchini insists that no Futurists, Metaphysical, or even newly minted Novecento artists were included, demonstrating that an anti-modern, traditionalist agenda prevailed. Though the artists represented different regions and generations, none of them were

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 452.

⁴⁹⁴ At the time of the *Italia's* voyage, trade between Italy and Argentina (and other Latin American countries) was still small. Britain was the largest trading partner by far, followed by the United States. In 1927, Britain was still responsible for over half of the foreign investment in Argentina, 28% of all exports, and 20% of all imports.

⁴⁹⁵ Quoted in Moure Cecchini, 456.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 455-8.

unknown or avant-garde in 1924; in fact many of them were derided by artists such as Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà for having an obvious and “stale style.”⁴⁹⁷ Yet, this traditionalism and investment in figuration was intentional and didactic, meant to impress the audience of “uncultured” emigrants with the leitmotif of *latinità* and remind them of their roots. In addition to his battle scenes, Sartorio exhibited a frieze, *Fede-Mondo Latino Oceanico* (Latin Oceanic Faith World, 1904) [Figure 6], which depicts an angel (faith) on the left, and an image of South America positioned horizontally across the Atlantic, creating a bridge to Europe. To underscore this connection, the continent was supported by two classical athletes and pointing towards the angel, illustrating how Latin America was sustained by Latin culture and religion.

According to Moure Cecchini, the official aim of the *Nave Italia* was to establish commercial relationships with Latin American countries, but embedded within was the desire to forge ties with emigrant communities and colonize them culturally under Italian influence.⁴⁹⁸ Mussolini wanted emigrants to see that present-day Italy was stronger and more prosperous than the one many of them (or their parents) had left behind decades earlier, as evidenced by the array of fine commercial products. In reality, the vast majority of the goods aboard the *Italia* were produced in the industrialized North, while most Italians living abroad by this time had come from the South. Significantly, authorities of the *Nave Italia* used the terms Italian and Fascist interchangeably, and the politics were obvious to anyone who was paying attention. The

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 459.

⁴⁹⁸ Moure Cecchini focuses her in-depth analysis of the *Nave Italia* on the planning of the trip, its artistic program, and the response among different communities that it visited.

ship's crew wore black shirts, performed the Roman salute, and sang fascist anthems; the boat even had a fascio aboard.⁴⁹⁹

“The politics of *Latinitá* is to show the commonalities between the ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized,’” Moure Cecchini writes, “avoiding a racist discourse while still underlining the superiority of Italy.”⁵⁰⁰ Yet the contents of the *Nave Italia* simultaneously snubbed working class immigrants—who couldn’t afford the products or the art sold on the ship—and the working class Italians who made the products but were represented in little of the art. Furthermore, the display completely ignored the importance of indigenous cultures throughout the Americas, highlighting Mussolini’s lack of respect for their cultural autonomy. As Moure Cecchini notes, the *Nave Italia* was best received in countries with larger Italian and smaller indigenous populations, like Uruguay and Argentina, and poorly received in places like São Paulo and Veracruz, Mexico, which had smaller Italian communities and vibrant indigenous cultures. In fact, of all the artistic groups who witnessed the ship’s arrival, only the Mexican muralists seemed to recognize or criticize the voyage’s political program. They railed against the arrival of art that was neither avant-garde nor reflective of any indigenous American cultures. In particular, they were outraged that the art on board was what the ruling classes had purchased fifteen to twenty years ago, making it not only passé, but also conservative and associated with old regimes. The Mexican

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 454. A fascio, of fasces, is a bundle of rods with an axe in the middle, a Roman imperial symbol of authority that was later adopted by the Fascist regime, in part to make a connection with Ancient Rome.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 450.

Communist Party even invited people to boycott the ship in solidarity with the Mexican and Italian working class, to no avail.⁵⁰¹

Also in 1924, Mussolini dispatched one of his trusted *gerarchi* (a member of the Fascist party), Giovanni Giurchiati, as an emissary to Latin America for nine months to investigate how different countries might be swayed by—and help—the regime. Giurchiati was a member of the Grand Council and a Fascist deputy. From 1930-31, he was the Secretary of the Fascist party. At the end of his trip, Giurchiati returned home and published a comprehensive study of each nation he had visited, titled *La crociera italiana nell'America Latina* (The Italian Cruise in Latin America) (1925). Giurchiati argued that Italy must be more organized in its approach to Latin America, and he discussed emigrant communities in terms of *expansion*: “Instead of sending Latin American emigrants in disordered flocks, we should send them in pacific battalions to establish productive enterprises, disciplining our movement of demographic expansion to our incalculable advantage.”⁵⁰² This statement from 1925 echoes the sentiments of many Italian statesmen from the 1880s: the notion of emigrant colonialism had not died out with the birth of *Martín Fierro* and calls for an autonomous Argentine art in the early 1920s, by figures like Pettoruti, Solar and Jorge Glusberg.

Regarding Argentina, where the largest community of Italians in Latin America resided, he argued that Italy might have a distinct advantage: “The fruitful collaboration of Italy with Argentina will establish indestructible links between the Capidoglio, the citadel of Latinness, and

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 465-68. There were also complaints in Valparaíso, Chile, and there is less information about the reception in Argentina, but there do not seem to have been any objections or incidents that were recorded in the press. For more on the relationship between Mexico and Fascist Italy, see: Franco Savarino Roggero, *México e Italia: política y diplomacia en la época del Fascismo, 1922-1942* (México: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2003).

⁵⁰² Giovanni Battista Giurchiati, *La crociera italiana nell'America Latina*, (Rome: Art Grafiche Affini Roma, 1925): 9-10.

the Latins beyond the sea.”⁵⁰³ But in his unpublished notes, he was less confident, expressing anxiety that Italians in Argentina seemed to be losing their Italian identity and were even embarrassed by it, due to Italy’s military defeat in Adwa, Ethiopia in 1896. He suggested that perhaps they would be prouder now that Fascism was making Italy strong again, and he proposed that the image of a poor nation that exported its people be replaced with that of a thriving nation expanding its global influence.⁵⁰⁴

Count Bonifacio Pignatti, the Italian Ambassador to Argentina, confirmed in 1930, that “The children of Italians feel that they are Argentine to the very marrow of their bones... They will never, under any circumstances, consider themselves Italian citizens.”⁵⁰⁵ Though, as we saw in the prior chapter, for many, Argentine identity had Italianness lodged within it, but in some cases, the Italian elements—beyond kinship— might have been difficult to perceive, especially for an outside observer. The playwright and novelist Massimo Bontempelli, who visited South America in 1934, wrote that he heard many in Argentina say “I am an Argentine, son of Italians,” but not one claimed, “I am an Italian born in Argentina.”⁵⁰⁶ Rodolfo del Mineo, a member of Prince Umberto’s delegation who traveled with Giuriati, posited that the issue for Italians in Argentina was that Argentina was alluring, and Italians were ultimately an adaptable people. “We have to fight against this country’s natural attraction that more than any other foreign land has the power to absorb and assimilate young people,” he wrote, “and our young people more than

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 57; qtd, 13.

⁵⁰⁴ Giuriati’s unpublished notes, “Studio dei paesi dell’ America Latin,” are discussed in Aliano, 58-9.

⁵⁰⁵ Quoted in Aliano, 58

⁵⁰⁶ Quote in Ibid., 60.

any other are susceptible to this phenomenon.”⁵⁰⁷ On the other hand, Argentine President Marcelo T. de Alvear (1922-28), the son of Italian parents, said in *Corriere della Sera*, a daily newspaper published in Milan, in 1926, “I would not be an Argentine if I didn’t love Italy. My love for Italy is second only to my love for my own fatherland.”⁵⁰⁸

Alvear raises the question: Could an Italo-Argentine love both countries, or was there a conflict of interest in this divided loyalty? As Aliano has noted, Mussolini’s desire to impose Fascism on Argentina was inherently paradoxical: he was pushing a nationalist agenda for Italy in a different country that was fomenting its own sense of nationalism. And as Piero Parini argued in the 1930s, “If there is a sector in which Fascism has radically renovated a mentality and a consciousness, it is undoubtedly that of Italians outside of its borders.”⁵⁰⁹ Was it possible for these two nationalisms to grow together, or would pushing too hard lead to a break between them? And Did Fascism change the way that Italo-Argentines thought about Italy?

The Aesthetics of Fascism: Marinetti’s Grand Tour:

Despite complicated feelings about the politics of Fascism, many Argentines were interested in the movement from an artistic perspective, and they admired the cultural renewal touted by the regime. In the artistic and literary world, Fascism was often equated with Futurism, and Futurism was equated with Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, who made his first whirlwind visit to South America in 1926. In just two months, he visited Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santos, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio again. He was initially planning to go to Chile and Mexico as well,

⁵⁰⁷ Quoted in Ibid., 58.

⁵⁰⁸ Quoted in Finchelstein, 51.

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in Aliano, 3.

but that part of the voyage was ultimately canceled due to lack of funds. Ever the self-promoter, Marinetti referred to the trip as a “triumphal explosion of Futurism in South America.”⁵¹⁰ In truth, though the trip did align with the global ambitions of the Futurist movement—which dovetailed with Fascism’s global push—it was largely financially motivated. It seems possible that Marinetti thought he could earn more money and draw bigger crowds in Latin America than in Europe, perhaps because of the large Italian populations in Brazil and Argentina. As such, he set out on a grueling itinerary like a rock star on tour. He was even organized and promoted by Niccolino Viggiani, a Rio-based concert promoter known for arranging visits of high profile European musicians, many of them Italian, to Latin America.

As Jeffrey Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha explain, “For Viggiani as for Marinetti himself, a diva’s recital and a Futurist’s road show belonged in the same ad column because they were kindred forms of spectacle.” Certainly, Viggiani, who ran a theater company that performed at Rio’s prestigious Teatro Lírico, knew how to tap into Marinetti’s sizable ego and hunger for international acceptance, and he thought the tour could be financially successful. He advertised the lecture series for two months, from April to June of 1926, in Brazilian newspapers like *A Manhã* and *Jornal de Comercio*, hoping to make the tour more lucrative for both Marinetti and himself. This level of broad promotion did not, of course, weaken the political elements of the tour, but rather, increased its propagandistic weight as a form of broad cultural diplomacy. The contract for the tour, from December 16, 1925, reads:

The poet F.T. Marinetti commits himself to undertake a lecture tour (minimum eight lectures) including Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires...Mr. Viggiani commits himself to organizing the lectures in question in the best theaters of the

⁵¹⁰ Marinetti is quoted in: Jeffrey Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, “Brazilian Velocities: On Marinetti’s 1926 Trip to South America,” *South Central Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2/3 *Futurism and the Avant-Garde* (Summer-Autumn, 1996), pp. 105-156. The quote comes from page 105.

above-mentioned cities...it being understood that seven days will be the minimum period spent in each city (so as to ensure the success of the lectures by means of interviews, etc.) Mr. Viggiani commits himself to paying F.T. Marinetti...twenty percent of the net after-tax box-office receipts.⁵¹¹

In addition to the twenty percent cut of ticket sales, which was fairly standard for a performer, Marinetti also received a per diem and all of his travel expenses and hotels were covered. So financially, the trip was a boon for Marinetti, who was then in need of money.

In Brazil, Marinetti found himself caught in the cross-hairs of a rift between the Paulista (São Paulo-based) and Carioca (Rio-based) modernist movements, who were debating how much European influence they should allow to seep into their culture in the years leading up to the publication of the *Manifesto Anthropofago* of 1928, which would argue for aggressive cultural cannibalism of European modernism. Marinetti arrived at Rio's port on May 13, 1926, and was greeted by Brazilian writers and Italian statesmen. He gave his first speech at the Teatro Lirico, Viggiano's home theater, and though the press described it as "[attended by] a huge audience mainly composed of men of letters," and an "extraordinary triumph being deliriously applauded," in reality the theater was only two-fifths full (596 tickets sold and 900 seats were left empty).⁵¹² He jumped from one topic to the next—the sensual similarities of Brazilians and Italians, the modernity of the cosmopolitan city, the need to oppose short haircuts for women—leaving the audience befuddled.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ The contract is available at the Marinetti Archive, Yale Beinecke Library, series III, box 53 folder 1978. It is also quoted in: João Cezar de Castro Rocha, "'Futures Past': On the Reception and Impact of Futurism in Brazil," in Günter Gerghaus, ed. *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2000), 219.

⁵¹² Schnapp and Castro Rocha, 112-13. Most of the tickets sold were cheap and probably went to students. Simultaneously,

⁵¹³ Ibid, 114.

His second talk had almost double the attendance, with 957 tickets sold, but when Marinetti began to praise Mussolini, the audience erupted into a ruckus. This response, and Marinetti's ensuing amusement, recalled Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights: The Pleasures of Being Booed," in which he wrote, "Everything that is booed is not necessarily either beautiful or new. But everything that is immediately applauded is certainly not superior to the average intelligence, and is thus something that is mediocre, banal, spewed up again, or over-digested."⁵¹⁴ Thus, Marinetti could justify the audience's enthusiastically appalled response by claiming that he was pushing them outside their comfort zone, which was more important than gaining easy acceptance. Similarly, Benedetta, Marinetti's wife, wrote to her brother that "everything is a big big time success. For over a week the newspapers can't get enough of Marinetti, Benedetta, and Futurism."⁵¹⁵

When Marinetti moved on to São Paulo, two factors made the visit more explosive and fraught from the outset: first, the political aspect of Marinetti's Rio trip was highlighted by the press, so attendees came in expecting it; and second, Viggiani did not have strong connections there, so the visit wasn't as well publicized or organized, and as a Carioca, he was viewed as an outsider. Mario de Andrade had been paid by Viggiano to introduce Marinetti on his first performance in the city, but he objected to the Futurist leader so vehemently, that he ultimately

⁵¹⁴ In this manifesto, from 1910, Marinetti claims that to get applause from an audience is a sign of mediocrity, because it means one's work is too easily digestible. Hard won success and acclaim, Marinetti argued, was ultimately better than immediate success and acceptance. The manifesto was originally published as a flier on October 11, 1910 and then reprinted in the Turin theater journal, *Il nuovo teatro*, nos. 5-6 (December 25, 1910-January 5, 1911). This quote comes from the translation in: Günter Berghaus ed., trans. Doug Thompson, *F.T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 181-5.

⁵¹⁵ Quoted in Schnapp and Castro Rocha, 116.

returned the money and refused to even appear at the lectures.⁵¹⁶ He cited political reasons, writing that “it is practically certain that Marinetti is serving as a fascist agent on this trip”⁵¹⁷ Still, Marinetti’s lectures were extremely well-attended, albeit by people who were there to argue against him and show their active participation.⁵¹⁸ When Marinetti took the stage during his first speech, the audience immediately began yelling and hurling vegetable projectiles. Marinetti later referred to the event gleefully, as the “noisiest and most violent Futurist soirée of my entire existence!”⁵¹⁹ In fact, this was the essence of a Futurist Seratê—the crowd was mobilized and polarized, and everyone was an active participant. Though the remainder of his lectures in São Paulo were less spectacular, the impact of the first one could not be overstated, and news of the uproar reached Argentina before he did.

When Marinetti arrived in Buenos Aires, he claimed to come with the intention of broadcasting Futurism’s theories and nothing more, emphasizing that he had an artistic agenda, not a political one. Marinetti’s visit was advertised in the pages of *Martín Fierro*, which devoted nearly half an issue to him on June 8, 1926, only three days before his arrival, and another one to him following his visit, in July, 1926. The issue included a lengthy *Homenaje a Marinetti*

⁵¹⁶ It appears that Viggiani wanted Mario to be there because he was such a towering figure in Paulista modernism at this moment. Furthermore, the other major Paulista, Oswald de Andrade, who would go on to write the *Manifesto Antropofago*, was currently in Paris with his future wife, Tarsila do Amaral. Later, when Marinetti wrote about his time in Brazil and mentioned the intellectual leaders of Rio and São Paulo, he intentionally left Mario de Andrade out of his account because he was still bruised by his absence during the lecture series. Interestingly, Marinetti focused instead on figures who would now be considered less avant-garde, thus showing that Marinetti himself was out of touch with truly radical trends by 1926.

⁵¹⁷ Quoted in *Ibid*, 117. Ironically, Mario de Andrade would go on a state-funded lecture circuit in Northeastern Brazil a few years later, so he became a functionary as well, though he made far less money than Marinetti.

⁵¹⁸ Of course, high attendance meant more money for Marinetti. His total profit from the Brazilian leg of the trip was \$850, or \$12,000 in today’s money, a sizable sum for less than three weeks of work. Marinetti’s second lecture in São Paulo was still well attended, but because Viggiano prevented students from entering, it was more civilized, and his last two lectures were increasingly tame and poorly attended. For more, see: Schnapp and Castro Rocha, 120-122.

⁵¹⁹ Marinetti, quoted in Schnapp and Castro Rocha, 119.

(Homage to Marinetti), a new Spanish translation of the *Founding Manifesto of Futurism* from 1909, a biography of Marinetti's personal life, and images by Futurist artists like Umberto Boccioni, Anotonio Sant'Elia, both of whom had died during World War I. The journal's editors declared that "Marinetti could not arrive in Buenos Aires without *Martín Fierro* opening its arms in a gesture of cordial hospitality," and he was amiably called "an effective sanitizer of a corrupt aesthetic, a shaved Messiah in a bowler hat who attracts the warmth of our sympathies," and "the most celebrated propagandist of new esthetic ideas that exists today in our world."⁵²⁰ Indeed, they acknowledged that Marinetti helped to "prepare the terrain" for the entire *Martín Fierrista* movement, and that he was unparalleled in terms of proclaiming the beauty of modern life. But a month later, following Marinetti's trip, the editors called him a "superficial man" and merely a "propagandist of tendencies, aspirations, and doctrines of the movement that he created," rather than a true artist.⁵²¹ Furthermore, they made it clear that they were interested in Marinetti's artistic value, not his political motives: "It has been said that Marinetti arrives to these American lands with a political motive," they wrote. "In this case, it may not be unnecessary to declare, to avoid any suspicious bother, that in terms of Marinetti as a political figure, we have nothing to do with his agenda."⁵²²

Fearing that his politics may be unwelcome after the Brazilian response, Marinetti was careful to present himself as a cultural figure, and according to all documentation, he refrained from mentioning Fascism or Mussolini in his Argentine appearances. This leg of the trip was a financial bonanza. Between June 11 and June 26, 1926, he delivered thirteen lectures, beginning

⁵²⁰ Editors, "Homenaje a Marinetti," *Martín Fierro*, Number 29-30, June 8, 1926, page 209. Translation is mine.

⁵²¹ Editors, "Martin Fierro y Marinetti," *Martín Fierro*, Number 30-31, July 8, 1926, page 223. Translation is mine.

⁵²² Ibid, 209.

in Buenos Aires, then traveling south to La Plata, and northwest to Rosario. In the capital, he gave three lectures at the Teatro Coliseo (two at the beginning and one at the end of his Argentine tour), to a total of 1,359 spectators. He discussed topics such as “The Origins and True Concept of Futurism,” *teatro sintetico*, and recited *Parole-in-libertá* style poems. From there, he went on to lecture at a mix of academic and public venues: the Amigos de Arte, the School of Architecture at the University of Buenos Aires, the Teatro Argentino in La Plata, Teatro El Circulo in Rosario, and the Teatro Artigas in Montevideo, Uruguay, on June 29.⁵²³

Between June 17-19, he spent a few days at the Amigos del Arte, where he spoke on Futurist music, poetry, fashion, sports and youth. To coincide with his visit, Amigos organized an exhibition called *Salón de Pintores Modernos en la Asociación Amigos del Arte*, which included fifteen works by Emilio Pettoruti, ten by Xul Solar, and ten by Norah Borges, among others.⁵²⁴ As Harper Montgomery claims, some of the works, like Pettoruti’s, showed a connection to Futurism, but many of them were meant to exhibit differences between Argentine modernism and European avant-garde movements, including Futurism. Despite this lack of continuity with Marinetti’s movement, he was invited to speak at the opening. The architect and critic Alberto Prebisch called the exhibition a “happy consequence of Marinetti’s visit,” and he favorably reviewed works by Pettoruti, Solar and Borges, arguing their juxtaposition revealed that “a modern accent can manifest in contradictory styles,” such as Pettoruti’s architectonic forms and Xul’s esoteric symbolism [Figure 7]. Yet, he lamented the fact that the show was thrown together

⁵²³ Though there are slight discrepancies in Marinetti’s own journals, these dates and numbers come from the records and receipts in the Marinetti Archive at the Bienenke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale. This archive has been extensively cited by Jeffrey Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, as well as Harper Montgomery. For more on attendance numbers, see: Schnapp and Castro Rocha, 112-23.

⁵²⁴ For more on this exhibition, consult: *Amigos del Arte 1924-42*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA & Fundación Constantini, 2008).

hastily, causing organizers to leave out important emerging voices, like Juan del Prete, or Pablo Curatella Manes.⁵²⁵ He disparagingly remarked upon Marinetti's dramatic style, commenting on his "theatrical gesticulations, his entire crafty display of rhetorical oratory."⁵²⁶

Following Marinetti's lectures at the Amigos, Prebisch noted that his ideas were no longer revolutionary by 1926, especially for the learned Argentine listener, who was already well-versed in Futurism and its key tenets: "In reality, few words left his mouth that disturbed the educated listener with any unforeseen novelty," he wrote. "This is because Marinetti's ideology is already known to the palates of the great connoisseurs, like an old wine."⁵²⁷ The comparison to an old wine can be taken two ways: It was a slight at Marinetti's age—Prebisch was only twenty-seven, while Marinetti was nearly fifty—but it also implied that Marinetti was getting more polished, and perhaps more palatable, with time and exposure. The journal *Nosotros* labeled Marinetti "the nicest, most cultured man in the world, sincere, cordial, effusive: with a lively Southern temperament, sharp-witted and eloquent, at the service of an aesthetic doctrine that cannot frighten in Argentina, where academic prejudices lack roots."⁵²⁸

To underscore independence from Marinetti and Futurism, the cover of the *Martín Fierro* issue that covered Marinetti's visit displayed Xul Solar's *Milicia* (1925) [Figure 8], which depicts several stick-figure-like helmeted warriors defending a barren landscape, which may represent the Argentine Pampas. They carry swords and giant spears rather than modern

⁵²⁵ Alberto Prebisch, "Marinetti en Los Amigos del Arte," *Martín Fierro*, Numbers 30-31, July 8, 1926, 221.

⁵²⁶ Quoted in Amigos del Arte, 294. He went on to compare Marinetti's flair and lack of seriousness to Le Corbusier's focus on doctrine rather than gestures. Le Corbusier would later deliver a series of ten lectures at Los Amigos del Arte in 1929. Like Marinetti, he also saw South America as ripe for cultural—or architectural—domination, and he toured major cities in order to pitch his ideas for rebuilding their capitals.

⁵²⁷ Prebisch, "Marinetti en Los Amigos" 219.

⁵²⁸ Quoted in Amigos del Arte, 294

weaponry, turning them into an imagined indigenous army staving off European influence. The painting was in the Amigos exhibition, but it was a curious choice to highlight in tandem with Marinetti's visit. Montgomery argues that, since Solar often blended geopolitics with mythology, this image may point to the combative stance of the avant-garde art in Argentina, defending itself against external forces. Or, perhaps the *Martín Fierro* editors chose this image to show a connection to Futurism in terms of its aggressive stance, but to break from the movement stylistically.⁵²⁹ Despite his Italian lineage, Solar represents a version of Modernism much closer to German expressionism than to Italian Futurism, as did his colleague Norah Borges.⁵³⁰ Had the editors wanted to show a stronger connection to Futurism, they could have chosen a Pettoruti work for their cover. Montgomery posits that, in 1924, Pettoruti's publicized return and controversial exhibition created a level of spectacle that was highly legible and desirable, but was ultimately too indebted to Futurist exhibition strategies. By the time of Marinetti's visit two years later, Porteños were sophisticated enough that they wanted something less derivative or European in origin. The combination of Marinetti's politics and his timing—at a moment when European clout was being spurned—led to a mixed reception during his visit.⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ Montgomery, "Futurist Confrontations," 74-75. Montgomery argues that, by 1926, *Martín Fierro* was aligning itself with a more personal, esoteric form of modernism, represented by Solar and Borges, as opposed to a more Cubo-Futurist example, represented by Pettoruti. In general, the journal wanted to move away from traditional European "isms" in its effort to assert cultural autonomy.

⁵³⁰ Norah Borges was frequently lauded for being free of European influences, but one can find many connections to *Neue Sachlichkeit* paintings. Many of her women wear cropped, short hair, like the "New Women" of Weimar Germany, and she trained in Geneva, Switzerland, and met many German Expressionists during her time abroad.

⁵³¹ For more on the press coverage of Marinetti's visit to Buenos Aires, see: Sylvia Saitta, "Marinetti en Buenos Aires: entre la política y el arte," *Cuaderno hispanoamericano*, No. 539-540 (May-June 1995): 161-169.

Futurism and Fascism: Marinetti's Politics:

In order to gauge the political aims of Marinetti's visit, we need to examine Futurism's relationship with Fascism leading up to the 1926 tour. Ernest Ialongo asserts that, "the line from Marinetti the Futurist to Marinetti the Fascist is not as clear as one would imagine," but nationalism and bellicosity were the most important elements of his politics, taking precedence over anything that could be labeled progressive.⁵³² Part of the reason Marinetti is so confounding as a political figure is that he was liberal on issues like religion, divorce, and gender equality, but jingoistic and imperialist with regards to war and Italian expansionism. Above all, Marinetti was power-hungry and opportunistic: he joined Mussolini when it became clear that he would not be able to achieve his aims for Italy through Futurism alone, and even though he broke with the party multiple times, his core ideology remained closely allied with that of Fascism. Richard Jensen contends that, "Futurist style and methods provided a model for Fascist action," since both Marinetti and Mussolini want to remake the world according to their own doctrines, and since both shared a love of militaristic violence (at least initially).⁵³³ Even when Marinetti claimed to no longer care about politics—as he did in an interview from September 25, 1922—Ialongo maintains that he was consistently politically motivated.⁵³⁴

Indeed, the relationship between Marinetti and Mussolini—or Futurism and Fascism—is riddled with rapid reversals, personal slights, and complications, making it difficult to ascertain

⁵³² Ernest Ialongo, "Flippo Tommaso Marinetti: The Futurist as Fascist, 1927-37," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (2013), 394.

⁵³³ Richard Jensen, "Futurism and Fascism," *History Today*, (45: No. 11, November 1995), 36. Marinetti agitated for the Italian invasion of Libya in 1912 and Italian intervention in World War I in 1915, and he referred to war as "the great hygiene of the world." Later though, he argues that there is no real connection between Futurist tactics—which used performative violence playfully and rhetorically—and Fascist violence—which was actual. Historians should be careful not to put them in the same category.

⁵³⁴ Ialongo, 395.

how the artistic and political movements truly interacted. On February 11, 1918, Marinetti published the *Manifesto of the Futurist Political Party*, in the last issue of the journal *L'Italia futurista*, during the tail end of World War I and before the party was officially founded.⁵³⁵ He opened with a proclamation that his party wanted, “an Italy that is both strong and free, no longer in servitude to its great Past, to foreigners, who are too much loved, and to priests, who are too much tolerated.”⁵³⁶ But his platform—which called for everything from universal literacy and suffrage, to the “gradual devaluation of marriage, eventually to be replaced by free love,” to rapid industrialization of major cities and the creation of a powerful standing army even in peace—was too radical to attract widespread support.

Marinetti met Mussolini in December of 1918 and referred to him as “certainly no great intellect,” who “comes from the people but no longer cares about them,” and “smacks of militarism for its own sake.”⁵³⁷ However, he quickly realized that an alliance could be politically beneficial. So in January of 1919, the two joined for the first time in order to disrupt a Socialist rally in Milan. They came to blows with the audience, bringing the whole evening to a grinding halt. Two months later, in March of 1919, Mussolini, Marinetti and approximately one hundred others founded the Fascist movement, and their collaboration in the election of November, 1919, landed Mussolini in power. Initially, the cooperation between Fascism and Futurism was more

⁵³⁵ Once the party was in existence and had its own journal, *Roma futurista*, the manifesto was reprinted in the first issue on September 20, 1918, and then distributed as fliers and posters.

⁵³⁶ Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Political Party,” in Günter Berghaus ed., trans. Doug Thompson, *F.T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), pp. 271-76.

⁵³⁷ Marinetti, “A Meeting with the Duce,” in Marinetti’s diary, December 4, 1918. The text has been translated and included in Berghaus, 284-85.

beneficial for Mussolini, because Marinetti was already well known as a cultural leader and the Futurist association helped to expand his influence.⁵³⁸

Yet, by May of 1920, Marinetti had officially resigned from the Fascist party, citing his anger that the Fascist Congress refused to support his proposal for exiling the King and the Pope. As Christine Poggi explains, Mussolini and Marinetti had widely varied ideas about tradition, religion, and the sanctity of family, so we cannot collapse Futurist and Fascist ideologies. Furthermore, Futurist nationalism was more modern and cosmopolitan than Fascist nationalism, which looked to ancient Rome for inspiration.⁵³⁹ Despite these key differences, in August of 1920, Marinetti's words were still very in-line with Fascist ideology, and they echo Mussolini himself: "The nation, being the maximum affective force of the individual, constitutes my own affective force. The *patria* being the maximum extension of the individual, is my own maximum extension. The nation is me. I am Italy."⁵⁴⁰ Even still, when Mussolini marched on Rome, in October of 1922, the Futurists were largely absent from the party, having been replaced by nationalists, aristocrats, and others who pushed the movement in a more conservative direction. At that time, Mussolini disparaged Marinetti, calling him an "eccentric buffoon who wants to play politics and whom no one in Italy, least of all me, takes seriously."⁵⁴¹ But this did not prevent Mussolini from using Marinetti as a mouthpiece later on, and Marinetti was glad to take

⁵³⁸ Jensen outlines this early collaboration between Mussolini and Marinetti. But, he argues, the real key to Fascist success was the rise of rural Squadristo, a Fascist paramilitary run by ex-officers that attacked foreigners and leftists, in the early 1920s.

⁵³⁹ For more, see: Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁵⁴⁰ Quoted in Ialongo, 395.

⁵⁴¹ Quoted in Jensen, 40.

advantage of the Fascist party and its generous funding to travel around the world after he returned to the party in 1924.

It is also difficult to parse out the complex and interwoven relationship between Futurism the art movement, and Futurism the political movement. In his 1918 Manifesto, Marinetti made it clear that the “Futurist Political Party will be entirely separate from the Futurist Art Movement”: though Futurist art was still too avant-garde for many people, Futurist politics were meant to appeal to all Italians. But the next year, in the introduction to his book, *Democrazia futurista*, he claimed that the Futurist Political Party was “born naturally out of the great spiritual current of the Futurist Artistic Movement.”⁵⁴² Abroad, it was an artistic liability for him to be associated with Fascism, so any remaining link must have been veritable. For Ialongo, the extent to which we see a consistent alliance between Futurism and Fascism rests, at least partially, upon whether we consider first wave (1909-1916) and second wave (1918-1945) futurism to be two different movements or part of one continuum. If they are unbroken and connected, as he believes, it becomes clear that Fascist ideology—even if it wasn’t called that— was always at the core of Marinetti’s belief-system and consistently injected into the work. In fact, in 1924, Marinetti published *Futurism and Fascism*, a compendium of his political writings, meant to remind the public of his shared history with Mussolini, highlighting the affinity between the political and artistic movements.

Certainly, a glorification of speed, virility and the unity between man and machine, was prevalent in Futurist works dating back to the 1910s, but these qualities became even more dominant in *Aeropittura*, or arial painting, of the 1920s and 30s. In the first *Aeropittura*

⁵⁴² Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Political Party,” in Berghaus, 271.

Manifesto, of 1929, Marinetti wrote, “We Futurists declare that...the mutable perspectives of flight constitute an absolutely new reality that has nothing in common with traditional reality seen from terrestrial perspectives.”⁵⁴³ Ialongo argues that Futurism, and *Aeropittura* specifically, helped Mussolini create a militaristic consciousness based around the idea of a modern air force. Emily Braun extends this argument, demonstrating that there had long been an Italian focus on aviation, strategic air bombing, and aerial photography, and *Aeropittura* was a style that depended upon advanced aviation and control of the camera in flight.⁵⁴⁴ The military commander and theorist, Giulio Douhet (1869-1930), developed the “shock and awe” doctrine of the first aerial strike attacks that were meant to completely frighten the enemy into submission. In 1921, he wrote *The Command of the Air*, in the hopes of creating an “air mindedness” amongst Italians, and a general acceptance of air warfare as inevitable.⁵⁴⁵

When Marinetti wrote his *Aeropittura Manifestoes* in 1929 and 1931, aerial paintings became the focal point of the Futurist exhibitions at the Venice Biennale. As Braun notes, these paintings blend the pictorial strategies of cubism, constructivism and biomorphic surrealism with more spiritual elements of cosmic transcendence, making them some of the most innovative works of the interwar period. Often, they center on a modern plane flying heroically over an ancient structure, like the Coliseum, illustrating the new surmounting the old, while still showing

⁵⁴³ Marinetti, “Manifesto Aeropittura,” *Futurismo*, 1929, qtd in Ialongo, 403. Also in 1929, Marinetti published “La Guerra Futura” in the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, arguing that Italy would have to fight another war, and it would be aerial this time. Interestingly, at least six women were involved in the aeropittura movement, and many of them signed the manifesto. Barbara, a female pilot, often took aerial photographs that the painters used as source material.

⁵⁴⁴ Emily Braun, “Shock and Awe: Futurist *Aeropittura* and Theories of Giulio Douhet,” in Vivien Greene, ed. *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe*, exhibition catalog (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2014), 269-273. Braun explains how, as early as 1911, airplanes were involved in the Italo-Turkish war, and Marinetti chronicled this development as a war correspondent. Italians were the first to bomb an enemy target from the air, to conduct a night raid, and to be shot down from below.

⁵⁴⁵ Braun explains that Douhet believed in three waves of arial assault: explosives, incendiaries, and poisonous gas. The clouds in the Futurist paintings can be interpreted as gas.

a connection to Italy's illustrious past.⁵⁴⁶ [Figures 9 and 10, for example] The bomber takes on a divine presence as he looks down on earth with a panoptic gaze.⁵⁴⁷ In many ways, *aeropittura* was the logical extension of first wave Futurism: the jolts and bombardment of the early manifestoes moved to the sky, normalizing the idea of aerial violence. Perhaps for this reason, they were extremely popular with the Fascist regime, and frequently praised by Mussolini. Thus, even if Marinetti did not publicly mention Mussolini on his Argentine tour, there were enough convergences that it seems the two would have been easily linked in the minds of audience members throughout Marinetti's visit and after.

"Mostra del Novecento Italiano" at Los Amigos del Arte:

Despite their emphasis on flight, *Aeropittura* works never made their way to Argentina in the 1920s or 30s, but the central movement endorsed by the the Fascist regime, *Il Novecento Italiano*, did. The Novecento group was initially founded in Milan by the gallerist Lino Persaro, and Margherita Sarfatti, an art critic who wrote for Mussolini's newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy). As part of a general "return to order" throughout Europe in the postwar period, the group's artists worked in a clear, sober style that celebrated the figure and connected to the classicism of Italy's past.⁵⁴⁸ The name *Novecento* (meaning 1900s) was a clear reference to

⁵⁴⁶ Lisa Panzera delineates four categories of *aeropittura*: 1) a synthesis of documentary photographs; 2) transfigured, lyrical images, like those by Dottori and Benedetta; 3) Mystical, ascendant images; and 4) stratospheric, cosmic images, like those of Prampolini. She also explains how the Futurists blend modern speed with elements of Catholic faith in their imagery of flight. For more, see Lisa Panzera, "Celestial Futurism and the 'Parasurreal'" in Vivien Greene, ed. *Italian Futurism*, pp. 326-29.

⁵⁴⁷ Braun notes that we never see the downside: there are no crashes and no carnage. Perhaps this is because the Italian government would not release photographs of damage fear fear that it would scare the civilian population.

⁵⁴⁸ For more on the Return to Order and how it related to politics throughout Europe, see: Kenneth E. Silver, *Chaos & Classicism: Art in France, Italy and Germany, 1918-1936*, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2010). In particular, the introductory essay, Silver's "A More Durable Self," is quite helpful in adding context.

earlier periods of Italian artistic greatness, such as the Quattrocento (1400s) of the Renaissance. Unlike the Futurists, who had published numerous manifestoes outlining their artistic and political aims by the 1920s, the artists associated with Novecento—including Anselmo Bucci, Carlo Carrà, Leonardo Dudreville, Achille Funi, Gian Emilio Malerba, Pietro Marussig, Ubaldo, Oppi, and Mario Sironi—lacked a clear artistic program, and they worked in a wide array of styles.

Sarfatti was the real mastermind behind the movement. Among other things, she was a serious intellectual, a socialist turned Fascist, Mussolini's mistress from 1914-32, and the author of his popular 1925 biography, *Dux*. Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan have argued that "Margherita brought a degree of cultural respectability to a movement that otherwise appeared to be nothing more than a gang of violent, anti-intellectual thugs."⁵⁴⁹ Sarfatti had studied the key tenets of the *Valori Plastici* and emerged with a central thesis: looking towards tradition was not synonymous with turning one's back on originality. According to Sarfatti, an artist could be both modern and classicizing. "By returning to the purest traditions of Giotto, Masaccio, Paolo Uccello," she wrote, "one does not renounce the originality of modern times, but only polishes off the rust and purifies our art of imitative alloys."⁵⁵⁰ She convinced Mussolini of art's power in creating a politically revitalized Italy, encouraging him to look back at the art of ancient Rome as well as the Renaissance. With Sarfatti's urging, Mussolini founded the Royal Academy of Italy, which he called "a vibrant center of national culture that augments and promotes the intellectual

⁵⁴⁹ Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993), 331. This text remains the most comprehensive biography of Sarfatti's and a very useful resource on her personal and political life. Cannistraro and Sullivan explain how Sarfatti and Mussolini had met through the socialist daily journal *Avanti!*, where she had been an art critic since 1908 and he took over as editor in 1910.

⁵⁵⁰ Margherita Sarfatti, "Letter from Berlin: An Affirmation of Italian Art," *Il Popolo d'Italia* (April 30, 1921), quoted in Catherine E Paul and Barbara Zaczek, "Margherita Sarfatti and Italian Cultural Nationalism," *Modernism/Modernity* 13 no. 1 (January 2006), p. 903.

movement according to the genius and tradition of our people.”⁵⁵¹ Members, many of them thought to be chosen by Sarfatti, received a stipend of 3,000 lire per month, and in exchange, they were required to attend high profile ceremonies wearing fascist uniforms.

Though Mussolini spoke at the Novecento’s first exhibition, in Milan in 1923, he was reluctant to have his name unilaterally attached to the group, and even Sarfatti’s influence was inconsistent. He refused to declare an official state style, perhaps because this allowed him to curry favor with a variety of different groups, fostering a competitive spirit among artists and keeping them all on the side of the regime. In his speech, he proclaimed that, “it is far from my idea to encourage anything like a state art. Art belongs to the domain of the individual. The state has only one duty: not to undermine art, to provide humane conditions for artists, to encourage them from the artistic and national point of view.”⁵⁵² Though the Novecento were in competition with other groups—including the Futurists—for state sponsorship, in 1926, they rebranded themselves *Novecento Italiano*, perhaps emphasizing nationalistic pride. At this time, Sarfatti spoke of the group as “Italians, traditionalists, moderns...[who] wanted to apprehend in time a new aspect of tradition.”⁵⁵³

That same year, they held a much larger exhibition, “I Mostra del Novecento Italiano,” where Mussolini spoke again, but this time, he argued that the political revolution must be met with a cultural one. “Art under Fascism will reflect the post-World War I reality,” he asserted, “because 20th century artists are artists who don’t refuse, and they shouldn’t refuse, any

⁵⁵¹ Quoted in Paul and Zacek, 893.

⁵⁵² Quoted in: Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.1. For more on the politics behind the Novecento, Braun is an excellent resource.

⁵⁵³ Margherita Sarfatti, *Storia della Pittura Moderna*, Roma: P. Cremonese, 1930, 125-26.

experience or experiment.”⁵⁵⁴ In fact, the main arena of experimentation became the art exhibition, and during Mussolini’s reign, the regime committed time, money, and personnel to nationalizing the display of art. As Marla Stone explains, throughout the late 1920s, local and regional Fascist syndicates organized a series of exhibitions, and artists were required to hold a *tessera*, or syndicate membership card, in order to participate. This membership gave artists access to an expansive network of patronage and official commissions, including public murals, mosaics, and exhibition displays, which became increasingly elaborate and didactic as the regime began to believe that the exhibition could be used to “shape consciousness and connect spectators to Fascist priorities.”⁵⁵⁵

How Fascist was the Novecento? In fact, the relationship between Novecento and the Fascist regime was more inconsistent than many scholars admit. Some, like Kenneth Silver, refer to the group as the de facto (though never the official) Fascist art movement; however the artist Mario Sironi, who worked as the illustrator for *Il Popolo d’Italia* from 1921-22, later asserted that to think of the Novecento as state artists was inaccurate. “The ‘Novecento’ was a group of people who could call themselves painters. Not amateurs. Painters!” he explained. “In this gathering of values coming straight from the trenches, there was no political intention whatsoever. Each one was what they wanted to be. ‘Novecentismo’ was created later by the

⁵⁵⁴ Quoted in Marla Stone, “Exhibitions and the Cult of Display in Fascist Italy,” in: Germano Celant, ed., *Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics, Italia 1918-1943*. Exhibition Catalog, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2018), 186. This massive exhibition, including over 600 works of art, was curated by Germano Celant and unearths the connective threads between art and politics in Italy during the Ventennio, the twenty-year Fascist period. One of the key elements of the Fascist Triennial, exhibitions which happened every three years, was the large-scale mural, as discussed by Romy Golan in her essay, “Monumental Fairytales: Mural Images During the Ventennio, in *Post Zang Tumb Tuuum*, pp. 330-335. Golan has also discussed Futurist murals in “Slow Time: Futurist Murals,” in Vivien Greene, ed. *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944*, pp. 317-325.

⁵⁵⁵ This is Stone’s wording. She explains how the most heavy-handed exhibition was the “Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista” of 1932, which celebrated the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome, and “blended art, architecture, and design to make visitors ‘experience’ national crisis and redemption.” (189).

minor painters.”⁵⁵⁶ Elena Pontiggia agrees, arguing that, if you really look at the art, the Novecento “did not wish to be and was not a form of state art.”⁵⁵⁷ She explains that the most political artists were minor figures, and the major artists almost never publicly celebrated the regime directly. Even when they did, as in Adolfo Wildt’s marble portrait of Mussolini, *Il Duce* (1924) [Figure 11], the work carried somewhat obscure symbolism, making them weak propaganda, according to Pontiggia. Wildt represented Mussolini as a new Augustus with an *infula*, or headband connoting religious leadership, making the work highly grandiose, but also not completely legible to the average viewer, who might not recognize that symbolism.⁵⁵⁸

In 1927, Sarfatti began to arrange a show of Novecento paintings to be exhibited throughout South America. The goal of the traveling exhibition was to introduce international audiences to new trends in Italian art, but the political connection was, by this point, more tenuous. By the late 1920s, Mussolini had withdrawn his official support from the movement, in favor of larger public projects—murals and mosaics—and syndicalist art organizations. Indeed, the show came at a time when Sarfatti’s own influence was waning, in part due to her Jewish identity at a time of rising antisemitism within the regime, and in part because much of the art she promoted possessed *italianità*, but was also connected to international modernism, leading to its derision by ultra-nationalists.⁵⁵⁹ By the time the show opened in Argentina, in 1930, the

⁵⁵⁶ Dino Campini, “Discorrendo di pittura. Il Novecento, riunione di uomini liberi organizzata da Sironi,” *Il Conciliatore di Milano*, year II, no. 5 (May 20, 1954).

⁵⁵⁷ Elena Pontiggia, “Novecento and State Art,” in *Post Zang Tumb Tuuum*, 149.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 150.

⁵⁵⁹ Due to her Jewish identity, Sarfatti was ultimately forced to leave Italy in 1938, and she went into exile in Argentina, where she became an influential art critic and wrote extensively in anti-fascist the antifascist newspaper, *Argentina Libre*, and the cultural journal, *Nosotros*. In the 1940s, she was included in debates in the literary magazine *Sur*.

political power of Novecento Italiano had already been weakened, but the movement continued to align itself with Fascism.

When the show opened on September 13, 1930, it was hosted by the Amigos del Arte, where 208 works by 45 artists were included. For three months, the exhibition stayed up, before traveling to Montevideo in mid December. Emilio Pettoruti, by then an outspoken antifascist, was chosen to curate the exhibition, since he had met many of the artists during his time in Italy, and he took it upon himself to remove anything that he deemed too propagandistic. In fact, he only agreed to take on the curatorial task under the condition that “no one, no even [Margherita], would step foot in the room” until it was fully installed and could not be altered.⁵⁶⁰ When she was finally allowed to enter, Sarfatti realized that Adolfo Wildt’s aforementioned bust of Mussolini—the exhibition’s only sculpture, which had been given ample description and was the first image in the exhibition catalog—had been removed by Pettoruti. According to him, the removal was a result of the bust’s political content combined with the fact that “it was a repulsive piece out of sync with the rest of the exhibition.”⁵⁶¹ Sarfatti exclaimed in dramatic horror, “Il Duce, il mio Duce!”⁵⁶² In fact, even if the political clout of the Novecento had decreased by 1930, its exaltation of Fascism had not. In Sarfatti’s preface to the catalog, in which she summarized the history of the group, she wrote that the exhibition was motivated by a desire to share with an international audience “some new aspects of the tradition... that arose from the disruption of the war and the redemptive labor of Fascism,” firmly allying the movement with

⁵⁶⁰ Emilio Pettoruti, *Un pintor ante el espejo*, (Buenos Aires: Solar-Hachette, 1968), 162.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 163.

⁵⁶² Ibid, 162.

Fascism.⁵⁶³ She further explained that the artistic aims of the Novecento were “tested as an expression and consecrated as solemn and significant by the consent and support of Mussolini.”⁵⁶⁴

Of the 208 works included, most of them were dispassionate, naturalistic portraits, fairly traditional landscapes, or a combination thereof. Many of the figures, particularly women, were shown in moments of intimate repose, such as Virgilio Guidi’s *Donna Che Dorme* (Woman Sleeping) [Figure 12], which shows a woman exhausted while folding laundry, or Piero Marussig’s *Bambina alla toilette* (Girl in her Dressing Room) [Figure 13], which depicts a young girl holding her dress up and perhaps looking at her reflection in a mirror that we cannot see. Though the second image is somewhat erotic, since her strap is falling off and her hand is on her breast, the girl is presented more as an object, rather than a sentient human. She exists out of time and is completely disengaged from the audience. When there are multiple figures, as in Mario Tozzi’s *Il Bibliofilo* (The Bibliophile) [Figure 14]— in which a woman carries a pile of books behind a man, who sits engrossed in his text—again, there is no connection between them. She stands tall and erect, like a classical statue, and though she glances over her shoulder, she looks past him. Landscapes and interior scenes vary broadly, from the surreal, de Chirico-esque *La Finestra* (The Window) [Figure 15], to straightforward pastorals by Francesco Trombadori. It is not always obvious that the land being depicted is Italy, and though none of the works that were ultimately included carried obvious political messages, they did show an adherence to

⁵⁶³ Margherita Sarfatti, “Prefazione,” in *Mostra del Novecento Italiano*, exhibition catalog, (Buenos Aires: Amigos del Arte, 1930), 13. Translation is mine. Interestingly, Sarfatti does not include years for the works included in the show, so I was not able to figure out exactly when they were made, but it seems clear that most of the paintings were from the late 1920s.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 15.

tradition, and respect for earlier artists from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century. Interestingly, not all of the artistic predecessors were Italian (though many of them are), and many of these works show connections to the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and other pan-European elements of Magic Realism. Perhaps these connections to trends outside of Italy explain why the Novecento had fallen out of favor with the increasingly nationalistic regime by 1930, even though Sarfatti still wrote about these artists as representatives of the State in the exhibition catalog.

Conclusion: The Broader Context of The Novecento Exhibition:

To return to the beginning, the impact of the Argentine Novecento show must be understood against the backdrop of the recent military coup, which occurred just a week earlier. As we have seen, on September 6, 1930, Uriburu overthrew Yrigoyen by taking control of the Casa Rosado (The Pink House, the president's residence) with popular support and little violence or opposition. Yrigoyen's popularity had been waning over the past year, since the Great Depression reverberated in Argentina, causing a spike in unemployment. In the aftermath of the coup, Uriburu banned political parties and suspended the 1853 Constitution, proposing that the country be reorganized along corporatist and fascist lines. In *Corriere della Sera*, Uriburu wrote, "Indestructible links unite Argentina and Italy," but he also argued that Argentine Nacionalismo was a separate movement from Italian Fascism.⁵⁶⁵

Diana B. Wechsler contends that the impact of the Novecento show must be examined with the coup in mind. I would argue that it should be studied in a broader context, as one

⁵⁶⁵ For more, see Finchelstein.

example in a long line of many demonstrating the enduring influence of Italian art on Argentina's evolving cultural landscape.⁵⁶⁶ Even though the rhetoric and politics evolved between 1880 and 1930, the Italian desire to culturally colonize Argentina was consistent. Wechsler carefully combs through reviews of the Novecento exhibition, which was heavily covered in both Spanish and Italian language newspapers in Buenos Aires. Interestingly, the Spanish language *La Prensa* did not dispatch its own critic to review the exhibition; instead, the paper quoted the University of Rome Professor, Arduino Colasanti, an ardent supporter of the Novecento. He praised the Novecento for renewing “the classical concept of universality, of order, of synthesis, of freshness, of harmony,” and reacting against “the distortions and degeneration” of much modern art.⁵⁶⁷ Colasanti claims that the movement was apolitical, even though he admits that some of ideals and aspirations—strength, youth, order—coincide nicely with those of Fascism. By allowing an Italian art historian, Colasanti, to speak for the paper, the Argentine press ceded its voice to an Italian one, thus playing into the notion of Argentina as a mere colony of the now rejuvenated motherland.

The Italian language, *Il Mattino* published articles titled “La fascista Margherita Sarfatti contro l'Argentina” (The Fascist Margherita Sarfatti Against Argentina) and “Fascismo, merce di esportazione?” (Fascism for Export?), which celebrated the exhibition, while the anti-fascist journal *Risorgimento* explored the idea of an aesthetic and political debate brought to the fore through the exhibition. Wechsler writes that the arrival of the Novecento show, and Sarfatti

⁵⁶⁶ Diana B Wechsler, “Da una estetica del silenzio a una silenziosa declamazione. Incontri e appropriazioni di una tradizione nelle metropoli del Rio de la Plata,” in *Novecento sudamericano: relazioni artistiche tra Italia e Argentina, Brasile, Uruguay* (Milan: Palazzo Reale, 2003), 27. Wechsler also posits that, during the interwar period, it is impossible to look at culture without taking national and international politics into account, and so the impact and reception of the Novecento show must be considered through a political lens.

⁵⁶⁷ Arduino Colasanti, *L'arte italiana del Novecento*, in “La Prensa”, Buenos Aires, September 15, 1930, p. 9, col. 5, e. 6; quoted in Wechsler, 28.

herself, sparked the question of a “South American Revolution” that could act as an artistic continuation of many of the modern-classical themes currently being explored in Italy. In her texts on Modern Italian Art, and even in her preface to the Novecento catalog, Sarfatti claimed an aesthetic connection between Italy and Argentina—much as Mussolini and *Martín Fierro* claimed a few years earlier—which could be further bolstered by demographic and political parallels. As Wechsler explains, the catalog was almost more important than the exhibition as a form of political and cultural publicity, because it could circulate more broadly throughout South American cities than the works themselves.⁵⁶⁸ With the preface, Sarfatti “wanted to demonstrate the international scope of the Italian movement, highlighting the convergence of interests that the Novecento had generated at different latitudes.”⁵⁶⁹ Wechsler points out that much of the political significance of the movement was lost on the Porteño audience, and paintings were examined on purely aesthetic grounds.

In an aforementioned 1928 article in *Nosotros*, Pettoruti claimed that “Argentine painting and sculpture were, in their beginnings, almost completely Italian.”⁵⁷⁰ Indeed, a strong Italian presence had always been felt in Argentina, and it manifested itself in increasingly concrete and intentional ways (on the part of Italy) between roughly 1880 and 1930. First, many artists of Italian descent rose to prominence and led art communities and organizations in the 1880s and 90s; second, Italy came to be seen as a repository of culture where artists could travel and study;

⁵⁶⁸ Now, the only copy of the catalog in the New York area is available at the Frick Collection’s Reference Library.

⁵⁶⁹ Wechsler, 28. She writes, “It is precisely in the space between aesthetics and politics where the acceptance and appropriation of the work of this group of artists is enriched, above all in the light of the powerful re-signification that takes place among the artists of our peripheral metropolises.”

⁵⁷⁰ Emilio Pettoruti, “Encuesta: Italia y nuestra cultura” *Nosotras*, Buenos Aires, April 1928, Vol 60, No. 227, pp. 79-80.

third, a steady stream of Italian texts and catalogs showed reproductions of Italian works throughout the 1910s; and finally, in the 1920s, Italian exhibitions and original artworks traveled to Argentina. Because Italy was more invested in impacting Argentina on a cultural level than France or Germany, Italian texts, exhibition catalogs, and journals, like *Valori Plastici*, were more readily available in Buenos Aires than their counterparts from other countries (and more of the population could read Italian than French or German). By 1930, on a cultural level, Argentina *had* become the colony that Mussolini wanted it to be.⁵⁷¹

The *Novecento* exhibition, following on the heels of Marinetti's whirlwind tour, and the *Nave Italia's* visit before it, aroused an interest in the minds of Argentine artists, who wanted to be part of the modern movement and were anxious about working so far from important European centers. Wechsler argues that the *Novecento* show, in particular, led to the rise of a more figurative style amongst many modern artists in Buenos Aires in the 1930s, called Nuevo Realismo (New Realism). Painters such as Antonio Berni, Lino Spilimbergo, and even Pettoruti himself, all turned towards figuration in this moment. They cited Giotto as an influence, but they also looked to de Chirico and Sironi to express a new modernity of estrangement and a quiet opposition to the increasingly dire political situation in their country.⁵⁷² However, whereas the

⁵⁷¹Another key text is Franz Roh's 1925 book *Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (After Expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the Newest European Painting), which was widely read throughout all of Latin America, including Argentina. Roh cites Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà as sources for the magic realism (or *Neue Sachlichkeit*) of Weimar Germany, and in 1927, a condensed version of his seminal work, *Magic Realism: Post Expressionism*, was translated into Spanish and disseminated throughout Latin America in the periodical *Revista de Occidente*. Thus, even though the text was authored by a German art critic, it highlights the importance of two Italian artists. For a crucial section, see: Roh, Franz. "Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism" 1925, except reproduced in Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, eds., *Magic Realism: Theory, History, Community*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁵⁷² Wechsler argues that these artists adopted this magical realist style as a form of "silent declamation." In South American capitals, "the impossibility of representing the real, which was observed in Europe, created an aesthetic that tended to suspend time and space in a process of increasing estrangement, which became a powerful declamation leading to new and original meanings." (34)

Novecento aesthetic was in the service of Fascism, a similar manifestation of strange realism in Argentina became a type of political resistance, and most of the artists who participated in the movement were leftists; their work has even been compared to American social realism, and they often depicted groups that were overlooked by other artists.

A salient example is Antonio Berni's *Club atlético Nueva Chicago* (New Chicago Athletic Club, 1937) [Figure 16], which shows a Buenos Aires youth soccer team on a heroic scale—six feet tall by ten feet wide. All sixteen members of the team are rendered with intense detail and skilled precision, suggesting that they actually modeled for him, and they appear to be of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds; some sport bare feet and street clothes, while others wear uniforms. The setting, on the other hand, seems surreal and highly reminiscent of de Chirico. Purportedly, the team posed in the now-defunct arcade of the Mercado de Hacienda de Mataderos, a large market that had closed in 1931 and been left to deteriorate. In the background, nondescript classical architecture dots the landscape, and the lefthand corner of the canvas takes on a destabilizing perspective. Also like a de Chirico, the light in the front of the painting suggests a bright, sunny day, while the background foretells a storm with low-hanging clouds.

Even if Berni incorporated elements of de Chirico's style, politically, he wanted to be affiliated with American socialist realism. When, in 1942, this painting was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, Berni wrote to Lincoln Kirstein, who had bought it on behalf of the museum, "It gives me great satisfaction that one of my paintings figures in a U.S. museum. I hope that this first contact with the American public...is a truly spiritual communication, affirmation of a New Realism, that is the focus of so many American artists and the path towards

a continental artistic unity.”⁵⁷³ Rather than stressing ties to Italy or Europe, he discussed plans for a Pan-American language, suggesting a true sea-change.

Indeed, 1930 marked a key turning point in Argentine political and cultural history, a moment when the official “imagined community” of Argentines became exclusionary in a new way. In order to participate in the larger project of nation-building, it was no longer enough to be white and of European origins; one also had to be Catholic, conservative, and fiercely patriotic. Ironically, the notion of transatlantic Fascism—a Fascism that could be exported across the Atlantic, along with its culture—was ultimately rejected in favor of a more inward-looking Argentine Nacionalismo, that had much in common with Fascism but saw itself as something distinct. This rightward turn led to an overall cloistering of the transnational community of artists explored in the last chapter. By the end of the year, Pettoruti had left Buenos Aires to work full time as the Director of the Museo Provincial de La Plata, a regional museum in his home town, about an hour south of the capital. Though he was reluctant to take this position at an underfunded museum with a small collection, he feared that turning down the opportunity would lead to the museum’s closure. He endeavored to grow the collection—first of Argentine art from colonial times to the present, then of Latin American art more broadly—and eventually create traveling exhibitions that would move throughout the provinces, reaching a wider public.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷³ This letter is quoted in: Samantha Friedman and Jodi Hauptman, eds. *Lincoln Kirstein’s Modern*, Exhibition Catalog (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2019), 151. Kirstein purchased Berni’s work in 1942 along with 149 others. He was ostensibly sent by Nelson Rockefeller, then head of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, to acquire art for MoMA, but he also had a more covert mission of checking different countries’ allegiances during World War II. Kirstein favored figurative work, so he purchased a number of paintings by the *Neuvo Realistas*. Notably, he did not buy anything by Pettoruti. He had supposedly heard the Pettoruti had Fascist leanings—an outright lie—but he also may not have liked Pettoruti’s more abstract style.

⁵⁷⁴ Pettoruti would stay on at this post until 1947, when he eventually was ousted by the *Peroón* regime for being unpatriotic. For more on Pettoruti’s post as a museum director see: Pettoruti, *Un pintor ante el espejo*, 165-185.

Ambitious as it was, Pettoruti's plan was geographically self-contained; it did not forge any connections with institutions across the Atlantic.

EPILOGUE:

Aftermath: Counter-Examples and Changing Migratory Routes

Nations show two faces: one, the obligatory, conventional face, formulated according to the requirements of the age and, most often, following the prejudice of some famous definer. The other, true and beloved, defined by slow history, manifests itself through language and customs. Between those two images, the apparent and the essential, we usually detect a notorious contradiction.⁵⁷⁵

This statement, from Jorge Luis Borges's 1925 *Inquisitions*, illuminates a complicated tension inherent in this entire dissertation. Throughout this study, I have tried to weave together the stories of the "obligatory" Argentina—as determined by immigration policy, state museums and academies, and regime shifts—and the "true," more complex Argentina—as highlighted by the smaller groups and individuals we have examined in Buenos Aires. The official relationship with Italy and *italianità* is not the same as the "true" one, and there are many individuals who have been left out of the story. For example, Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), born in Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina, in 1899, has been conspicuously absent, because he stands as the inverse of the artists discussed here. Though he was also born to Italian parents and was also itinerant—moving between Milan and Buenos Aires throughout his life—he always identified as Italian first, rather than a dual or transnational.⁵⁷⁶ Evidently, Italy's campaign of "emigrant colonialism" proved exceedingly effective on him.

⁵⁷⁵ Jorge Luis Borges, "Inquisitions" (1925) in *On Argentina*, Alfred Mac Adam, ed. (New York: Penguin, 2010), 25.

⁵⁷⁶ Fontana moved to Milan with his family in 1905, when he was six years old, then returned to Buenos Aires between 1922-28, where he worked for his father's sculpture studio making funerary monuments, among other things. He was in Milan again between 1928-40, then went back to Buenos Aires in 1940. He thought the trip would be brief, but it wound up lasting seven years, since Italy entered the war. In 1947, he returned to Milan for the last two decades of his life, which were, in many ways, his most successful years. For more on Fontana's biography, see: Sarah Whitfield, *Lucio Fontana*, Exh. Cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1999). For his life and work during the interwar years, see: Enrico Crispolti, *Lucio Fontana: Catalogo ragionato di sculture, dipinti, ambientazioni* (Milan: Skira, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, Fontana opted to fight for Italy during the First World War, and he welcomed the *squadristo* violence of Fascism in the 1930s. According to Pettoruti, “Fontana believed artists had to reach for a common goal, attaining such a might that politicians would no longer ignore them,” and with tireless ambition, he worked to attain notoriety and artistic freedom by working for whomever controlled the purse straps and exhibition halls.⁵⁷⁷ Yet, what may have begun as opportunism transformed into true ideological allegiance. As Emily Braun notes, Fontana was called “The Juggler” by critic Eduardo Persico, because he was able to “juggle” an eclectic array of styles and political beliefs, but ultimately, he was an ardent supporter of Mussolini.⁵⁷⁸ Unlike artists of the *Generación Ochenta*, who endeavored to forge a national style through images of the Pampas, or the *Martín Fierristas* (including Pettoruti and Solar), who created an urban Argentine avant-garde, Fontana largely directed his energies towards a European market. Though he strategically capitalized upon his Latin Americanness when it made sense for him to do so—earning government scholarships to study abroad, for instance—all of his discoveries ultimately reached their potential in Italy, even if they were first invented in Argentina.

In 1946, Fontana founded the Academia Altamira with the critic Jorge Romero Brest and Pettoruti, who had just been dismissed from his museum post under mounting political pressure from the Perón regime. By design, the Academia lacked a director, and each professor was in

⁵⁷⁷ Emilio Pettoruti, *Un pintor ante el espejo*, (Buenos Aires: Solar-Hachette, 1968), 205.

⁵⁷⁸ For more on Fontana’s politics, see: Emily Braun, “The Juggler: Fontana’s Art Under Fascism,” in Iria Candela, ed. *Lucio Fontana On the Threshold* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 29. Interestingly, Fontana studied with Adolfo Wildt, whose bust of Mussolini was removed from the *Novecento* exhibition at Los Amigos. Braun argues that Fontana never wavered in his support of Mussolini. Even though some critics have equated his modern style with oppositional politics, it seems there is no evidence that he went against the regime, especially considering that Mussolini did not try to quash abstraction or the Italian avant garde.

charge of his own classes: Pettoruti taught painting with two other artists, Jorge Larco and Raúl Soldi, Fontana taught sculpture, and Romero Brest created the art history curriculum.⁵⁷⁹ The Academia only lasted a year—it was shut down by the Perón regime in 1947—but the *Manifiesto Blanco* (White Manifesto), which Fontana wrote with his students in 1946, proved instrumental in launching the “Spazialismo” (Spatialism) movement when he relocated to Milan the next year.

Tellingly, the *Manifiesto Blanco* was *not* about a national style and was *not* directed at an Argentine audience, which Fontana deemed isolated and parochial. Conversely, Fontana desired to move beyond the country, the boundaries of the canvas, traditional mediums, and conventional notions about depth and space.⁵⁸⁰ Above all, Fontana aimed to synthesize time and space through his two and three dimensional works. His sculptural practice of the late 1940s evolved into *Spatial Environments*, involving electric—and sometimes ultraviolet—lights suspended in space, as well as “Spatial Concept” paintings, that consist of slashed canvases, implicating the literal space behind the flat surface.⁵⁸¹ Yet, as someone who wanted to move *beyond* spatial boundaries, his identity was squarely set in Italy. Throughout his career, his central inspirations were the Italian Baroque, Catholic sculpture, and Novecento artists like Arturo Martini (1889–1947) and his teacher Adolfo Wildt (1868-1931). Again, he stands as the ideal example of the Italian who

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 227. Pettoruti reflected on the school in 1968, the year of Fontana’s death: “[It] was magnificent, liberal, idealistic...an art school opens, a handful of professors work for free for enthusiastic students who will no doubt enroll; the amount they collect will be added to the existing funds... so as to make Altamira a great art school.”

⁵⁸⁰ Lucio Fontana, “The White Manifesto,” originally published in 1946 with the following students signatures: Bernardo Arias, Horacio Cazeneuve, Marcos Fridman, Pablo Arias, Rodolfo Burgos, Enrique Benito, Cesar Bernal, Luis Coll, Alfredo Hansen, Jorge Roca-monte. This translation comes from: Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 652-56.

⁵⁸¹ For more on Fontana and his fascination with space, as well as outer space: Anthony White, “Art Beyond the Globe: Lucio Fontana’s Spatial Identity,” *EMAJ*, Issue 3, 2008, pp 1-13.

sometimes lived in Latin America but always privileged his *italianità* over his Argentine birthplace.

Fontana also serves as a relevant case study for the work of social anthropologist Arnd Schneider, who argues that many Italians in Argentina have never completely assimilated, or more accurately, their assimilation was never a total loss of an Italian identity to a dominant Argentine one. Rather, what has resulted over the 150 years since mass migration began is more of a “fusion or amalgamation of the immigrants and their descendants into a new Argentine society” that continues to be in the process of self-definition.⁵⁸² For Schneider and others, the true consolidation of Argentine identity began with Urriburu’s rule and continued during the nationalist regime of Juan Domingo Perón (1943-55). Unlike Nacionalismo, Peronism did not arise out of an economic crisis, nor was it as violent or totalitarian. Rather, it is best described as “authoritarian populism,” and it is worth discussing here as a coda to our story of immigration and Italo-Argentine relations.⁵⁸³

Peronism is difficult to define, because it cut across divisions of fascism, socialism, nationalism, and other left and right wing political ideologies. Perón himself claimed “We are not sectarians...if there is something in communism we can adopt, we will adopt it. We are not intimidated by political labels. If Fascism, Anarchism or Communism have something good to offer, we will take it.”⁵⁸⁴ He argued for the “third way” between capitalism and socialism, much

⁵⁸² Arnd Schneider, *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity Among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*, (Bern: Peter Lang, AG, 2000), 28-29.

⁵⁸³ When Perón was elected in 1946, he said he would like to learn from Mussolini’s mistakes and adapt the Italian example to the Argentine situation. In fact, Finchelstein contends, “this transatlantic adaptation was perhaps Mussolini’s most unexpected legacy.” (p 165)

⁵⁸⁴ Quote in Schneider, 89.

like Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia. In order to establish economic independence, he eschewed imports in favor of increased Argentine manufacturing, ultimately creating a more insular economy. Under this new plan, Argentina's gross domestic product rose by almost thirty percent between 1945-48, but production fell steeply in the 1950s, ultimately ending lower than 1946 rates.

With the goal of boosting production and re-connecting Argentina and Europe after fifteen years of isolationism, Perón began to recruit European immigrants with technical skills by establishing Argentine immigration offices in Spain and Italy in 1946. In a presidential decree, he said that he aimed to incorporate four million foreigners into the nation between 1947-51. Though his numbers were overly optimistic, in this four year period, 840,000 Europeans came and approximately 610,000 stayed permanently. Of that group, 388,000 were Italian, comprising the last wave of immigration to Argentina.⁵⁸⁵ Perón referred to these men and women as the “new blood the country was waiting for.” In 1948, the Dirección General de Migraciones (Director of Immigration) stated:

Once peace was declared [after World War II] our government was the first to consider the possibility of attracting once more that flow of foreigners which had helped for almost a century to enlarge the country...The Dirección General de Migraciones... *selects* the immigrants according to the government's pleasure; it *prohibits* the entry of the *undesirable* who could be a danger to the internal order; it does not allow the entry of the ill and handicapped who could become a burden for the State or benevolent institutions; it seeks the best immigrants, the young elements willing to work, technicians, skilled workers, scientists, industrialists, etc...”⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ All statistics come from Schnieder, 94. In the immediate postwar years, many highly skilled technicians and engineers were recruited by Argentine companies, or Italian companies with Argentine factories. Fiat and TECHINT are just two key examples.

⁵⁸⁶ Quoted in Schneider, 95.

Upon entry to the country, a pamphlet called *The Immigrant in Argentina*, was distributed in Spanish, Italian, German, French and English, describing the joys of being an immigrant in an ethnically diverse and openminded country:

They have arrived at the pot of hope. Men of the yellow, black, and white races descend the gangway; they all form part of the march toward the land of work and peace...Some immigrants not knowing the condition of life in the country imagine that the authorities will discriminate because of the color of their skin or eyes... But in Argentina he becomes astonished. His tranquility and confidence in a definite solidarity among all men are reborn. He is able to verify that in the country in which he has chosen to work and live there exist no such differences. ... The man who suffered persecutions or slights of racial character discovers to his surprise that he has not only found a new country but also a new world. ...It has been said that Argentina is a melting pot of races. It is a precise definition. Progress and welfare, which constitute two present-day solid realities are founded on an authentic nationality which was formed clearly and vigorously with a contribution of blood, culture, and work of men of all races.”⁵⁸⁷

Indeed, for several decades, Argentina offered the promise of upward mobility for many immigrants, regardless of where they came from. For example, southern Italians could become business and property owners in Argentina far more rapidly than in the United States. Still, this pamphlet was, of course, propaganda, and aspects of it were merely fallacious. As we have seen, the country’s different ‘races’ did not “precisely melt” together. Rather they created the proverbial “salad bowl,” coexisting (not always peacefully), but retaining their own discreet brands of *Argentinidad*,. In particular, the Italians, who made up the largest foreign block, developed a unique transatlantic, Italo-Argentine identity, as represented by artists like Pettoruti, Solar, the *Martin Fierristas*, the *Artistas del Pueblo*, and the *Generación Ochenta* before them. But, as much as these figures influenced national art and culture between 1880-1930, their affects were felt most deeply in Buenos Aires, a city that was always heavily linked to Europe. More broadly, Italian influences on Argentine life and identity are undeniable: the largest Italian

⁵⁸⁷ Quoted in Schneider, 96.

speaking population outside of Italy—1.5 million people—is in Argentina; Argentine Spanish has Italian intonations and rhythm; pizza, pasta, and polenta are ubiquitous; and Italian surnames are inescapable.

These elements of Argentine life may make it difficult for present day Italo-Argentines to find a clear and authentic version of Argentina embedded within this underlying web of Italian elements. In 1989, a woman named Patrizia Silvani was interviewed by Schneider. She had left Italy for Argentina with her family in the late 1940s, and even four decades later, she denied the existence of a straightforward Argentine national identity. “There is no national identity,” she contended. “The national being/essence (the *ser nacional*) was never consolidated. The arriving immigrants were only motivated to make money and then leave again.... I never took on Argentine citizenship. Culturally, I don’t feel Argentine, although all my life, my struggles and work have been here.” She concludes with a revealing statement: “I would like to get Italian passports for my children.” In fact, when Argentina suffered an economic crisis in 1988-89, many Italo-Argentines applied for Italian passports so they could capitalize on their links to Italy, which was then (and now) economically stronger and more stable.

In 1930, Argentina had a higher GDP per capita than many European countries, but in the latter half of the twentieth century, it was transformed from a shining beacon of opportunity to an economically peripheral nation with a shrinking job market. During the same decades, Italy economically recovered to become one of the world’s most prosperous nations. As Schneider explains, beginning in the 1930s, “Argentine notions of modernity and progress were replaced gradually by disillusion with and dissociation from the dream of building an immigrant

nation.”⁵⁸⁸ He asserts, “the whole experience of migration itself was a metaphor for modernity, as it seemed to embody the promises of progress and upward mobility in a dislocated time (the future) and space (Argentina).”⁵⁸⁹ If Italy now provides greater economic promise than Argentina, is Italy now “America,” the land of hope?

Indeed, while migration to Argentina has slowed dramatically over the last six decades, Italy has become a major receiver of immigrants, leading to intense debates about Italy’s “imagined community.” A country that once aggressively promoted *emigration* is now taking in more people annually than ever before. Official records, which do not include illegal immigrants, show that over ten percent of Italy’s population is now foreign-born. While in the 1990s, Eastern Europeans, particularly Romanians, began flocking to northern and central Italy, over the last two decades, hundreds of thousands of immigrants have crossed the Mediterranean from northern and subsaharan Africa.⁵⁹⁰ According to a report from the United Nation’s International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2017, 119,310 men, women and children arrived in Italy by sea. That figure, while staggering, represents the lowest total since 2013.⁵⁹¹

In recent years, immigration has become one of the most hotly contested issues within Italian society. It was the hallmark of the 2018 presidential election, and the newly elected right-wing Lega (League) party, which formed a coalition government with the anti-establishment

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid, 25.

⁵⁸⁹ Schneider, 113.

⁵⁹⁰ As of 2013, the origins of Italy’s foreign born population was subdivided as follows: Europe (50.8%), Africa (22.1%), Asia (18.8%), America (8.3%), and Oceania (0.1%). Statistics can be found at: <http://demo.istat.it/str2016/index.html> (accessed February 19, 2019).

⁵⁹¹ International Organization for Migration Report, “Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 171,635 in 2017; Deaths Reach 3,116,” January 5, 2018. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/italy/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-171635-2017-deaths-reach-3116> (accessed February 19, 2019).

Five Star Movement in June of 2018, almost immediately began closing ports and deporting migrants under the slogan, “Italians first!” Matteo Salvini, the Lega’s leader and the deputy prime minister and interior minister, has pledged to deport as many as 500,000 illegal migrants, to not only “reduce the number of people arriving, but also increase the number of deportations.”⁵⁹² Most recently, In January of 2019, Italy closed its ports to two ships carrying forty-nine migrants rescued off the coast of Libya, sparking outrage and igniting debate. As in Argentina of the 1930s (or the United States today), burgeoning immigration has resulted in a move to the right and an uptick in nationalist sentiments, protectionist policies, and fears that Italy’s own culture will be diluted by an influx of foreigners.

As a final note on both Italy and Argentina—yet equally applicable to other nations—it is interesting to consider the ongoing tension between specificity and universalism, as discussed by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. Writing in 1990, he proposed that “the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.”⁵⁹³ For Appadurai, though globalization does *not* have to mean homogenization, there *is* a direct relationship between the two. The earlier a society homogenizes, the sooner it can participate in global networks; however, each nation must maintain a delicate balance in order to survive and thrive: with too much openness, national identity is threatened, and with too little, the country exits the global stage. Will Italy be able to

⁵⁹² Italy’s politics are incredibly complicated. In many ways, the rise of nationalism parallels what has happened in the United States with the rise of Donald Trump, and Salvini is often compared to Trump. For more on Salvini and the Lega, see: John Cassidy, “Why the Center Collapsed in Italy: Recession, Austerity, and Immigration,” *The New Yorker*, March 5, 2018. Also see, Alexander Stille, “How Matteo Salvini Pulled Italy to the Far Right,” *The Guardian*, August 9, 2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/09/how-matteo-salvini-pulled-italy-to-the-far-right> (accessed February 20, 2019).

⁵⁹³ Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Theory Culture Society* (London: SAGE), Vol. 7, 1990, 295-310.

strike this balance? And how will recent immigration trends affect its visual culture? These are questions for another study.

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Chapter 2 Figures



Figures 2.1 and 2.2: Plates from Antonio Pozzo, *Expedición al Rio Negro. Abril a julio de 1879* (Expedition to the Rio Negro, April to July 1879).





Figure 2.3: Antonio Pozzo, *Jefe de la expedición General Roca y Estado Mayor General*, from *Expedición al Rio Negro. Abril a julio de 1879* (Expedition to the Rio Negro, April to July 1879).

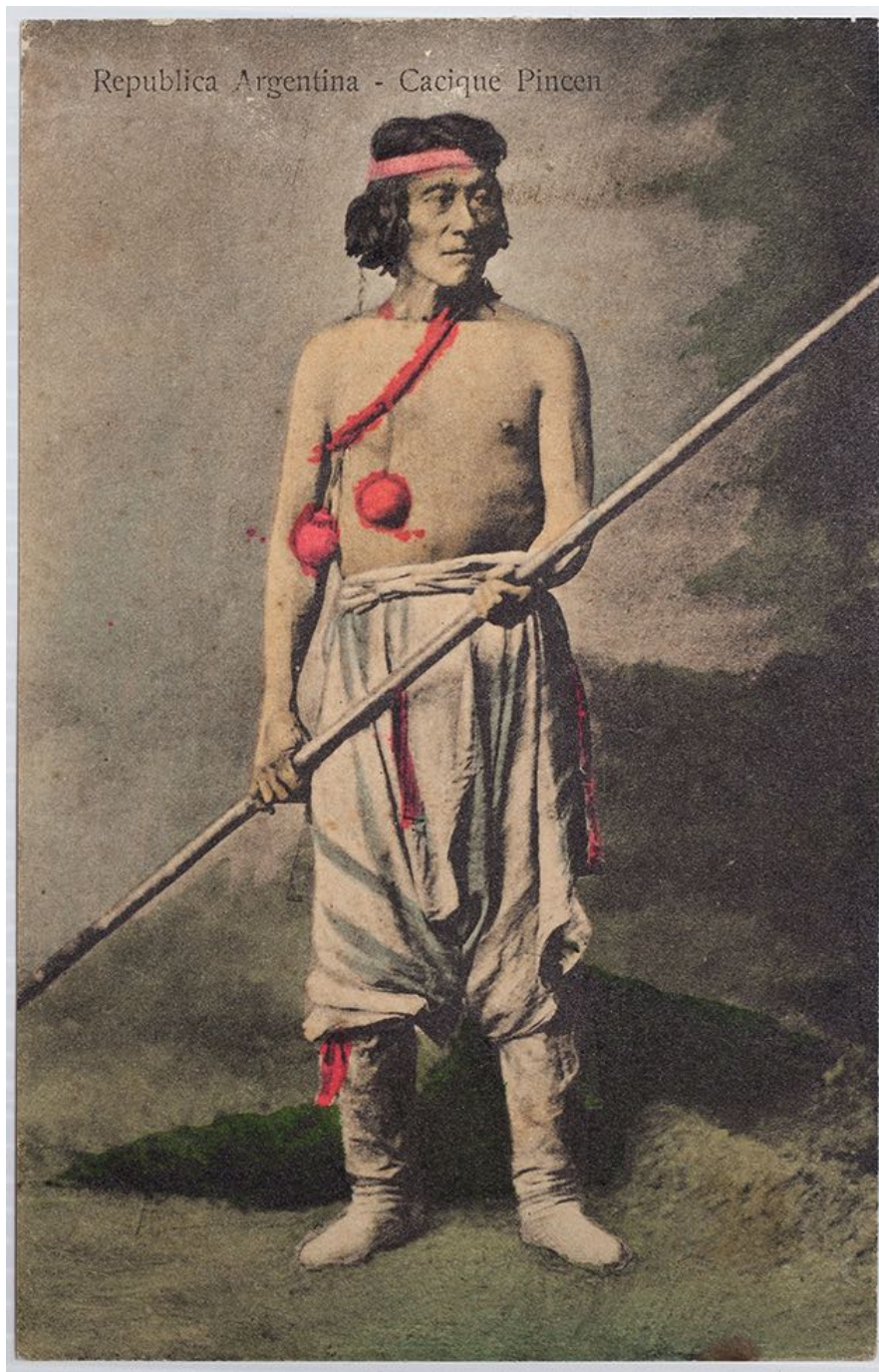


Figure 2.4: Antonio Pozzo, *Cacique Pincén* (Chief Pincén), 1878, Hand-colored halftone postcard, printed, c. 1900.



Figure 2.5: Ernesto Schlie, *Estación Central: Primer Ferro-Carril del Chaco*, (Central Station, First Train in Chaco), from *Vistas de la Provincia de Santa Fe* (Views of the Province of Santa Fe, 1889)



Figure 2.6: Ernesto Schlie, *Casa israelita. Monigotes, Santa Fe* (Israeli Home, Monigotes, Santa Fe), from *Vistas de la Provincia de Santa Fe*, 1889 (Views of the Province of Santa Fe, 1889)

Chapter 3 Figures



Figure 3.1. Reinaldo Guidici, *Primer ferrocarril "La Porteña" cruzando la campaña* (*The First Train, 'La Porteña,' Crossing the Countryside*), 1881, Oil on canvas, 51 x 100 cm (20.1 x 39.4 in.). Image courtesy of Museo de Arte Hispanoamericano Isaac Fernández Blanco, Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Figure 3.2. Ángel Della Valle, *La vuelta del malón* (*The Return of the Indian Raid*), 1892, Oil on canvas, 186.5 x 292 cm (73.5 x 115 in.). Image courtesy of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.



Figure 3.3: Sociedad Estimulo de Bellas Artes (Society for the Stimulus of Fine Arts), Buenos Aires, c. 1900



John Gast, American Progress, 1872.
Chromolithograph published by George A. Crofutt.
Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Figure 3.5: Fiovanni Fattori, *The Italian Camp at the Battle of Magenta*, 1861





Figure 3.6: Eduardo Sívori, *Estancia* (Country Estate), 1895



Figure 3.7: Angel Della Valle, *Apartando* (Separation), c. 1900



Figure 3.8 (Above): Juan Manuel Blanes, *La Cautiva (The Captive)*, 1880. Image courtesy of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

Figure 3.9 (below): Juan Manuel Blanes, *La Cautiva (The Captive)*, 1881. Image courtesy of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.





Figure 3.10: Eduardo Schiaffino, *Reposo* (Repose), 1889.
Image courtesy of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.



Figure 3.11: Ernesto de la Cárcova, *Sin Pan y Sin Trabajo* (Without Bread and Without Work), 1893-4. Image courtesy of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

Images for Chapter 4:

Inventing a “Neo-Creole Avant Garde”:
Emilio Pettoruti, Xul Solar, and the “Martin Fierristas”



Image 4.1:
Emilio Pettoruti (1892-1971) at age 40

Photography courtesy of Fundación Pettoruti



Image 4.2:
Michelangelo, *Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici*, Florence, 1520s



Image 4.3:
Pettoruti (second from right) and friends in Florence, 1914
Photo Courtesy of: Fundación Pettoruti



Image 4.4:

Pettoruti in the Piazza della Signoria, Florence, 1914

Photo Courtesy of: Fundación Pettoruti



Image 4.5:
Masaccio, *Scenes from the life of Saint Peter*, Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, c. 1425

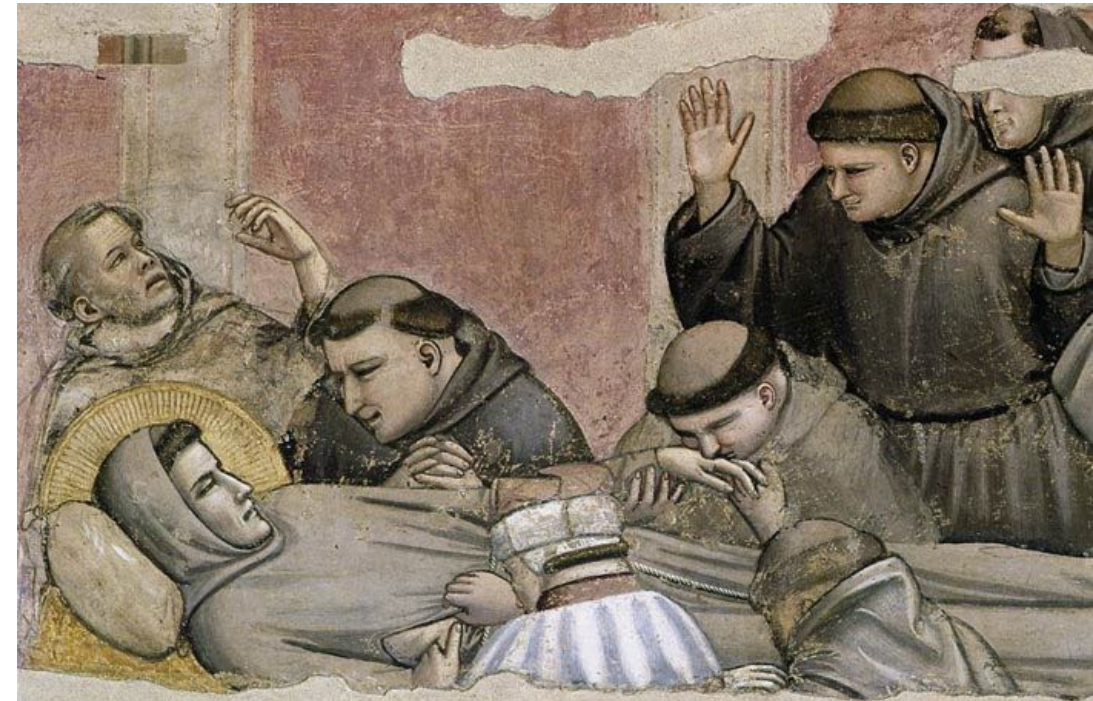


Image 4.6:
Giotto di Bondone, Scenes from the Bardi Chapel, Church of Santa Croce,
Florence,
c. 1325-28



Image 4.7:
Pettoruti, *Primavera* (Springtime), 1914
Photograph courtesy of the author

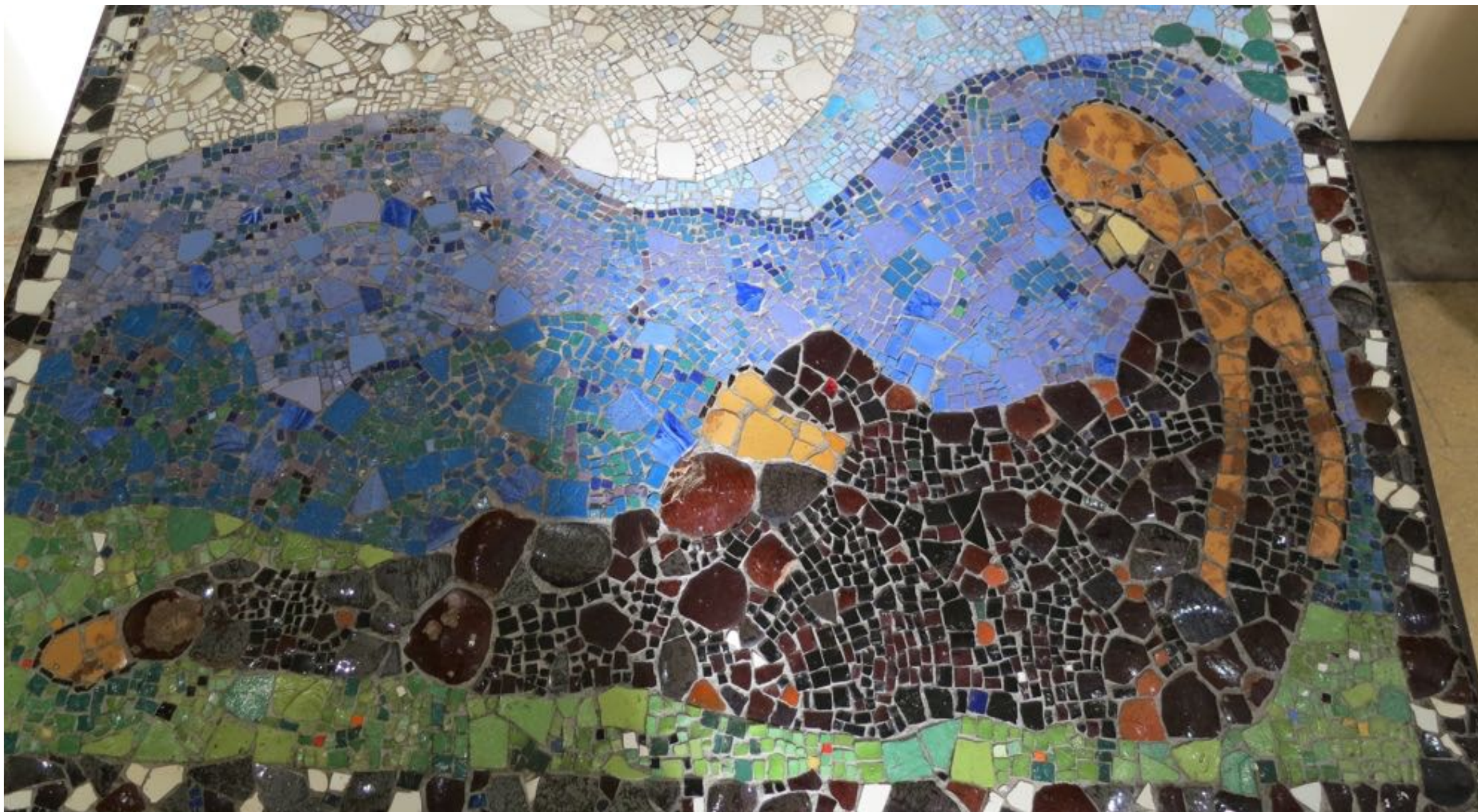


Image 4.8:

Pettoruti, Meditación (Meditation), 1915. Photograph courtesy of the author

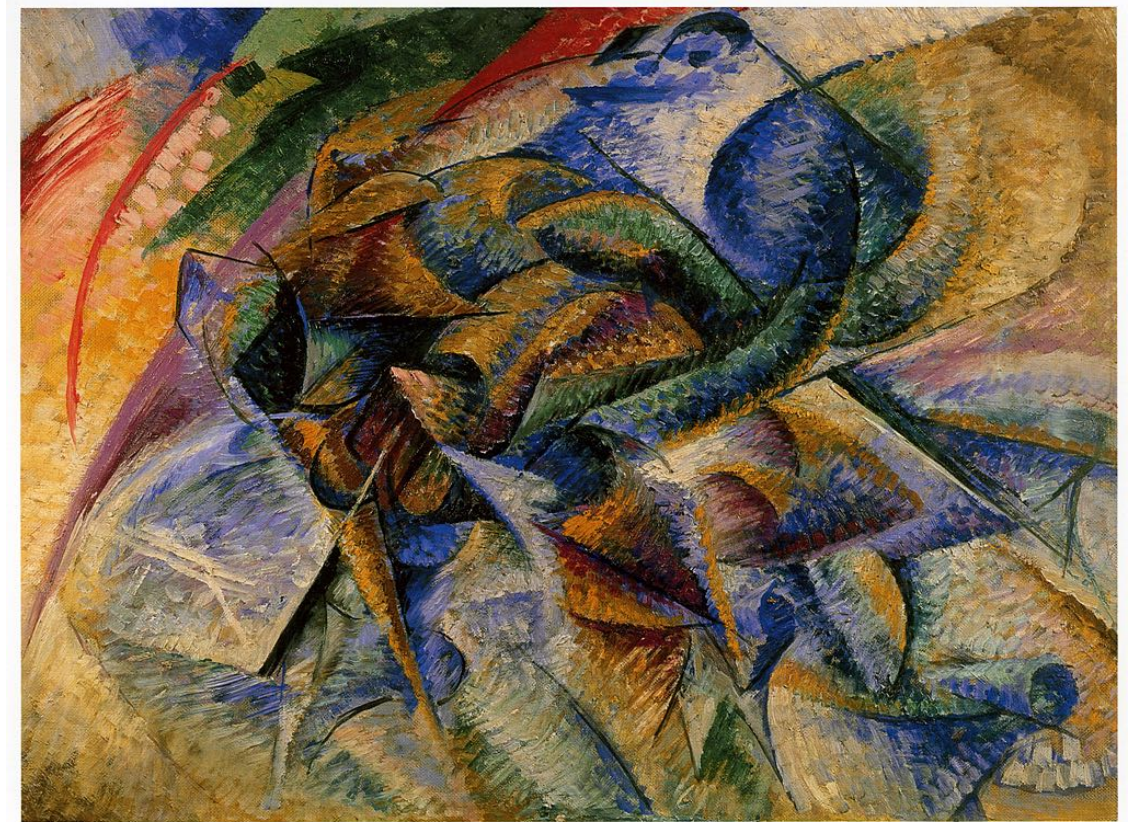
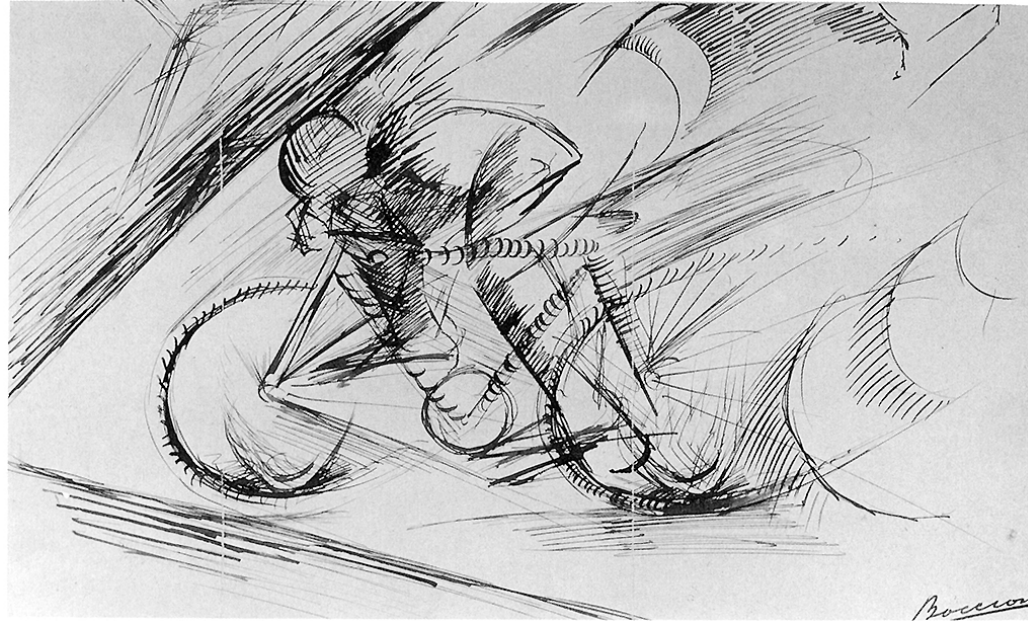


Image 4.9:
Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Cyclist*, published in *Lacerba*, 1913

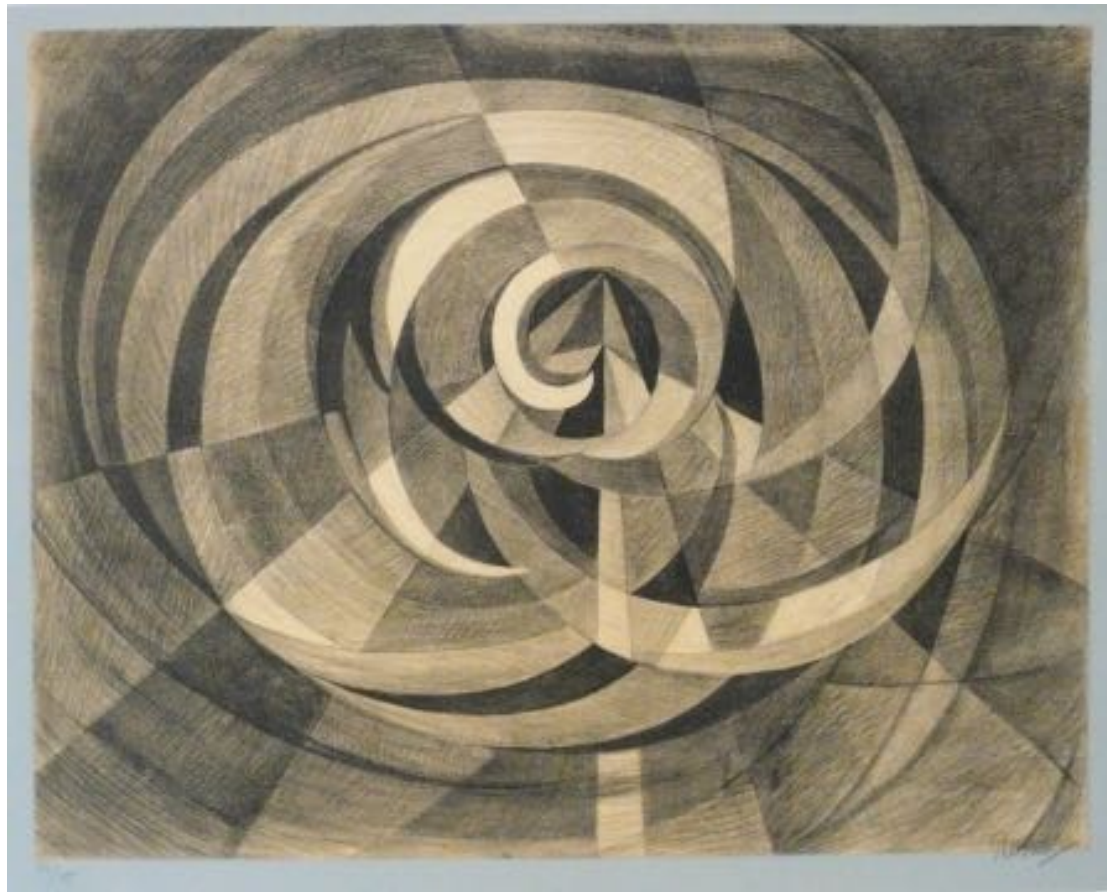


Image 4.10 :
 Pettoruti, *Armonia-movimento-spazio*
 (Harmony, Movement, Space)
 1914

Image Courtesy of the Museum of
 Modern Art

Image 4.11:
 Pettoruti,
Dinamica del vento (Dynamism of the wind)
 1914

Image Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art





Image 4.13:
Giacomo Balla, *Speeding Car and Light*, 1914



Image 4.12:
Pettoruti, *Composizione futurista*
(Futurist Composition), 1914



Image 4.14:
Pettoruti, *Citta-Paese*, 1914



Image 4.15:
Juan Gris, *Landscape and Houses at Ceret*,
1913



Image 4.16:
Pettoruti, *El Sifón* (*Lacerba*), 1915



Image 4.17:
Picasso, *Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Vieux Marc*, 1914



Image 4.18:
Xul Solar
(1887-1963)

Photograph courtesy of
the Fundación Pettoruti



Image 4.19:
Emilio Pettoruti, *Xul Solar*, 1920



Image 4.20:
Giorgio de Chirico,
The Uncertainty of the Poet, 1913



Image 4.21:
Mi ventana en Florencia (My Window in Florence), 1917

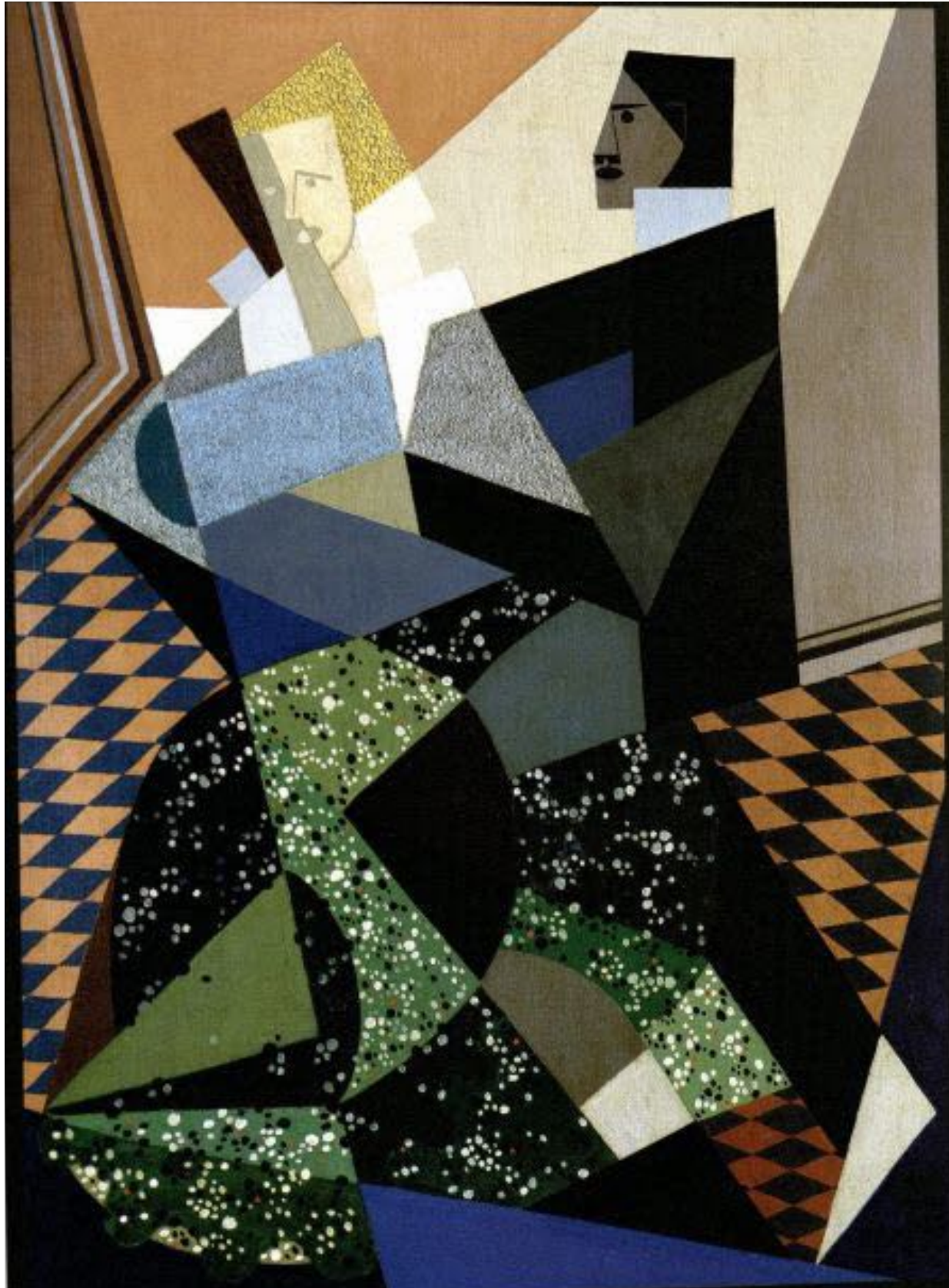


Image 4.22:
Pettoruti, *Bailarines*
(Dancers), 1918



Image 4.23: Gino Severini, *Blue Dancer*, 1912



Image 4.24: Juan Gris, *Madame Josette Gris*, 1916



Image 4.25: Xul Solar, *Reptil que Sube*, 1920



Image 4.26:
Pettoruti, *Carolita*, 1925



Image 4.27:

Pettoruti's 1924 exhibition at the
Witcomb Gallery

Photograph courtesy of Fundación
Pettoruti

MARTIN FIERRO

Periódico quincenal de arte y crítica libre
10 Cts. NUMERO DOBLE — EDICION DE 12 PAGINAS 10 Cts.
Segunda época, Año P. Núm. 10 y 11 Buenos Aires, Septiembre — Octubre 9 de 1924 Dirección y Adm.: Bustamante 27

Primavera

Ante todo ¡Viva la cursilería! Cursilería de estar enamorado, cursilería de emocionarse ante un durazno florido, cursilería de advertir que el cielo está más claro y las mujeres más hermosas, cursilería de la naturaleza que sólo tiene dos temas melódicos: el otoño y la primavera. Cursilería de haber dicho te amo, cursilería de haberse puesto así al air que le dicen te adoro. Cursilería. La primavera ha llegado con su bagaje de cursilería. Sus flores han invadido los jardines y las floréricas. Hay rosas por todos lados, en las vidrieras, en los balcones, en las mesas de los restaurantes, en el pecho, en la boca de las mujeres. Hay niñas que buscan novio y van con un ramo de flores en la mano. Las mujeres hacen camoufflage de su belleza, llevando rosas, muchas rosas en la mano. Y las esposas jóvenes que aún esperan el otoño de la maternidad, hacen training llevando un ramo de flores como si llevaran un bebé. En las ferias entre el bochinche del toma y daca, entre el rojo demagógico de los tomates primerizos y el verde guarango de los ajíes, las flores se mantienen apartadas cuidando silenciosas la dignidad de su belleza. En cada esquina hay un hombre sonriente que vende flores. Yo pienso que la humildad de la violeta es un cuento inventado por floristas para que todos compren violetas, las últimas de invierno. Todas las revistas reproducen el cuadro de Boticelli.

Primavera. Cursilería del artículo de diario saludando la primavera. Apertura del salón anual con pinturas al aceite. Paseo de jubilados por las veredas tranquilas llenas de sol. Palermo es un gran jardín de infantes. Canchas de rugby donde los muchachos juegan a hacerse pedazos, canchas de tenis donde las mujeres juegan para olvidar su sexo. Cursilería de estar pensando en la novia mientras la jazzband del café de la esquina enloquece el silencio. Carreras desenfrenadas de autos transparentes por las avenidas luminosas. Pasan muchachos con cara de boxeadores; en todo hombre hay un boxeador subjetivo.

Primavera. Las chicas de los colegios se leen recíprocamente las cartas de sus novios, en los recreos, a escondidas de la profesora de moral que es fea. Las mujeres comienzan a desnudarse. Cursilería de un desnudo que ha copiado toda la Academia de Bellas Artes.

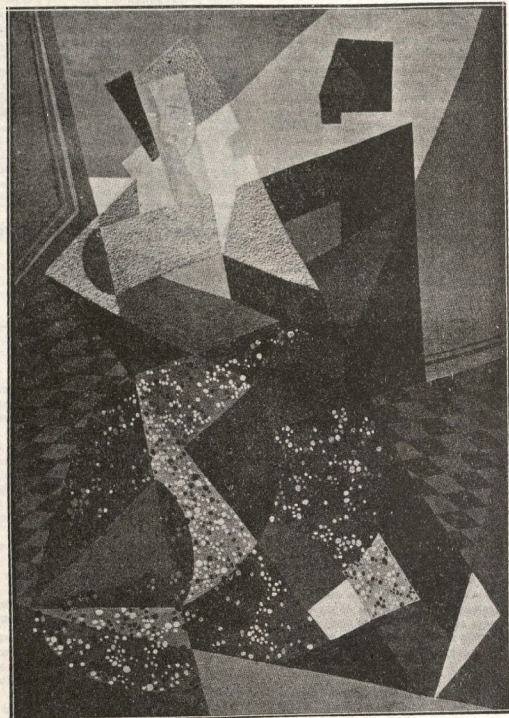
Domingo de septiembre en Palermo. Encantadora cursilería de la primavera. Pasos en botes por el lago, de muchachas sin melena, que han conseguido un novio, humildes como un boleto de tranvía. Fotógrafos ambulantes, especie de escribanos de la luz que dan fe de un episodio de romanticismo municipal mediante una fotografía. Rosaleda, hermoso muso de rosas *au plein air*. Hay tanta luz que dan ganas de guardar para los días nublados. En estos días de primavera quisiera ser el señor Intendente para pasearme por todo Buenos Aires en un Packard abierto, saludado por los agentes de tráfico. Este año la primavera llegó del lado del río y se mojó los pies. En el Botánico florecen las flores y los amores. Recuerdo que mi único amor es de Jardín Botánico. A veces, la palabra primavera me parece el nombre de un pueblo donde no hay premios municipales. Primavera, dame la primavera y diré esta oración: Primavera, dame el poco de cursilería que me pertenece.

Pablo ROJAS PAZ.

EN ESTE NUMERO:

Pettoruti, por A. Xul Solar.
Emoción y S. por Eduardo González Lanuza.
Nora Lange, por Jorge Luis Borges.
El Conservatorio Nacional, por Leopoldo Hurtado.
Andrés L. Carr, por Héctor Castillo.
La oratoria del hombre confuso, por M. Fernández.
El Salón Nacional, por Alberto Prebisch.
El espíritu del finado, por Roberto Leleuana.
Versos del: Enrique M. Amorin, Brandon Carráza, Versos del: Enrique M. Amorin, Brandon Carráza, Vizconde de Lazzano Tegui, Poetas de Chile. Varios otros textos, epigramas, notas gráficas.

P E T T O R U T I



Pettoruti.—Bailarines

Digamos algo más del conocido pintor platense Pettoruti, uno de la vanguardia criolla hacia lo futuro, uno de los pocos que luchan conscientemente por nuestra completa independencia espiritual.

Aun muy joven. Siempre electrizado, chispeante, es un activo fermento y comburente en la vida de sus amigos, y lo será ciertamente también en la vida de nuestra patria.

Complicada idiosincrasia moderna. Inquieto en su alma y serenamente feliz en su arte. Apasionado de realidad, se aleja siempre más de ella en sus cuadros. Epicéreo cotidiano, vive para su ideal de belleza.

Poco respetuoso de preceptos, estudia y se renueva continuamente. Hizo el arduo aprendizaje artístico a través de su propio drama, en sí mismo, y no acumulando frías recetas; cada etapa de su desarrollo, una cada adquisición técnica, corresponden en él a una nueva sazón de su alma. Mucho buscó y meditó y ensayó. Pronto llegó a lo más difícil, a la madurez que equivale a un segundo nacimiento, el encontrarse a sí mismo. Ahora, ya con un capital re-

lizado de armoniosas obras que nos garantiza su porvenir, se entrega de lleno a la embriaguez de crear; corrigiendo, dosando con su ciencia, gusto y fineza las mayores audacias, la exuberancia del Sur. Invento libremente, cosas poco clasificables, a menudo discutibles, pero que contienen vida, y la tan rara esencia: Belleza.

Cosas que, aunque siempre dentro del mejor gusto, se salen de la ley común—de la letra de la ley—haciendo escuela de por sí. Verdadera, pura pintura, fuera de lo que llamaron pintar durante siglos, gravosa superstición deducida del museo por algunos críticos famosos del período histórico que está feneciendo, de ciertas regiones que se erocina (y se erren) centro y clave universal. Cierta es que el arte, el gran arte, es arcaico como el hombre; y el arte novísimo es un producto, una necesidad tan lógica (y mucho más honda y seria y fecunda) de la cultura actual, como podía serlo el arte que se hacía por y para príncipes y magnates en el Renacimiento.

(Sigue en página 7).

Image 4.28:

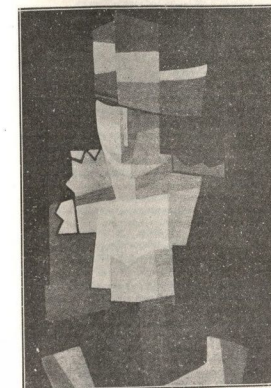
Xul Solar' review of Pettoruti's exhibition, *Martin Fierro*, October 9, 1924

MARTIN FIERRO

P E T T O R U T I

Lentamente maduraba en nuestro Pettoruti una nueva convicción, no sólo en los momentos de ardor creativo, sino también ayudada por periodos de apatía improductiva: de inquietud, de viajes, de tormento íntimo, de duda.

La necesidad musical le pedía libre juego en líneas, movimientos y masas, según su despotismo rítmico. La necesidad plástica lo llevaba a un mayor resalto de los volúmenes y de las "valores", a la violación del color, a un equilibrio arquitectónico, raro en la Naturaleza, confuso por excesivamente rica. La necesidad poética, en fin, quería basar el cuadro entero en el sujeto que dictaría, justificaría todos los elementos y medios a emplear.



Pettoruti.—La señorita del traje violeta

En cuanto todo esto se le hizo claro y sólido, nuestro artista, admirablemente joven, como lo es siempre todo artista de veras, animo virgen, produjo sin dilación, sin estudio intermedio, estas sus nuevas obras, casi sorprendido de sí mismo, guiado, solo y seguro, por su Dios.

Se entreveran unos muestrarios de colores, se amon-



Pettoruti.—Flautista ciego

tonas cubos, cilindros, conos: resulta el retrato de un alma. O los rostros se exasperan, reventan luz, mientras las formas más se deforman, giran en calidoscopio: resulta un poema paisaje. También nos encontramos con algunos cuadros preocupados, gélidos, nervios inasistibles, que son curiosidades de laboratorio secreto, lo más interesante, índice de hasta donde llega



Emilio Pettoruti

este pintor cuando desenta su antejo de la fantasía por las abstracciones.

Obras de esta clase que son ya número, serán quizás abominadas por nuestros públicos, cuando por aquí se expongan, tachadas de "incomprensibles" o de "des-equilibradas". No porque parezcan más "naturales", la pintura del pasado y la "pasadista", se requiere menos perspicacia en penetrar toda su geometría, su



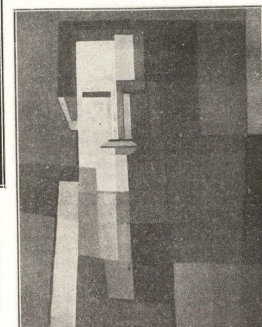
Pettoruti.—Paisaje

ritmo, su poliorrma, y tantos otros valores imponderables. Si ahora los novísimos artistas en todo ramo transigen menos con el gusto y uso común, si no volan lo más aparente de su arte con el exteriorismo de lo verosímil, justamente por su desnudez de intención,

sus cuadros son inmediatamente accesibles—para quien quiera, sepa ver.—

Pudo Pettoruti diez años en Europa. En Florencia estudió mucho varios años. En Roma admiró. En Milán varios años trabajó mucho. Conoce toda Italia como pocos italianos y a tantos italianos como pocos extranjeros. Estuvo en Alemania unos meses en contacto con los expresionistas; luego en París entre el arte más nuevo. Amigo de Picasso y Juan Gris, Archipenko, Chagall, Zadkín, Hernández y tantos otros.

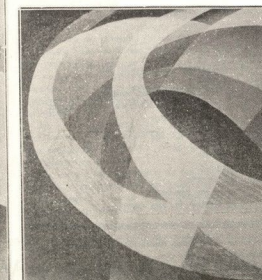
Nuestro Pettoruti, con un compañero de arte, también de nueva fe, retornó ya al terruño traído por la nostalgia.



Pettoruti.—Retrato del pintor Xul Solar

Ya podrán los portados admirar o condenar o desdorar su obra, que otros públicos sancionaron en más de treinta exposiciones, en Francia, Italia, Suecia y Alemania; pero todos reconocerán la gran importancia estimulante de este su arte, un punto de partida para nuestra evolución artística propia.

No pretende Pettoruti imponernos una dada moda, convenciéndonos de cualquier cosa con la pujanza del talento. Su arte está dentro de todo el siglo espiritual presente.



Pettoruti.—Paisaje a gran velocidad

A esta época es que el arte es más individual y arbitrario que nunca, no se le puede decir antiquaria. Existe a pesar de tanta confusión, una tendencia bien definida hacia la simplicidad de medios, la arquitectura clara y sólida, hacia la pura plástica que conserva, acentúa la significación abstracta de línea, masa y color, todo dentro de una completa libertad de comprensión y composición. Estas nuevas amplias perspectivas, este serio esfuerzo de Pettoruti—disidente por fin—nos

MARTÍN FIERRO

PERIODICO QUINCENAL
DE ARTE Y CRÍTICA LIBRE

Segunda época

Buenos Aires, Febrero de 1924

Año I.° N.º 1

La vuelta de "Martín Fierro" Balada del Intendente de Buenos Aires

Los carteles del "Martín Fierro" de Marzo de 1919,—originalísima presentación y sistema inédito de propaganda que fué elogiosamente comentado en el país y el extranjero,—expusieron su programa, aunque no eran todo el que se trazó aquel núcleo de escritores jóvenes, sofocados por el ambiente enrarecido en fuerza de platitud, de ausencia de verdad y de una amplia libertad en la expresión del pensamiento.

Ideas de renovación y transformación social, a las que nadie podía permanecer ajeno en aquel momento, mucho menos los espíritus nuevos y las vanguardias intelectuales; reacción explicable y justa contra multitud de prejuicios absurdos del público y de los dirigentes de la opinión, dentro y fuera del gobierno, desde el concepto sobre la lucha de clases,—en un período álgido hace cuatro años y frescos aun acontecimientos insólitos y bochornosos,—hasta expresiones diversas de la vida colectiva y del movimiento literario y artístico, sin contar manifestaciones múltiples de la chatura mental circunstante, constituían el fundamento de esa iniciativa juvenil que se concretó dando a luz "Martín Fierro".

Concluía de expresar ese anterior programa una estrofa del clásico gauchesco cuyo nombre se tomaba como símbolo, ateniéndose a su tradición de independencia, conforme con su espíritu altivo y franco, y con su esencia nacional:

"De naides sigo el ejemplo,
Naide a dirigirme viene;
Yo digo lo que conviene,
Y, el que en tal gueya se planta,
Debe cantar, cuando canta,
Con toda la voz que tiene."

Vuelve ahora "Martín Fierro", y, aunque los tiempos no son, exterior y aparentemente, los mismos, hacemos nuestro el antiguo programa, en todo cuanto la actualidad reclama, como acción imperiosa, a la juventud pensante que ha de dirigir, o por lo menos influenciar, con su pensamiento o sus hechos, el desenvolvimiento de la vida argentina. Y los antiguos redactores del periódico que se incorporan a la actual renovación de su existencia, tan breve como prestigiosa, al lado de las jóvenes gentes para las cuales el "Martín Fierro" de 1919 fué la mejor tentativa de prensa libre, al igual de los nuevos, expresan con el viejo gaucho nutrido de su clara y sencilla filosofía, para explicar su presente situación espiritual:

"Yo he conocido cantores
Que era un gusto el escuchar;
Mas, no quieren opinar
Y se divierten cantando;
Pero yo canto opinando
Que es mi modo de cantar."

Así decía, volviendo de su voluntario destierro entre los salvajes, (otra coincidencia entre el tipo simbólico y la intención de este periódico?), con mayor experiencia que nunca, el nativo cantor de las desdichas del pueblo. Y este "Martín Fierro",—que gusta la risa y la sonrisa, y tan lírico como idealista, ama el canto,—quiere también, por ser humanamente utilitario, cantando opinar sobre los hechos, las obras y los hombres. Por eso repetimos a los jóvenes:

"Procuren, si son cantores,
El cantar con sentimiento;
No tiemplan el instrumento
Por solo el gusto de hablar
Y acostúmbrense a cantar
En cosas de fundamento."

Y ahora. En guardia, los cretinos!

La Dirección.

Ciudad de las torres de confitería
Que surges del río puro chocolate
Con el idiotismo de tu simetría
De tus pobladores franco disparate:
Tienes quien te gane si no quien te empate.
Y es tu prototipo y es toda tu esencia
Y es de tus faroles el mejor remate
El chocolatero que está en la Intendencia.

Su nariz define su tilinguería,
Dice, antes que él llegue: "Paso al botarate!"
Como quien anuncia ya su apología
Mostrando, insolente, tal zanahoriarte.
Doctor en barbecho, similor magnate,
Por propio decreto se nombró "Excelencia"
Mientras que en su casa miel y huevos bate
El chocolatero que está en la Intendencia.

Para deslumbrarnos con su fantasía
Próceres de bronce tiene en jaque-mate,
Crea mingitorios coloniales, vía
Costanera, cambia nombres. El orate
Quiere que el tranvía nunca se abarate.
Y las mancebías son una indecencia
Pues su unitarismo sórdido no abate
El chocolatero que está en la Intendencia.

ENVÍO:

REY de mermeladas y jaleas: ¡tate:
Tú que en los merengues fincas tu adherencia:
Puede que termines con nuestra paciencia
Y que Buenos Aires, decidido, achate
Al chocolatero que está en la Intendencia.

JORGE MORA.

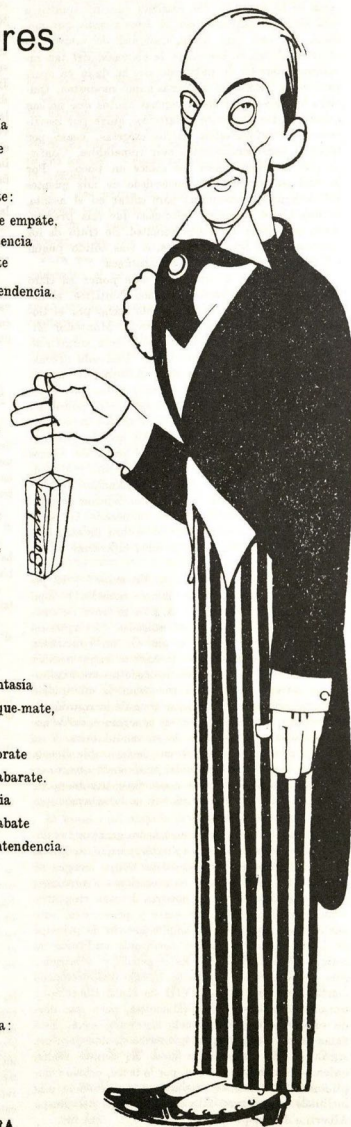


Image 4.29:
First Issue of *Martín Fierro*, with the
Manifesto,
published February, 1924

"MARTIN FIERRO"

Periódico quincenal de arte y crítica libre

Frente a la impermeabilidad hipopotámica del
"honorable público".

Frente a la funeraria solemnidad del historiador y del catedrático, que momifica cuanto toca.

Frente al recetario que inspira las elucubraciones de nuestros más "bellos" espíritus y a la afición al **ANACRONISMO** y al **MIME-TISMO** que demuestran.

Frente a la ridícula necesidad de fundamen-
tar nuestro nacionalismo intelectual, hinchando
valores falsos que al primer pinchazo se des-
inflan como chanchitos.

Frente a la incapacidad de contemplar la vida sin escalar las estanterías de las bibliotecas

Y sobre todo, frente al pavoroso temor de equivocarse que paraliza el mismo ímpetu de la juventud, más anquilosada que cualquier burocrata jubilado:

"**MARTIN FIERRO**" siente la necesidad imprescindible de definirse y de llamar a cuantos sean capaces de percibir que nos hallamos en presencia de una **NUEVA** sensibilidad y de una **NUEVA** comprensión, que, al ponernos de acuerdo con nosotros mismos, nos descubre panoramas insospechados y nuevos medios y formas de expresión.

"MARTIN FIERRO" acepta las consecuencias y las responsabilidades de localizarse, porque sabe que de ello depende su salud. Instruido de sus antecedentes, de su anatomía, del meridiano en que camina: consulta el barómetro el calendario, antes de salir a la calle a vivir: con sus nervios y con su mentalidad de hoy.

"**MARTIN FIERRO**" sabe que "todo es nuevo bajo el sol" si todo se mira con una pupila actual y se expresa con un acento contemporáneo.

“**MARTIN FIERRO**”, se encuentra, por eso, más a gusto, en un transatlántico moderno que en un palacio renacentista, y sostiene que un buen Hispano-Suiza es una **OBRA DE ART**.
muchísimo más perfecta que una silla de mar-
nos de la época de Luis XV.

"**MARTIN FIEBERO**" ve una posibilidad arquitectónica en un baúl "Innovation", una lección de síntesis en un "marconigramma", una organización mental en una "rotativa", sin que esto le impida poseer — como las mejores familias — un álbum de retratos, que hojea, a veces en cuando, para descubrirse al través de un antepasado... o reirse de su cuello y de su corbata.

"MARTIN FIERRO" cree en la importancia del aporte intelectual de América, previo tij

retazo a todo cordón umbilical. Acentuar y generalizar, a las demás manifestaciones intelectuales, el movimiento de independencia iniciado, en el idioma, por Rubén Darío, no significa, empero, que habremos de renunciar, ni mucho menos, finjamos desconocer que todas las mañanas nos servimos de un dentífrico sueco, de unas toallas de Francia y de un jabón inglés.

"**MARTIN FIERRO**", tiene fe en nuestra fonética, en nuestra visión, en nuestros modelos, en nuestro oído, en nuestra capacidad digestiva y de asimilación.

“**MARTIN FIERRO** artista, se refriega los ojos a cada instante para arrancar las telarañas que tejen de continuo: el hábito y la costumbre. ¡Entregar a cada nuevo amor una nueva virginidad, y que los excesos de cada día sean distintos a los excesos de ayer y de mañana! ¡Esta es para él la verdadera santidad del creador!... ¡Hay pocos santos!

“**MARTÍN FIERRO**” crítico, sabe que una locomotora no es comparable a una manzana y el hecho de que todo el mundo compare una locomotora a una manzana y algunos opten por la locomotora, otros por la manzana, rectifica para él, la sospecha de que hay muchos más negros de lo que se cree. Negro el que exclama ¡co!soal! y cree haberlo dicho todo. Negro el que necesita encandilarse con lo cursante y no está satisfecho si no lo encandila lo cursante. Negro el que tiene las manos achatadas como platillos de balanza y lo sopesa todo y todo le juzga por el peso. ¡Hay tantos negros!...

"MARTIN FIERRO" sólo aprecia a los negros y a los blancos que son realmente negros o blancos y no pretenden en lo más mínimo cambiar de color.

¿Simpatiza Vd. con "MARTIN FIERRO"?
¿Colabore Vd. en "MARTIN FIERRO"?
¿Suscríbase Vd. a "MARTIN FIERRO"?!

Suscripción, por año, desde el primer número,
pago adelantado, \$ 2.50. Página de avisos, por
publicación, \$ 200; por fracción : proporcional.

—
"MARTIN FIERRO", — periódico redactado por la más brillante juventud intelectual argentina, — se costea con el modesto peculio de sus redactores asociados, mediante la suscripción de acciones de \$ 10 m/n. Está disponible una serie. ¿Quiere Vd. ser uno de los dueños de "MARTIN FIERRO"? Suscriba una o varias acciones, y colabore a esta obra de bien.

Dirección y Administración:

BUSTAMANTE 27, D 3. C

Image 4.30:
Martín Fierro Manifesto,
published in *Martín Fierro*,
May 1924.



Image 4.32:
Tarsila do Amaral, *Abaporu*, 1928

Figures for Chapter 5:
“A Gigantic Extended Arm”:
Italian Fascism Goes to Argentina

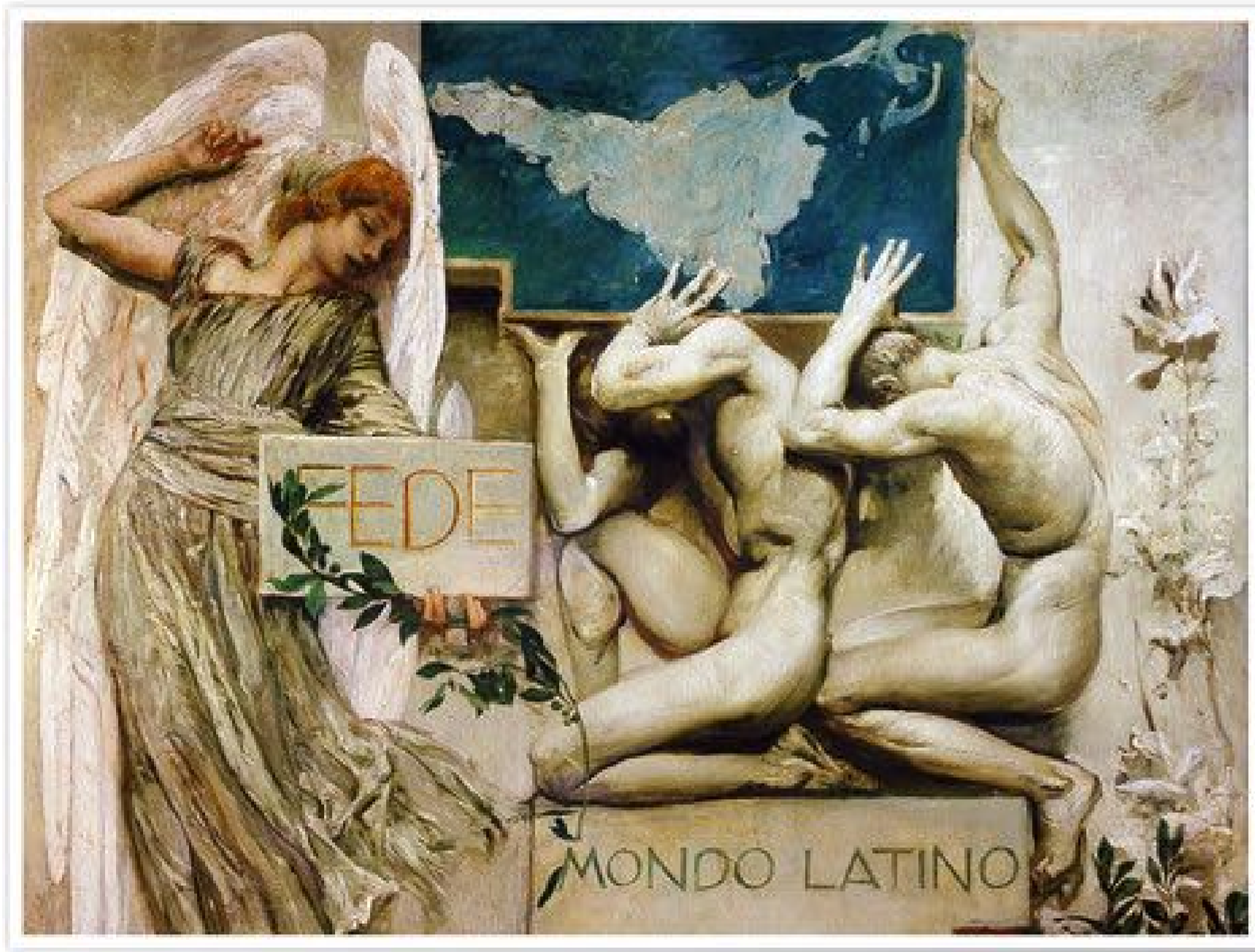


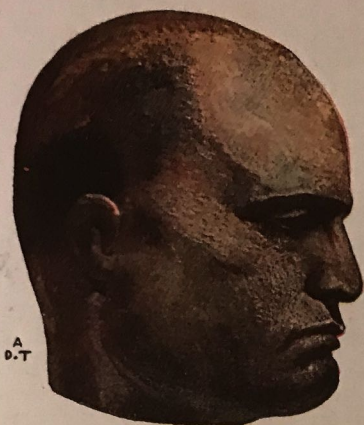
Figure 5.1: Giolio Aristide Sartorio, *Fede-Mondo Latino Oceanico*, 1904



Figures 5.2 and 5.3: From *Lettture classe prima: Scuole italiane all'estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933).



Figure 5.4: From *Lecture classe prima: Scuole italiane all'estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933)



I L D U C E

Tutti i bambini italiani amano Mussolini, il Duce che guida la nuova Italia e che senza riposo lavora per il bene della Patria.

Il volto austero del Duce si illumina di dolcezza quando Egli guarda i bambini. Sanno i bimbi italiani perchè il Duce li ama tanto?

Li ama perchè i bimbi sono le più belle speranze d'Italia, perchè se essi cresceranno forti, laboriosi, buoni, l'Italia anche sarà forte, potente, felice.



Balilla.

Mimmo per la prima volta ha messo la sua firma sopra un foglio importante: ha firmato la domanda per diventare balilla.

La divisa che la mamma ha cucito con tanto amore è pronta, ma Mimmo sa che per essere un vero balilla non basta indossare la divisa e marciare bene a passo con altri bambini.

Sa che il balilla, anche quando non veste la divisa, è un piccolo soldato d'Italia e, come tutti i soldati, deve essere sempre forte, leale, coraggioso.

Figures 5.5 and 5.6: From *Letture classe prima: Scuole italiane all'estero* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1933).

MARINETTI EN LOS "AMIGOS DEL ARTE"

Por Alberto Prebisch

Una feliz consecuencia de la visita de Marinetti a esta ciudad, ha sido la exposición organizada por un grupo de artistas de vanguardia en el local de los "Amigos del Arte". Pettoruti, Xul Solai y Norah Borges concurren a ella con algunas de sus obras más representativas. Dos proyectos arquitectónicos de Vautier y Prebisch integran esta interesante manifestación de arte vanguardista.

Lástima grande que la premura con que ella fue organizada, no haya permitido presentar al público una más amplia demostración de fuerzas nuevas. Las tentativas de esta índole implican una serie de responsabilidades que es necesario encarar con larga premeditación. Desgraciadamente, el público es un factor que el artista debe tener siempre bien presente. Su suspicacia es extrema. Mal orientado por una deficiente educación estética, inocente y cotidiana víctima de la crítica ciega, su mala voluntad hacia cualquier intento renovador es indiscutible. Y la docilidad presurosa con que acepta en la vida diaria, toda innovación que concurre a mitigar los inconvenientes de una existencia demasiado febril, se encuentra ampliamente compensada por aquella incomprensible cerrazón rutinaria.

Varios son los artistas, de indudables merecimientos, que podrían haber figurado con honor al lado de

los antedichos. Pintores como Horacio Butler, Travascio, Tapia, del Prete, escultores como Curatella Manés y Falcini, arquitectos como Alejo Martínez y Fermín Beretebide, hubieran acrecentado eficazmente el valor demostrativo de esta exposición. Acaso el orgulloso apartamiento de una obra aislada, por excelentes que sean sus cualidades, no tenga, ante la opinión puerilmente impresionable del público, la fuerza convincente de un nutrido conjunto.

En esta oportunidad, la cálida verba del señor Marinetti puso al alcance de los espectadores algunos de los más notorios artículos de su dogma estético. En realidad, pocas palabras salieron de su boca que conmovieran por su imprevista novedad al oyente entendido. Y es que la ideología marinettiana sabe ya a vino pasado, según el paladar de los buenos catadores.

En los comienzos de la campaña modernista, pocas eran las obras que respondieran con alguna fidelidad al sentir original de los artistas innovadores. Ante los requerimientos de una sensibilidad que se despierta tumultuosamente, la facultad expresiva del nombre se debate en la más desesperante insuficiencia. Y es entonces que la fiebre teórica aparece, para compensar esta pobreza creativa. El credo artístico de Marinetti

(Sigue pág. 5)

Marinetti en los "Amigos del Arte"



Norah Borges — El medallón

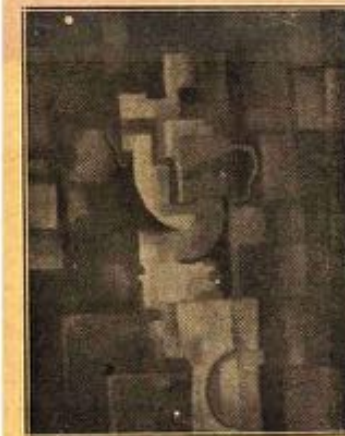


Norah Borges — El niño rubio



Norah B. — Paisaje de Portugal

tiene todo el sabor de aquella época de exacerbada furia dialéctica.



Emilio Pettoruti — Estudio de retrato

Cualquier teoría encierra, dentro de su propia fuerza, el peligro de la degeneración dogmática, cuando no es

sofística, de tiempo en tiempo, a una rigurosa confrontación con la realidad. De aquí que el pensamiento de Marinetti no haya perdido aún su carácter primitivo, general y casi abstracto. A medida que iban saliendo a luz las obras de los artistas innovadores, la teoría marinettiana original sufría modificaciones sustanciales. La experiencia individual de cada artista, puesta ya en el duro trance creativo, le sugería las fallas inherentes a todo sistema puramente dialéctico. A la severa ortodoxia plástica de los primeros tiempos, hemos visto así suceder un fuerte movimiento de reacción hacia la naturaleza objetiva. La aspiración de un arte puro y deshumanizado ha llevado a los creadores hacia un callejón sin salida honorable. Y la abstracción decorativa, única meta en la circunstancia, no se acuerda por cierto, con esa intensa necesidad de íntima espiritualidad que parece ser, en efecto, una de las esenciales características del arte nuevo.

El futurismo marinettiano ha sido ampliamente superado. Por otra parte, la extraordinaria complejidad del espíritu contemporáneo se resiste a someterse a los rigores de cualquier estrecho dogma. Y cada individualidad vigorosa exige, a su aparición, un serio examen enmendado de las teorías vigentes.

En la exposición que nos ocupa, Pettoruti por un lado, Xul Solai y Norah Borges por otro, nos demuestran que el arte moderno puede manifestarse bajo apariencias contradictorias, en obras reveladoras de los más opuestos temperamentos. Los ensayos de abstracción de formas abstractas que preocupan a Pettoruti, el arte misterioso y simbólico de Xul Solai, la intensidad poética y dulcemente sentimental de los di-

hijos de Norah Borges, nos obligan a considerar con escepticismo los principios que pretenden fijar intencionalmente los límites y las fuentes precisas de la creación artística.



Emilio Pettoruti — Pierrot

ALBERTO PREBISCH.



A. Xul Solai — Angel



A. Xul Solai — Escenario

Figure 5.7:
"Marinetti en los Amigos del Arte"
Martín Fierro, July 8, 1926

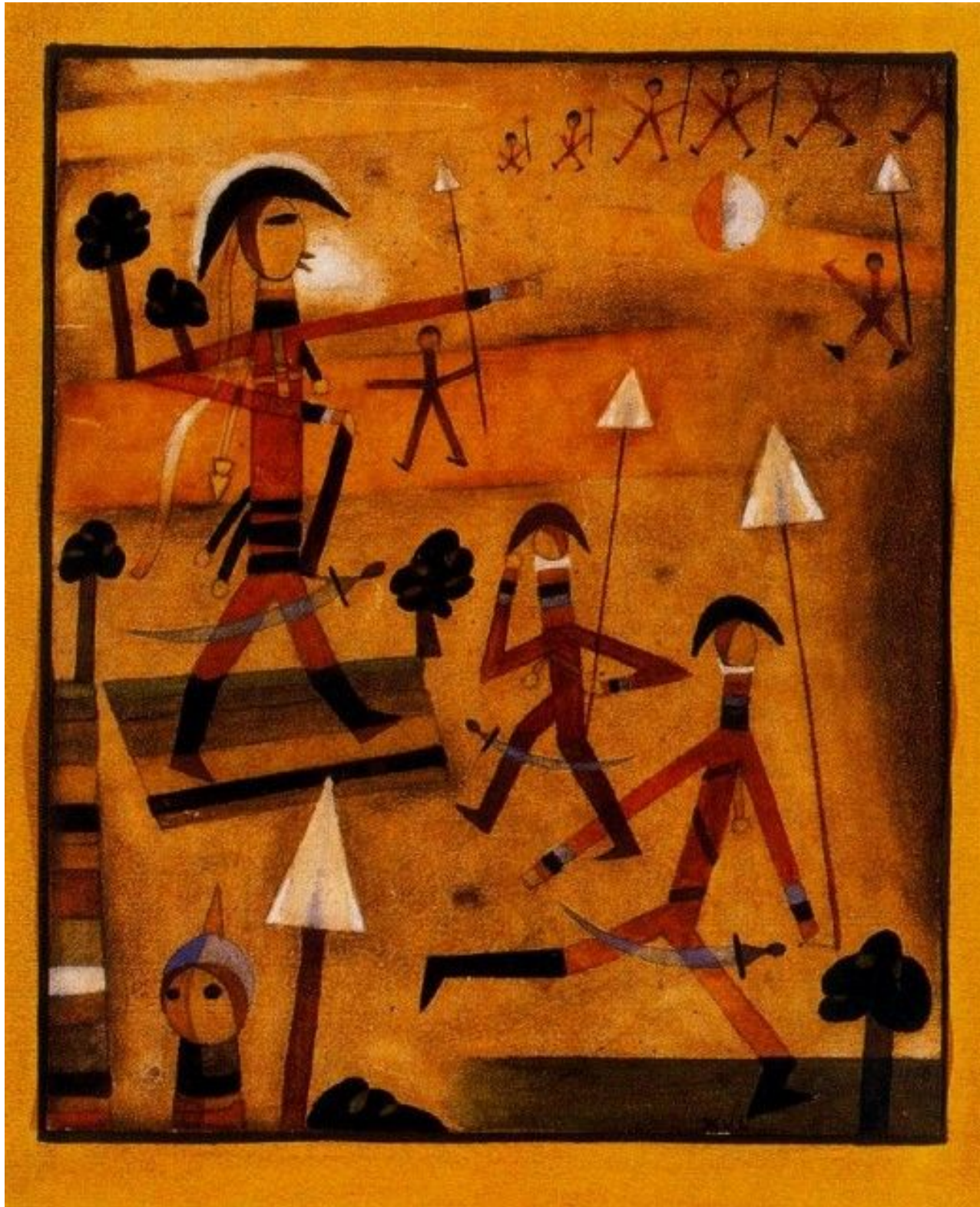


Figure 5.8:
Xul Solar,
Milicia, 1925



Figure 5.9:
Tato,
*Flying over the Coliseum
in a Spiral*, 1930



Figure 5.10:
Gerardo Dottori,
Aerial Battle over the Gulf of Naples,
1942

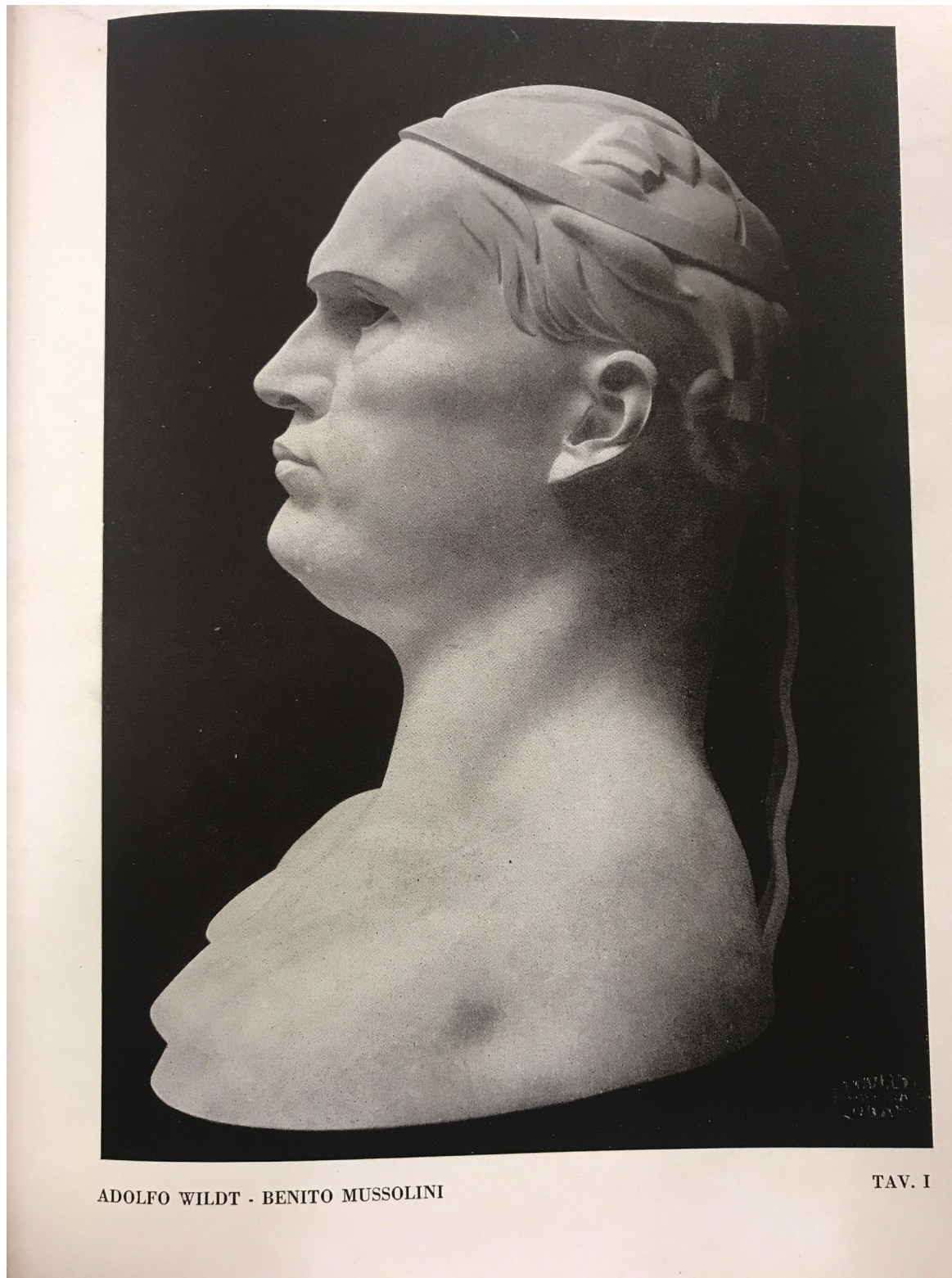


Figure 5.11:
Adolfo Wildt, *Il Duce*, 1924,
Image taken from the catalog:
Mostra Novecento Italiano,
Amigos Del Arte,
(Buenos Aires, September 1930)

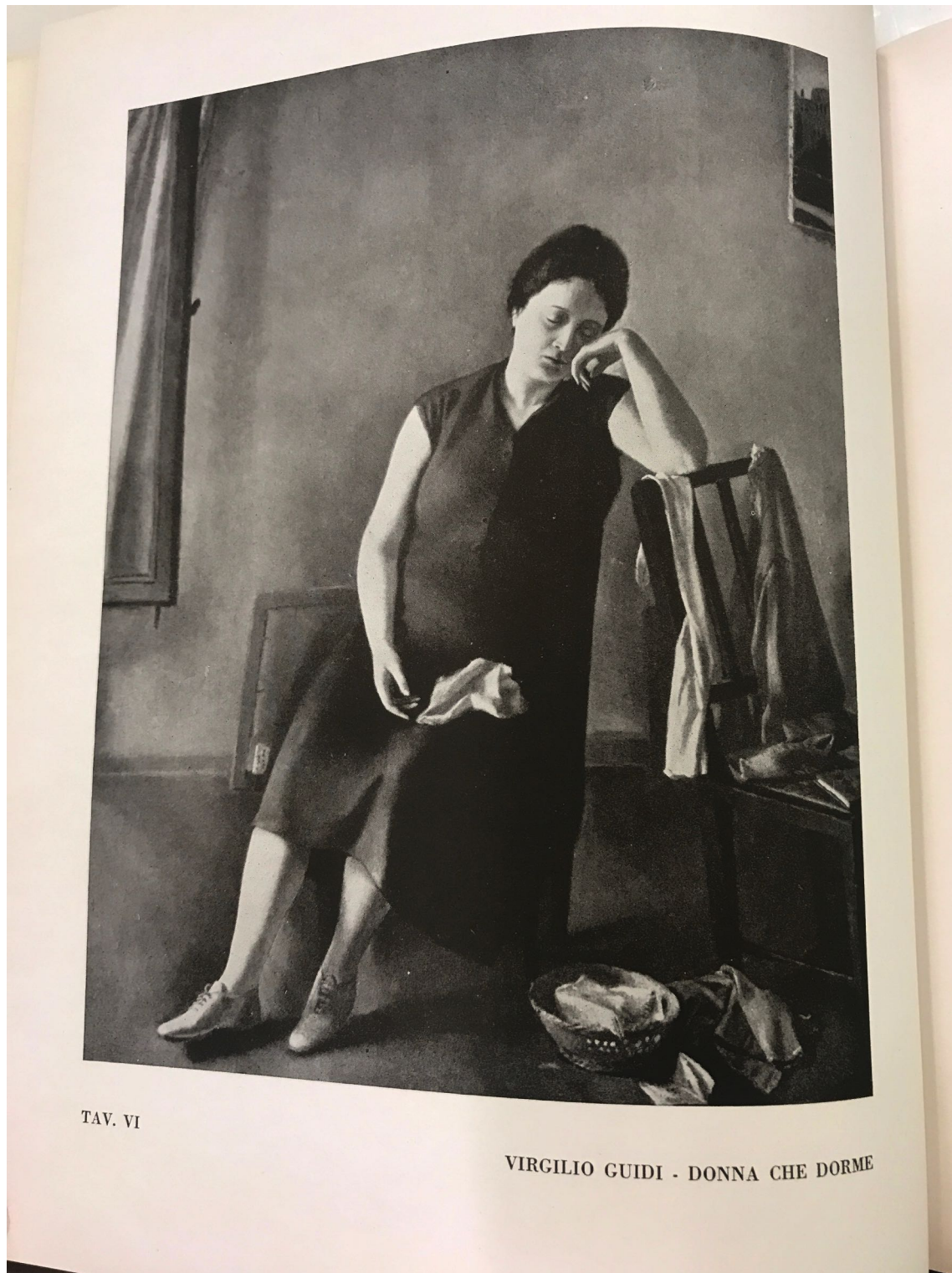


Figure 5.12:
Virgiliio Guidi, *Donna Che Dorme*

Image taken from the catalog:
Mostra Novecento Italiano,
Amigos Del Arte,
(Buenos Aires, September 1930)

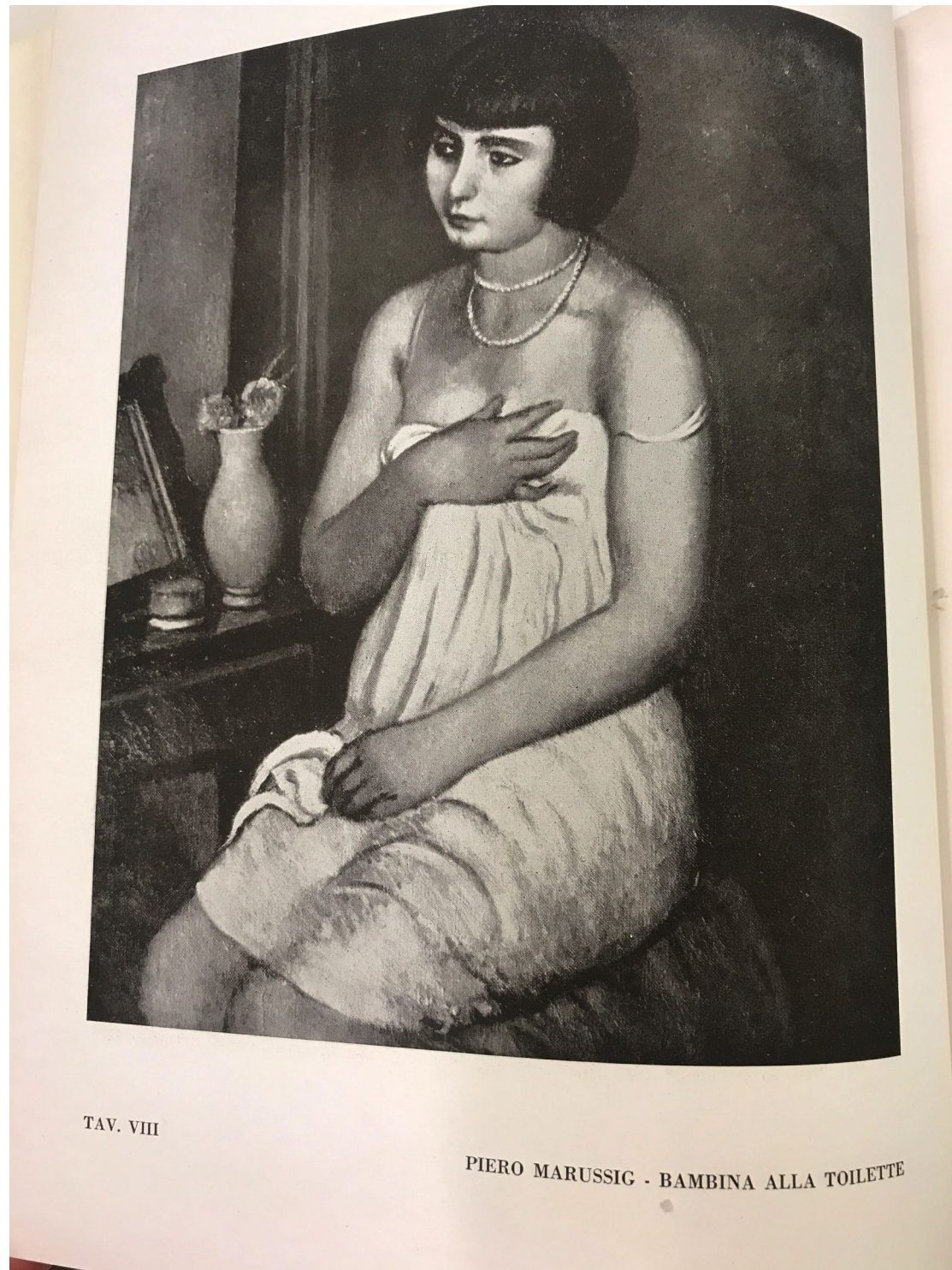
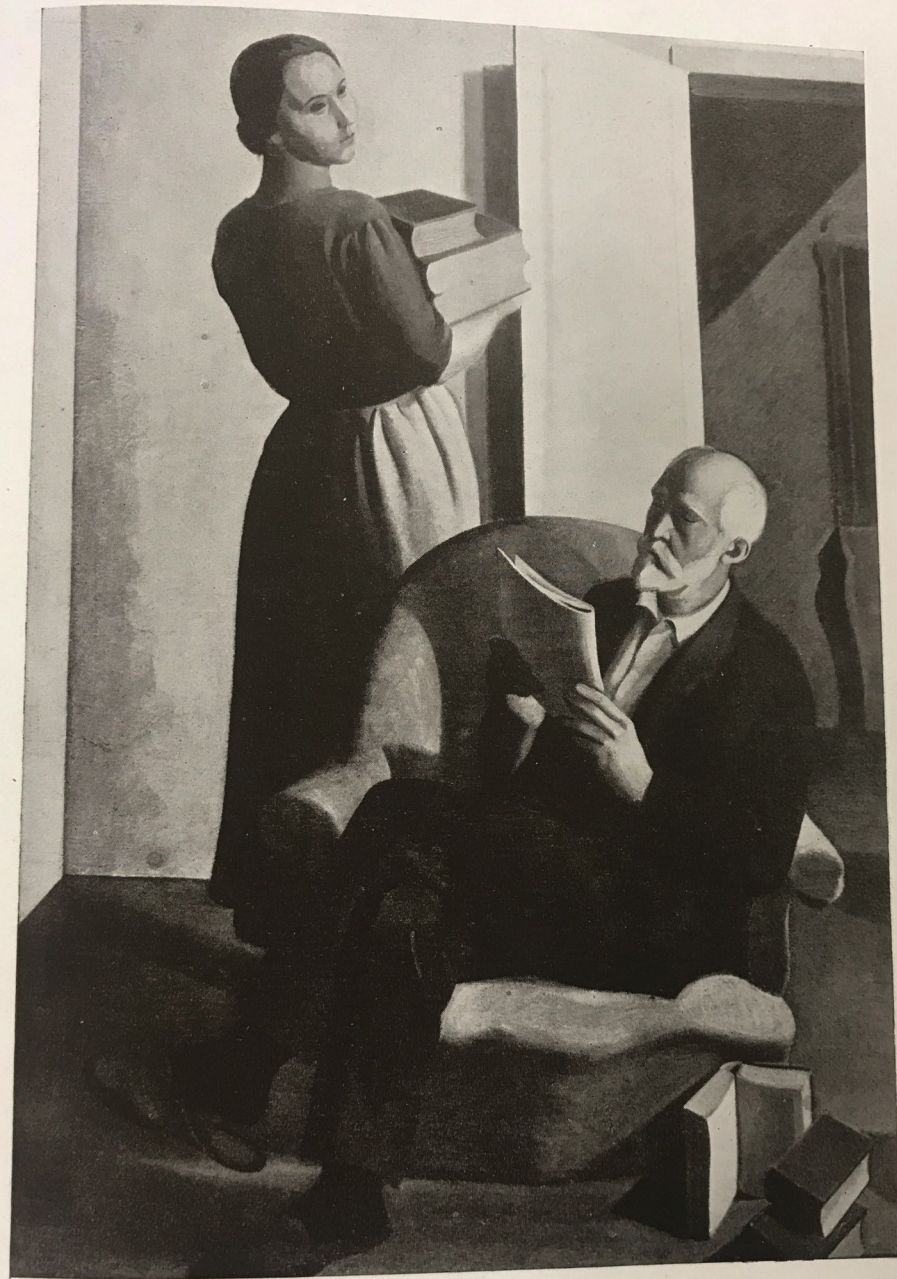


Figure 13:
Piero Marussig, *Bambina Alla Toilette*

Image taken from the catalog:
Mostra Novecento Italiano,
Amigos Del Arte,
(Buenos Aires, September 1930)



MARIO TOZZI - IL BIBLIOFILO

TAV. IX

Figure 5.14:
Mario Tozzi, *Il Bibliofilo*,

Image taken from the catalog:
Mostra Novecento Italiano,
Amigos Del Arte,
(Buenos Aires, September 1930)

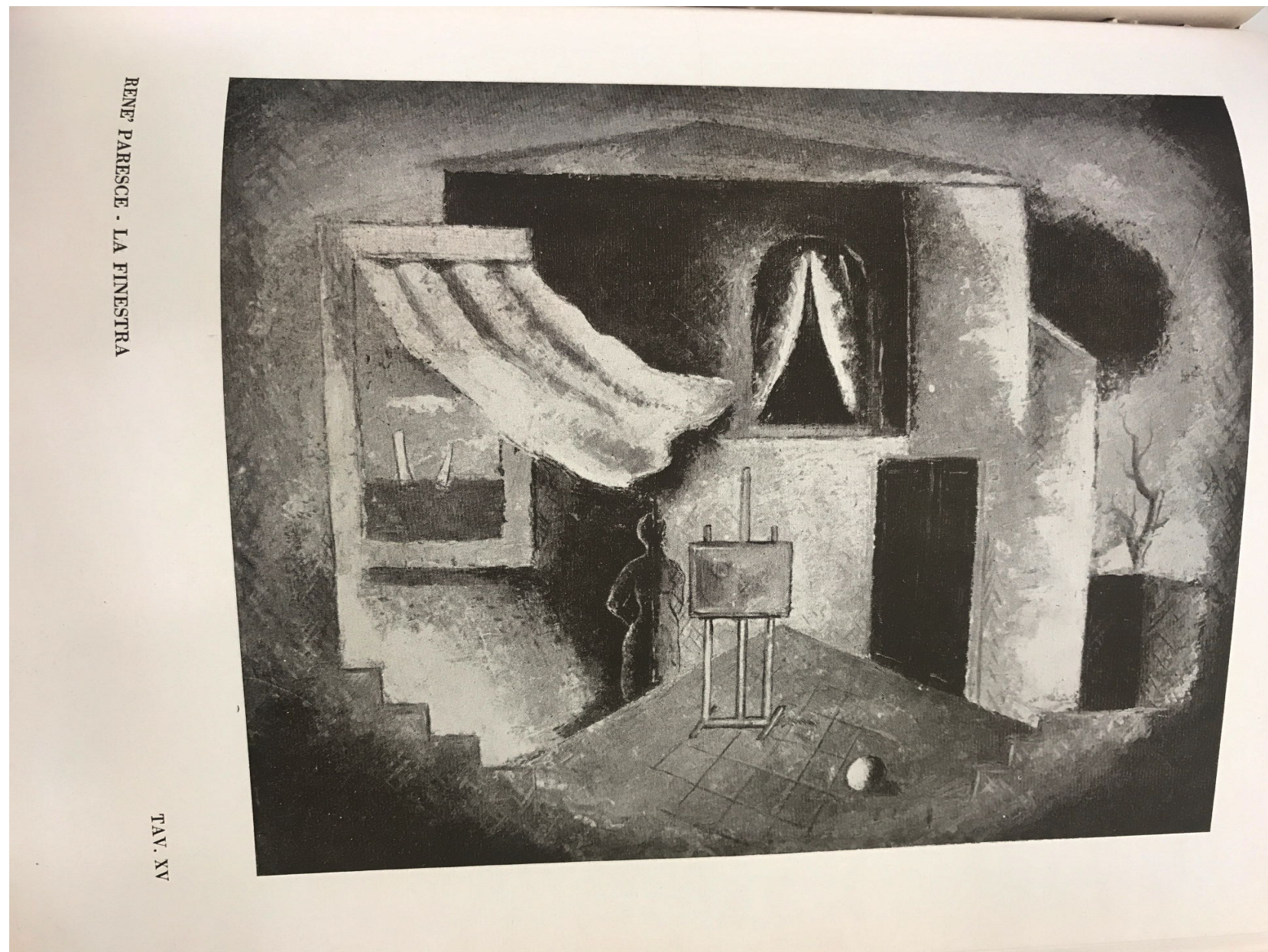


Figure 5.15:
Rene Paresce, *La Finestra*,
Image taken from the catalog: *Mostra Novecento Italiano*,
Amigos Del Arte, (Buenos Aires, September 1930)



Figure 5.16:
 Antonio Berni's *Club atlético Nueva Chicago* (New Chicago Athletic Club), 1937