

Reinventing the Nation: The Generation of the Centenary and the Rise of Nationalism in Argentina

By

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Introduction: An Underappreciated Generation

A hundredth birthday is always a momentous occasion. For a person, it is a time of reflection and appreciation: reflection on all one has seen in a century of life, and appreciation for having been blessed with such good health. Almost without exception, such an event is cause for celebration. But how does a nation celebrate its hundredth birthday? When the United States honored its centenary in 1876, it received the Statue of Liberty as a gift from France. The country hosted a World's Fair, the Centennial Exposition, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was a self-congratulatory look at the progress the United States had made since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The Exposition's Main Hall was full of industrial marvels, including a Corliss steam engine from Providence, Rhode Island that generated enough electricity to power the entire fair.¹ An entire section of the Exposition was called Machinery Hall.² The most popular and most important exhibitions were technological marvels the likes of which the general public had never seen before. The United States had turned the city of Philadelphia into a giant telescope into the future. The Centennial Exposition was the symbolic announcement of the country's arrival on the global stage.

Historical Context

But not all nations' centennials become causes for such boisterous celebration. Argentina celebrated this milestone in 1910, the anniversary of the May Revolution. On May 25, 1810, prominent lawyers, businessmen, and soldiers in Buenos Aires voted to remove Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros, the head of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata and representative of the Spanish

¹ Michael Vorenberg, "The American Civil War' Lecture" (Providence, RI, December 1, 2014).

² J.S. Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition Described and Illustrated* (Philadelphia, PA: Hubbard Bros., 1876), 601.

Empire, from power.³ Argentina's inaugural domestic government, the First Junta, replaced him. Two years later, an Argentine general named José de San Martín led an army across his homeland and into Chile and Peru, winning a string of victories against the Spanish armies that were supposed to keep order in the colonies. In 1816, Argentina officially declared its independence at the Congress of Tucumán. By 1822, San Martín had liberated all three countries that he had marched through in partnership with Simón Bolívar. The story of Argentina's independence is as unlikely and inspiring as the United States' victory over the British Empire. What happened after independence in the two countries, however, could not be more different. Whereas the United States established a republican government less than a decade after the Revolutionary War ended, Argentina limped through a series of civil wars as the old Viceroyalty broke apart and upstart generals sought to carve out their own personal fiefdoms. Though the country would eventually consolidate itself and begin to develop economically in the 1850s and 1860s, the founding of Argentina still represents a sort of historical trauma to many.

In the wake of this turbulent beginning, Argentina's leaders in the second half of the nineteenth century obsessed over the need to modernize the country. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Bartolomé Mitre dedicated their lives to turning Argentina into a world power modeled on the great empires of Western Europe and North America. They would become known as the Generation of 1837. They helped write the country's first constitution and established the political culture that would predominate there for the next half century. The Constitution of 1853 institutionalized liberal values modeled on those of the United States, and Argentina's presidents dedicated significant resources to attracting immigrants and investment from Europe. Only with new sources of labor and capital, so it was argued, could the

³ Though the May Revolution took place in Buenos Aires, the Viceroyalty included parts of contemporary Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil.

country develop quickly. The vast majority of these new resources became concentrated in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital, much to the chagrin of residents of the provinces of the interior. Nevertheless, the liberal development model seemed to be working. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Argentina was receiving immigrants at annual rates that only the United States and Australia could match, and the country's impressive exports of meat and grain had brought it immense wealth.⁴ In the span of just a few decades, Buenos Aires had transformed from an only-barely-post-colonial backwater to a proud emulator of the architectural and cultural customs of Europe's great cosmopolitan capitals. The city now hosted some of the Argentina's first factories. One could hear Arabic, Russian, Italian, and Yiddish on streets that, just a few decades earlier, only Spanish-speakers (and some English-speakers) used to call home.

This rapid modernization was cause for celebration in 1910. Argentina's government even mimicked the United States in putting on a centennial exposition. The International Centenary Exposition opened on the anniversary of the May Revolution and ran through November of that year. Argentina received numerous distinguished visitors from abroad, including Isabel, Princess of Asturias of Spain and Chilean president Pedro Montt.⁵ The Exposition was to symbolize a new era of international cooperation for Argentina. On April 5, the first trans-Andean rail tunnel opened, making travel and trade to often-rival Chile much easier.⁶ When Princess Isabel arrived in Buenos Aires, crowds greeted her with shouts of support for the embattled Spanish monarchy: "Long live Spain! Long live the Republic of Argentina! Long live King Alfonso XIII! Long live the Spanish Army!"⁷ For the Exposition, the

⁴ David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 167.

⁵ Horacio Salas, *El Centenario: La Argentina en su Hora Más Gloriosa* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1996), 95-101.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

government built four massive pavilions celebrating the country's fine arts, hygiene, railroads, and agriculture respectively. Together, these pavilions symbolized the great progress Argentina had made in the past hundred years. Its agriculture and railroads represented the country's astonishing economic growth in recent decades. Its hygiene pavilion was an emblem for its civilized, clean citizenry. For a city that had weathered a devastating yellow fever outbreak in 1871, this pavilion in particular was to represent the dramatic progress the country had made in such a short time.⁸ Its fine arts pavilion was to be proof that Argentina had constructed a well-rounded, cultured nation. The International Centenary Exposition ushered in a new sense of patriotism and pride in Argentina's history.

Not all Argentines, however, were pleased with the state of their country. Labor unions from the country's nascent industrial sectors, led by anarcho-syndicalists who were mostly European immigrants, used the International Centenary Exposition as a global stage on which to air their grievances. Following a major suppression of union activity the prior year and the passage of a Residency Law in 1902 that gave the federal government wide authority to deport "undesirable" immigrants without due process, workers were especially agitated and desperate for a victory.⁹ During the Exposition, one of Argentina's largest unions declared: "The only celebration we can have in the centennial parties" is one that "will be commemorated with the conquest of more freedom."¹⁰ Workers planned a general strike for May 18, just a week before the centenary itself, unless the government revoked the Residency Law. With the eyes of the world fixed on him, Argentina's president, José Figueroa Alcorta, cracked down on the

⁸ David Rock, *Argentina*, 143.

⁹ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History, and Its Impact* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 58.

¹⁰ Salas, *El Centenario*, 85.

protestors. He declared a state of siege on May 14 and threw countless workers in jail.¹¹ Just over a week before the celebration of Argentina's freedom from Spain, the country's government had violated the freedom of many of its poorest citizens, the vast majority of them immigrants. The crackdown around the Centenary celebration only exacerbated relations between the labor unions and the government, which would be a central factor in Argentina's history. The image of stability that the International Centenary Exposition was supposed to project was cracking.

Nor were labor union activists the only Argentines who were disillusioned with their country. A group of young writers, several of them descendants of wealthy creole families from the country's interior, began to question the intellectual and political status quo. The leaders of this movement, which is commonly referred to as *La Generación del Centenario* — the Generation of the Centenary — were Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez, and Leopoldo Lugones. They believed the International Centenary Exposition betrayed a desire for a materialistic, cosmopolitan future for Argentina that they wanted no part of. On the occasion of his homeland's hundredth birthday, Rojas remarked on the state his immigrant-filled country and Buenos Aires in particular: "Indeed, they do not constitute a nation, these cosmopolitan crowds harvesting grain on the plains that work without love. The nation is... in the same land, in the worship of the same traditions, in the accent of the same language."¹² Because of its recent astonishing development, Argentina no longer fit Rojas's definition of a nation. In the years leading up to and following the hundredth anniversary of the May Revolution, Rojas and his compatriots launched an intellectual rebellion against the dominant liberal order. Starting around the turn of the twentieth century, this group of nationalists wondered aloud about what it meant to be an Argentine and whether or not the political and cultural establishment was promoting the

¹¹ Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900-1932: The Argentine Patriotic League* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 35.

¹² Salas, *El Centenario*, 243.

right model of development. This concept of *argentinidad* — a Spanish word meaning “Argentinian-ness,” which Rojas coined — would permeate their works.

At first, the group concerned itself mostly with cultural questions. It focused more on the *argentinidad* of the country’s works of art than its educational or political systems. The most important questions for them involved how to create a uniquely Argentine literary canon or artistic form. As the twentieth century wore on, however, this intellectual movement made the leap into the public sphere. In doing so, the Generation of the Centenary put itself squarely at odds with the country’s longstanding tradition of (at least rhetorically) welcoming immigrants of all creeds and nationalities to its shores. For a number of different reasons, including a fear of the spread of Communism and increasing labor unrest, the nationalists’ message found a friendly audience for the first time in Argentina’s history. The years after World War I saw the rise of right-wing paramilitary groups and the only major anti-Jewish pogrom in the history of the Western Hemisphere, *La Semana Trágica* — Tragic Week.¹³ Thanks in part to the Generation of the Centenary, Russians, Italians, Syrians, Spaniards, and Jews would not be received equally in Argentina anymore.

The influence of the Generation of the Centenary continued to proliferate in the aftermath of the First World War. As opposition to the freely elected government of the Radical Civic Union (r. 1916-1930) grew on the right, paramilitary groups’ impunity grew, and an alliance between conservative Catholics, wealthy businessmen, and the fiercely anti-Communist military formed to fight back against what they considered a society spiraling out of control. Rightists openly discussed the possibility of a coup to remove the Radical government. Nationalism had gained a new illiberal flavor. When this coalition overthrew president Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1930,

¹³ Haim Avni, *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 101.

it was Leopoldo Lugones, a member of the Generation of the Centenary who by now had aligned himself with the growing global fascist movement, who wrote the revolution's manifesto. He had been advocating for the violent overthrow of the Radical government for the better part of a decade. The military replaced Yrigoyen with General José Félix Uriburu, a fascist dictator who disbanded the Argentine Congress and removed local governors who were loyal to the former president.¹⁴ Like many members of the military government and their supporters, Uriburu was a staunch anti-democrat. When calling for new elections for a more palatable president than Yrigoyen in 1931, he scoffed at the idea of truly free voting: "The secret ballot is precisely what has permitted the demagogic indulgence that we have been suffering."¹⁵ Historians refer to this military regime's reign from 1930 to 1943 as the "Infamous Decade" due to the rampant fraud and arbitrary oppression the government oversaw during its rule.

But the Revolution of 1930 is noteworthy not only for having ended the first period of freely elected government in Argentina; it is also important because it set a tragic pattern in the country's history. Following 1930, there were further military coups in 1943, 1955, 1962, 1966, and 1976. Argentina did not enjoy another extended period of democratic government until 1983. There would not be a peaceful transition between two freely elected presidents until 1989.¹⁶ In each case, a similar political alliance formed to oust whatever group was in power: the military partnered with wealthy business interests linked to foreign capital, conservative Catholics, and, on occasion, foreign governments, to intervene. In this way, the contributions of the Generation of the Centenary are essential to the birth of an antidemocratic aspect of Argentine politics that

¹⁴ David Rock, *Argentina*, 216-218.

¹⁵ Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, *Historia de La Tortura Y El Orden Represivo En La Argentina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Eudeba, 1985), 60.

¹⁶ Briefing, "A Century of Decline," *The Economist*, February 15, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21596582-one-hundred-years-ago-argentina-was-future-what-went-wrong-century-decline>.

has cast a dark shadow over the country's history. Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones are central to the difficulties Argentina has had in establishing a culture of democracy since the turn of the twentieth century.

Literature Review

Though the Generation of the Centenary has had an outsize influence on Argentinian history since its rise to prominence, it rarely receives sufficient analysis from scholars. Nicolas Shumway's *The Invention of Argentina*, perhaps the most widely cited intellectual history of the country, ends its analysis in the years before the Generation of Centenary came of age. Though the final two chapters of the book cover the roots of nationalism there, Shumway defines the movement as merely an "inchoate, shifting, inconsistent opposition to Argentine liberalism."¹⁷ It is a broad confederation of ideas that seem to only share a disdain for the dominant liberal thinkers. Indeed, Shumway is the first to admit that "no single idea unites this opposition to liberal elitism" that he calls nationalism.¹⁸ The nationalism that the author discusses in his book encompasses the work of figures as diverse as *caudillos* like José Artigas and more progressive leaders like Justo José Urquiza, who brought down the conservative dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas and set the stage for the political consolidation of Argentina in 1852.¹⁹ These figures, though each important to nineteenth century Argentine history, do not approach the members of the Generation of the Centenary in their virulence or, more importantly, in their influence. What set men like Ricardo Rojas and Leopoldo Lugones apart from earlier literary figures who rebelled against the liberal intellectual hegemony like José Hernández, author of the famous epic poem *The Gaucho Martín Fierro*, are their tone and their success. Only the former group helped

¹⁷ Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 214.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁹ A *caudillo* is a Spanish term for a military leader who is also head of state. In many circles, it has taken on a negative connotation.

construct a political movement powerful enough to become a domineering force in Argentina for decades. Though their ideology was similar in some respects to that of the Generation of the Centenary, writers like Hernández lived in an era in which liberals still dominated the country's politics. By focusing his discussion of nationalism on men like Hernández, Shumway gives insufficient attention to the nationalists who actually were able to build a political movement. Though its members receive the occasional mention in *The Invention of Argentina*, the Generation of the Centenary feels like a sort of epilogue to the book.

In addition, historians have practically never considered the roots of the Generation of the Centenary's particular ideology. It is easy to align Argentina's nationalists with those of other countries both in Latin America and in Europe, attributing their rise to seminal thinkers like the Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, and the Frenchman Ernest Renan, but to do so without considering the unique local context in which they developed their ideology would leave any analysis incomplete. The work of these nationalists' intellectual predecessors within Argentina was key to their own rise. David Rock has explored the question of the Generation of the Centenary's roots in parts of different works, including his book *Authoritarian Argentina*, a related journal article called "Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina, 1900-1927," and a section of Sandra McGee Deutsch's 1993 work *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* titled "Antecedents of the Argentine Right." Rock is a leading proponent of the argument that men like Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones can trace their ideology to further north in Latin America and across the Atlantic to France to authors like Rodó and Renan. Indeed, the primary documents this thesis analyzes support his claims to an extent. His focus on external influences for the rise of nationalism in

Argentina, however, diminishes the extent to which the Generation of the Centenary was responding to and building on political and cultural forces within the country's borders.

Sandra McGee Deutsch herself has extensively studied far-right movements in Latin America. Three of her books — the aforementioned *The Argentine Right*, along with *Counterrevolution in Argentina: The Argentine Patriotic League, 1900-1932* and *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* — provide key background information on the various crises that the Radical regime faced after World War I, including *La Semana Trágica*. The last chapter of this thesis in particular relies on her accounts of the relationship between members of the Generation of the Centenary like Lugones and paramilitary groups like the Patriotic League. *Counterrevolution in Argentina* includes impressive quantitative statistics about the extent to which it and similar groups permeated the highest classes of Argentine society. Her contribution to *The Argentine Right*, “The Right Under Radicalism, 1916-1930,” examines not only the formation of these paramilitary groups, but also the influence of international fascism on rightists like Lugones and Patriotic League president Manuel Carlés. The book creates a divide between the “nacionalistas” — rightist focused on typical Argentine values like Catholicism and folklore — and conservatives who were mostly concerned with protecting their own economic interests.²⁰ The Generation of the Centenary often aligned itself with the former group. Together, these works provide a detailed understanding of the growing influence of nationalism over the Argentine state and the Generation of the Centenary's role in that process.

Jean H. Delaney offers an alternative view of the intellectual roots of nationalists like the Generation of the Centenary. In two works, “Imagining ‘El Ser Argentino’: Cultural Nationalism

²⁰ Sandra McGee Deutsch, *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, (Scholarly Resources: Wilmington, Delaware, 1993), 56-58.

and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina,” and “Making Sense of Modernity: Changing Attitudes Towards the Immigrant and the Gaucho in Turn-of-the-Century Argentina,” Delaney argues that a deep romanticism that can be traced back to the concept of *volk* from nineteenth-century German writers was a key driver of these writers’ ideology. Without this concept of “nations as distinctive folk or ‘ethnocultural’ communities,” the Generation of the Centenary would never have been able to construct an effective counterweight to the liberalism and positivism of the Generation of 1837.²¹ Though there certainly is evidence for Delaney’s thesis in the works of Rojas and Gálvez in particular, I argue that this interpretation of the Generation of the Centenary is incomplete as well. By portraying these thinkers as so wholly Europhilic in their ideas — from where else could they have adapted the concept of *volk*? — Delaney discounts the autochthonous nature of their nationalist paradigm. From their earliest works, the Generation of the Centenary was obsessed with creating something authentically Argentine. They could only have done so by interacting with one another, their antecedents, and the particular context in which they came of age.

To understand that domestic context, one must trace the nationalists’ roots back to moment at which they began to function as a unit. In the case of the Generation of the Centenary, this first contact took place at a very young age. In 1903, Manuel Gálvez founded a literary magazine called *Ideas* when he was only 21 years old. Though it only released 24 issues between then and 1905 before going out of print, *Ideas* hosted work from many young writers who would become leaders of the Generation of the Centenary, including Ricardo Rojas, Emilio Becher, Alberto Gerchunoff, and Leopoldo Lugones. Despite its clear centrality to the formation of cultural and political nationalism in Argentina, historians have provided only a cursory analysis

²¹ Jean Delaney, “Imagining ‘El Ser Argentino’: Cultural Nationalism and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, no. 3 (August 2002): 629.

of the magazine's content. In both *Authoritarian Argentina* and "Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina," Rock briefly quotes from certain articles from *Ideas*. Given that he mistakenly claims that *Ideas* was first published in 1901 in both articles, it is unclear whether or not he interacted directly with copies of the magazine or found the quotations in other secondary sources.²² Regardless, *Ideas* merits further study, as the language in its articles not only repeats itself in later, more famous works from the Generation of the Centenary, but also reflects these authors' understanding of the liberal intellectuals who preceded them like Sarmiento and Alberdi. The magazine in this way serves as an ideological bridge between two different eras of Argentina's history.

Chapter Descriptions

To remedy some of the pitfalls in what is admittedly an already strong historiographical tradition, this thesis will in three chapters provide a holistic understanding of the ideology of the Generation of the Centenary, its roots, and its influence. Only by providing this combination of context, primary source analysis, and historiographical review can one avoid relegating the group to a secondary status in Argentina's history.

In the first chapter, I will provide a glimpse into the intellectual context in which the Generation of the Centenary came to prominence. Argentina had a specific liberal past that elicited a specific nationalist response and therefore merits analysis before any study of the Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones themselves. Any understanding of this portion of the country's history must include examinations of the work of Shumway and William H. Ktra, author of *The Argentine Generation of 1837*. These books provide two different but important interpretations of the ideology of a group of thinkers and politicians who were key to the formation, or, as

²² Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 38; Rock, David Rock, "Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina, 1900-1927," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (May 1987), 274.

Shumway would call it, “invention” of Argentina: Estéban Echeverría, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Bartolomé Mitre.²³ These men and others worked to stabilize Argentina after decades of civil war and set it on the path toward prosperity. In doing so, they left behind a specific ideology that would not face a meaningful challenge until the beginning of the twentieth century. This group, known as the Generation of 1837, hoped to transform Buenos Aires into a modern, European-style capital city. The cultural and political mores of France and the United Kingdom would be imported to Argentina. By encouraging foreign investment, they would secure financial stability for its economy. A massive campaign to attract immigrants to the under-populated country would couple with this investment. In the words of Alberdi, “To govern is to populate.”²⁴ In order to complete this vision, Argentina would have to shed evidence of its violent colonial past.

The fruits of this liberal project are clear, but they are not all sweet. The civilizing zeal of the Generation of 1837 extended to their treatment of those already in Argentina. The army exterminated the few indigenous tribes that remained and refused to assimilate. No longer would the central government tolerate individual *caudillos* from the interior fracturing the country and terrorizing its citizens. Secular public education would be available to all. The Catholic Church, seen as a haven for superstition and dogma, would lose influence as Argentina’s leaders embraced positivism and the scientific method. Buenos Aires would be the seat of a centralized government; the interior provinces would assume a secondary status in the national order. By 1900, Argentina was one of the fastest-growing countries on Earth. Buenos Aires was the largest city in Latin America.²⁵ Later leaders like Julio A. Roca updated but preserved the governing

²³ Taken from the title of Shumway’s book *The Invention of Argentina*.

²⁴ Though this quotation is largely apocryphal, the basis for it can be seen in his pamphlet *Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Republic of Argentina*, published in 1852.

²⁵ Rock, *Argentina*, 143.

model that Sarmiento and his contemporaries had envisioned in the 1850s. Thus, these liberals set the stage for the rise of the Generation of the Centenary in the early twentieth century.

The second chapter of this thesis turns to the Generation of the Centenary itself, particularly its three most important members: Manuel Gálvez, Ricardo Rojas, and Leopoldo Lugones. In it, I examine how this group came to be and to what extent their ideology can be considered uniquely Argentine as opposed to a more generic nationalist philosophy dependent on the influence of foreign thinkers. Many historians have undervalued the importance of the domestic context of early twentieth-century Argentina in the development of the Generation of the Centenary. In addition, they have not given sufficient weight to the literary magazine *Ideas* that Gálvez founded in 1903. Both Rojas and Lugones wrote for the magazine on many occasions, and many of the Generation's lesser figures, such as Alberto Gerchunoff, Ricardo Olivera, and Emilio Becher, were also important contributors. Though *Ideas* tended to concern itself with cultural questions, it is clear from the publication's first issue that its editors and writers saw themselves as the vanguard of a new intellectual movement. Even at this early stage, one can observe the inchoate nationalism of the Generation of the Centenary. Thus, the first part of this second chapter will analyze the relationship between *Ideas* and the group's later works. Though the magazine was published in Spanish, I have translated all of the quotations used in this thesis to English myself.²⁶

Following a thorough examination of *Ideas* and an analysis of how the magazine became a laboratory of sorts of its young writers, the second chapter will turn to the Generation's later, more famous writings. Because many of these works, including Rojas's *La Restauración Nacionalista*, Gálvez's *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, and Lugones's *El Payador*, are some of the most famous works in Argentina's cultural production, I will focus not on their central

²⁶ Indeed, many of the primary sources for this thesis are translated from Spanish, either by other authors or by me.

arguments as much as I will emphasize the ways in which these arguments relate to the work of the Generation of 1837.²⁷ As historian Fernando Devoto has argued, it is clear that men like Gálvez saw themselves as writing in response to Sarmiento, Alberdi, and Mitre in many cases. Understanding this interplay is essential because its existence proves that creating an artificial barrier between the two groups when studying Argentina's intellectual history is a mistake. One cannot truly comprehend the ideology of the Generation of the Centenary without understanding the political and intellectual contexts in which they wrote. These contexts have not yet received sufficient attention from many of Argentina's most notable historians.

This thesis's third chapter covers the myriad ways in which the work of the Generation of the Centenary infiltrated various aspects of Argentine society in the decades that followed their emergence. The group has left an indelible mark on Argentina's history. Though Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones began their careers on the political left, preoccupied mostly with the question of what a uniquely Argentine art scene would look like, their work did not remain confined to that realm. By jumping into the public sphere, the Generation of the Centenary provided the intellectual fuel for a new force in Argentina's politics. In the words of Jean Delaney, "Writers had ceased to 'hacer literatura' and begun to 'hacer patria;'" they were now making a country instead of just literature.²⁸ The three also became much more conservative over time. The uncertainty that followed the end of World War I led them and their contemporaries to more openly question the direction in which Argentina was going. Right-wing nationalists began to form paramilitary groups that sought to influence the freely elected federal government by force. Public figures openly questioned the value of liberal democracy. Xenophobia and anti-Semitism, though never absent from a nation of immigrants, reached new heights. In addition, the

²⁷ The English titles of these books are *The Nationalist Restoration*, *The Diary of Gabriel Quiroga*, and *The Minstrel* respectively.

²⁸ Delaney, "Imagining 'El Ser Argentino,'" 634

Generation of the Centenary was able to radically reconfigure Argentines' perceptions of certain cultural touchstones in their society. It was during their heyday that the rehabilitation of the once-maligned *gaucho* became complete. At the same time, folklore and tango, two wildly popular performance traditions, became prominent symbols of *argentinidad*. This is not a coincidence. By reorienting Argentines' opinions on the nature of their national identity, thinkers like Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones were able to turn formerly embarrassing cultural artifacts into key, authentic aspects of life on the shores of the Rio de la Plata.

Together, these three chapters will show just how important the Generation of the Centenary has been to understandings of Argentine national identity over time. Though Manuel Gálvez, Ricardo Rojas, and Leopoldo Lugones are far from hidden gems of this country's intellectual and literary traditions, studies of their work as a unit, as an indispensable *sine qua non* in some of the country's brightest and darkest moments, are uncommon. Their contributions to Argentine culture have earned them a position beyond their typical isolation in the epilogues and prologues of intellectual histories of the country. Instead, historians ought to think of them as a bridge between the liberals of the nineteenth century and the more radical nationalists — including some Peronists — who followed them. The ideology of writers like Gálvez and Rojas did not appear in a vacuum. Nor did it simply disappear when younger thinkers began to build on their thinking. Histories of early twentieth century Argentina must reflect this reality.

Chapter One

Argentina's Slow Motion Founding and its Influence on the Development of Nationalism

Though this thesis analyzes the rise of a very different political order than the one that dominated nineteenth-century Argentina, it is impossible to appreciate the works of the Generation of the Centenary in early twentieth-century Argentina without first understanding what came before them. Nationalism in the country can trace its roots to a previously preeminent liberal ideology. This order, which a group of men known as the Generation of 1837 created, had a disproportionate impact on the development of their nation. The men who made up this generation — Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, Estéban Echeverría, and Bartolomé Mitre, among others — were both political leaders and intellectuals, so they could leverage many aspects of Argentine society in their efforts to revolutionize their homeland. Sarmiento, for example, was both the author of the seminal novel *Facundo, or, Civilization and Barbarity* and later President of the Republic. Echeverría was both a fierce critic of the regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas (r. 1829-1852) and one of the earliest prominent Argentine literary minds. By working in the political, literary, and military fields, the Generation of 1837 was able to develop and implement the ideology that would guide Argentina's dramatic rise from a distant colonial backwater to one of the most dynamic economies in the world in just a few decades. Their impact was so pervasive that the political system dedicated to preserving the order the Generation of 1837 helped build survived until 1912.

The transformations through which the Generation of 1837 was able to guide Argentina were numerous and their impact was immense. They were able to influence the structure of

Argentina's constitution, its public education system, its religious rituals, its literary forms, and its economy. Together, the reforms that men like Sarmiento and Bartolomé Mitre carried out in the second half of the nineteenth century built the society against which men like Manuel Gálvez and Ricardo Rojas reacted in the early 1900s. It was at these liberals' behest that Argentina began to receive European immigrants at rates only matched by the United States.²⁹ These men encouraged the isolation of the Catholic Church from the education system and the establishment of freedom of religion as a key tenet of the Constitution of 1853. Echeverría and Sarmiento were the first writers to think of Argentina as locked in a constant battle between *civilización* and *barbarie*: civilization and barbarity. They defined their own cosmopolitan, rational worldview as civilized. Everything else about Argentina had to be eliminated from the national psyche if the country were ever to become a great, civilized nation. In this way, the Generation of 1837 set both the political conditions and intellectual terms of debate on which their nationalist successors would eventually redefine *argentinidad*.

Despite the extraordinary contributions of Sarmiento and his contemporaries, however, Argentina's liberal development policies never produced a true consensus. Indeed, the resistance to — and eventual overthrow of — this consensus is the topic of this thesis. Evidence of this failure to find a true political agreement is one of the central arguments of Nicolas Shumway's *The Invention of Argentina*, a comprehensive intellectual history of the nation in the nineteenth century. In addition to providing a significant amount of factual information on the lives and works of the Generation of 1837, Shumway's book effectively foreshadows the undoing of these men's policies in the early 1900s. In this way, it is an apt prologue to the analysis of the coming two chapters, though it does not cover much of the work of the actual members of the Generation

²⁹ Wanda Velez, "South American Immigration: Argentina" (New Haven, CT, January 6, 1990).

of the Centenary. This decision to isolate the two groups is one of the major methodological errors that I intend to remedy with this thesis.

The Invention of Argentina also rejects what its author considers a too simple understanding of these intellectuals as an ideological monolith. Other historians like William Kattr, however, believe Shumway went too far in his emphasis on the tensions between Sarmiento and men like Juan Bautista Alberdi and Bartolomé Mitre. He also was inconsistent in his selection of which works to emphasize for each of the key members of the Generation of 1837. For example, arguably Alberdi's most important piece of written work, "Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic," receives an insufficient analysis in *The Invention of Argentina*.³⁰ Moreover, Sarmiento seems like a petty, racist egomaniac in parts of the book. Though these faults have some basis in historical fact, Shumway may have exaggerated the man's shortcomings. This chapter will utilize *The Invention of Argentina* and other existing scholarly works on the subject to show how the intellectual history of the nineteenth century informs the nationalist movements that followed it. Ideologies are not formed in a vacuum, and Ricardo Rojas's understanding of *argentinidad* could not have existed without Sarmiento's that predated it. The work of the Generation of the Centenary in Argentina took the form it did because of the specific context in which it was born.

Argentina was not politically founded and geographically formed in the same moment. Though the nation gained independence from Spain during the upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars, it was not until the 1860s that it occupied something resembling the borders and governmental structure it has today. The country did not have even a true constitution until

³⁰ William Kattr, "Review," *Chasqui* 21, no. 2 (November 1992): 86.

1853.³¹ In the decades following the May Revolution of 1810 and the Congress of Tucumán's declaration of independence on July 9, 1816, tensions were high between the prosperous, Europhilic region in and around Buenos Aires and the more sparsely populated, agriculturally focused interior. The leaders of the province of Buenos Aires sometimes did not even consider itself part of the same nation as its neighbors. A series of governments — the First Junta, the Great Junta, the First Triumvirate, the Second Triumvirate, and a series of ineffectual presidents — desperately attempted to hold the country together to no avail.³² This half-century of upheaval left Argentina without a dominant political ideology around which to structure its society. The country's earliest leaders often were too concerned with accumulating personal wealth or preoccupied with possible intervention by European colonial powers to dedicate the intellectual energy necessary to construct such an ideology.³³ That work would be left to the generation that followed Argentina's founders.

In the half-century that came after the Congress of Tucumán's declaration of independence, local warlords — *caudillos* — gained control of personal agricultural fiefdoms complete with private armies to enforce their rule. *Caudillos* filled the vacuum left by the series of weak central governments. Their principal associates in enforcing political order in their regions were the *gauchos*: nomadic, rugged, violent men that are somewhat analogous to the cowboys of the western United States. For Argentine intellectuals, the *gaucho* has had countless meanings and mythologies associated with him (the concept is a very gendered one). For those more sympathetic to this solitary bandit as a symbol of *argentinidad*, to be *gaucho* is to be at

³¹ Earlier constitutions like the Constitution of 1819 did not become law for large portions of Argentina, because many provinces rejected their language.

³² In the chapter "Revolution and Dictatorship, 1810-1852," David Rock chronicles this ineptitude in great detail, particularly between pages 86 and 102.

³³ William Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837* (Teaneck, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 15.

once pragmatic and generous.³⁴ These men were the hearty pioneers who tamed the pampas and brought a modicum of civilization to Argentina. Their beverage of choice, an herbal tea called yerba mate, is still ubiquitous in the country. Traditionally, one shares his or her mate with all who are present; drinking it has always been a welcoming, communal experience. Those who detested the violence and destruction that often lay in the *gauchos*' wake, however, took their name to mean something wholly different. They "claim that *gaucho* originally means vagabond, delinquent, or outcast, and that no self-respecting *campesino* (peasant) would consent to being called" one.³⁵ They were illiterate delinquents who contributed little productive to society. Their poverty and laziness were weighing on the country. Worthy symbols of Argentine identity or not — a question of hot debate later in this thesis — the *gauchos* did play an important role in the chaos that followed independence. They fought in large numbers in the civil wars of the years after 1816, and their fate often became tied to that of their *caudillo*.³⁶

As each of the Buenos Aires-based provisional governments formed and collapsed in quick succession, the *caudillos* only grew stronger. In stark contrast with the nominally democratic presidents of Argentina, these men — Facundo Quiroga, Manuel Dorrego, and Juan Lavalle chief among them — derived their power from little more than the number of men they could muster to protect their territorial claims. *Gauchos* and poor tenant farmers tied themselves to a *caudillo* both out of fear and out of necessity: in exchange for a stint in the warlord's army, they gained an important degree of security against outside threats.³⁷ A sort of feudal system had taken root in nineteenth-century Argentina. This bloody way of holding power, combined with the *caudillos*' disdain for commercial development that was stirring in Buenos Aires, caused a

³⁴ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁶ Ariana Huberman, *Gauchos and Foreigners: Glossing Culture and Identity in the Argentine Countryside* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

violent schism between the warlords of the interior and the genteel urbanites of the capital. The two factions formed their own political parties: the *caudillos* of the interior and their allies were the *federales* (Federalists), and the importers and speculators of Buenos Aires led the *unitarios* (Unitarians). The Unitarians envisioned Buenos Aires as the seat of a powerful central government that would allow Argentina to develop rapidly. Intense investment from European powers would jumpstart the nation's economy, and immigrants would be welcome from all over the world for the skills and productivity they would bring with them. The Federalists were wary of the cosmopolitan *porteños*, who they believed would sell their lands to the British or French in a heartbeat if it meant a handsome profit. This division would become the defining characteristic of Argentine politics for much of the nineteenth century. Tensions with Buenos Aires even have influenced the significance of certain Spanish words. It is common to hear citizens of Buenos Aires refer to themselves as *porteños* — literally, port people. In interior provinces like Tucumán or Santiago del Estero, however, to call someone a *porteño* is an insult; it embodies the haughtiness and femininity that many associated with those who lived in the capital.³⁸

At the same time that the *unitarios* and *federales* were battling for the very soul of Argentina, the nation's international borders were still in flux. The Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, the administrative region that the Spanish Empire established to govern much of South America, included parts of contemporary Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile, and even faraway Peru. Modern Argentina makes up only about one third of the original Spanish viceroyalty. As capital of the United Provinces, however, an independent Buenos Aires reasonably could have believed it would be able to rule over all of these regions. Many, however, had their own designs on independence. Thus, the rulers of Argentina often had to fight two

³⁸ Francisco Corigliano, "Patria En 1810 Y En 2010," *Criterio*, June 2010, <http://www.revistacriterio.com.ar/cultura/patria-en-1810-y-en-2010/>.

battles simultaneously: one within, and one without. From Buenos Aires, the leaders of the country fought newborn Brazil over what would become the independent nation of Uruguay in the Cisplatine War.³⁹ Argentina also was the target of repeated interference from European colonial powers, particularly France. In 1838, the French began a two-year blockade of the Rio de la Plata to support Bolivia and Peru in their war with Argentina.⁴⁰ Chaos in the region following the collapse of the Spanish Empire further allowed the *caudillos* to carve out their own personal fiefdoms within Argentina's borders. In this way, the peculiarities of the boundaries of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata had an outside influence on political and intellectual developments within the country.

Internally, the *caudillos* continued to battle each other for military and economic supremacy. No *caudillo* was more powerful or more instrumental to the development of his country than Juan Manuel de Rosas. Born into a wealthy creole family in 1793, Rosas quickly consolidated power in the region around Buenos Aires, becoming governor of the surrounding province in 1829. An energetic and charismatic man, he was able to satisfy many warring factions at once, and his rule saw a modicum of political stability return to the country. Rosas was, according to a rather standard interpretation, “a man proven in battle, idolized by the urban poor and the rural *gauchos*, firmly linked to conservative landowners, and apparently capable of restoring order by dint of his powerful personality.”⁴¹ This popularity provided Argentina with a brief respite from the perpetual war it had seen since 1816. Nevertheless, Rosas was not, even at this apogee, a democrat. Upon his election as governor of Buenos Aires, he received *facultades extraordinarias* (extraordinary powers) from the national congress — of which his cousin,

³⁹ Rock, *Argentina*, 102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

⁴¹ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 117.

Tomás Manuel de Anchorena, was a leading member — that “with legislative sanction made him a virtual dictator for the next three years.”⁴²

Rosas would use these extraordinary powers liberally. He was brutal in his treatment of dissenters and was quick to raise an army against any opponents. He closed opposition newspapers, and the intellectuals behind them went into exile. His personal state police, the Mazorca, executed enemies of the *federales* both “real and imagined.”⁴³ The phrase “Long live the Federalists and death to the Unitarian savages” became ubiquitous in speeches, newspaper articles, and letters.⁴⁴ He led his fiefdom to war against Uruguay, Brazil, and many neighboring *caudillos*. Rosas certainly was successful in his political and military pursuits. At his peak, he had become head of the entire Argentine Confederation, which encompassed almost all of non-indigenous Argentina. Opposition to Rosas’s rule had practically collapsed, and his country had prospered. Fear of meeting an unseemly end at the hands of the Mazorca was as responsible as any other force for the modicum of stability that had come to Argentina. During his rule, Rosas earned two monikers, one of his own creation, and the other given by historians over a century after his rule. He may have considered himself “the restorer of laws,” but it would be no exaggeration to call him “the Caligula of the River Plate.”⁴⁵ Rosas’s ever more violent actions not only led to his downfall in 1852, but it also helped spawn a group of thinkers so hostile to his way of governing that they would eventually change the entire economic and political structure of Argentina. Without Rosas, there never could have been a Generation of 1837. A brief sketch of its leading members is necessary to fully comprehend their lasting impact.

Estéban Echeverría

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 120.

⁴⁴ Translated from Spanish: “¡Viva la federación y mueran los salvajes unitarios!”

⁴⁵ Rock, *Argentina*, 104.

It was in fact the violence of the Mazorca that inspired one of the most famous pieces of Argentine prose. Esteban Echeverría, a notable Unitarian, penned “The Slaughterhouse” — “El Matadero” — in 1840, while Rosas was at the peak of his powers. Though it did not get published until 1871, long after the unification of Argentina, “El Matadero” has earned a reputation as perhaps the first uniquely Argentine work of fiction. It earned such a prestigious accolade not only by situating itself in a key juncture in the country’s history, but also by developing some of the most common forms in its literary tradition. Echeverría, who was in exile in Chile when he wrote “El Matadero,” tells the story of a young Unitarian who is brutally murdered by agents of “*El Restaurador*,” The Restorer, a reference to Rosas’s preferred nickname. At the end of the story, members of the Mazorca strip naked, disembowel, and crucify the Unitarian for refusing to wear the required Federalist ribbon on his coat. The Unitarian, true to his values even at the cost of his life, can only be forced to wear it “by bestial violence.”⁴⁶ Defiantly, the Unitarian proclaims: “That’s your weapon, you scoundrels. Wolves, tigers, and panthers are also strong. The lot of you should be crawling about on all fours like them.”⁴⁷ Those who use violence to secure their wishes, as the Mazorca has done, are nothing short of animals to the young Unitarian and to Echeverría.

The contrast between the Federalists and Unitarians that Echeverría has constructed will become one of the most important axes on which intellectuals will debate the nature of *argentinidad* — what it means to be Argentine. On one side lies the genteel, reasoned, noble Unitarian. In “El Matadero,” he rides a horse like a “gringo” and owns fancy holsters for his

⁴⁶ Echeverría Estéban, “El Matadero” (Proyecto Biblioteca Digital Argentina, 1838), <http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/cuentos/matadero/matadero.htm>.

⁴⁷ Ibid. In Spanish: “Esas son vuestras armas; infames. El lobo, el tigre, la pantera también son fuertes como vosotros. Deberíais andar como ellas en cuatro patas.”

guns.⁴⁸ To Echeverría, this fashion represents a level of sophistication that the *gauchos* of the interior lack. On the other, the violent Federalist gnashes his teeth, waiting to impulsively murder his next victim. Echeverría's archetypical Federalist, Matasiete, is a brute but is viciously efficient with a knife, the mark of a man well versed in the cattle trade. For some, he is a true Argentine. Matasiete is equally likely, however, to slit the throat of a bull as that of a human if the "Restorer" orders it done.⁴⁹ The Unitarian is civilization incarnate; the Federalist is a crude representation of human barbarity. Or, as a man such as Rosas — or a member of the Generation of the Centenary — would see it, the Unitarian is a stiff European import with no understanding of what the real Argentina, the one outside Buenos Aires, looks like. Regardless of one's political position, this battle between civilization (*civilización*) and barbarity (*barbarie*) would set the terms of debate on the nature of Argentine national identity through the early twentieth century.

"El Matadero" is but one example of the fierce liberal resistance to Rosas's rule. Indeed, the *caudillo*'s regime is at least indirectly responsible for the birth of the liberal ideology that would predominate in Argentina for the last half of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century. Echeverría organized anti-Rosas meetings in his spare time both before and during his exile to Uruguay.⁵⁰ Men like Bartolomé Mitre, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and Juan Bautista Alberdi, all ardent Unitarians, developed their political philosophy while in exile, out of reach of the Mazorca. These men made up the vanguard of the legendary Generation of 1837. They "came to define [the] lasting parameters for Argentine culture and society" through their work.⁵¹ Though bitterly opposed to the Rosas regime, the four hoped to at least calm, if not

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Rock, *Argentina*, 114.

⁵¹ Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 7.

eliminate, the differences between the Federalists and the Unitarians. They planned to, as Echeverría put it in his 1846 work *Dogma Socialista*, “unitarize the Federalists and federalize the Unitarians.”⁵² Upon Rosas’s defeat at the Battle of Caseros on February 3, 1852, Echeverría, Mitre, Alberdi and Sarmiento returned to Argentina and, along with a likeminded group of writers and generals, set about remaking the country in their image. Their tools varied from poetry and polemic to saber and cannon, but together, they would leave an indelible mark on their homeland. The rest of this chapter will cover the lives and impact of the men who constitute the core of the Generation of 1837. It will pay particular attention to how each of them contributed to the rise of Argentine liberalism and set the stage for the rise of the Generation of the Centenary in the 1900s.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was born to a poor farming family in the San Juan province in the far west of Argentina. A world away from the bustling port of Buenos Aires, his family’s fate was tied directly to that of the local *caudillo*, in this case Juan Facundo Quiroga. His experiences with Quiroga and with San Juan more generally would be instrumental in the construction of Sarmiento’s political philosophy. According to one of his memoirs, in 1827, the *caudillo* and his men — many of them *gauchos* — marched into San Juan. Though the account is no doubt an embellishment, the nightmarish figures Sarmiento describes betray his contempt for these men. They had “dust-covered faces, with tangled hair and tattered clothing, and almost without bodies... like... demons that were half-centaurs.”⁵³ Indeed, it was his “difficult” youth

⁵² Estéban Echeverría, “Dogma Socialista” (Proyecto Biblioteca Digital Argentina, 1846), http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/ensayo/dogma/dogma_ojeada.html.

⁵³ Joseph Criscenti, ed., *Sarmiento and His Argentina* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers, 1993), 148.

that would inspire his greatest work, a book that would inspire a generation of politicians and generals to work toward the consolidation and prosperity of Argentina.⁵⁴

Facundo, or, Civilization and Barbarism: The Life of Juan Facundo Quiroga rivals “El Matadero” in the vehemence of its critique of Rosas, and at least one cultural critic considers it to be the foundational work of “not only Argentina’s literary and cultural tradition but also Latin America’s Romantic canon.”⁵⁵ Unlike Echeverría’s short story, however, it does not discuss its subject so directly. Instead, *Facundo* covers the life of Quiroga, a famous *caudillo* from the 1820s and 1830s. Published in installments in the Chilean newspaper *El Progreso* in 1845, Sarmiento’s greatest work turns Quiroga’s life into an allegory for Rosas’s brutal regime. It forges the same dividing line in Argentine society as “El Matadero:” civilization on one side, barbarity on the other. *Facundo* is impressive in its breadth. Sarmiento alternately takes on the role of anthropologist, historian, political scientist, and geographer in its various sections. The book’s conclusions, however, are clear. If Argentina is to become a leading power — which, in Sarmiento’s opinion, was its destiny — it will have to both collaborate with and mimic the great European powers. If left up to its own devices, the country will fail. Its ills were sowed into its very soil: “the evil that afflicts the Argentine Republic is its vast emptiness.”⁵⁶ Forgetting the problematic nature of this claim, which ignores the significant native population still living within contemporary Argentina’s borders, Sarmiento here betrays his disdain for the interior in which he grew up. Its inhabitants are invisible to him, and when they are indeed present, they are backwards and violent. The *caudillo*, lord of the interior and leader of an army of brutish *gauchos*, rules not by reason or fairness but by his personal whims. He manipulates a listless,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁵ Kutra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 96.

⁵⁶ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, “Facundo, O, Civilización Y Barbarie: La Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga” (Proyecto Biblioteca Digital Argentina, 1845), http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/ensayo/facundo/facundo_00indice.htm, 19.

ignorant people for his own ends: “Rosas has invented nothing; his talent consists only of plagiarizing his successors, and of turning the brutal instincts of the ignorant masses into a coldly meditated and coordinated system.”⁵⁷ And what would save Argentina from its barbaric current inhabitants? Supplements from across the Atlantic: “the principal ingredient towards order and ethics in the Argentine Republic is immigration from Europe.”⁵⁸ The perfection of the nation would require the injection of new blood.

Not any migrant, however, would be satisfactory to Sarmiento. Citing racialized understandings of northern and southern Europeans in vogue in the nineteenth century, he argued that only Protestant men and women of strong Germanic stock would drag Argentina into prosperity. In his disdain and even contempt for the common people of his country, Sarmiento also made a clean break with its original colonizers: Spain. This rejection, in spite of the countries’ shared language and heritage, was a common theme in the work of the Generation of 1837. In Sarmiento’s eyes, one could trace all the ills of Argentina back to the Iberian Peninsula: “Where, then, did this man [the Argentine citizen] learn about the innovations that he introduced into his government... He learned them from the cattle ranch, where he has spent his whole life, and from the Inquisition, in whose tradition he has been educated.”⁵⁹ The Inquisition was both everything Argentina should avoid and an essential part of the nature of Spain. This ugly, irrational moment from the country’s past was the ultimate colonial legacy; it coursed through the blood of every creole. *Hispanidad* — Spanish-ness — was a cancer. The mixing of Spanish and native blood had created a useless amalgam reminiscent of a swarm of Africanized bees: “A homogeneous whole has resulted from the fusion of the [Spanish, African, and Indian] races. It is

⁵⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁹ Ibid., from José Luis Romero, *A History of Argentine Political Thought* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 123.

typified by love of idleness and incapacity for industry... The Spanish race has not shown itself more energetic than the aborigines.”⁶⁰ This group could not bring prosperity to Argentina.

Ironically, this racial ideology did not explicitly exclude Jews, who often have been the subject of such restrictions in other nations throughout history and who would become the target of harsh discrimination after the rise of the Generation of the Centenary. In the middle of the nineteenth century, many Jews had become successful in commercial and financial roles in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in modern-day Germany. Based on his calls for a more ethnically diverse Argentina, Sarmiento likely would have welcomed these immigrants for their expertise and understanding of the value of hard work, which he believed was absent in Hispanic culture. Rejecting Argentina’s creole past would require a reconfiguration of the importance of the *gaucho* as well. The men with “dust-covered faces,” “tangled hair,” and “tattered clothing” of his youth had no place in the Argentina of the future.⁶¹ Any sympathies for this migratory cowboy would have to be expunged and replaced with contempt for the lawlessness and barbarism associated with him. For Sarmiento, the remaking of Argentina would not be simply an economic or social project; it would require a total reconstruction of the country’s national identity.

In a later work, *Agirópolis*, Sarmiento further sketches out his dream for the Argentina of the future. Published in 1850, the utopian tract attempted to influence the content of the coming constitution, the first of its kind for the whole nation. It touched on many of the key Unitarian hopes for the political and economic structure of Argentina — free trade between the provinces, universal public education, and increased foreign investment — but it also foresaw a key

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Criscenti, *Sarmiento and his Argentina*, 148.

flashpoint in tensions between Buenos Aires and the interior: the location of the capital.⁶² In *Agirópolis*, Sarmiento proposes building a purely administrative capital on Martín García Island in the Rio de la Plata. His model for Martín García came, as with much of the utopian community he had envisioned, from the United States. The new capital was to be Argentina's Washington, D.C.⁶³ In this respect, at least according to Shumway, he broke with his compatriot Juan Bautista Alberdi, who favored Argentina's capital returning to Buenos Aires. Alberdi did not share Sarmiento's grand vision of Argentina as "a mirror image of the United States on the other extreme of the hemisphere."⁶⁴ The ideology of the Generation of 1837 was not a monolith, and these thinkers' esteem of the United States was sometimes a point of contention between them.

Despite the occasionally harsh treatment he receives in *The Invention of Argentina*, the author of *Facundo* did not hold only disdain for the masses of his country. Though the book often implies as much, the policies that Sarmiento supported often bolstered the prospects of the humblest Argentines, as William Katra argues in his review of Shumway's book.⁶⁵ Before becoming president, Sarmiento pushed for a policy on the use of public lands that would allow for not only improved foreign investment, but also for the creation of smaller ownership plots that would prevent the further consolidation of what Katra calls "the cattle oligarchy."⁶⁶ Large agricultural interests had held disproportionate economic and political power since before the time of Rosas, and Sarmiento, more than his contemporaries like Mitre, sought to break their entrenched influence. In addition, in the last years of his life, he partnered with then-president

⁶² Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 167.

⁶³ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 159-160.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶⁵ Katra, "Review," 86.

⁶⁶ Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 198-199.

Julio A. Roca to finally deliver free, mandatory, and secular education to all Argentines.⁶⁷ Some historians, including Nicolas Shumway, are critical of what they consider Sarmiento's inability to turn ingenious ideology into practical policy, but his impact on Argentina — before, during, and after his presidency — is undeniable.⁶⁸ The language he used to attack his enemies and his occasional self-serving nature are certainly important parts of his life's work, but any overemphasis on these aspects of his personality would be inappropriate and would excessively diminish his accomplishments. Studies of Sarmiento's life should instead focus on his contributions to the creation of Argentina's political system.

Juan Bautista Alberdi

Juan Bautista Alberdi often took a more “lucid, analytical” approach to solving Argentina's problems than Sarmiento was apt to employ.⁶⁹ Though he eschewed using allegory or polemic to construct his vision for the nation's future, Alberdi still contributed greatly to its political and social structure. A native of Tucumán, he was known for his ability to reconcile with those leaders with whom he often had ideological differences. As the historian Ktra points out, “it was only Alberdi who even considered collaboration with Rosas... he tried in every possible way to construct a meaningful dialogue between the young generation [of 1837] and the despot.”⁷⁰ This pragmatism set him apart from Sarmiento in particular. Though the two shared many of the same hopes for what Argentina would look like in the future, they often differed on how to make those dreams a reality, even if Shumway exaggerates the importance of these disagreements. When Rosas finally lost power in 1852, Alberdi was far more amenable to

⁶⁷ Ktra, “Review,” 86.

⁶⁸ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, xii.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁰ Ktra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 135.

reconciliation with the Federalists than Sarmiento was. This ability to compromise would place the Tucumán lawyer in an excellent position to impose his vision on the new Argentine constitution. In this way, he occupies a similar role in the country's history as James Madison and John Jay do in that of the United States. Though, like Jay, he never became president, his ideas became the foundation for the political structure of Argentina for much of the next century.

Alberdi's understanding of how to improve Argentina — along with that of many members of the Generation of 1837 — drew on a new philosophical approach that had recently arrived from France: positivism. Founded by French philosopher Auguste Comte, positivism called for the use of rational, scientific thought to improve society. It was a perfect fit for elitist liberals like Alberdi and Sarmiento. The great symbols of barbarism in their esteem — the *gaucho*, Rosas, and the decaying Spanish Empire — were rife with irrational, backward thinking. The stereotypical *gaucho* killed for sport and was governed only by his whims. Rosas's Mazorca killed with a similar arbitrary zeal, as captured in Echeverría's "The Slaughterhouse." The Spanish Empire had fallen apart in part because the Catholic Church had become a bastion of intolerance and irrationalism. Civilization, then, would have to be a scientific counterweight to a world rife with superstition and violence. Comte's positivism became a foundational aspect of the Generation of 1837's rational, occasionally unfeeling liberalism.

If Alberdi holds a similar place in Argentina's history as James Madison does in the United States', "Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic" is Argentina's Federalist No. 51.⁷¹ "Bases and Starting Points," which Alberdi penned while in exile in Chile, is as much a work of comparative politics as it is the foundations of a national constitution. Published in 1852, it oscillates between providing an indictment of his homeland's social ills similar in function if not in form to *Facundo* and delivering specific

⁷¹ "Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina," in Spanish.

prescriptions for the political structure that should follow the fall of Rosas. Its prescriptions were myriad and dramatic: Argentina would have to provide an exceptional education system, but it had to develop independent of the Catholic Church. In addition, education alone would be insufficient to spur growth. Without changing the ethnic makeup of the country, the creole heritage of Argentina would restrain development permanently. Particularly while they shared the common enemy of Rosas, Sarmiento and Alberdi shared very similar political philosophies.

A popular saying of Alberdi's, "*Gobernar es poblar*" — to govern is to populate — became one of the most important maxims of Argentine development policy. During the Rosas era, Argentina was a country of "one million people in land that could fit 50 million."⁷² Immigration would be the key to spurring economic growth. Though Alberdi tended to eschew the social Darwinist-like rhetoric that Sarmiento was inclined to employ in eliminating indigenous peoples from the national psyche, he did have his preferences as to who exactly should be coming to populate the country. Northern Europeans, specifically Anglo-Saxons, would bring prosperity to Argentina. The descendants of the Spanish colonists that currently made up the country thus far had failed to do so: "Take one of our ragamuffins, or *gauchos*, or half-breeds — the essential ingredients of our popular masses — through all the transformations of the best educational system, and in a hundred years you will not make of him an English laborer."⁷³ To Alberdi, the creole was not yet ready for the responsibility associated with representative democracy. Even the short-lived Bear Flag Republic in California, which had written its own constitution before becoming part of the United States in 1850, had a superior political system to Argentina.⁷⁴ There seemed to be something intrinsic to the Anglo-Saxon ethic

⁷² Juan Bautista Alberdi, "Bases Y Puntos de Partida Para La Organización Política de La República Argentina" (Hispanic American Center for Economic Research, 1852), <http://www.hacer.org/pdf/Bases.pdf>, 51.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

that allowed them to adopt democracy more successfully. Thus, immigration from Western and Northern Europe would have to “modify the dough” of the Argentine national bread.⁷⁵

In addition, Alberdi had mixed feelings about Catholicism and organized religion more generally. Though he certainly was not an atheist, he was a strong admirer of the way in which the founders of the United States had managed to separate their personal Christian convictions from the structure of their country’s government. In keeping with this tradition, he was a staunch anti-clericalist. Though the Argentine Church lacked the financial and political clout of, for example, its Mexican counterpart, it still had a significant influence over the country’s education system at the time. Education in English was far more important to Alberdi than knowledge of the dead language of the Church: “Let priests educate themselves, but do not put them in charge of training our lawyers and statesmen, shippers, and generals.”⁷⁶ Education would focus on turning Argentina into a cosmopolitan nation. Its citizens would have to be capable of interacting with people from all over the world if the liberals’ plan for increased trade and foreign investment was to be a success. For Alberdi, the Catholic Church was not capable of offering this sort of training. When members of the Generation of the Centenary like Ricardo Rojas railed against the inability of the public education system to inculcate *argentinidad* in its students in *La Restauración Nacionalista*, they were indicting the model that came from nineteenth-century thinkers like Sarmiento and Alberdi.

The constitution he proposed in “Bases and Starting Points” would have to be free of any overt Catholic influence as well. The Chilean constitution, which had been composed in 1833, made Catholicism the state religion. Alberdi opposed this measure for the suffocating effect it could have on the country’s economic future: “The Egañas [two of the framers of the Chilean

⁷⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 43.

constitution]... poorly understood the economic needs of South America... They excluded all non-Catholic worship, without realizing that they were seriously undermining Chile's most important need, which is the growth of its population through immigration of industrious and excellent men, which Protestant Europe can offer."⁷⁷ The isolation of the Church from the educational and political spheres had practical as well as ideological motivations. If Argentina had followed the Chilean model, Protestants from the British Empire or Prussia would not have felt as welcome in the country. Merchants and investors needed to feel welcome praying in Anglican and Lutheran Churches. Such a decision would have hampered the modernizing reforms the Generation of 1837 had been advocating for in other spheres. The old reliance on solely Catholic immigrants had been, in the eyes of both Sarmiento and Alberdi, a serious drag on the development of Spain's former colonies. Argentina would remedy this mistake if Alberdi had anything to say about it.

Alberdi's anti-clericalism, though not the majoritarian view in the country overall, was common among members of the Generation of 1837. Echeverría, for one, believed that "The state, as a political body, cannot have a religion, because it lacks the conscience of an individual. The concept of freedom of conscience will never be reconciled with the dogma of state religion."⁷⁸ Their beliefs shaped the Constitution of 1853, which, though it required presidents to be Catholic — possibly a compromise in order to not entirely alienate Church leadership — and encouraged the army to forcibly convert indigenous peoples to the religion, specifically included people of all faiths in the Argentine national family: "All inhabitants of the Nation are entitled... to profess freely their religion."⁷⁹ Promoting immigration to the country was one of the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁸ Echeverría, "Dogma Socialista."

⁷⁹ 1853 Constituent Assembly, "Argentine Constitution of 1853" (World Intellectual Property Organization, 1853), http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=282508.

enumerated powers of Congress. If these legislators were to be successful in their charge, they would have to welcome non-Catholics: “Spanish America, limited to Catholicism to the exclusion of any other religion, resembles a solitary and silent convent of nuns.”⁸⁰ Argentina was not about to repeat the Egañas’ mistake.

In this way, the political reorganization of Argentina that the Generation of 1837 helped conduct accidentally contributed to the great battles the Generation of the Centenary would wage against Jews and other immigrants in the early twentieth century. At the time of the publication of “Bases and Starting Points,” the United States was in the throes of what would become one of a series of nativist moments in its national politics. The “Know-Nothings,” a group of former Whigs, had organized around opposition to non-Protestant immigration. Closer to Argentina, neighboring Chile had included the pro-Catholic provisions in its constitution that were mentioned earlier in this chapter. Archrival Brazil had cracked down on what had been a relatively liberal policy in 1830 by prohibiting government spending on immigration promotion.⁸¹ Though even Italian immigration, which predated Jewish immigration by a few decades, would not become commonplace until the 1880s, the Generation of 1837’s impact on Argentina’s reputation as a place that would welcome non-Christians is clear. When it came time for European Jews to choose where to place the first colonies for their people later in the nineteenth century, it is easy to understand why Argentina was so attractive a destination. Tolerance of non-Catholics was a fundamental part of the country’s constitution. The nationalists’ struggle to define *argentinidad* in the early 1900s was a direct consequence of the liberal policies of the nineteenth century, including the constitution itself.

⁸⁰ Alberdi, “Bases y Puntos,” 52.

⁸¹ Maria Stella Ferreira Levy, “O Papel Da Migração Internacional Na Evolução Da População Brasileira,” *Revista Saúde Pública* 8, no. 1 (1974): 51.

The pro-immigration provisions in the Constitution of 1853 made members of the Argentine Church nervous, but they did not come as a surprise. Clergy of the era understood that liberal ideology was weakening their grasp on the population, particularly the youth. Young people in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires, were forsaking a Christian life in favor of one full of the latest trends from Europe and the rational explanations of the surrounding world that the scientific method offered. In a letter to Cardinal Alejandro Barnabó from 1861, a priest lamented: “The philosophy of the last century... has corrupted so many people’s souls that the current generation of men lacks any sort of religious convictions.”⁸² Despite the Church’s obvious reservations about the constitutional structure of the republic, the liberal consensus would stand firm throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. The framers of this paradigm set the stage for mass immigration to Argentina, including for those who did not practice the Catholic faith. Through “Bases and Starting Points” and his other works, Juan Bautista Alberdi was able to dramatically influence the political makeup of Argentina after the fall of Rosas. His stances on religion and immigration in particular would leave an indelible mark on the nation.

Despite their influence on Argentine politics in the middle of the nineteenth century, the responsibility to implement the ideas of the Generation of 1837 would fall to someone outside of their ranks. The leaders of the Unitarians had high hopes for Justo José Urquiza, the man who defeated Rosas at the Battle of Caseros. He had begun a rebellion against the *caudillo* by siding with Brazil to unseat the Federalist-allied government in Uruguay. He then raised an army of 24,000 men to take on Rosas; it was “the largest... ever assembled on South American soil.”⁸³ After Urquiza’s smashing victory at Caseros, Rosas went into exile in Great Britain, and the upstart general suddenly controlled almost all of Argentina. Many Unitarians, including

⁸² Loris Zanatta and Roberto Di Stefano, *Historia de La Iglesia Argentina Desde La Conquista Hasta Fines Del Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 2009), 276.

⁸³ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 170.

Sarmiento, wanted strong reprisals against Rosas's subordinates, particularly members of the Mazorca. Urquiza, however, resisted the urge for vengeance, much to the liberal intellectuals' chagrin. His policies disappointed the Unitarians in other respects as well. Equality between the provinces and Buenos Aires was now the law of the land, and Federalist red still was the color of the government. Urquiza even gave Rosas, now living on a farm outside Southampton, a pension for the rest of his days.⁸⁴ It was clear that the victor of Caseros was not the Unitarian liberator that these men had dreamed of. In Sarmiento's eyes, Urquiza was nothing more than "the new Rosas."⁸⁵ Someone else would need to lead Argentina in the direction that he and his counterparts thought was necessary for the country's sustained growth.

Bartolomé Mitre

Unlike his counterparts in the Generation of 1837, Bartolomé Mitre, the youngest of the group, was first and foremost known as a warrior, though he contributed to the movement's literary body of work as well. Mitre fled Buenos Aires during Rosas's reign, settling in Montevideo. While there, he honed his military skills with famous generals like Giuseppe Garibaldi, the legendary unifier of Italy, and Fructuoso Rivera, who later became the first president of an independent Uruguay. His exile included stints in Bolivia, Peru, and Chile as well. It was in the last of the three countries that Mitre met his future ally Juan Bautista Alberdi. He returned to his homeland after the Battle of Caseros, and he immediately set about forging a constitutional agreement that would favor his birth province of Buenos Aires. Like Alberdi, Mitre hoped a new constitution would provide for a strong capital that dominated the sparsely populated interior. When Urquiza began to build reveal his plans for the document, however, they were disappointed. Only a few months after his victory at Caseros, the new head of the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 170-171.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 171.

Argentine Confederation called together the provincial governors for preliminary debates on the structure of a constitution at San Nicolás. The conference was a disaster. Buenos Aires's representatives boycotted the entire affair, and the subsequent agreement thus "took a predictable anti-Porteño direction."⁸⁶ The San Nicolás Accord called for the nationalization of the lucrative Buenos Aires-owned customs houses and the political divorce of the capital from the surrounding province. The interior provinces would not enshrine the city's supremacy in Argentina's new founding document.

Mitre in particular stood up against the potential marginalization of Argentina's largest city under Urquiza's rule. To him and many other *porteños*, the very freedom that they had ostensibly fought for against Rosas was under attack again: "The Argentine Confederation is sick in spirit... If we wish to establish liberty, then let's begin by sanctioning it by law."⁸⁷ Such fiery language was atypical to Mitre's writing, and it demonstrates both his superior understanding of how to win the support of the masses in his city and his personal investment in the old Unitarian cause. He had become the chief spokesperson for Buenos Aires — the ultimate demagogue to supporters of the San Nicolás Accord, a defender of self-determination to others. He would leverage that position into a stint as governor of the province in 1860. In the meantime, however, Mitre's attention had turned to crafting the right sort of constitution for his home region. Without it, Buenos Aires would not join the new nation. Mitre even raised an army of *porteños* in September of 1852. Urquiza, hoping to salvage an agreement, refused to engage him on the battlefield.⁸⁸ It was in this context that Alberdi penned "Bases and Starting Points."

Seeking to balance what was in his mind the necessity of a strong federal capital on the coast with a desire to finally unite Argentina, Alberdi sent copies of the work to Mitre, Urquiza,

⁸⁶ Kattr, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 150.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁸⁸ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 173.

and other members of the country's political elite.⁸⁹ The publication of "Bases and Starting Points" would eventually become a massive success for the Generation of 1837, but Mitre was not satisfied at first. At his urging, Buenos Aires remained independent until 1859. This is not to say that he opposed unification. The general agreed with Urquiza on the need for Buenos Aires to return to the Confederation, "but on terms quite different from" his.⁹⁰ The geography of Argentina meant that shipping goods up the Paraná River and circumventing the independent capital was quite difficult. The Urquiza-led Confederation constantly teetered on the edge of economic collapse. In what historian David Rock calls a move of "desperation," Urquiza attempted to take Buenos Aires by force. He was successful, defeating the *porteño* army at Cepeda and forcing the region to ratify the new constitution. His hold on the area would be short-lived, however. Under Mitre's leadership, a new set of revolts defeated Urquiza's army at the Battle of Pavón in 1861. Now on the offensive, the governor of Buenos Aires quickly forced the Argentine Confederation to the bargaining table. A new government would form with all of the country's provinces united. At last, the Argentine Republic was whole.

In 1862, Mitre would be elected its first president. Now the work of nation building could become a reality. Though he was not well known for his intellectual contributions to Argentina's consolidation, Bartolomé Mitre was instrumental to its political formation. Had he simply accepted the San Nicolás Accord, Buenos Aires may never have become the cosmopolitan metropolis that it was when the Generation of the Centenary came of age. Mitre's political and military acumen were instrumental to the liberals' success in molding Argentina in the ways in which they desired.

The Generation of 1837 in Power

⁸⁹ Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 159.

⁹⁰ Rock, *Argentina*, 122.

The years following Argentina's declaration of independence were its baptism by fire. Its chaotic, slow motion birth became a scar that would influence the country's intellectuals' attitudes for over half a century. The liberal, Europhilic intelligentsia, which would come to dominate Argentine politics in the years after the fall of Juan Manuel de Rosas, guided the country through a period of growth whose pace had rarely been seen before. In 1868, Sarmiento succeeded Mitre as president and, as mentioned previously, public education became one of his administration's top priorities. A longtime admirer of the school reformer Horace Mann, he traveled to the United States to visit his widow, Mary. In that respect, Sarmiento shared the American's belief that quality schooling could seriously impact the lot of his people. Under his rule, the state in 1869 established a national network of normal schools that would bring in foreign teachers to improve pedagogical practices in the country.⁹¹ To this day, young public school students in Argentina wear white smocks that Sarmiento implemented as the great equalizing uniform of all children. Within the walls of a public school, all were equal, and that egalitarianism extended even to children's clothing. This public school system would lie out of the reach of the Catholic Church, thus increasing tensions between the anti-clerical government and the religious center of the nation. Sarmiento extended the right to education to women as well, because he believed they had a special responsibility to inject his civilizing mission into the home: "civilization stops at the doors of the homes if a home is not prepared to receive its benefits. In her role as mother, wife, or domestic servant, a woman can destroy the standing of the home. She perpetuates habits, good or bad."⁹² Neglecting the education of women would seriously hamper Sarmiento's plans for Argentina's rapid development.

⁹¹ Criscenti, *Sarmiento and his Argentina*, 83.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 93-94.

Though he was most successful as President in revolutionizing Argentina's education system, Sarmiento implemented other aspects of the liberal political agenda as well. He continued to promote immigration to populate the country. In these endeavors, however, the author of *Facundo* betrays the racism and elitism behind some of the Generation of 1837's ideology. Once President, Sarmiento could turn his disdain for the "lesser" peoples of Argentina — particularly *gauchos* and indigenous peoples — into national policy. Public schools, for example, marginalized indigenous history and language instruction. Though, given his desire to import non-Catholic Europeans to Argentina, it is likely that Sarmiento was more open to Jewish immigration than later nationalists like Ricardo Rojas would be, the beliefs of the most prominent member of the Generation of 1837 set a dangerous precedent of making policy based on preference for one ethnicity or racial group over another. Ironically, this great crusader for a more open Argentina also may have provided some of the ideological gunpowder for the exclusionary tendencies that would explode decades after his death. The Generation of the Centenary often worked in response to Sarmiento's life's work.

After the Generation of 1837

Sarmiento's successors as president — beginning with Nicolás Avellaneda and Julio Argentino Roca — oversaw what would become decades of political and social stability. The ideology that held Argentina together, including an emphasis on foreign immigration and a strong state free of interference from organized religion, was forged in the bloody decades it took to make the country whole. After Sarmiento finished his term as President in 1874, Argentina truly began to prosper. Increasing rates of immigration, combined with impressive exports of grain and meat, were turning the country into a major player in the global economy. Though the Generation of 1837 was now fading into the history books, its successors as leaders of Argentina

would continue to espouse their particular ideology. General Julio A. Roca, who became president in 1880, left a particularly important mark on the nation. Having carried out the Conquest of the Desert — the displacement and extermination of tens of thousands of Tehuelche and Mapuche indigenous peoples in modern-day Patagonia — before entering politics, Roca sought to continue to cure Argentina of what Sarmiento called its “vast emptiness.”⁹³ His presidency’s policies were a fusion of those of Sarmiento, Alberdi, and Mitre, and the results were indisputable. From 1880 to 1890, Argentina’s population increased from 2.4 million to 3.4 million. In the same decade, the population of Buenos Aires doubled from 286,000 to 526,000.⁹⁴ Much of this astronomical growth came from significant foreign investment and increased immigration, thus realizing the dreams of Mitre, Alberdi, and Sarmiento. The decade before Roca’s presidency saw just 250,000 net immigrants to Argentina; 220,000 immigrants entered the country in 1889 alone.⁹⁵ At the same time, Roca oversaw a dramatic increase in the country’s exports, particularly with its greatest trading partner, the British Empire. From 1870 to 1874, Argentina exported 3.11 million pounds sterling of goods to Britain. From 1885 to 1889, that number had doubled to 6.88 million pounds sterling.⁹⁶ That figure more than tripled the value of British imports over the same five-year period.

Nowhere was Argentina’s modernization more evident than in its capital city. Buenos Aires was beginning to look like the European capital Sarmiento had envisioned in *Agirópolis*. It was during the 1880s that the city built its famous wide boulevards in the style of Haussmann’s Paris. The installation of a sewage system helped end the once-perpetual cycle of yellow fever

⁹³ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 9.

⁹⁴ Rock, *Argentina*, 153.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

and malaria outbreaks.⁹⁷ New neighborhoods, like affluent Recoleta, were developed as the city ballooned in size, largely thanks to an influx of foreign-born men and women. By 1900, half of the population of Buenos Aires had been born outside of Argentina.⁹⁸ Sarmiento's particular vision of "civilization" was finally manifesting itself in the Buenos Aires. Roca established state-backed elementary education in the city and politically divided it from the surrounding province as well. Now independent from its rural neighbors, the federal capital could focus on the public works projects that most benefitted its prosperity instead of balancing its interests with those of its rural surroundings.⁹⁹ Though the city and nation would suffer in the economic panics of the early 1890s, by the turn of the twentieth century Argentina had returned to — and exceeded — its former rates of growth. It was now a wealthy nation.

General Roca also perpetuated Alberdi's anti-clerical tendencies. The formation of state-backed compulsory elementary education meant a further diminished role for the Catholic Church, which still had an important role in teaching the country's youth. Law 1420, which passed in 1883, guaranteed "*la enseñanza laica, gratuita, y obligatoria*" — secular, free, and obligatory education.¹⁰⁰ In addition, he was the first President to allow civil marriages in Argentina.¹⁰¹ His *Registro Civil* (Civil Register) chronicled every birth, wedding, and death in the country.¹⁰² The milestones of life that the Church once dominated were slowly coming under the purview of the state. Roca and his National Autonomous Party (PAN) were reconfiguring the relationship between Church and State. According to one Argentine historian, "For [the State's] representatives, it was important to create good and loyal citizens, respectful of laws and national

⁹⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁹⁸ Raanan Rein and Jeffrey Lesser, *Rethinking Jewish Latin Americans* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008, 8-9.

⁹⁹ Rock, *Argentina*, 155.

¹⁰⁰ Di Stefano, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina*, 346.

¹⁰¹ Rock, *Argentina*, 155.

¹⁰² http://www.presidencia.gob.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1260&template=blank

sovereignty, ready to contribute to the progress of the country regardless of their religious beliefs.”¹⁰³ Alberdi’s dream was becoming reality under the Roca administration. For a clerical body that was used to “serving and legitimizing” the Argentine government “as the guardian of Christianity,” this level of hostility came as an unpleasant surprise to the Church.¹⁰⁴ Even when it seeped into the Constitution of 1853, the anti-clerical rhetoric of men like Alberdi did not represent as serious an affront to its role in society as Law 1420 did. The Church saw the government’s conversion of Argentina into a “neutral” party in matters of religion instead as an attempt to “dechristianize” the populace.¹⁰⁵ From the era of Spanish colonization, Catholicism — and its leaders — had been inextricably tied to the fate of the state; their joint goal was to bring the kingdom of Christ to the new world. The breakdown of that alliance, then, signaled a true loss of legitimacy for the state in the eyes of the Church.¹⁰⁶

While earlier leaders like Sarmiento and Alberdi had laid the foundation for the immigration of non-Catholics to Argentina, Roca was the first president of the country to directly encourage non-Christians to cross the Atlantic. Following a rash of pogroms in the Russian Empire, he sent an emissary to Moscow in 1881 to encourage Jews to come to Argentina. By the end of the 1880s, the first Jewish agricultural colonies were being established.¹⁰⁷ The first planned mass immigrations to Argentina had begun: in 1889, a ship named the *Weser* brought 820 Russian Jews to the country.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the total population of Jews in Argentina still only numbered about 6,000 in 1895.¹⁰⁹ Though mass immigration of Spaniards and Italians had already begun, large numbers of Jews would not join them until the turn of the twentieth century.

¹⁰³ Di Stefano, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina*, 342-343.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Rein and Lesser, *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Nevertheless, Roca's policies towards Russia's Jews indicate his willingness to accept people of all religious backgrounds and may hint at a readiness to welcome political refugees to Argentina. The question of how to treat refugee groups that wished to immigrate to the country would become a thorny issue in the 1930s after the rise of Adolf Hitler, and Roca's dealings with the Russian Empire set an important precedent against which the Generation of the Centenary would rebel in the 1900s.

Tensions between Roca's PAN and leading clergymen would only increase. Priests and Catholic conservatives in Congress attempted to block the implementation of Law 1420, and Roca's government responded by expelling the papal nuncio and cutting off diplomatic relations with the Holy See.¹¹⁰ This decision would have far-reaching consequences in Argentine history. For the first time since the consolidation of the Argentine state, a few politicians began to question the liberals' policies. Pedro Goyena, for example, believed a state with secular education was doomed: "A school without religion, a school from which the notion of God has been proscribed, and in which God's name is not even mentioned... is damned."¹¹¹ He and his allies questioned the PAN's lax immigration policies, blaming them for the influx of non-Catholics — at this point mostly Protestants — into Argentina.¹¹² Though conservatives like Goyena and José Manuel Estrada still represented a small minority in the grand scheme of Argentine political thought, their ideas would set the stage for a far more virulent, nationalist Catholic movement in the next century.

Despite the protests of some conservatives like Goyena, by the turn of the century, the intellectual status quo in Argentina had solidified to a significant extent. It was very much reminiscent of the original vision of the Generation of 1837. The liberal consensus, manifested

¹¹⁰ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 31.

¹¹¹ Argentine Chamber of Deputies, "Diario de Sesiones, I" (Argentina Cámara de Diputados, July 11, 1883).

¹¹² Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 32.

politically by the hegemony of the National Autonomous Party and socially by the primacy of works of Echeverría, Sarmiento, and Alberdi, had dragged Argentina out of the barbarity of its civil wars and into civilized respectability. Their model of development was unquestioned: a constant flow of immigrants and heavy foreign investment had driven growth throughout the end of the nineteenth century, and their understanding of Argentine national identity reigned supreme. Though the vast majority of the development that brought Argentina to the precipice of global power came after these men had faded from public life, Nicolas Shumway is correct in his estimation that “the country’s guiding fictions and rhetorical paradigms were founded well before [then], and that these fictions to continue to shape and inform the country’s actions and concept of self.”¹¹³

Rapid modernization, however, is never without its discontents. As the liberals of the Generation of 1837 and their successors like Roca guided Argentina into the twentieth century, the nation changed irreversibly. In Buenos Aires, Russians, Italians, Greeks, Jews, and Poles clogged the streets that people of Spanish descent used to dominate. Beaux-Arts buildings like the Water Company Palace and the Teatro Colón, physical manifestations of unprecedented wealth, rose seemingly from nowhere in the city’s most fashionable neighborhoods. As the capital prospered, the provinces of the interior had less and less power domestically. The national symbols of the nineteenth century — the *gaucho*, the barbaric *caudillo*, and the creole — were disappearing. Foreign investment had brought with it international cultural phenomena, and the works of the most prominent French and English thinkers found ready audiences in the salons of Buenos Aires. The stages of the city’s theaters became clogged with translations of European plays. For Argentina’s artists, imitation seems to have been preferable to originality in this era. It is in this context that Argentina celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the May Revolution of

¹¹³ Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, xii.

1810. Manuel Gálvez, Ricardo Rojas, and their ideological allies watched the changes that their homeland was undergoing with dismay. To them, it was time to fight back against the excesses of nineteenth-century liberalism.

Chapter Two

The Rise and Ideology of the Generation of the Centenary

Nicolas Shumway's *The Invention of Argentina* leaves the reader with a cliffhanger. The book's focus on the formation of Argentina — physically and ideologically — in the nineteenth century almost leaves up to the imagination what will come next. In this chapter, I will respond to the reader's anticipation by constructing a narrative of the intellectual tradition that succeeded liberals like Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, Bartolomé Mitre, and, later, Julio A. Roca. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a group of young writers of similar backgrounds began to provide the most coherent and most successful response to a liberal paradigm that had controlled Argentina's politics and culture for fifty years. This group, often referred to as the Generation of the Centenary for their rise to prominence around the same time that the country was celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the May Revolution of 1810, would have an outsize influence on Argentina in years to come. Its members, most importantly Manuel Gálvez, Ricardo Rojas, and Leopoldo Lugones, would become giants of Argentine literature. They injected a new virulence to earlier forms of nationalism that had long been relegated to the fringes of the country's politics. In doing so, they became central to a three-decade period that would leave Argentina unrecognizable.

This chapter is divided into two equally important phases. The first will discuss the origins of the Generation of the Centenary. After examining the existing historiography on this question, I will point to a short-lived magazine called *Ideas*, which one of their own, Manuel Gálvez founded in 1903. Many members of the Generation of the Centenary first worked together at this magazine at a very young age. Though a few historians have mentioned *Ideas* in

their analyses of the origins of the nationalist movement in Argentina, none has conducted a sufficiently comprehensive investigation into the magazine's content and the extent to which it provided the earliest such proving ground for the ideology of the Generation of the Centenary. The second portion of this chapter will unpack the exact nature of this nationalist ideology, particularly during the first decades of the twentieth century. By the end of the First World War, most of the key features of these writers' beliefs are clear, and the political landscape in Argentina changed dramatically after 1916, so I will examine those events and the influence of the Generation of the Centenary on them in the third chapter of this thesis.¹¹⁴ In analyzing this group's ideology, I will show how, even while often responding negatively to the society that men like Sarmiento helped construct, they sometimes adopted and built on these older writers' ideas. The terms of debate that the Generation of 1837 set had not yet become irrelevant. In this way, fully comprehending Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones is not possible without the survey of Sarmiento, Alberdi, and Mitre that preceded this chapter.

In addition to looking at the magazine at which they first worked together, the first section of this chapter also examines larger trends in Argentine history. *Ideas* may have been the vessel through which the Generation of the Centenary first articulated their ideology, but Manuel Gálvez published the magazine in a particular context within Argentina that one cannot ignore when thinking about the movement's roots. Indeed, as the beginning of this chapter hints at, the turn of the century was a time of great flux in Argentina, and even more so in Buenos Aires. The astounding rates of growth that had begun under President Julio A. Roca in the 1880s continued — with a brief exception in the global economic crisis of the early 1890s — through the rest of the nineteenth century. On the back of a powerful economy focused on the export of refrigerated

¹¹⁴ In 1912, the Argentine Congress passed the Sáenz Peña Law, which allowed for universal, required suffrage for male citizens. The era of mass politics had arrived to Argentina. Four years later, Hipólito Yrigoyen of the Radical Civic Union (UCR) won Argentina's first free election.

meat and grain, Argentina seemed poised to join the elite club of world leaders. Foreign investment from the British Empire had helped spawn a small but growing domestic industrial sector. At the very least, Argentina had established itself as the most developed nation in South America. Some contemporary writers even have compared Argentina's economic state at the turn of the twentieth century to that of China in recent years.¹¹⁵ A flow of European immigrants that only the United States could match supported this breakneck pace of growth. At the start of World War I, Argentina's GDP per capita was greater than those of France, Italy, and Germany.¹¹⁶ In every respect, it seemed that the vision of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and the rest of the Generation of 1837 had proven to be a success. The liberals had pushed Argentina into the modern era by adopting the policies they had been proposing since the early 1840s.

Behind this façade of prosperity and unity, however, lay cracks in an ideological regime that never fully consolidated its power. The liberal elites of turn-of-twentieth-century Argentina — the heirs to Echeverría, Sarmiento, Alberdi, and Mitre — had established what was essentially a one-party government. The National Autonomous Party (PAN) controlled Argentine politics in large part due to the limited nature of suffrage in the country. The PAN, however, could only maintain its hegemony so long as it delivered consistent economic results. After the panics of the 1890s, movements for broader suffrage gained popularity. A new political party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR), emerged as a powerful opponent to the PAN. Its leaders, Leandro N. Alem and in particular his nephew, Hipólito Yrigoyen, supported universal male suffrage and secret, mandatory voting to ensure broad and free participation in the democratic process. The UCR led unsuccessful rebellions against the existing government in 1890, 1893, and 1905. Yrigoyen finally was able to secure these rights for all male Argentines with the passage of the 1912 Sáenz

¹¹⁵ "The Parable of Argentina," *The Economist*, 2/15/2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21596515-there-are-lessons-many-governments-one-countrys-100-years-decline-parable>

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Peña Law. Popular democracy and the politics of the masses had come to Argentina. There was no transition period or gradual implementation of suffrage. The country would have to grapple with the consequences of mass democracy immediately.¹¹⁷ As immigrants continued to stream ashore in Buenos Aires and domestic industry developed, the structure of the Argentine economy and society began to change in ways that no one could have foreseen.

It was into this tense intellectual and political climate that a new generation of intellectuals was born. A group of men who came of age as Argentina was celebrating the hundredth of the May Revolution in 1910 finally tore down the liberal order that had dominated the country's politics for almost fifty years. This Generation of the Centenary, led in particular by Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez, rebelled against the cosmopolitanism and Europhilia of the prior Generation of 1837. In doing so, they drastically reconfigured the terms of Argentine national identity. *Argentinidad* — a term that Rojas himself coined — took on a far more nationalistic flavor: a true Argentine worked the cattle ranches of the interior and was deeply faithful to the Catholic Church.¹¹⁸ He spoke Spanish and embraced his creole heritage. This reconfiguration of what it meant to be Argentine put these new nationalists in conflict with an inconvenient reality of their country's demographics in the early twentieth century. Argentina was welcoming immigrants to its shores at unprecedented rates, and among these immigrants were thousands of Jews who were particularly problematic in the eyes of the Generation of the Centenary. The size and influence of Buenos Aires was growing, not shrinking. At some points, over half of the city's population was foreign-born.¹¹⁹ The country was becoming more, not less diverse.

¹¹⁷ Women, however, would not win suffrage until 1949 under Juan Perón.

¹¹⁸ Michael Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 36.

¹¹⁹ Rein and Lesser, *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, 8-9.

The principal members of the Generation of the Centenary, Gálvez, Rojas, and Leopoldo Lugones, along with their contemporaries Ricardo Olivera, Emilio Becher, and Alberto Gerchunoff, shared some important biographical traits. Unlike many leading intellectuals of the generations that preceded them, several of them hailed from outside the province of Buenos Aires. Rojas was born to a powerful family from San Miguel de Tucumán in 1882. His father, Absalón, was governor of the state at the time of his birth. Rojas spent much of his childhood in Tucumán and the neighboring northern state of Santiago del Estero. Gálvez was born just two months before Rojas in Entre Ríos. He was part of a wealthy creole family that could trace its ancestry back to some of Argentina's most powerful original leaders. Lugones was born in 1874 in Villa María del Río Seco, a small town in the Córdoba Province. All three came from politically connected (if not always economic) privilege, but in their earliest years, they identified with different strains of the political left in Argentina. Rojas and Gálvez were socialists; Lugones was an anarchist.¹²⁰ Over time, however, as the Generation of the Centenary's ideology matured and made the leap from a mere cultural program to a broader political movement, each moved further to the political right.

These new nationalists' attitudes toward *argentinidad*, however, did not appear in a vacuum. These writers often took their cues from their counterparts outside of Argentina. In his article "The Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina, 1900-1927," David Rock identifies two thinkers in particular who provided the ideological foundations for the Generation of the Centenary. One, Ernest Renan, was French, the other, José Enrique Rodó, was Uruguayan.¹²¹ Rock repeats this claim in his contribution to Sandra McGee Deutsch's *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, and Michael Goebel

¹²⁰ Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past*, 37.

¹²¹ Rock, "The Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism, 1900-1927," 273.

concurr in his book *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History*.¹²² It is interesting that Rock has identified these two men as the intellectual ancestors of Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez, as each contributed a key component of Argentine nationalism. From Rodó and the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, they received some of the first rumblings of modern anti-imperialism and anti-materialism in Latin America. In *Ariel*, Rodó writes of a “Hispanic-America” that shares little in common with the United States. That country received its “utilitarian” legacy from the British, while the nations of Central and South America — including, of course, Argentina — were intrinsically less materialistic. This legacy, however, was now in danger. In the wake of Spain’s embarrassing defeat at the hands of the United States in 1898, Rodó feared the possibility of an impending “de-latinized America” if its peoples were to imitate the industrial north.¹²³ The message of *Ariel* resonated with the Generation of the Centenary in part because its author addressed the book “to the youth of America.”¹²⁴

From Renan, the nationalists received a second target for their rage: the Jews. Indeed, it was Renan who first popularized the supposed ethnic difference between Jews (Semites) and Christian Europeans (Aryans).¹²⁵ In one of his most famous works, *General History and Comparative Systems of Semitic Languages*, Renan claims “the Semite hardly knows any duties except to himself... to ask that he keep his word, that he carry out disinterested justice, is to ask of him the impossible.”¹²⁶ Later in the same book, he says Jews — to him, the “Semitic race” — “is recognizable almost uniquely by negative characteristics. It has no mythology, no epic, no

¹²² McGee Deutsch, *The Argentine Right*, 6.

¹²³ José Enrique Rodó, “Ariel” (Project Gutenberg, 1900), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22899/22899-h/22899-h.htm>

¹²⁴ Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, “La Argentina Del Centenario: Campo Intelectual, Vida Literaria Y Temas Ideológicos,” *Hispanérica* 9, no. 25/26 (August 1980): 36.

¹²⁵ William Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 118.

¹²⁶ Ernest Renan, “Histoire Générale et Systèmes Comparés Des Langues Sémitiques” (The Internet Archive, 1855), <https://archive.org/details/histoiregnrale03renagoog>, 15.

science, no philosophy, no fiction, no plastic arts, no civic life.”¹²⁷ The racialized anti-Semitism of Renan’s work would become central to the rise of fascism in the early twentieth century, and it is easy to see the links between his writing and Nazi propaganda during the 1930s. Though writers like Rojas and Gálvez often took a more restrained approach to their quarrels with Jewish — and Christian and Muslim — immigrants to Argentina, they invoked many of the same tropes in doing so. As members of the Generation of the Centenary radicalized in the 1920s and 1930s, their anti-Semitism increased significantly, and they gained more adherents to their ideology. Indeed, the Argentine government began to restrict Jewish immigration in the 1930s.¹²⁸

When Rock references Renan as one of the ideological predecessors of Argentine nationalists like Rojas and Gálvez, however, he is not referring to the Frenchman’s anti-Semitic works like *General History and Comparative Systems of Semitic Languages*. Instead, Rock identifies the play *Caliban, After the Conquest*, an alternate history of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, as Renan’s most important work for the formation of the Generation of the Centenary.¹²⁹ In *Caliban*, Renan crafted a dichotomy similar to the one Rodó constructed in *Ariel*, which is based on the former’s work. Caliban, the self-educated slave, overthrows Prospero and takes control of the island they both occupy. The island’s new ruler, however, is unable to govern effectively, and he quickly loses power again. Renan’s reinterpretation of *The Tempest* is meant to show the author’s disdain for the common people of his native France. He published *Caliban* in 1878, just seven years after the failed Paris Commune. Some critics have identified a link between the Communards’ frustrated attempt to establish a socialist utopia in the French

¹²⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁸ Fernando Devoto, *Historia de La Inmigración En La Argentina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Sudamericana, 2004, 392-393.

¹²⁹ Rock, “The Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism,” 273.

capital and Renan's contempt for Caliban, the avatar of the proletariat.¹³⁰ No matter the allegory, Rock's main use for *Caliban* in his article is to prove Renan's contempt for liberal democracy. Indeed, both Renan and the Generation of the Centenary identified with a certain illiberal — even proto-fascist — thread of nationalist thought. But perhaps Rock also should have evaluated the link between Renan's anti-Semitic tendencies and the tragedies that would befall Argentina's Jews in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Other authors have identified different sources as the early nationalists' inspirations. In his book *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, Federico Finchelstein identifies a different European source of right-wing nationalism on the Rio de la Plata. Owing in part to what Benito Mussolini would call “arterial links” between the two countries, the Fascist ideology in Italy could easily transport itself across the Atlantic.¹³¹ Indeed, these “arterial links” reflected a demographic reality in Argentina. By the 1920s, Italians were the largest immigrant group in Buenos Aires.¹³² The massive size of the Italian community in the Argentine capital is what in part inspired the famous Jorge Luís Borges quotation, “The Argentines are Italians that speak Spanish, educated by the English, who want to be French.”¹³³ Finchelstein's organizes his book around this metaphorical blood relationship between Argentina and Italy, jumping from overviews of complex intellectual histories of fascism to accounts of political back-channeling in the span of a few pages. This international orientation, however, means *Transatlantic Fascism* identifies the Argentine nationalism more as an import than as a domestic ideology. When the book does discuss the earlier writers that are

¹³⁰ Roberto Fernández Retamar, “Para La Historia de Calibán,” *Guaragua* 2, no. 4 (1997), 81.

¹³¹ Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

¹³² Ricardo Feierstein, *Historia de Los Judíos Argentinos*, (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Galerna, 2006), 67.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 366. In Spanish: “Los Argentinos son italianos que hablan español, educados por ingleses, que quieren ser franceses.”

the subject of this thesis, it classifies them as “still liberal cultural nationalists.”¹³⁴ It explains the focus on *argentinidad* in these writers’ works as a response to overwhelming amounts of Italian immigration, ignoring how threatening the Generation of the Centenary viewed other immigrant groups, especially Jews.¹³⁵ Though they may not have begun their careers as such, it is clear that by the 1920s, writers like Rojas and Lugones were at best skeptical of the virtues of liberal democracy.

Finchelstein’s is not the only alternative interpretation of the intellectual roots of nationalism in Argentina. In “Imagining ‘El Ser Argentino’: Cultural Nationalism and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina,” Jean H. Delaney instead claims German romantics of the 1800s provided the basis for the writings of Rojas and Gálvez.¹³⁶ Indeed, Delaney’s article shows that the conceptions of citizenship that the Generation of the Centenary constructed do share some common traits with that of romantics like Johann Gottlieb Fichte. To writers like Fichte, the “volk” are people who share “particular mental and emotional traits, and are bound together by language, religion, and common descent. This understanding of nationality also entails a particular view of historical development that celebrates national uniqueness.”¹³⁷ Gálvez and Rojas often utilize nostalgic language to appeal to a now lost, genuine sort of *argentinidad* found on the plains of the interior rather than the one found in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires. Particularly in the earliest years of their careers, Delaney’s classification of the members of the Generation of the Centenary as romantics makes a lot of sense, even if there is more evidence for their having been aficionados of Darío and Renan than of Fichte.

¹³⁴ Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 145.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Delaney, “Imagining ‘El Ser Argentino,’” 626.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 629.

Indeed, praising “national uniqueness” was one of the main motivations for the Generation of the Centenary’s formation. In 1903, seven years before Argentina marked its hundredth birthday, Manuel Gálvez founded a monthly literary magazine called *Ideas*. This short-lived periodical — it was discontinued after just 24 issues in 1905 — not only brought together these young writers for the first time, but it also laid out an early form of the Generation of the Centenary’s particular nationalist ideology. Though another literary magazine *Mercury of America*, founded in 1900, attempted to fill a role similar to the one *Ideas* did three years later, its writers did not include many of the key members of the Generation of the Centenary, including Gálvez, Rojas, Ricardo Olivera, and Emilio Becher.¹³⁸ Only *Ideas* provided the social linkages that were key to the rise of this movement. In the magazine’s pages, these writers and others sought to forge a new Argentine culture. In the past, the country’s cultural institutions had been more concerned with imitating fashionable foreign arts movements, marginalizing truly national art. For Argentina to become a world power, so the founders of *Ideas* suggested, it would have to create cultural products that were uniquely its own. This cultural nationalism permeated the pages of *Ideas*. Members of the Generation of the Centenary, however, did not content themselves by engaging with only cultural questions. Before long, they injected their nationalist ideology into Argentina’s political sphere. The importance of *Ideas* as a proving ground for this group, then, cannot be understated. The magazine helped spawn a movement that forever reshaped Argentine politics and culture.

Despite its centrality to the formation of the Generation of the Centenary, however, *Ideas* has not received significant attention from those historians who otherwise have devoted time to this group. In “The Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina, 1900-1927,” David Rock devotes about a page of his article to the magazine. In it, Rock calls the “*Ideas*

¹³⁸ Leopoldo Lugones, however, did write for *Mercurio de América* for a time.

group... the first organ of traditionalism and anti-positivism in Argentina.”¹³⁹ His analysis of *Ideas*, however, relies more on Manuel Gálvez’s autobiography *The Friends and Teachers of My Youth* than on any close reading of the magazine’s issues. Two Argentine authors, Veronica Delgado and Mariana Bendahan, have written on *Ideas*, but the former does so as part of a larger dissertation on similar magazines and their influence on the country’s literature, and the latter discusses *Ideas* in only a short journal article. In *The Early Nationalism of Manuel Gálvez and Ricardo Rojas*, Carlos Payá and Eduardo Cárdenas identify not the founding of *Ideas* but the publication of *La Restauración Nacionalista* and *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* by Rojas and Gálvez respectively as the first real record of nationalism in Argentina.¹⁴⁰ They do so even while clearly acknowledging the magazine’s role in bringing the Generation of the Centenary together in the first place. Perhaps this lack of emphasis on the centrality of *Ideas* to the origins and ideology of the group has to do with the format of Payá’s and Cárdenas’s book: it often reads more like a biography of the two authors than a historical analysis of nationalism more generally. A biography of course would put a greater emphasis on a person’s greatest works instead of his or her earliest works.

Ideas’ purpose is clear from its inaugural issue. In a fiery editorial that opened the magazine, Ricardo Olivera delivered the Generation of the Centenary’s opening salvo. The May 1903 issue begins with his article, titled “Sincerities.” One can already see the outlines of the group’s nationalism in it, though for now Olivera is more concerned with the quality of Argentina’s intellectuals than its ethnic character: “There are many deceptions coming from our small intellectual circles. The newspapers generally are complacent in this excess; true criticism has very few representatives, and in the general public there exists an atavistic intellectual

¹³⁹ Rock, “Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism,” 274.

¹⁴⁰ Eduardo José Cárdenas and Carlos Manuel Payá, *El Primer Nacionalismo Argentino En Manuel Gálvez Y Ricardo Rojas* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: A. Peña Lillo, 1978), 13.

laziness that makes them accept without examination others' opinions."¹⁴¹ *Ideas*, then, would take on a dual charge. On the one hand, its pages would attempt to provide "true criticism" of the literary, dramatic, and visual arts of the time in Argentina. On the other, it would attempt to engender in its readership a greater understanding of what a truly Argentine culture could look like. That culture would not just be a cheap knockoff of the latest trends from London or Paris. It would be original, and it would be American.¹⁴² To the writers of *Ideas*, the challenge before them was monumental. It represented a veritable crisis: "National necessity screams its urgency, directing the strength of the youth at the prior generations and polarizing all its energies toward the creation of an ideal for the Argentine people. The small group that has founded these pages does not want to delay its contribution to this grand work. Its initiative is a call to action."¹⁴³ Even at the time of its publication in 1903, it seems the members of what would become the Generation of the Centenary already understood the place it wanted to occupy in Argentina's cultural discourse.

The pilot issue of *Ideas* continued to lay out its agenda in its later sections. In its review of the month's painting and sculpture work in Buenos Aires, Martín A. Malharro asks, "Is the existence of a national art possible, in terms of painting and sculpture?"¹⁴⁴ He answers his own question in the next sentence: "It is undeniable that art can and *ought to* be national, concrete, to speak the language of the country and partaking of its emotions, to be a reflection of this. If we consider that the conception of feeling and action is not the same in our land as in Europe... we will find that a universal feeling of beauty does not exist."¹⁴⁵ If there is no universal standard,

¹⁴¹ Ricardo Olivera, "Sinceridades," *Ideas*, May 1903, 9.

¹⁴² Of course, these writers understood "American" to mean of and pertaining to the entire Western Hemisphere, not the United States.

¹⁴³ Olivera, "Sinceridades," 8-9.

¹⁴⁴ Martín A. Malharro, "Pintura Y Escultura," *Ideas*, May 1903, 56.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

then the best a nation can do is create art attuned to the values and priorities of its own people. Importing works of minor European artists to exhibit in Argentina — a common practice at the time — was a less desirable option than promoting the work of those who had always lived in the country: “In order to support a national painting movement, it is necessary to almost *forget* what we may have learned in the European schools. Face to face with the nature of our country, let us search for its mysteries, exploring, looking for the sign, the appropriate path to its interpretation.”¹⁴⁶ Malharro’s article mentions the phrase “*pintura nacional*” — literally, national painting — multiple times. It is a common concept throughout the issues of *Ideas*, and it implies a dual task in the construction of a truly Argentine fine arts movement. National painting means celebrating and patronizing both painting *of* Argentina and painting *by* Argentines. And Malharro’s pride in his country permeates his writing: “We have the shores of the Uruguay and the Gualeguay, the sierras of Córdoba, the wheat regions of Santa Fe and countryside of Tierra del Fuego; the forests of Chaco and the papas of Buenos Aires, all of them offering great beauty, intense poetry, all of them waiting for the artist with an *American soul*.”¹⁴⁷ It is easy to understand why David Rock classifies these writers as “cultural nationalists;” their first forays into public life concerned the state of the Buenos Aires art scene far more than the ethnic makeup of the city.¹⁴⁸

In the opening issue’s “Theater” section, Manuel Gálvez echoes Malharro’s nationalist rhetoric. As he was the editor-in-chief of *Ideas*, one can treat Gálvez’s first contribution to the magazine as a sort of mission statement for the publication as well. In it, the 21 year-old author writes of the importance of creating a national theatrical tradition just as Malharro desired a national painting and sculpture tradition. Before beginning his reviews of recently-premiered

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴⁸ Rock, “Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism,” 271.

plays in Buenos Aires, Gálvez lays out a brief, yet poignant manifesto on what he sees as *Ideas*' charge: "We will not make an agenda. We only promise to tell the truth."¹⁴⁹ By appealing to a universal understanding of truth instead of merely any political program as the rudder to his magazine's ship, Gálvez couches his forthcoming analysis — and, by extension, anything else that comes from his magazine — in the positivist language of old. Thus, when his first survey of the Buenos Aires theater scene opens with a scathing rebuke, his opinion becomes more than mere polemic; it elevates itself to the status of rational truth. Only with this appeal to truth could Gálvez succeed in delivering his harsh criticisms of Argentine theater: "If we were to make a computation of the works premiered there, we could see that the majority of them are translations and arrangements. It is easily understood that this is neither beneficial for national art, let alone a stimulation for the authors. For the moment it is much easier and profitable to translate a play from French or Italian than it is to write an original work."¹⁵⁰ Translation, in Gálvez's opinion, was a debilitating disease for Argentine theater. It was the easy way out for producers and directors in Buenos Aires. In the February 1904 issue of *Ideas*, he is able to list several translated plays that have premiered in the previous fifteen days. The translation "fever" would have to break before any national theater project could be born.¹⁵¹

In this way, the cultural project of *Ideas* is very similar across art forms: there must be an intrinsically Argentine theatrical identity in the same way that there must be an intrinsically Argentine literary identity. The stages and publishing houses of Buenos Aires must ooze with *argentinidad*. This utopia could never exist without the support and praise of homegrown literary talents. Indeed, in the following issue, the writer David Peña writes a hypothetical dialogue that delivered the same indictment of the state of theater there titled "Promoting the National

¹⁴⁹ Manuel Gálvez, "Teatro," *Ideas*, May 1903, 86.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁵¹ Manuel Gálvez, "Teatro," *Ideas*, February 1904, 191.

Theater.”¹⁵² Perhaps the writers that made up the staff of *Ideas* were so successful in influencing the general public because, from the magazine’s first issue, Manuel Gálvez weaved the positivist language of old into his new nationalist message. Though their understanding of *argentinidad* was in many ways a departure from that of the Generation of 1837, the language they used was not so different and was therefore easy for readers to digest. The Generation of the Centenary framed their ideology in a similar manner to earlier, more liberal thinkers.

Though the format of *Ideas* was not identical from issue to issue, Gálvez generally divided the magazine into familiar sections. Issues often opened with a sample of a literary work, perhaps a preview of a forthcoming novel, or a translated portion of a European work, or an original piece exclusive to the magazine. After that came a series of reviews of the various sectors of the arts world in Argentina: poetry, painting and sculpture, music, letters, and theater. The letters section often focused on Argentine or Hispanic-American developments from the past month, but some issues also included reviews of French or Spanish literature. This balance reflects *Ideas*’ cultural priorities: though it did not discount the value of French or Spanish writing, its goal was to promote and critique an Argentine, or at the very least American, literary tradition.

It should be of no surprise, then, that one of the Generation of the Centenary’s leading figures, Ricardo Rojas, spent his time contributing to the section of the magazine devoted to literary criticism. When he was just 21 years old, he wrote his first entry in *Ideas* on the state of modernism in Latin America.¹⁵³ From his very first contributions to the magazine, Rojas was already articulating key aspects of his nationalist ideology. He was unafraid to critique leading lights of European literature, including José de Echegaray, the winner of the Nobel Prize in 1904.

¹⁵² David Peña, “Fomento Del Teatro Nacional,” *Ideas*, June 1903, 122.

¹⁵³ Ricardo Rojas, “Letras Hispano-Americanas,” *Ideas*, June 1903, 176.

When reviewing Pompeyo Gener's *Things from Spain*, Rojas offers praise for the author's application of racial theories to the stagnation of that country in recent centuries. The claim that "the strong and noble races are those who populate the north of the peninsula... while those of the center and south, Semitic and pre-Semitic, are those who have brought ruin to the entire nation" of Spain was not in any way racist to Rojas.¹⁵⁴ Instead, Gener's book is "tough and brave. There are things [in it] that not everyone can say in Spain."¹⁵⁵ In Rojas's eyes, *Things from Spain* simply delivers hard truths for its readers about why the once-powerful country had struggled, suffering defeat even at the hands of the United States in 1898. These sorts of claims, of course, are nothing new to Argentina. Alberdi and Sarmiento made normative observations about European groups decades before Rojas was writing for *Ideas*. In the hands of the Generation of the Centenary, however, these claims eventually would become national policy. The freedoms that the Constitution of 1853 promised to all would not last forever.

In the following issue of *Ideas*, Rojas expanded on his earlier claims about racial difference while reviewing a story by Alfonso Danvila, a Spanish writer and diplomat. At one point, Rojas pauses his review, instead remarking on the state of Latin America's development in the past century: "The spirit of America, not content with having declared political independence, breaking the links that bound us to mother Spain, has also achieved... mental independence, while the migratory flood is completing the differentiation of the [American] race."¹⁵⁶ Constructing a national literary tradition would require preserving the "mental independence" that Rojas believes now existed between South America and Spain. This process was moving even more quickly in Argentina because of the astonishing number of immigrants it was

¹⁵⁴ Ricardo Rojas, "Letras Hispano-Americanas," *Ideas*, September 1903, 139.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁵⁶ Ricardo Rojas, "Letras Hispano-Americanas," *Ideas*, October 1903, 205.

receiving. For Rojas, this process had gone too far. Later in his review of Danvila's work, he delivers his interpretation of a century's intellectual history in Argentina:

The nineteenth century started for us with the reign of the French encyclopedia, and we have in its aftermath attended to a flowering of French literature as well. In this way, instead of completing that rebellion [against the Spanish Empire], with our own intellectual sovereignty, we have fallen into another servitude whose inconveniences and disadvantages I do not want to clarify here.¹⁵⁷

In Rojas's mind, the May Revolution and the Congress of Tucumán did nothing for Argentina but trade one sort of subjugation for another. The Francophilia of earlier groups of intellectuals like the Generation of 1837 had smothered the flame of a truly Argentine identity and intellectual tradition. At the same time, thanks to the policies of the late nineteenth century, Argentina was becoming something never before seen: a country that was neither wholly American nor wholly European. Understanding the nature of this new identity, then, would become the Generation of the Centenary's most important charge.

Though he departed from Sarmiento and Alberdi in his embrace of Argentina's former colonial overlords, Rojas did offer some nuance in his support for Spain. His love for that country was far from unconditional. Instead, he believed that Spain must engage in "the denial of its past, without renouncing the worship of its legitimate glories."¹⁵⁸ For Rojas this "denial" had one peculiar requirement. For Spain to become prosperous again, it would have to rid itself of the disproportionate influence of the Catholic Church. The root of Spain's decline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries lay in the strength of the Church there: it "has had dire consequences for the national character. Catholicism gave the people everything, [including] something of its exclusiveness and immobility."¹⁵⁹ It had even infiltrated art in Spain and its colonies. It was time for art in Spain — and in Argentina — to develop separate from the Catholic Church. Rojas's laicism does not seem so different from the anti-clericalism of earlier intellectuals like Sarmiento

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ricardo Rojas, "Letras Españolas," *Ideas*, February 1904, 171.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 173

and Roca. Indeed, when the latter was president, he passed Law 1420, which removed the Church from the sphere of public education.¹⁶⁰ Neither Rojas nor Roca was interested in having religion play a major role in the formation of the nation, be it in the arts or education. This opposition to the Catholic Church would in fact put Rojas in conflict with other members of the Generation of the Centenary, most notably Gálvez and Emilio Becher.

Ricardo Rojas was not alone in articulating this new nationalist vision for Argentine literature. Other notable members of the Generation of the Centenary contributed to *Ideas*' ideology through the literary criticism articles that occupied each issue's final pages. In a review of Ángel de Estrada's "The Voice of the Nile," from the November 1903 issue of the magazine, the Jewish writer Alberto Gerchunoff comments on the state of Argentine literature and identifies two important figures for this thesis as leading lights of writing in the Americas: Leopoldo Lugones and Rubén Darío.¹⁶¹ Gerchunoff's praise of these two men is quite common in *Ideas*. It is clear that Gálvez worked hard to use the criticism sections of the magazine to help build an intellectual movement. Members of the Generation of the Centenary constantly reviewed each other's work — with universal praise — in these pages. In the following issue of *Ideas*, Emilio Becher praises Rojas, who had just published a book of poems titled *The Victory of Man*, as "perhaps one of the three or four young men of his generation who will come to make a work... against the hate and contempt of the barbarians."¹⁶² In the same review, Becher, like Gerchunoff the month before, cites Lugones and Darío as inspirations to the Generation of the Centenary.¹⁶³ The letters section of *Ideas* was in this way the key site for perhaps the magazine's most important contribution to Argentine history: it helped Gálvez and his comrades build an

¹⁶⁰ Di Stéfano, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina*, 346.

¹⁶¹ Alberto Gerchunoff, "Letras Argentinas," *Ideas*, November 1903, 301.

¹⁶² Emilio Becher, "Letras Argentinas," *Ideas*, December 1903, 384.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 374.

intellectual community that was united in its opposition to the existing liberal order. Part of what sets the Generation of the Centenary apart from earlier nationalist groups is the degree to which they were able to actually alter the ideology of Argentina's citizens. This success certainly had a lot to do with structural factors in the country's politics and culture, including increasing rates of immigration, global instability, the increasing threat of communism, and newfound economic prosperity, but the Generation of the Centenary did not simply ride a wave of radical changes to a position of national acclaim. Their rise was an intentional one, and they made a concerted effort to promote each other's work and ideology.

Though *Ideas* was dedicated first and foremost to cultural commentary, it did occasionally make a foray into political questions. In its June 1903 issue, Juan Ángel Martínez published a brief article on the financial policies of then-president Julio A. Roca.¹⁶⁴ Even at this early date, one can divine a nationalist bent to the articles that *Ideas* publishes: "The false notion of the power of production, relative to what work produces in the Republic, as well as the misconception that our politicians have held and still hold, with respect to the political condition of the Argentine provinces, has resulted in one large and permanent anarchy in the legislation on taxes, public spending, and the use of credit."¹⁶⁵ Martínez's indictment of Roca's economic policies represent a bridge of sorts between the Generation of the Centenary's cultural and political agendas. Though the group did not often engage with purely political questions at first, it is clear that these writers are beginning to tackle such issues more easily as they mature. In a later issue of *Ideas* from March 1905, Martín Malharro tackles the problem of educating the masses about Argentine art. Understanding of art used to be a "luxury, an exclusive privilege of

¹⁶⁴ Roca is most famous for having served as President of Argentina in the 1880s, but he won the office again in 1898 and served through 1904.

¹⁶⁵ Juan Ángel Martínez, "Conferencia Sobre Finanzas," *Ideas*, June 1903. 117.

aristocrats,” but it was essential to the construction of “a complete life.”¹⁶⁶ Teachers in Argentina’s schools would be responsible for teaching the “elevation of the senses” and “love for nature and life” as much as they would be tasked with training students in reading and writing.¹⁶⁷ In this way, Malharro, an accomplished post-impressionist painter himself, is advocating for preparing the youth of Argentina to understand the national art movement that *Ideas* was dedicated to constructing in the first place. It should be of no surprise, then, that education would be one of the first avenues through which members of the Generation of the Centenary would get involved in politics.

Martínez’s staunch defense of the interests of the provinces of the interior in the June 1903 issue of *Ideas* reflects a larger wariness among the Generation of the Centenary of the notion that Buenos Aires was the social and political center of the nation. Many of the group’s most famous works denounced the capital as cosmopolitan, dirty, impoverished, and immoral. It was crawling with whores, immigrants, and criminals. Indeed, this negative impression of the city is present from Olivera’s opening editorial on the nature of the magazine he had just helped found. He calls his homeland’s capital “the synthetic expression of the Republic” that “has never had that loving predilection for spiritual things that is exquisitely exemplary of superior civilizations. To call it Athens has always been more sarcasm than praise.”¹⁶⁸ In other instances, the city itself seems to become a single living, breathing prostitute. In the 1919 novel *Nacha Regules*, Manuel Gálvez chronicles the journey of Fernando Monsalvat, a young lawyer, who attempts to rescue the titular call girl from her life of sin. As the book’s plot develops, Nacha becomes an allegory for the entire Argentine capital. During the supposedly utopian celebration of the country’s centenary — a deliberate choice of setting from Gálvez — Fernando descends

¹⁶⁶ Martín A. Malharro, “La Estética En La Escuela,” *Ideas*, March 1905, 316-317.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁶⁸ Olivera, “Sinceridades,” 3.

deeper and deeper into the underbelly of the city to save his missing sister from the “vast market of human flesh” that is Buenos Aires.¹⁶⁹ In this way, *Nacha Regules* articulates a key aspect of the Generation of the Centenary’s ideology. Suspicion and even contempt for Buenos Aires abound in their writings. Given men like Gálvez and Rojas’s upbringing in provinces far from the capital, a healthy guardedness of the relatively large and prosperous city would be understandable.

The significance of this attitude, however, transcends any biographical information about members of the Generation of the Centenary. Earlier leaders like Sarmiento and Mitre had placed Buenos Aires in the center of their plans for Argentina’s development. As Governor of Buenos Aires, Mitre had battled the Argentine Confederation to preserve the capital’s privileged position. In *Agirópolis*, Sarmiento’s work detailing his utopian vision for a capital of the “United States of the Rio de la Plata” on Martín García Island off the country’s coast.¹⁷⁰ The city Sarmiento described was never built, but his vision of a cosmopolitan city steeped in the culture and philosophy of Europe came true in Buenos Aires. The Generation of the Centenary aimed to repudiate this dream. Sometimes they did so rather directly: in 1908, Rojas published *Cosmópolis*, a nationalist rebuttal to Sarmiento’s earlier work. The supposedly hard-working European immigrants were, in Rojas’s eyes, merely “indigent multitudes.”¹⁷¹ He rejects the cosmopolitanism of Buenos Aires, claiming it is a cause of the city’s moral ills: “Heterogeneous peoples, upstart peoples without spiritual unity, are peoples without perpetuity or a destination.”¹⁷² The quantitative improvements to the quality of life for Argentines that the

¹⁶⁹ Manuel Gálvez, “Nacha Regules” (The Internet Archive, 1919), <https://archive.org/details/nacharegulesnove00gl>, 43.

¹⁷⁰ Brendan Lanctot, *Beyond Civilization and Barbarism: Culture and Politics in Postrevolutionary Argentina* (Lanham, Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2014), 70.

¹⁷¹ Ricardo Rojas, *Cosmópolis* (Paris: Garnier Hermanos Libreros-Editores, 1908), 1.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, vii.

Generation of 1837 had helped win had come at the cost of some intrinsic moral decay. For the nationalists of early twentieth century Argentina, Buenos Aires was the perfect symbol of this decline. To them, the city meant something far different than it did for their predecessors.

In rejecting the allure of Buenos Aires, the writers of *Ideas* often did the same of Paris. For decades, the City of Light had been the cultural capital of the world for Argentines.¹⁷³ Though Argentina had been a Spanish colony, the latest fashions, political treatises, and works of fiction came from London and Paris more often than they came from Madrid. The pro-Hispanic ideology of the Generation of the Centenary, however, came with at the very least a skepticism of — and occasional denunciation — of the French capital. This guardedness began in the magazine's very first article: Ricardo Olivera's "Sincerities." In it, he explicitly compares Paris and Buenos Aires, and not in the most flattering way. He accuses his country's capital of attempting to be a poor imitation of the French one: intellectual life in Buenos Aires had few other purposes other than the "pretension... of repeating the case of Paris: to be for this America of the *caudillos* and riots what that one is for Europe and the rest of the world: a City-Light that absorbs all continental thought in order to radiate civilization."¹⁷⁴ For Olivera, Paris is a poor model for Argentina to follow, because Latin America has a totally different soul from Europe. It is the land of *caudillos* and should be proud of it. Continental France has a very different history, and attempting to emulate it would be a mistake.

Olivera also complained that artists, including Argentina's best painters, musicians, and sculptors, "leave [for Paris] and do not always return."¹⁷⁵ *Ideas'* December 1904 issue included a similar account of the experience of young Latin American writers in Paris. The article describes the city as if it were the Buenos Aires of Gálvez's *Nacha Regules*. It "seduces;" it "leads one

¹⁷³ Even today, it is common to hear foreigners refer to Buenos Aires as the "Paris of Latin America."

¹⁷⁴ Olivera, "Sinceridades," 3.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

astray.”¹⁷⁶ There was a certain “frivolity” oozing from it, “distracting strong spirits” from Argentina.¹⁷⁷ A city that had been the model for liberals like Sarmiento was anything but in the minds of *Ideas*’ writers. Rojas, too, criticized Paris’s fame in the magazine. He could not stand the trend of Latin America’s best men of letters moving to the city for an extended period of time. Their motivation, according to him, was clear: publishing “a European edition” or “a collaboration in foreign magazines” was lucrative business.¹⁷⁸ After such a trip, an Argentine author could return from Europe with some extra prestige, and his books would sell more.¹⁷⁹ Rojas, however, believed these writers had a duty to spend their time in their home country, constructing its literary tradition: “To pursue... European glory, seems like an illusion to me.”¹⁸⁰ Any national literature would have to come from within Argentina’s borders or it would not be authentic.

The final issue of *Ideas*, from April 1905, closes with a printed version of a speech that Ricardo Rojas gave to a group of students in his home province of Santiago del Estero. The speech, titled “The Country of the Forests,” represents an impressive encapsulation of the cultural nationalism that the Generation of the Centenary had articulated in the past two years of work at the magazine. In it, Rojas jumps from moments of nostalgia for his youth in the interior — a youth that could not exist anymore — to fiery praise for Santiago del Estero, which to him was the truest, “most characteristic region of the Republic.”¹⁸¹ This province was the most authentic area of Argentina because it blended indigenous and foreign, American and European, civilized and barbaric in the most effective manner:

¹⁷⁶ Alberto Tena, “La Juventud Hispano-Americana En Paris,” *Ideas*, December 1904, 471.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 470.

¹⁷⁸ Ricardo Rojas, “Letras Hispano-Americanas,” *Ideas*, August 1904, 410.

¹⁷⁹ Rojas himself took such a trip in the mid-1900s.

¹⁸⁰ Rojas, “Letras Hispano-Americanas,” 411.

¹⁸¹ Ricardo Rojas, “El País de Las Selvas,” *Ideas*, April 1905, 345.

You already see that time has not run in vain for the people or for me, and as the hours pass toward their unknown destination, let us toast: for the fruitful race of the Quechuas that left these traditions here in their language; for the first Spaniards who arrived here, opening with their heroism and their swords new paths between the virgin bushes; for those who went from here with the liberating legions to mark with corpses the borders of the nascent Republic; for the *montoneras* and *caudillos* who planted here the red banner of autonomy, while the vision and gallop of their armed centaurs crossing the shadows of the plain; for all those who from time immemorial have contributed to the civilizing of our land.¹⁸²

No other entry from *Ideas* so perfectly captures the combination of romantic wistfulness and righteous anger that typified the works of Rojas and his compatriots. At first glance, “The Country of the Forests” is nothing more than a romantic ode to his province and, by extension the interior regions that share its heritage. A closer reading, however, betrays its nationalistic bent. The symbols that he singles out for praise as the most authentic aspects of Argentine identity are representations of life in the interior. Some are quite obvious: the caudillos established power bases outside of Buenos Aires, relying on the agricultural economy for their wealth and local soldiers for their security. Other, however, are more obscure: the “armed centaurs” that Rojas mentions — perhaps a reference to Sarmiento’s description of them in his memoirs — are the *gauchos*.¹⁸³ The same group that Sarmiento had vilified as barbaric brutes becomes a civilizing force in this speech. The objects of Rojas’s admiration share, with the exception of the Quechuas, another common trait: they are unquestionably creole. Rojas expresses his affinity for Spain in other issues of *Ideas*, and here he links the country to the most important symbols of *argentinidad*. The Generation of the Centenary had thrown its lot in with the interior, against much of the contemporary establishment. An older, more liberal member of the *porteño* intelligentsia probably would have recognized the attack Rojas delivers against Buenos Aires in this speech.

¹⁸² Ibid., 346-347.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 347.

It would be a mistake, however, to argue that “The Country of the Forests” represents a complete rejection of the ideology of the Generation of 1837. Even while delivering his implicit indictment of Buenos Aires and the cosmopolitan leanings of the political establishment, Rojas uses the terms of debate that Sarmiento set decades before. The different groups that he toasts at the end of his speech — the *caudillos*, the conquistadors, and the *gauchos* — share a common goal: the “civilizing” of Argentina.¹⁸⁴ Though the Generation of the Centenary will dedicate much of their work to rehabilitating some of these figures that Sarmiento and Echeverría had denigrated so thoroughly in works like *Facundo* and “El Matadero,” such as the *caudillo* and the *gaucho*, the terms on which they do this work are very similar to the ones the Generation of 1837 first established. In addition, Rojas makes clear in his speech that he does not have a love for everything American about his homeland. Though he toasts the Quechua for having left behind some of their tribe’s traditions and myths, he does so at a time in which they have become nearly invisible. Since Julio A. Roca completed the Conquest of the Desert in the 1870s, there had been very few indigenous peoples in Santiago del Estero and its neighboring provinces.¹⁸⁵ Sarmiento himself had great contempt for indigenous peoples, whom he believed to be “savages, incapable of progress.”¹⁸⁶ In this way, their ideology lives on even after the rise of conservative nationalism in the twentieth century.

Nor is Rojas’s speech in Santiago del Estero an anomaly in this respect. Members of the Generation of the Centenary often used the language of their predecessors to respond to and build on the existing liberal school of thought. In his plea for expanded arts education in schools in *Ideas*, Martín A. Malharro argues that such a change is necessary because knowledge of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Rock, *Argentina*, 154.

¹⁸⁶ Lourdes Martinez-Echazabal, “Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (May 1998): 25

painting, sculpture, and theater is proof of a citizenry's "high grade of progress, of fortunate societies that have arrived at the total development of its strengths in agricultural, livestock, industry, and commerce."¹⁸⁷ For a member of a group that, according to historians like David Rock, was noteworthy in their rejection of positivism, Malharro chooses similar words to describe his ideal society as Auguste Comte would use. Though no individual is perfectly representative of a group's ideology, the influence of the Generation of 1837 on how Malharro, Gálvez, and other writers for *Ideas* approach improving Argentina remains clear. Indeed, when concluding his article on increasing investments in arts education, Malharro points out that doing so will, above all, create "rational and civilized" citizens.¹⁸⁸ In using these two specific words, the post-impressionist painter appeals to the twin gods of Argentine liberalism: Comte and Sarmiento.

Fernando Devoto's book *Nacionalismo, Fascismo, y Tradicionalismo en la Argentina Moderna: Una Historia* includes even more examples of this harmony between the two generations of intellectuals. Lugones's *El Payador*, describes the *gaucho* with the same language that Bartolomé Mitre had used half a century before its publication in 1916.¹⁸⁹ In his 1908 work *The Jesuit Empire*, Lugones argues that the order had corrupted the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, just as Mitre had in *Belgrano*.¹⁹⁰ He also admired Sarmiento for his focus on education as the path to modernization.¹⁹¹ According to Devoto, Manuel Gálvez thought of himself as an ideological successor to Sarmiento and Alberdi: their ideologies were part of the same "federal" historical lineage.¹⁹² Indeed, to make a clear delineation between the works of the Generation of

¹⁸⁷ Malharro, "La Estética en la Escuela," 316.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁸⁹ Fernando Devoto, *Nacionalismo, Fascismo Y Tradicionalismo En La Argentina Moderna: Una Historia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno de Argentina Editores, 2002), 104.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 49.

the Centenary and the Generation of 1837 makes little sense. The younger group constantly played off of and built on the work of the older one. Studying Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones without an understanding of Mitre, Sarmiento, and Alberdi, is therefore impossible.

The writers of *Ideas* had an acute sense of their own place in history. As early as Ricardo Olivera's opening editorial, it is clear that Gálvez and his comrades wanted to build a new literary and artistic movement. The Generation of the Centenary was born from this publication in an intentional manner. This new movement, however, did not represent a complete break from Argentina's existing intellectual history. Instead, *Ideas* — and many literary works that would come after it from this group — sought to build on the ideology of earlier thinkers, most importantly members of the Generation of 1837 like Alberdi. They did so in many different ways, including incorporating the language of positivism and the duality of civilization and barbarity into their writing and even directly praising the heroes of old. In one article from *Ideas*, Ricardo Rojas's brother Julio delivers a paean to Sarmiento rare in its steadfast praise: "Great and luminous soul of Sarmiento, I salute you triumphantly!"¹⁹³ To this less famous Rojas brother, Sarmiento's greatest work, *Facundo*, has had all but "exclusive [influence] in the task of the political organization of the country."¹⁹⁴ Nor was Rojas faulting Sarmiento for this outsize influence. Instead, he believes the former president's liberal project was necessary "to ensure democracy" in Argentina.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps, then, Sarmiento's only crime in the eyes of the Generation of the Centenary was the extent to which his project was successful. Perhaps their first responsibility was to correct the excess of Argentina's older leaders.

After *Ideas* went out of print, the leaders of the Generation of the Centenary only grew in their prominence. Indeed, many stepped further into the public sphere, becoming more explicitly

¹⁹³ Julio A. Rojas, "Sarmiento," *Ideas*, October 1903, 160.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

involved in the turbulent politics of the day. Given these writers' interest in raising the cultural consciousness of their fellow citizens, it should come as no surprise that many of the group's most prominent members made their first foray into politics through education. Gálvez became Chief Inspector of Secondary Education in 1906 when he was still only 28 years old.¹⁹⁶ From this position, he would be able to influence how Argentina's young understood what it meant to be citizens of their country better than he ever could as Editor-in-Chief of *Ideas*. Rojas was also able to leave his mark on national education debates, but he did so largely from outside the sprawling federal bureaucracy.¹⁹⁷ Instead, he published a book titled *La Restauración Nacionalista* in 1909, hoping that his grievances would reach sympathetic members of the Argentine government and intellectual elite. He never could have anticipated the book's success. *La Restauración Nacionalista*, along with Gálvez's *Diary of Gabriel Quiroga*, became one of the seminal works of the Generation of the Centenary.¹⁹⁸ Though the book is ostensibly about the state of Argentina's public education system, Rojas takes the opportunity to expound upon many aspects of the ideology he had begun to articulate in *Ideas*. Four years after that magazine's final printing, however, he was not satisfied to keep himself out of major political debates.

Immigrants in particular bore the brunt of Rojas's attacks in *La Restauración Nacionalista*. Though he acknowledges that inviting some Europeans to Argentina's shores was essential to the consolidation of the country, further infiltration of the masses was going to do more harm than good. Nowhere was this clearer than in Buenos Aires: "Wealth and immigration have taken its ancient village homogeneity, but not to carry us to the organic heterogeneity that is the true job of social progress, rather, to return us to the original chaos" of the years after

¹⁹⁶ Cárdenas and Payá, *El Primer Nacionalismo Argentino*, 85.

¹⁹⁷ Though Rojas would later become rector of the University of Buenos Aires, a public institution, in the first decade of the twentieth century Gálvez worked much more closely with the Argentine government.

¹⁹⁸ Cárdenas and Payá, *El Primer Nacionalismo Argentino*, 13.

independence.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps Alberdi's famous phrase "to govern is to populate" no longer was true. Instead, the newly rich and populous Buenos Aires "excessive influence over the rest of the country, in such a way that fourteen provinces live to its rhythm."²⁰⁰ As in Gálvez's *Nacha Regules*, and in "The Country of the Forests," Buenos Aires is a decadent, bloated city that is entirely unrepresentative of the rest of Argentina. The solution to this "cosmopolitan corruption," however, was not to expel immigrants or even limit their entry, necessarily.²⁰¹ Instead, education represented the best avenue through which the state could imbue these people with the necessary *argentinidad* to no longer represent a threat to the nation. For Rojas, it was of the utmost importance to turn the schoolhouse into a nationalist space.

Doing so would require a complete curricular reform, and *La Restauración Nacionalista* spares no detail in this respect. In one chapter of the book, Rojas lays out an entire history curriculum for multiple years of school, including which major historical figures to emphasize (almost all of whom were Spanish kings).²⁰² Since, in his opinion, "the ends of teaching history is patriotism," it should not be surprising that the majority of his hypothetical curriculum centered on the Iberian Peninsula instead of the United States or Germany.²⁰³ In this way, Rojas was just as concerned with constructing a uniquely Argentine person as he had been with constructing an Argentine arts movement while writing for *Ideas*. By refocusing the country's history curriculum on its Spanish origins, students would spend their time learning about the nation's true roots. Studying the history of the United States or the British Empire — the idols of Sarmiento and Alberdi — had turned Argentina into a cosmopolitan, amoral mass with no sense

¹⁹⁹ Ricardo Rojas, *La Restauración Nacionalista* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, 1909), 89.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 62-63.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 43.

of a national soul. Immigrants in particular needed to be subsumed into a broader national identity. If forcing adults to undergo this process was an unrealistic proposition, at least their children could possibly do so. This was the underlying goal of Rojas's *La Restauración Nacionalista*: to incorporate an entire generation of children into Argentine society.

Part of the reason that immigrants felt the brunt of Rojas's policy proposals in *La Restauración Nacionalista* is that many newcomers to Argentina had established community schools to educate their own children. There were German schools, Italian schools, and Jewish schools in different neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. These schools, however, were unacceptable to Rojas. If allowed to persist, they would cripple his vision of a "communion of spirits in one language, one ideal, and one territory."²⁰⁴ He attacked them with a particular virulence throughout the book. To him, a Jewish community school "creates the Jewish family whose patriarchal religion will prevent it from merging with the families of the land and assimilating into our basically secular society."²⁰⁵ Rojas is able to cloak his particular suspicion of Jews in his hostility towards religion more generally. Though Haim Avni argues in his book *Argentina and the Jews* that he and other members of the Generation of the Centenary were xenophobic toward all immigrants and did not usually single out Jews for particularly poor treatment. Why, then, did Rojas make no similar special mention of Italian community schools? There were far more Italians in Buenos Aires in 1909 than there were Jews. Regardless of the possible anti-Semitic nature of parts of *La Restauración Nacionalista* — which will be discussed in much greater depth in the following chapter — it is clear that Rojas's desire to transform immigrant children

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 169.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 127-128, from Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 88.

into “profoundly argentine” individuals was placing him squarely at odds with the demographic trends in his own country.²⁰⁶

The anti-materialist language typical to many articles in *Ideas* is also visible at multiple junctures in *La Restauración Nacionalista*. Rojas believed that the prosperity that had come to Buenos Aires in recent decades was in fact part of the problem with Argentine society. Wealth had led the country astray.²⁰⁷ It had created a desert no different from the one that Alberdi had encountered over half a century before. This one, however, was philosophical, not physical. By focusing solely on economic concerns, the liberals had neglected to nurture the spirituality of their constituents. For Rojas, nothing better represented the “hard work of civilization” than the “constant accretion” of the spirit of the people.²⁰⁸ Rojas followed *La Restauración Nacionalista* with *Blasón del Plata* and *La Argentinidad* in 1912 and 1916 respectively, continuing to build his vision for a new Argentina, united in a common culture, language, and spiritual identity. No work of his, however, garnered quite the same level of public praise as *La Restauración Nacionalista*. It, more than any other book, is a complete synthesis of Rojas’s early ideology.

One also can learn a lot about Rojas’s nationalist vision by visiting the home he constructed for himself in Buenos Aires. The house, which he helped design in 1929 with famous *porteño* architect Ángel Guido, is an extraordinary synthesis of “eurindian” architecture. After entering the arched doorway on Charcas street, visitors found themselves in a well-kept garden of a house that, at first glance, is reminiscent of an old colonial estate.²⁰⁹ The imitation stucco walls are topped with a clay tile roof that looks like it should be in Rojas’s home province of Santiago del Estero instead of a crowded street in Buenos Aires. The stonework that adorns

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 141.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 88-89.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁰⁹ While conducting archival research at the Museo Casa de Ricardo Rojas, I also observed the site’s architecture and took some photographs of the layout of the house.

most of the interior walls, however, represents a dramatic departure from a typical Spanish mission or fortress. Incan iconography, including representations of the Sun and corn stalks, joins traditional Catholic images of saints and cherubs on the walls of Rojas's garden.²¹⁰ In this way, the house became a living testament to Rojas's vision of *argentinidad*: something clearly neither wholly European nor American, something unrecognizable in Buenos Aires yet somehow at home in the provinces, something authentic and original. As much as his work, his home was supposed to promote "the creation of an autochthonous American conscious for the valorization of all our historical predecessors, of all our geographical riches, and of all our spiritual possibilities."²¹¹ It remains a testament to his nationalist dream to this day.

Rojas and Gálvez, however, did not always present a uniform ideology. As they matured, they began to diverge on their esteem of the Catholic Church and the importance of religion to *argentinidad*. In *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, Gálvez's first major work of prose, he emphasizes the value of Catholicism even while Rojas and other members of the Generation of the Centenary remained skeptical of it: "Religion, like language, is one of the essential foundations of our nationality."²¹² Christianity — specifically, Catholicism — was central to the nature of *argentinidad* for Gálvez. He used debates over religion to create a clear divide between himself and the Generation of 1837: "Someone has written that the salvation of Latin America is in Protestantism. [This] is a ridiculous and dangerous affirmation... Protestantism would mean for the Republic its complete denationalization."²¹³ The mysterious "someone" who wrote about the importance of Protestantism to Argentina's development was, of course, Juan Bautista

²¹⁰ Museo Casa de Ricardo Rojas, "Museo" (Ministerio de Cultura, 2015), <http://www.cultura.gob.ar/museos/museo-casa-de-ricardo-rojas/>.

²¹¹ Taken from a placard on the grounds of the Museo Casa de Ricardo Rojas, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

²¹² Manuel Gálvez, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga: Opiniones Sobre La Vida Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2001), 67.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

Alberdi. Religious diversity was of no benefit to Gálvez. This emphasis on Catholicism not only put a divide between him and his friend Rojas, but it also made his writings especially hostile towards Jews as he grew older. In addition to the prestige of the Catholic Church, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* flips many other priorities of the Generation of 1837 on their head. Juan Manuel de Rosas, the sworn enemy of Unitarians like Alberdi and Echeverría, instead became the one true “realizer of national unity who, supported by the peasant masses, busily defended [Argentina’s] sovereignty.”²¹⁴ He was an authentic manifestation of *argentinidad*. *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, which Gálvez formats as the diary of a fictional man for whom he named it, is as clear a manifesto of the nationalist ideology as will emerge from the author.

From the beginning of the book, it is clear that Gálvez is using this fictional diary to set up a series of dualities that should now be familiar: modern versus traditional, urban versus rural, American versus European, immoral versus immoral. At one point in Quiroga’s travels through Argentina, he reflects on his country’s recent history:

Until a few years ago, the country was poor. It lacked power and prestige; it had a sparse population; industry and commerce were just beginning to prosper; foreigners did not think about this corner of South America and we lived in continual revolutions and wars. But then, instead, there was a national spirit. Patriotism exalted our soldiers and our writers, ideals of homeland spread through all regions of the country; we were Argentines and not Europeans, and we had those great romantic spirits that felt the soul of the race and expressed it in our writings and deeds.²¹⁵

Suddenly, the extraordinary transformations that Argentina had undergone in the four decades prior to the book’s publication had become a tragedy. The “Europeanization” that the Generation of 1837 had dragged Argentina through had done nothing but split the country into European and American, littoral and interior, Buenos Aires and other provinces, when they should have been focused on uniting its people.²¹⁶ The nostalgia that Jean Delaney identifies as reminiscent of

²¹⁴ Cárdenas and Payá, *El Primer Nacionalismo Argentino*, 108.

²¹⁵ Gálvez, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, 85-86.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

nineteenth-century German romantics also represents one of the first attempts at revisionist history in Argentina.²¹⁷ The worldview of the Generation of the Centenary represents so radical a departure from that of Sarmiento, Alberdi, and Mitre that the totality of the country's experience over the past half century required reinterpretation. The *caudillo* Juan Manuel de Rosas was now a national hero. His formerly heroic detractors, the Unitarians, were cold, effeminate Francophiles. They were "artificial... aristocratic, and civilized."²¹⁸ His supporters, the Federalists, were "spontaneous, democratic, popular, and *bárbaro*."²¹⁹ I left this last word untranslated from Spanish here because it has a double definition. The word can mean barbaric, but, particularly in vernacular Spanish, it can also mean grand or fantastic. Here, Gálvez has flipped Sarmiento's duality, which had dominated Argentine culture since the publication of *Facundo*, on its head.

Even while fiercely attacking the consequences of the policies of the Generation of 1837, however, Gálvez still manages to praise their legacy. In *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, he calls Sarmiento "the most Argentine of all men. No one understood the old national soul as deeply as he."²²⁰ For him, as for many members of the Generation of the Centenary, one could attack the policies of one of Argentina's founding fathers without denigrating him as a national hero. He could personally embody admirable traits even if his beliefs had destroyed the country's national character. Perhaps the title Gálvez chose for this book is no coincidence, then. Perhaps the fictional Gabriel Quiroga is a distant descendant of the *caudillo* Juan Facundo Quiroga about whom Sarmiento wrote his greatest work; perhaps Gálvez is writing a direct answer to Sarmiento, thus still playing within the terms of debate that he set decades before.

²¹⁷ Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past*, 36.

²¹⁸ Gálvez, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, 131.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

The ideology of the Generation of the Centenary is difficult to articulate in only a few pages. Perhaps it is so hard to boil down their beliefs to a pithy phrase or a list of policy points because there are so many important figures who make up the group. Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez, Alberto Gerchunoff, Martín A. Malharro, and the other members of the Generation of the Centenary each produced far too many works of art and literature to analyze in this thesis. Nevertheless, there are a few broad points of concurrence between these thinkers that are clear from the analysis of this chapter. Most importantly, this group of nationalists believed that Argentina should preserve and celebrate what had made the country special. The recent breakneck pace of economic development in Argentina, and in Buenos Aires in particular, had come at the expense of something unique to their home country. Because of its peculiar ethnic makeup, Argentina had synthesized the greatest of American and European civilization. Waves of immigration from across the Atlantic, however, had put that harmony in jeopardy. To them, there was nothing in Argentina's American character to be ashamed of. The country's supposedly "barbaric" past was now a point of pride in many respects. The *gaucho* was now the perfect symbol of *argentinidad*. Though earlier writers like José Hernández, author of the epic poem *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, had praised this mythic, extinct figure years before the emergence of the Generation of the Centenary, until this group rose to prominence, no thinkers had been able to redeem him. The success of the nationalist project of Gálvez, Rojas, and others sets them apart from their predecessors as much as any aspect of their ideology.

At the same time that members of the Generation of the Centenary began to have more influence on Argentine society, their nation was beginning to come apart around them. One incident in particular would foreshadow a far nastier stage in the development of Argentine nationalism. On November 14, 1909, a teenage Ukrainian-Argentine Jew named Simón

Radowitzky threw a bomb at the feet of the chief of police of Buenos Aires, Ramón L. Falcón. On May Day of the same year, Falcón had presided over the execution of “Red Week” — *La Semana Roja* — in which police killed five marchers and wounded dozens more who were protesting poor working conditions in the city’s many new factories and port facilities. Falcón died in the explosion. Radowitzky, an anarchist, was arrested, and the Argentine government suppressed a rapidly growing labor movement in the country. The well-to-do in Buenos Aires knew that the assassin was Jewish, and their wariness of these new immigrants grew immediately. At Falcón’s funeral, the head of a group affiliated with the ruling party called the Autonomous Youth lamented: “the nationality is in danger, and we of the native group must unite ourselves in a movement of common defense.”²²¹ To this man, Argentina’s thus far “improvised cosmopolitanism” had brought with it instability and a weakened national identity.²²² The head of the Autonomous Youth, the man who had drawn a dividing line between immigrants — Jews in particular — and native-born Argentines, was named Julio Rojas. Like other members of the Generation of the Centenary, the former occasional contributor to *Ideas* magazine had become aligned with ever more conservative elements of the ruling class as the first decade of the twentieth century wore on. Within the year, Julio’s more famous brother, Ricardo, would publish *La Restauración Nacionalista*, a widely popular book that launched him into the political sphere. He had become part of the vanguard of a new generation of writers and politicians that would represent a dramatic departure from the openness and rationalism that typified the Generation of 1837. The nationalism that replaced this old order ran headlong into the reality of Argentina’s rapidly diversifying population.

²²¹ McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900-1932*, 35.

²²² *Ibid.*, 35.

The nationalism of the Generation of the Centenary would also become more virulent in the next decades of the twentieth century. At the dead police chief's funeral, another young man praised Falcón as "a devoted supporter of 'the dignity of the social order.'"²²³ His eulogy won thunderous applause from those present. That man was named Manuel Carlés. He would later become president of *La Liga Patriótica*, a right-wing paramilitary group that would adopt the ideological tenets of Italian fascism and roam the streets, brutalizing their opposition. Falcón's death led to a crackdown on workers' movements on the left that culminated with the declaration of a state of siege in May 1910, in the middle of the celebration of Argentina's hundredth birthday. In the words of the historian Sandra McGee Deutsch, it was "an ironic setting for the centennial of the birth of liberty."²²⁴ Such illiberal, oppressive occurrences would become all too common in the years that followed. Argentina was coming apart at the seams.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Chapter Three

The Incalculable Influence of the Generation of the Centenary

“Writers had ceased to ‘hacer literatura’ and begun to ‘hacer patria.’” – Jean Delaney²²⁵

Had the writers behind *Ideas* stuck solely to the cultural sphere in their criticisms of the Argentine establishment, this thesis would not need to be written. When their nationalist ideology began to manifest itself in the political realm, however, the results were explosive. Indeed, the Generation of the Centenary is perhaps as noteworthy for the movements it inspired as for its own important contributions to Argentine politics and culture. Particularly after the First World War, nationalist groups gained increasing political legitimacy among Argentines. Their work inspired right-wing paramilitary groups to hijack the country’s political system. These groups were partially responsible for a pogrom against Buenos Aires’s Jewish community in January 1919: *La Semana Trágica*, Tragic Week. Once they found themselves in positions of power, nationalists took their ideology one step further. Those who took up positions within the federal government severely limited certain immigrants’ ability to come to Argentina at all. The Generation of the Centenary also helped place the Catholic Church, long marginalized in the name of progress and freedom of religion, in the center of society yet again. These disparate changes coalesced in the Revolution of 1930, a military coup that brought about the end of the country’s first experiment with representative democracy. The coup itself, in which members of the Generation of the Centenary and their followers played decisive roles, set an unfortunate

²²⁵ Delaney, “Imagining ‘El Ser Argentino,’” 634. “Hacer literatura” means to make literature, and “hacer patria” means to make a homeland. Delaney is trying to show how the project of Argentine literature morphed into a nationalist one as the twentieth century wore on. This process will be central to this chapter of my thesis.

precedent for the country: there would not be a peaceful transition from an incumbent to an opposition leader until 1989.²²⁶

Throughout this chapter, we will see the echoes of the Generation of the Centenary's work from the first decade of the twentieth century reverberating in ways that even they could not have foreseen. Their form of nationalism infected numerous aspects of Argentine society, from how citizens treated Jewish immigrants to the esteem of liberal democracy among the country's intellectuals. Though many historians, including David Rock, Sandra McGee Deutsch, Oscar Chamosa, and Loris Zanatta, have authored in-depth works that analyze the events of this era, it is rare to see one that sufficiently links these happenings to the birth of nationalist ideology just a few years earlier. This chapter will create a more holistic understanding of the cause of some of the great upheavals that Argentina witnessed in the 1920s and 1930s by examining three overlapping legacies of the Generation of the Centenary: the rise of anti-Semitism, the emergence of right-wing paramilitary groups, and the growing centrality of Catholicism in Argentine society.

Understanding the link between *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* and the Revolution of 1930 is as important as understanding how the ideology of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento set the stage for the rise of the Generation of the Centenary in the first place. When Manuel Gálvez founded *Ideas* in 1903, it is unlikely that he could have predicted his ideology would contribute to the founding of *La Liga Patriótica* (The Patriotic League), a paramilitary organization that was “one of the most powerful political associations” in Argentina at its peak.²²⁷ Ricardo Rojas would not have anticipated that his written attacks on immigrant community schools from *La*

²²⁶ In 1989, Carlos Saúl Menem of the Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista) defeated Eduardo Angeloz of the UCR, who was to replace fellow Radical Raúl Alfonsín. Menem took office the following year, marking the first such transition between parties since Hipólito Yrigoyen replaced Victorino de la Plaza in 1916.

²²⁷ McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina*, 4.

Restauración Nacionalista in 1910 would contribute to real violence against one of these groups nine years later. An ardent leftist during *Ideas*' years of production, Leopoldo Lugones never could have foreseen providing ideological cover for the military coup in 1930. Nevertheless, each of these three men — along with their numerous contemporaries like Alberto Gerchunoff, Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviría, and Ricardo Olivera — contributed to the chaos that was Argentine democracy's undoing in the decade that followed the First World War. Indeed, many of them became more politically extreme as they matured as well. Despite this transition, their nationalist ideology morphed only to a limited extent. The language of *Ideas* is still visible in these later years. Thus, Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones, as the vanguard of the Generation of the Centenary, are responsible for the consequences of their ideology's spread.

Perhaps the ugliest legacy of the works of Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones is the trio's influence on the rise of anti-Semitism in Argentina. Though there has been an effort among historians of the Jewish experience in Latin America to expand their research beyond incidents of anti-Semitism in recent years, these tragedies still merit further examination. The book *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans* by Raanan Rein and Jeffrey Lesser is a prominent example of this new trend. The hyphen linking Jewish and Latin American identities in the book's title is telling: Rein and Lesser argue in their introduction that a religious identity such as Judaism is not necessarily separate from or more powerful than a national identity such as Brazilian or Argentine. Rein's 2010 work *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora* has a similar thesis on a merely national scale. He and Lesser also posit that scholars "tend to overemphasize xenophobic attitudes by the majority population, creating the impression that daily life for most Jews on the continent has been a constant nightmare."²²⁸

While it may be the case that Argentina is unfairly and disproportionately infamous for incidents

²²⁸ Rein and Lesser. *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, 4.

relating to anti-Semitism — including the harboring of thousands of Nazi operatives, most famously Adolf Eichmann, after World War II — the first decades of the twentieth century remain an era in which many intellectual leaders, if not the general population, held anti-Jewish sentiments. For many years, Argentina had been a remarkably open country, but, after the rise of writers like Rojas and the brutal “Tragic Week,” that was no longer the case. Something had changed. Though Rein and Lesser are right to posit that there is much more to the Jewish experience in Latin America than resentment and violence at the hands of a few extremists, the ugliness of the era on which my thesis focuses still merits further study.

One of the chapters of *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, Barnard College professor José Moya’s “What’s in a Stereotype? The Case of Jewish Anarchists in Latin America,” fits comfortably within Rein’s and Lesser’s attempt to pivot the history of Jews on the continent away from a focus on anti-Semitism. Moya admits that the Jew as anarchist — and, often simultaneously, as capitalist — stereotype was a central trope of contemporary anti-Jewish thought.²²⁹ However, he seems to discount its repugnance simply because many Jews in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires were indeed anarchists: “[Stereotypes] can also function as cognitive mechanisms that handle bewildering diversity by organizing knowledge into formulas, that, although simplified, reflect real traits.”²³⁰ A stereotype of a Jew as a political extremist is harmful regardless of its veracity. Moya also characterizes the negative characterization of Jewish anarchist Simon Radowitzky as “standard liberal discourse” about immigrants.²³¹ The phrenological examinations to which court officials subjected Radowitzky, however, have too much in common with the medical examinations of SS doctors at Auschwitz for one to dismiss as mere xenophobia. During his trial, the prosecutor argued that features like “excessive

²²⁹ Ibid., 55.

²³⁰ Ibid., 55-56.

²³¹ Ibid., 73.

development of the lower mandible, preeminence of the zygomatic and supracilial arches, depression of the forehead, [and] light facial symmetry” that he observed in Falcón’s murderer were evidence of his being a “criminal type.”²³² Though Moya claims these sorts of pseudoscientific classifications were common to similar trials of poor non-Jewish defendants, the fact remains that discourses like the one surrounding Radowitzky’s trial existed in Latin America, and they contributed to an othering of Jews that surpassed any similar process for gentile immigrant groups.

Despite incidents like the Radowitzky trial, tens of thousands Jews streamed ashore at the port of Buenos Aires in the early 1900s. Indeed, Jews were fleeing their homes with good reason. Though some had achieved commercial success and a modicum of social acceptance in countries like Germany, a great number of Jews lived in small towns in Poland and the Russian Empire known in Yiddish as *shtetlekh*, or shtetls. Though some of these towns had existed for centuries, Jews in Russia in particular began to face harsh oppression in the 1880s. In 1882, Tsar Alexander III ended what had been a time of relative peace for the Jews with the promulgation of the May Laws. Among other restrictions, these laws curtailed Jewish freedom of mobility and put limits on the number of Jews who could study at the high school level or higher. They also opened the door for a wave of pogroms against residents of the shtetls. Nine years later, authorities forcibly removed the Jews of Moscow from their homes.²³³ Up to two million Jews fled violence and oppression in the Russian Empire between 1881 and 1914.²³⁴

As their home became an increasingly hostile environment, European Jews began to look across the Atlantic for potential countries in which to settle. Wealthy Jews hoped to financially

²³² José C. Moya, “The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires,” *Jewish History* 18, no. 1 (2004): 36.

²³³ Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 33.

²³⁴ David Green, “This Day in Jewish History,” *Haaretz*, May 15, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/this-day-in-jewish-history/.premium-1.590624>.

support their brethren who wished to live in “colonies” in their new homelands. Among those seeking to sponsor new colonies was Baron Maurice de Hirsch. A successful Bavarian banker, de Hirsch founded the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in 1891 to help those who wished to flee the Russian and Ottoman Empires. The JCA established agricultural colonies in several countries, but their focus was largely in Argentina and Brazil.²³⁵ Though only about 10,000 Jews made it to Argentina before Baron de Hirsch’s sudden death in 1896, the JCA’s work set the stage for an “avalanche” of immigration in the decades that would follow.²³⁶ Violence in Europe escalated in the 1890s and 1900s, and moving to Palestine became impossible after the Ottomans implemented restrictions on Jewish immigration. The prospect of traveling to the United States and Argentina, which had both been relatively receptive to the idea of large-scale Jewish immigration, was becoming more attractive with each passing year.

The arrival of Jewish immigrants to Argentina was not, however, a wholly revolutionary concept. Non-Catholics had called Argentina home long before the early 1900s. Indigenous peoples had resided within the country’s borders for centuries. Anglican British merchants lived in Buenos Aires in the years after independence, and other Protestants had made the trip across the Atlantic in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, for many of the intellectuals that this thesis analyzed in its first chapter, this heterogeneity was a good thing. The northern Europeans that were Alberdi and Sarmiento’s most desired immigrants in large part were not Catholic.²³⁷ But never before had so many non-Christians lived in Argentina, and their concentration was most visible on the streets of Buenos Aires. Of course, not all non-Catholics who immigrated to Argentina were Jewish. According to the country’s 1914 census, 0.8% of

²³⁵ For further information on the work of the JCA and other organizations in Argentina during the late nineteenth century, see the 2010 Brown University undergraduate honors thesis “Big Dreams Versus Small Actions: The Argentine Response to the Jewish Refugee Crisis in the 1930s” by Sophie R. Elsner.

²³⁶ Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 45.

²³⁷ Alberdi, “Bases y Puntos,” 252.

Argentina's population was from the Ottoman Empire, and 0.3% hailed from Germany.²³⁸ Many of these immigrants were no doubt Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, or Protestant. The largest and most visible non-Catholic immigrant community, however, was the Jews. One government source counts over 105,000 Jews in Argentina by the start of World War I.²³⁹ The Jewish community made up a healthy 1.3% of the country's population of 7.9 million.²⁴⁰

Jews did not, however, continue to receive a warm welcome in Buenos Aires. Their resistance to assimilation and their commitment to their religious practices drew the ire of members of the Generation of the Centenary. This process began as early as 1910. In *La Restauración Nacionalista*, which was published that year, Ricardo Rojas directs much of his displeasure with the state of Argentine society at the city's large immigrant communities, sometimes targeting Jews specifically. In his landmark work *Argentina and the Jews*, Haim Avni disputes the claim that *La Restauración Nacionalista* specifically targeted Jewish community schools. Instead, Avni contends that Rojas took aim at all immigrant schools equally: "the teaching of 'extra-Argentine' languages and religion in their schools was not basically different from the linguistic activities and anti-Argentine imperialism in the Italian, English, and German schools."²⁴¹ All of these community schools, in Avni's opinion, were preaching allegiances to their European homelands in opposition to assimilation into Argentine culture. A close reading of Rojas's work, however, seems to indicate otherwise. The Jewish schools in Buenos Aires, which generally were linked to a specific synagogue, were particularly menacing to him: "Jewish schools... instead serve a nomadic church and a theocratic family that is difficult to merge with

²³⁸ Devoto, *Historia de La Inmigración en la Argentina*, 305.

²³⁹ Feierstein, *Historia de los Judíos Argentinos*, 399.

²⁴⁰ Devoto, *Historia de la Inmigración en la Argentina*, 294.

²⁴¹ Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 88.

our family, Christian or secular, into a national homogeneity.”²⁴² In addition to representing a clear attack on specifically the Jewish community, this passage from *La Restauración Nacionalista* also employs what will become typical anti-Semitic canards. For centuries, Jews were viewed as suspicious for their alleged double loyalty: on the one hand, to their adoptive nation, but on the other, to their religion above all else. The “nomadic” Jew could never become fully Argentine due to this split allegiance. According to many anti-Semitic writers, including Ernest Renan, one of the inspirations for Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones, Jews were not even white, though their skin color may suggest so.

In analyzing *La Restauración Nacionalista* or any work by the Generation of the Centenary, it is important to note what Rojas and his compatriots considered the chief goal of the nationalist project and, in turn, what role the Argentine public education system ought to play in the completion of that project. Here, as in much of Rojas’s writings, the goal is to produce “a national homogeneity.”²⁴³ He is not necessarily exclusionary in his treatment of the Jews. Such sentiments will become more common later in the twentieth century. At this moment, on the eve of the centenary, he is merely assimilationist. If Jews are to become full-fledged Argentines, they must abandon a significant part of their personal identity.

Rojas’s assimilationist tendency is actually a legacy of the ideology of the Generation of 1837. He did not invent many of the policy points that make up *La Restauración Nacionalista*. Indeed, Sarmiento himself, despite his support for European immigration to Argentina, was concerned about these newcomers’ ability to integrate into Argentine society. As many intellectuals in the United States believed at this time, Sarmiento saw his country as a *crisol de razas* — a melting pot. Haim Avni argues that his passion for strong public education actually

²⁴² Rojas, *La Restauración Nacionalista*, 211-212.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

came from a desire to bring about “the disappearance of ethnicity by merging the immigrants and preventing them from achieving cultural-ethnic consolidation.”²⁴⁴ Even this liberal member of the Generation of 1837 harbored some xenophobic, and even racist, tendencies. The biggest change between the 1880s, when an elderly Sarmiento was warning against the insular practices of new Italian immigrant communities, and the years in which Rojas was writing *La Restauración Nacionalista* was the unique challenge that Jewish immigrants posed. Their religion and culture were that much more alien to Argentines. In this way, they did present the greatest threat to Rojas’s vision of his country’s future of any of the ethnic groups that now called Buenos Aires home. The Jews refused to be dissolved into any South American melting pot: “They were endogamic, they preserved their linguistic, religious, and cultural distinctiveness, and they were insistent on passing on their heritage to the younger generation.”²⁴⁵ The idea of the melting pot of Argentine society being under siege is nothing new in 1910. The target of intellectuals’ rage, however, is.

Unfortunately, Rojas’s occasional suspicion of Jews is rather benign compared to what followed the First World War. The cessation of hostilities in Europe meant that commodity markets returned to their peacetime states: demand for Argentine meat and wheat plummeted, sending shocks through the country’s economy. Along with this economic downturn came increased labor unrest at Buenos Aires’s industrial centers. In January 1919, the city’s striking metallurgical workers, whose union was run by anarcho-syndicalists, clashed with police in a scene that reminiscent of Red Week a decade earlier.²⁴⁶ On January 9, workers in the capital launched a general strike. Amidst these tensions, rumors of a communist conspiracy based in Montevideo, Uruguay that was poised to launch a revolution in Buenos Aires spread through the

²⁴⁴ Avni, *Argentina and the Jews*, 201.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Rock, *Argentina*, 202.

city. The only tip about this “maximalist plot:” a letter from a “*ruso*” to the Montevideo Chief of Police claiming to be aware of its existence.²⁴⁷ *Ruso* may literally mean Russian in English, but Argentines understood the coded message: Jews were plotting to bring down their capital. In the opinion of many *porteños*, they had open lines of communication to Vladimir Lenin’s Bolshevik forces in Russia and were carrying out an international conspiracy. On January 10th, the government’s soldiers moved in to restore order under the command of General Luis Dellepiane. Instead of providing some semblance of calm, however, Dellepiane’s decision to enter Buenos Aires gave cover for certain *porteños* to wreak havoc in Jewish and pro-union areas. The General provided weapons to these vigilantes, who destroyed massive amounts of Jewish property.²⁴⁸ What had begun as a demonstration for better labor conditions had devolved into a pogrom.²⁴⁹ The events of January 1919 would come to be known as *La Semana Trágica* — the Tragic Week.

In the aftermath of *La Semana Trágica*, multiple members of the Generation of the Centenary rushed to defend the actions of the rioters even while some distanced themselves from the targeting of Jews specifically. Ricardo Rojas, for one, denied that their motivations were anti-Semitic in nature. In an interview with the Jewish magazine *Vida Nuestra* (Our Life), he pointed out that those who were in the street “were crying: ‘The Russian! The Russian!’ Why? Because of a very simple association: this riot was a reaction against the alleged communist revolution, and Russia is the source of the fire... No one has said that anyone screamed ‘To the Jew! To the bastard Jew!’”²⁵⁰ Rojas feigns ignorance about the coded nature of calling someone Russian in Buenos Aires. Indeed, he had good reason to do so. One of the first groups in the streets on

²⁴⁷ Edgardo Bilsky, *La Semana Trágica* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: CEAL, 1984), 125.

²⁴⁸ McGee Deutsch, *The Argentine Right*, 38.

²⁴⁹ A pogrom is a term that refers to an organized attack on a specific community. It is most commonly used when discussing assaults on Jews.

²⁵⁰ Ricardo Rojas, “Encuesta de Vida Nuestra Sobre La Situación de Los Judíos En La Argentina,” *Vida Nuestra*, March 1919, 194.

January 10th was the National Youth Committee, an anti-government group formed to push Argentina to the allied side during World War I. Rojas was one of its leaders.²⁵¹ The group coordinated with the city's chief of police to "keep order."²⁵² Behind Rojas's supposedly benign interest in the Jews and their resiliency lay a clear allegiance to his country's conservative forces.

Rojas was not alone in this radicalization. By 1919, Leopoldo Lugones had grown fed up with the revolutionary left. The former avowed socialist no longer supported workers' rights. Now national unity was in danger thanks to "acts of rebellion, supported by... foreigners and Russian Bolshevism."²⁵³ He began to speak of the need to purify or cleanse Argentina of foreign influence. To him, the *Semana Trágica* was "a war fought by the nation against a foreign enemy."²⁵⁴ That enemy was the sea of immigrants who clogged the streets of Buenos Aires. Lugones quickly became a powerful spokesman for a burgeoning fascist movement. He and fellow extremists began to doubt the efficacy of liberal democracy. Instead, they called for a "'new order,' of which he saw the army as the architect."²⁵⁵ Argentina had opened its political system to all male citizens with the promulgation of the Sáenz Peña Law in 1912. Hipólito Yrigoyen of the UCR won the country's first free elections four years later. For many, however, the fruits of democracy had only been chaos. Labor unions had grown more powerful, disrupting what had been largely peaceful relations between workers and owners of capital before the twentieth century. Global crises had brought new fluctuations to the Argentine economy. In this context, it is easy to understand why people on the political right from the military, the Church, and the economic elites united in their quest to keep order. These nationalists, including many members of the Generation of the Centenary, did not feel any remorse for the pogrom that took

²⁵¹ Bilsky, "La Semana Trágica," 121.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Leopoldo Lugones, "Ante La Doble Amenaza," 1923.

²⁵⁴ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 71.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 72.

place during the *Semana Trágica*. Instead, they redoubled they efforts. In the 1920s, multiple paramilitary groups formed to, as the slogan of one urged, “safeguard order and national tradition.”²⁵⁶

The largest and most famous of these groups was *La Liga Patriótica* — The Patriotic League. Sandra McGee Deutsch’s book *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900-1932* is a very strong account of The Patriotic League’s influence on Argentina’s politics. One of the author’s most interesting findings is the extent to which the League’s members occupied the highest positions in the country’s society. They were so prominent, in fact, that the Yrigoyen government had no choice but to accommodate the paramilitary organization.²⁵⁷ By July 1919, “6 generals, 18 colonels, 32 lieutenant colonels, 50 majors, 212 captains, 300 lieutenants, and more than 400 sub-lieutenants” from the army alone were part of the League.²⁵⁸ The League was able to work closely with security forces in part because so many of its members were from the military or the Buenos Aires police. The group’s leaders were members of the prestigious Jockey Club and Rural Society, bastions of wealth tied to agriculture and exporting businesses.²⁵⁹ Joining them were prominent conservative writers like Carlos Ibarguren and Manuel Carlés, who would become the League’s president in 1921.²⁶⁰ The Patriotic League had become too large for President Yrigoyen to ignore. He gave the group free reign to roam the streets of Buenos Aires and crush organized labor.²⁶¹

Since McGee Deutsch has provided such a detailed history of The Patriotic League and similar paramilitary groups, it is more important in the context of this thesis to understand how

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 67.

²⁵⁷ McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina*, 102.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 100.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 102.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 61.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 113.

the Generation of the Centenary participated in these movements and influenced their formation. Though Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones did not take up explicit leadership positions in the League, their work was key to its ideological foundations. When the group held its first organizing meeting in May of 1920, it laid down a set of core principles that would guide its members' actions. They are very reminiscent of work that the Generation of the Centenary had been producing since their years working for *Ideas*. Their statement of purpose "defined *argentinidad* as conformity with the political and status quo. Anarchists, union members, socialists, and other dissidents did not fit the Liga's vision of an idyllic Argentine past blessed with social peace; hence, they were 'foreign.'"²⁶² The League would be *argentinidad*'s guardian against these subversive elements.

The same nostalgia that informs works like Gálvez's *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* and Rojas's *La Restauración Nacionalista* is clear from this manifesto. Before some tipping point date, Argentina was stable and prosperous. After that point, at least in the opinion of the leaders of the Patriotic League, chaos had hijacked the nation. What had changed from the country's idyllic past? European immigrants had flooded into Argentina. These foreigners had launched labor unions that had only brought the country strife. The creole was no longer the dominant ethnic type. Indeed, the 1920 statement of purpose constructs a dichotomy between "native" members of the League and their "alien" opponents.²⁶³ There is an implicit alliance between the "native" and "social peace." In the last issue of *Ideas*, Ricardo Rojas makes a similar argument to the one put forth by the League in his speech "The Country of the Forests." What made Santiago del Estero the "most characteristic region of the Republic" were its landscape and its history.²⁶⁴

²⁶² McGee Deutsch, *The Argentine Right*, 39-40.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶⁴ Rojas, "El País de las Selvas," 345

In both cases, the province oozes of native character: its woods hold the “spirit of the race.”²⁶⁵ The “armed centaurs” — the *gauchos* — gallop through the trees.²⁶⁶ The language that the Patriotic League uses in its statement of purpose is nothing new. Only its virulence has changed in the fifteen years since *Ideas* closed.

Rojas may have provided the foundation for the ideology of the Patriotic League, but Leopoldo Lugones participated far more directly in its transformation from a group of citizens concerned with preserving order in Argentina to a fascist paramilitary organization. He provided the bridge between these two phases first in a series of League-sponsored lectures in 1923 and then, more famously, the following year in “The Hour of the Sword.” In that speech, Lugones openly questions the value of liberal democracy. To him, “popular democracy [was] incorrigibly ‘demagogic.’”²⁶⁷ The only institution left that could protect Argentina was the army, as it was the only one that predated the liberal order of the nineteenth century. Anti-liberalism, however, was nothing new for Lugones and Rojas. Both had opposed the Sáenz Peña Law of 1912 that provided for universal male suffrage, the latter because it lacked a provision for a literacy test, the former because he was “an opponent of ‘mob rule.’”²⁶⁸ Beginning with “The Hour of the Sword,” Lugones took the Generation of the Centenary’s rejection of men like Sarmiento and Alberdi to new extremes. No longer would he even operate within the terms of debate that the Generation of 1837 set as Gálvez and Rojas often had done in their early works. Argentina’s entire system had to be destroyed for the nation to survive. Until his suicide in 1938, he would identify as a fascist and a fierce admirer of Benito Mussolini. He was an active participant in the Revolution of 1930 that brought down Hipólito Yrigoyen and replaced him with likeminded

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 344.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 347.

²⁶⁷ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 72.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 57.

General José Félix Uriburu. Lugones's move toward fascism alarmed even close friends like Gálvez, who once remarked "I have just spent an hour with [him] and came out with the sensation of having been with a viper."²⁶⁹ His wariness of Lugones is somewhat ironic given that, according to David Rock, "even before 1914, Gálvez was proposing that violence possessed a subliminal power to cleanse, mobilize, and unify and that targets for violence... could be utilized as the instruments to 'save the nation.'"²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the union of nationalism with violence was a new development in Argentina, and it would have a massive influence on the country's history in the decades to come.

Lugones was not alone in developing these ideological extremes during the 1920s. Two men in particular, the Irazusta brothers, Rodolfo and Julio, were also key supporters of Argentine fascism. Born in 1897 and 1899 respectively, they represent a slightly later generation of nationalists from the Generation of the Centenary, and this difference is clear in their ideology. Julio, for example, wrote for the nationalist publication *La Nueva República* — *The New Republic* — and considered himself both a "spiritualist" and an "anti-positivist."²⁷¹ *La Nueva República* made a point of eschewing electoral politics, instead preferring to work with opposition generals to foment the coup that eventually came in 1930. This explicit anti-liberalism placed its writers, including the younger Irazusta, to the right even of staunch clericalists like Gálvez. Rodolfo, the elder brother, had developed a relationship with the French writer Charles Maurras, the leader of the nationalist, anti-intellectual group Action Française and progenitor of many aspects of fascist thought.²⁷² Though the Irazustas departed from Lugones in their devotion

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 73.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 60.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 81.

²⁷² Ibid., 81-82.

to the Catholic Church, their ideology still represents the latter's importance to a younger group of nationalists who were even more prone to political extremism.

In 1930, the same year that the military ousted Yrigoyen, Lugones published *La Patria Fuerte* — *The Strong Fatherland* in English. It is a compilation of political speeches that he had given over the previous decade, including “The Hour of the Sword.” In the last of these works, “The Immortal Fatherland,” Lugones appeals to a citizenry that transcends any governmental structure: “what is certain and positive is that the people remain and principles change.”²⁷³ He builds on the nostalgia that Rojas laid out in speeches like “The Country of the Forests.” No matter what political ideology dominates the day, there is an essential nature of a people that is indomitable. Maintaining the fatherland, then, is more important than supporting any one political system. That is why a coup is necessary in 1930, at the time of *La Patria Fuerte*'s publication: “Once again in history, reality requires the amending of the excesses of ideology.”²⁷⁴ According to Lugones, the fatherland, like religion and love, is “one of those supreme entities” that can never be destroyed.²⁷⁵ Lugones dedicates much of the rest of *La Patria Fuerte* to the justification of military force in the name of the protection of the nation. His speeches have titles like “The Concept of Power,” “The Principle of Power,” and “The Dignity of Force.” It is clear that he is preparing his readers for the possibility of armed conflict. Though it would require some very loose readings of *Ideas* to divine the same sort of militarism as in Lugones's work, some of the concepts remain the same across the years. At some point, decades before the rise of the Generation of the Centenary, there was an authentic Argentine nation, a true expression of *argentinidad*. As Rojas put it in 1910, that sense required a “restoration.”²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Leopoldo Lugones, *La Patria Fuerte* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Círculo Militar, 1930), 125.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ As in the title of his famous book *La Restauración Nacionalista*.

Lugones has a very similar goal, though his faith in violence isolated him from even some of his fellow nationalists. The means of reconstructing *argentinidad* may have changed, but the ends have not.

The work of the Generation of the Centenary placed a great deal of importance on Catholicism as an essential aspect of national identity. Many members of the group saw fervent religious practice as a key to being a true citizen. As the dominant faith in Argentina, Catholicism became increasingly central to the homogenizing process that Gálvez and Rojas advocated for as the means through which the thousands of European immigrants in Buenos Aires and around the country could be welcome. Recall that in *La Restauración Nacionalista*, Rojas had argued that “Wealth and immigration have taken [from Argentina and, in particular, Buenos Aires] its ancient village homogeneity, but not to carry us to the organic heterogeneity that is the true job of social progress, rather, to return us to the original chaos.”²⁷⁷ In addition to a Hispanic ethnic background and an appreciation for the *gaucho*, Catholicism was a key part of this original condition that dates back to the colonial period. Indeed, it is likely that part of the reason that Rojas saw “‘Latin’ migrants as the most compatible with the Argentine ‘soul’” was their preexisting Catholic faith.²⁷⁸ In this way, even the early romantic articles of *Ideas* had a coded nature to them. When men like Rojas, Gálvez, and Martín A. Malharro appeal for a national art form, to what do they refer? According to Malharro, art “*must* be national, concrete, it must speak the language of the country and participate in its emotions, it must be a reflection of [these emotions].”²⁷⁹ As this thesis has shown, there have been many different understandings of what it means to “speak the language” of Argentina over time. The Generation of the Centenary simply added a requirement to the list of traits necessary to do so. In the words of

²⁷⁷ Rojas, *La Restauración Nacionalista*, 89.

²⁷⁸ Devoto, *Nacionalismo, Fascismo, y Tradicionalismo*, 58.

²⁷⁹ Malharro, “Pintura y Escultura,” 56-57.

Gálvez in *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, “religion, like language, is one of the essential foundations of our nationality.”²⁸⁰ From its earliest years, the Generation of the Centenary had been setting the stage for religion to become a key aspect of *argentinidad*, even if they were not explicitly advocating for this in their earliest works.

Manuel Gálvez in particular became preoccupied with the Catholic nature of his homeland, and his work helped launch a resurgence of the Argentine Church’s influence. Indeed, the religious sphere is the area in which he makes his most complete break with the liberals of the Generation of 1837. In works as early as *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, Gálvez had indicted Sarmiento and Alberdi for encouraging non-Catholic immigrants to come to Argentina.²⁸¹ In that book, he argued that “the individual who... practices a religion that is not Catholic introduces... a germ of spiritual disintegration.”²⁸² Not just non-Christian, but all non-Catholic religious practice was a threat to the nation. By 1931, he had fallen in line with some of the most common anti-Semitic stereotypes. In one column, he claimed the Jews were “conductors of communism.”²⁸³ In addition, Gálvez’s preference for residents of the interior provinces over *porteños* was based in part on their greater piety as well. Those people had a “contemplative aptitude” and a “spiritual depth” that their counterparts in the capital did not.²⁸⁴ As in the novel *Nacha Regules*, Buenos Aires is a godless pit in Gálvez’s mind. In his memoir, Gálvez reserves his most vehement attacks for the anti-clericalists with whom he associated during his earlier years.²⁸⁵ In this way, books like *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* laid the foundation for the work of even more militant Catholics like Miguel de Andrea and Manuel Carlés. De Andrea, a priest from Buenos Aires,

²⁸⁰ Gálvez, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, 67.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁸³ Loris Zanatta, *Del Estado Liberal a La Nación Católica. Iglesia Y Ejército En Los Orígenes Del Peronismo, 1930-1943* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial de la Universidad de Quilmes, 1996), 104.

²⁸⁴ Gálvez, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, 149.

²⁸⁵ Jefferson Rea Spell, “Review,” *Hispania* 29, no. 1 (February 1946): 153.

vigorously opposed complete democracy and Communism. Carlés became president of the paramilitary Patriotic League. Together, they would help move Argentina from, as historian Loris Zanatta has called it, a “liberal state” to “a Catholic Nation.”²⁸⁶

This increased focus on the relationship between Catholicism and citizenship further isolated Jewish immigrants to Argentina in particular. The emphasis on religiosity that some members of the Generation of the Centenary placed made the country even less hospitable to them. While other immigrants could be, in the words of historian Federico Finchelstein, “digested by the body of the nation,” Jews, the “ultimate others,” could not.²⁸⁷ Argentina’s melting pot could never dissolve them. In a column for the Jewish periodical *Mundo Israelita*—*The Jewish World*— on October 30, 1926, Ricardo Rojas cited Henry Ford’s anti-Semitic publication *The International Jew* as proof of his vast knowledge of the religion.²⁸⁸ Even while claiming to be attracted to Judaism’s unique characteristics, he utilizes tired anti-Semitic stereotypes to describe Jewish life in New York. Among the institutions to which Rojas links American Jews are the press, cinema, labor unions, and international banks.²⁸⁹ As fascism and anti-Semitism became more prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s, such statements became more socially acceptable.

Another member of the Generation of the Centenary, Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviría, better known by his pen name Hugo Wast, used this opportunity to launch the most vehement anti-Semitic attacks yet in Argentine literature. Born just a year after Rojas and Gálvez, he was a contemporary of both authors and distant cousin of the latter.²⁹⁰ Wast’s most famous work, the

²⁸⁶ Taken from the title of Zanatta’s book *Del Estado Liberal a Nación Católica: Iglesia y Ejército en los Orígenes del Peronismo, 1930-1943*.

²⁸⁷ Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 146.

²⁸⁸ Ricardo Rojas, “El Fenómeno Judío,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 30, 1926, 2.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹⁰ Spell, “Review,” 153.

twin 1935 books *Oro* and *El Kahal*, seem as if they had been cut from Nazi propaganda scripts.²⁹¹ Drawing on foreign anti-Semitic screeds like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Ford's *The International Jew*, Wast tells the story of a Jewish cabal that schemes to gain control of the world's major institutions: banks, governments, and media companies.²⁹² The daughter of the books' antagonist eventually converts to Christianity, redeeming her and making her morally pure. The books even depart from typical Catholic doctrine by excusing of the murder of Jews. Doing so was a matter of national security for Wast: "In all countries the call 'Death to the Jews!' was always synonymous with the cry 'Save the homeland!'"²⁹³ Both *Oro* and *El Kahal* were massive commercial successes: by 1955, the former had sold 104,000 copies, and the latter had sold 107,000 copies.²⁹⁴ Wast, who was already director of Argentina's National Library, would eventually become the country's Minister of Justice and Education. In 1943, he would reincorporate required religious instruction into public school curricula.²⁹⁵ Nor was Wast alone in his anti-Semitism. Julio Meinvielle, a Catholic priest, published *El Judío — The Jew* — in 1936. In this book, Meinvielle ties the stereotype of Jewish economic supremacy to a threat of impending religious supremacy over Christians:

Alongside the penetration of ideas which act against the Christian religion, against the state, and the Argentinean family, the Jews are responsible, too, for the dissemination of communism. The Jews are the secret agents of the theory that the harmony between the worker and his employer must be disrupted. They are robbing the country for one sole purpose: to poison the mind and destroy the heart of all genuine Christian believers.²⁹⁶

Yet again, extremists on the right are able to link Jews and Jewish immigration with threats to the Argentinian state. Meinvielle and Wast built a wall around *argentinidad* that no Jew would

²⁹¹ In English, their titles are *Gold* and *The Congregation*, respectively.

²⁹² Graciela Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews of Argentina, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 42.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 137.

²⁹⁶ Julio Meinvielle, *El Judío en el Misterio de la Historia*, 16, from Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, 51.

be able to scale; Catholicism was becoming a non-negotiable condition for true citizenship.

According to Roberto di Stéfano, a historian of Argentine Catholicism, it was in this period that the idea that “the Catholic religion represented the nucleus of the Argentine ‘nationality,’” that “it represented the most important of the unifying factors,” first gained widespread acceptance.²⁹⁷ Though the virulence of *Oro*, *El Kahal*, and *El Judío* may have been aberrations, the message behind the books — that Argentina was becoming a Catholic nation — was clear. The project of constructing a national person had replaced the project of constructing a national art that *Ideas* had so devoted itself to, but the ideological foundations remained the same. Before the rise of the Generation of the Centenary, there was no widespread exclusionary intellectual movement like there was after they became prominent.

Here again, however, the Generation of the Centenary does not provide historians with an ideological monolith to examine. Though Gálvez — and, to a lesser extent, Rojas — put a great deal of faith in the Church, Lugones remained a staunch anti-clericalist throughout his life. In the same issue of *Vida Nuestra* in which Rojas attempted to defend the rioters’ actions during *La Semana Trágica*, he instead denounced any attempts to target the Jewish community in Buenos Aires. At least one historian argues that this sympathy for the Jews stemmed not only from his anti-clericalism, but also from his close friendship with fellow member of the Generation of the Centenary Alberto Gerchunoff, himself a Jew.²⁹⁸ At least through the 1920s, the same decade in which he delivered militaristic speeches like “The Hour of the Sword,” Lugones was able to separate his fascism from anti-Semitism. He considered anti-Jewish ideology a “barbarous” outgrowth of the growing power of the Catholic Church.²⁹⁹ In spite of his fascist tendencies,

²⁹⁷ Di Stéfano, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina*, 403-404.

²⁹⁸ Huberman, *Gauchos and Foreigners*, 120.

²⁹⁹ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 75.

Lugones's politics were less preoccupied with questions of race and religion than were some of his counterparts, including Wast, Gálvez, and Rojas.

Just as the rise of the Generation of the Centenary would not have been possible without the preexisting (if very different) ideological framework that the liberals of nineteenth-century Argentina established, the rise of right-wing extremism and Catholic militarism in the 1920s and 1930s would never have taken place without the work of Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez, Leopoldo Lugones, and others in the prior two decades. The Patriotic League, for example, would never have formed outside of the intellectual context that these writers helped create. This is not to say that the Generation of the Centenary migrated into the public sphere and ignored cultural questions; their contributions to Argentine society did not focus solely on right-wing politics. Indeed, this is Jean Delaney's central argument in her article "Imagining 'El Ser Argentino': Cultural Nationalism and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina."³⁰⁰ One area in which the group broke sharply with earlier thinkers like Sarmiento that had little to do with day-to-day politics was in their esteem of the legendary *gaucho*. Though they were not the first to do so, the Generation of the Centenary made a special effort to celebrate him as the standard bearer of *argentinidad*. Though writers had been attempting to rehabilitate the *gaucho* since José Hernández published the epic poem *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* in 1872, readers in Buenos Aires remained skeptical of the figure's importance into the twentieth century.³⁰¹

It was not until Leopoldo Lugones published *El Payador* in 1916 that the *gaucho* began to take on the cultural significance that it possesses today. In it, the author proposed that the epic

³⁰⁰ Oscar Chamosa, *The Argentine Folklore Movement: Sugar Elites, Criollo Workers, and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism, 1900–1955*, 40.

³⁰¹ Jean Delaney, "Making Sense of Modernity: Changing Attitudes Towards the Immigrant and the Gaucho in Turn-of-the-Century Argentina," 445.

poem should serve as the very foundation of the national literary tradition that *Ideas* had sought to construct a decade prior. The *gaucho* had become “the hero and civilizer of the Pampa.”³⁰² Note yet again that Lugones uses the same terms of debate — civilization and barbarity — that the Generation of 1837 established half a century before he published a series of lectures he had given on Hernández’s epic poem in a book titled *El Payador*. Indeed, perhaps this accommodation of thinkers like Sarmiento and Echeverría is what allowed his “rescue of *Martín Fierro*” to be a success.³⁰³ When the already well-respected Lugones took to *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*’s defense, intellectuals reexamined Hernández’s work. The poverty in which the *gaucho* lived no longer symbolized the shameful chaos of the early days of Argentina’s existence. Instead, served as a rejection of the materialism Lugones and other members of the Generation of the Centenary saw running wild in Buenos Aires. Suddenly, the mixed-race child of the *gaucho* and indigenous women, the *mestizo* baby, was Argentina’s ethnic ideal.³⁰⁴ If the mixed-race children of the Pampa are to be symbols of national identity, then of course the new, phenotypically white Jewish immigrants from Europe are the racially inferior ones. Plenty of thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Ernest Renan, did not think of Jews as white. Hernández had flipped Sarmiento’s racial hierarchy from the nineteenth century. Without the success of *El Payador*, this change would not have won public acclaim.

The Generation of the Centenary also played a key part in another cultural movement of the early twentieth century: folklore. In many ways, the folklore movement in Argentina is a perfect microcosm of the changes that writers like Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones were able to effect in the country. The movement, the development of which Oscar Chamosa describes in great detail in his 2010 book *The Argentine Folklore Movement: Sugar Elites, Criollo Workers*,

³⁰² Leopoldo Lugones, *El Payador* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Otero & Co., 1916), 59.

³⁰³ Delaney, “Making Sense of Modernity,” 445.

³⁰⁴ Lugones, *El Payador*, 64-66.

and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism, 1900–1955, could never have begun without the nostalgia that members of the Generation of the Centenary so effectively articulated starting with their work for *Ideas*. Rojas’s speech “The Country of the Forest” overflows with references to various myths and local traditions that are central to folklore. These traditions, he says, are part of “the spirit of the race.”³⁰⁵ They were the cultural manifestation of the Eurindian civilization that he sought to create both in his home in Buenos Aires and in a namesake book. *Eurindia*, which Rojas published in 1924, five years before his home was finished, argues that Argentina ought to aspire to build a culture that represents a synthesis of American and European societies. This new culture should not be based on xenophobia. Instead, it would represent “a philosophical and artistic rebirth” by focusing on Argentina’s “autochthonous” features.³⁰⁶ What was more autochthonous than folklore? In addition to emphasizing Argentina’s native features, Rojas called for a marginalization of their foreign opposites. This included a rejection of the materialism that he saw growing in Buenos Aires. For him, the city had a higher spiritual calling: “it cannot be its destiny to be on the banks of the [Rio de la Plata] like a merchant ship with its Babel-like crew toiling only in the drudgery of steerage.”³⁰⁷ Instead of being a moral-less economic engine, Buenos Aires ought to have a spiritual link to the surrounding provinces.³⁰⁸ A “Eurindian” Argentina, then, could not exist without the folkloric traditions that he described nineteen years earlier in “The Country of the Forests.”

According to Chamosa, part of what attracted nationalists to folklore was the extent to which it represented a primordial, authentic version of *argentinidad*.³⁰⁹ Having a symbol like folklore available for their use was key to answering the question that all of Argentina’s

³⁰⁵ Rojas, “El País de las Selvas,” 344.

³⁰⁶ Ricardo Rojas, *Eurindia* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: J. Roldán & Co., 1924), 19.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Chamosa, *The Argentine Folklore Movement*, 48.

intellectuals have had to face: what did the country's residents have in common? What was their shared identity? Whereas liberals from the Generation of 1837 had sought to unify Argentina's diverse populace through "mutual respect and subordination to the Constitution," the Generation of the Centenary argued that people living within the country's borders "could be inducted into a unified Argentine culture."³¹⁰ *Eurindia* merely gave a name to that culture. This idea, however, predates 1924, when Rojas published that book. Gálvez's *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, Rojas's *La Restauración Nacionalista*, and Lugones's *La Patria Fuerte* all had the same goal as *Eurindia*. Though the road to this unification were different — education for the former and violence for the latter — the objective was the same. Folklore became a key part of this project.

When one has a solid understanding of the rise and ideology of the Generation of the Centenary from the first two decades of the 1900s, one can quickly spot its echoes throughout the upheavals that marked the fall of Hipólito Yrigoyen's Radical government and the rise of Argentina's first military regime in 1930. In some cases, the same actors became more politically extreme and incorporated new concepts into their ideologies. Leopoldo Lugones, for example, forsook the anarchism of his youth and became an ardent fascist who was sometimes too radical even for The Patriotic League. His embrace of violence as a means of effecting political change was a key ingredient in the Revolution of 1930. Manuel Gálvez linked the romantic nostalgia of *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* to an increasing commitment to Catholicism. Through these dramatic personal evolutions, however, each of these men carried with them a significant portion of the ideology they had helped develop in their youth. The nostalgia, ambition, and pride that filled the issues of *Ideas* is still on display in works like Lugones's "The Hour of the Sword" or Rojas's interview with *Vida Nuestra*. The fundamentals of the nationalism that birthed that magazine in 1903 had not changed in the decades that followed. Instead, the years after the First

³¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

World War saw the Generation of the Centenary's ideology mix with a society that was being battered by an increasing number of violent forces: communism, fascism, paramilitary groups, devout Catholics, and economic crises combined to force Lugones, Gálvez, and Rojas to evolve in the ways in which they did. Only then did Argentine society combust, culminating in Yrigoyen's ouster in 1930.

Conclusion: Nationalism and Contemporary Understandings of *Argentinidad*

Manuel Gálvez, Ricardo Rojas, Leopoldo Lugones, and other members of the Generation of the Centenary sought to answer questions that intellectuals of any nation must eventually confront: What does it mean to be from Argentina? What does it mean to be a citizen of the Argentine nation? What sort of country should Argentina look like? Books like *La Restauración Nacionalista*, *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga*, and *La Patria Fuerte*, along with the issues of *Ideas*, all sought to answer these questions. Nor were these questions novelties at the beginning of the twentieth century. When Juan Bautista Alberdi penned “Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic,” he hoped to answer them as well. Although Alberdi’s works may more literally examine what Argentina should look like than Gálvez’s, the overall project remains the same. Perhaps this continuity has to do with the extent to which members of the Generation of 1837 like Alberdi and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento left their footprint on Argentina. They were some of the country’s most important political *and* intellectual figures. To completely break from the terms of debate that they established would be near impossible, as the work of the Generation of the Centenary shows. Liberals like Sarmiento were not quite as enlightened as their reputation; nor were nationalists like Rojas as close-minded as their legacies may imply. *La Restauración Nacionalista* is not so dramatic a departure from *Facundo* as one may think at first glance.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Generation of the Centenary by itself on contemporary Argentina is massive. Nationalism has been a central theme, perhaps even a pathology, of Argentine politics. Since the presidency of Juan Domingo Perón, it has been one of the most important planks of the country’s policies. Perón reorganized the country’s unions into a

corporatist structure and nationalized foreign-owned industries, including the railroads.³¹¹ His five-year plan aimed to encourage the growth of domestic industry and wean the Argentine economy off the volatile global commodity markets. With the exception of the occasional neoliberal military regime, these nationalist policies largely remain in place. Exorbitant taxes on imported electronic goods make Argentina the most expensive country on Earth in which to buy an iPad.³¹² The country's current president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, renationalized YPF, the former state oil company, in 2012. She also engaged in an unsuccessful international legal battle with American holders of Argentina's sovereign debt over how to repay them.

This nationalism has infected the Argentine political psyche as much as it has infected the country's policies. One need not look any further than a map of the country produced there. Argentina's borders are not the same on many of them. In addition to its mainland territories, these maps include not only the Falkland Islands — disputed with Great Britain — but also a portion of Antarctica that overlaps with both British and Chilean claims to exploration on the continent and surrounding sea floor.³¹³ There is a major soccer stadium in Buenos Aires called *Estadio Islas Malvinas*, the Argentine name for the Falklands. There is also a major avenue in the city's Retiro neighborhood called *Avenida Antártida Argentina*. These territorial claims are, for many, an obsession. People from across the political spectrum wear wristbands that bear the phrase "*Las Malvinas Son Nuestras*" — "The Falklands are Ours." This is not to say that these policies and cultural quirks are the automatic consequence of the nationalist works of Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones alone. Nevertheless, the contrast between Peronist Argentina and Argentina

³¹¹ Rock, *Argentina*, 278.

³¹² Tom Wright, "Argentina Most Expensive Place to Buy iPad, Malaysia Cheapest," *Wall Street Journal*, September 23, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2013/09/23/argentina-most-expensive-place-to-buy-ipad-malaysia-cheapest/>.

³¹³ Owen Bowcott, "Argentina Ready to Challenge Britain's Antarctic Claims," *The Guardian*, October 18, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/oct/19/climatechange.fossilfuels>.

under the Roca's PAN is astounding. It transcends the modernizing developments of the decades that separate the two eras. The very fabric of the nation changed in the intervening period.

Other, nastier legacies of the Generation of the Centenary have persisted as well. Members of Argentine society resorted to violence countless times throughout the twentieth century in order to effect political change. There were five more military coups in the country after 1930: in 1943, 1955, 1962, 1966, and 1976. Nor was the Patriotic League the last major paramilitary group in Argentina's history. The Tacuara Nationalist Movement, a right-wing organization, attacked police officers and Jews in the 1950s and 1960s.³¹⁴ Under the regime of Isabel Perón, who replaced her late husband as president upon his death in 1974, her personal secretary José López Rega formed the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (Triple A) to hunt down members of left-wing armed groups, including the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the *Montoneros*. One cannot help but think of Lugones's "The Hour of the Sword" and the other speeches from *La Patria Fuerte* when looking at the agonizing history of armed conflict in twentieth-century Argentina. Although violence had long been part of the country's politics and culture — think of Rosas's Mazorca security forces, the reputation of the *gaucho*, or Roca's Conquest of the "Desert" in the 1800s — the Generation of 1837 had been successful in marginalizing this history. Only in the 1920s did Lugones revive it.

Anti-Semitism did not disappear from Argentina either. During Adolf Hitler's reign from 1933 to 1945, German cultural institutions there adopted Nazi ideologies and further fomented attacks against Jews. Right-wing newspapers like *Criterio*, *La Nueva República*, and *Clarín*, for which members of the Generation of the Centenary like Gálvez wrote, heightened their anti-Jewish rhetoric. During the National Reorganization Process that Argentina's last military dictatorship carried out, the government disproportionately targeted Jews for "disappearance."

³¹⁴ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 205-206.

Jacobo Timerman's popular memoir *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* delivers a vivid account of these atrocities. His interrogation opened with questions about his religious identity and his opinion of Zionism.³¹⁵ Just in the past year, the issue of the treatment of Jews in the country has received international attention. In the 21 years since the destruction of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires in a terrorist attack, Argentina's government has failed to bring those responsible for that act to justice. A prosecutor named Alberto Nisman, who was investigating a possible cover-up relating to the connection between the Kirchner administration and the Iranian government, the presumed sponsor of the bombing, was found dead just this January. Nisman's death has prompted international outcry as families of the 85 who died in the AMIA attack continue to search for justice.³¹⁶ Again, the Generation of the Centenary is by no means responsible for all instances of anti-Semitism in Argentina, but it was members of that group who first linked notions of *argentinidad* with Catholic religious identity. Anti-Jewish attitudes without a doubt intensified because of their ideology.

The Generation of the Centenary was not singlehandedly responsible for these dramatic changes in Argentine society, but their work provided much of the foundation for them. As early as 1903, when Gálvez founded *Ideas*, these writers were advocating for the construction of an Argentina that was ideologically, culturally, and ethnically distinct from not only its South American neighbors, but also its European overlords and trading partners. When Ricardo Rojas lambasted his fellow young writers who got lost in the allure of Paris or praised his home state of Santiago del Estero, he was redefining *argentinidad* as both a social and political term. Gálvez did the same in books like *El Diario de Gabriel Quiroga* and *Nacha Regules* when he painted a

³¹⁵ Anthony Lewis, "The Final Solution in Argentina," *New York Times*, May 10, 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/10/books/the-final-solution-in-argentina.html?pagewanted=all>.

³¹⁶ Karen Zraick, "The Mysterious Death of Alberto Nisman," *New York Times*, February 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/02/07/world/americas/argentina-alberto-nisman-case.html>.

picture of Buenos Aires as an amoral and overgrown metropolis. Lugones followed suit with the speeches that made up *El Payador*; the *gaucho* was to be Argentina's new symbol. Taken together, the work of the Generation of the Centenary starts to coalesce around a specific understanding of what it means to be Argentine. It includes Hispanic heritage, Catholic practice, appreciation for and roots in the country's environment, and single-minded patriotic fervor. This view of *argentinidad* became a weapon that paramilitary groups and anti-Semites wielded against their opponents with glee. The blacksmith, however, is not free from responsibility for the use of the sword he forges. The Generation of the Centenary provided the ideological fuel for movements that upended much of Argentina's politics and culture.

Indeed, the questions that these writers posed are still relevant today. *Argentinidad* has become part of the zeitgeist in Buenos Aires, permeating even popular music. In 2004, the prominent rock group Bersuit Vergarabat published a record titled *La Argentinidad al Palo*. The album's titular single reads like one five-minute joke about the darkest moments in the country's history. It alternates between references to mundane stereotypes of Argentine life — the obsession with *dulce de leche* and soccer, for example — and deadly serious moments like the dictatorship's cover-up of torture during the 1978 World Cup.³¹⁷ It describes the ethnic makeup of Argentina as a melting pot, in similar terms to Sarmiento and Rojas: "Neapolitans, Galicians, Jews, Creoles, Poles, Indians, Blacks, immigrants all, but with a French pedigree. We are in a place that is at once holy and profane, a mixture of high combustion."³¹⁸ It is clear that the concept of *crisol de razas* lives on. In what ought to be a testament to the resonance of the band's message, *La Argentinidad al Palo* won the Gardel Prize, Argentina's answer to the Grammy

³¹⁷ Bersuit Vergarabat, *La Argentinidad Al Palo*, 2004.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

Awards, for Best Album in 2005.³¹⁹ To this day, even humorous looks at the nature of *argentinidad* like Bersuit Vergarabat's song garner attention and praise.

Though I believe the importance of Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez, and Leopoldo Lugones to the politics and culture of the society in which they lived is evident, there is room for further research on these individuals and their compatriots in the Generation of the Centenary. For one, this thesis has chosen to focus disproportionately on the work of Rojas, mostly due to the relative difficulty with which primary sources about the lives and writings of Lugones and Gálvez could be obtained. The museum that now occupies Rojas's home houses a documentary archive that was essential to the construction of this thesis. Though Lugones has received significant attention as a literary figure by himself, Manuel Gálvez in particular deserves further study, as it was his magazine — *Ideas* — that was so central to the formation of this nationalist movement. In addition, I chose to spend less time on certain sources and authors that have already received sufficient treatment from historians. The right-wing periodicals *Clarín* and *La Nueva República*, for example, are central to the work of David Rock, particularly *Authoritarian Argentina*. Sandra McGee Deutsch devotes pages of her books to the lives of Manuel Carlés and Rodolfo and Julio Irazusta, but their ties to the Generation of the Centenary are more tenuous, so this thesis instead focuses on the people who developed the roots of their fascist ideology: Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones.

The impact of the Generation of the Centenary on Argentina is clear from this thesis. Why, then, is it so hard to find comprehensive studies of their origins and ideology? Perhaps there is a clue in the title of Nicolas Shumway's book, *The Invention of Argentina*. In general, scholars have divided the intellectual history of Argentina into two phases. In the first, liberals

³¹⁹ Información General, "Gardel de Oro," *La Nación*, April 14, 2005, <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/695990-gardel-de-oro>.

like Sarmiento, Mitre, and Alberdi attempted to rescue their country from the chaos of civil war. They crafted the country's first binding constitution and set it on the path toward prosperity. In the second, nationalists, including not only Gálvez, Rojas, and Lugones, but also Manuel Carlés, Carlos Ibarguren, and the Irazusta brothers, undid this liberal order. Argentina slid into a political and economic decline from which it did not fully escape until the fall of its last military dictatorship in 1983. There is no consensus about where the line of demarcation between these two eras lies — it could be in 1919, when *La Semana Trágica* took place, in 1930, when the Yrigoyen government fell, or in 1903, when *Ideas* was formed — but the narrative is essentially the same. First, Argentina was invented. Then, it was somehow undone. The country regressed. In artificially splitting the intellectual history of Argentina into these two phases, however, historians have left the Generation of the Centenary in limbo. As either the very earliest players in the second phase or the rumblings of a rebuttal to the first, they become more of an intellectual interlude than actors in and of themselves. Their chronological position also makes writers like Rojas, Gálvez, and Lugones occasionally difficult to categorize. Yes, they certainly are nationalists, and some of them even became fascists when they were older. They came of age, however, in an era in which the liberal paradigm was still hegemonic, so they often operated within the constraints of this preexisting order. Thus, only by constructing a history that stretches from the Rosas regime in the 1830s to the fall of Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1930, as this thesis has attempted to do, can one fully comprehend the importance of the Generation of the Centenary.

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