

## Confronting Discursive Hegemony: The Problematization of Argentine Cultural Identity in *Los suicidas del fin del mundo* (2005), by Leila Guerriero, and *Viajera crónica* (2011), by Hebe Uhart

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents a joint study of two volumes of contemporary Argentine *crónicas*: *Los suicidas del fin del mundo* (2005), by Leila Guerriero, and *Viajera crónica* (2011), by Hebe Uhart. It argues that both authors adopt a “political commitment” (Caparrós 2008) by challenging the homogenizing hegemonic discourses about Argentine cultural identity through a dialogic narrative (Bakhtin 1986) which problematizes its complexities and contrasts, exposing the tensions between centers and peripheries. Overall, it examines how these books contest dominant perspectives by depicting socio-political dynamics (Guerriero) and linguistic practices (Uhart) utilizing three intertwined types of discourse: a) the chronicler’s gaze and first hand observations, b) written documented sources, and c) people’s testimonies recovered from real life interactions.

**KEYWORDS:** Guerriero – Uhart – crónica – Argentina – cultural identity – center and periphery.

Despite their apparent dissimilarity, based primarily on contrasting writing styles and different approaches to the genre, *Los suicidas del fin del mundo* (2005), by Leila Guerriero, and *Viajera crónica* (2011), by Hebe Uhart, share a conception of travel writing as a form of deep engagement with cultural identity. This paper analyses the way in which these volumes of contemporary *crónicas* retrieve, discuss and portray Argentina’s heterogeneous cultural identity through the depiction of socio-political issues and linguistic features of the country. Moreover, it argues that the authors adopt the political commitment (Caparrós 2008) of challenging the totalizing and unifying hegemonic discourses about Argentine cultural identity through a dialogic narrative (Bakhtin 1986) which problematizes its complexities and contrasts.

In “Contra los cronistas” (2008), Argentine chronicler Martín Caparrós criticizes mainstream journalism that seeks the spotlight, conceiving the *crónica* as a counter hegemonic practice that turns the writer into a politically involved subject:

Yo creo que vale la pena escribir crónicas para cambiar el foco y la manera de lo que se considera «información» (...) Frente a la ideología de los medios, (...) portadores de «la realidad», relato irrefutable (...) Frente a la aceptación general de tantas verdades generales (...) Frente al anquilosamiento de un lenguaje (...), la crónica que a mí me interesa se equivoca buscando formas nuevas de decir, distintas de decir, críticas de decir –y eso se me hace tan político (61).

Picking up on this reflection, Uhart’s and Guerriero’s *crónicas* can be interpreted not only as political stances in the sense that Caparrós proposes, but as “act[s] of intervention” (Bernabé 13) in which “la escritura entra en conflicto con la metafísica de la totalidad apostando a una dialéctica que descompone la narrativa” (10) in different viewpoints. This discursive diversity can be productively explored in light of Mijail Bakhtin’s theory of speech genres. The Russian critic argues that every area of human activity develops its own relatively stable types of utterances, expressing that “special emphasis should be placed on the extreme *heterogeneity* of speech genres” (60; original italicized).

In line with Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to verbal interactions, the abovementioned *crónicas* contest dominant perspectives by depicting socio-political and linguistic practices through three intertwined types of discourse: a) the chronicler’s gaze and first hand observations showing her interests and personal judgement; b) written sources from local newspapers, historical documents, or books quoted directly from their source; and c) oral testimonies recovered from real life interactions with locals. In Bakhtin’s terms, “any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (60), and is, therefore, “articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways. Various viewpoints, world views and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it” (94). By contesting the unidirectionality of hegemonic speech trends such as mainstream newspapers and audio-visual media, government propaganda, or scholarly definitions –often presented as neutral objectivity–,

this plurality of discourses becomes a productive way of exploring Argentina's cultural identity and its constitutive contrasts, exposing the tensions between centers and peripheries.

*Los suicidas del fin del mundo's* narrative is situated around a wave of suicides occurring between 1997 and 1999 in the small Patagonian village of Las Heras, province of Santa Cruz. The *crónica* focuses on the circumstances of the deaths while portraying everyday life in the small town. Moreover, intertwining the stories of the victims with the more general context of society and its institutions, Guerriero explores socio-political features of Argentina's cultural identity. The chronicler's interest in these aspects is explicit from the beginning. In the first chapter, she presents the village's history, describing the impact that the arrival of the national oil company, YPF (*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*), in the 60's had on the configuration of families in Las Heras. Likewise, she highlights the emergence of recurring pickets in the 90's following the company's privatization and subsequent financial crises.

On her way to Las Heras, Guerriero hears one of the passengers on the bus say that there are rumors about a highway blockage due to protests. The chronicler observes that "Aunque no trascendieran, los cortes, las tomas, los piquetes eran habituales en Las Heras" (Guerriero 22), accounting for a social phenomenon that she returns to several times in the *crónica*. The importance she gives to these manifestations can be linked to the national context. She visits Las Heras in 2002, right after the 2001 economic crisis in which social movements like *piqueteros*<sup>2</sup> emerged. Thus, the situation of local YPF workers protesting is reflective of the hundreds of thousands of citizens who lost their savings and jobs and took to the streets to claim for their rights.

This context of social crisis, derived from a general disapproval of the political class, is also closely related to local politics. In Las Heras,

Era intendente, desde 1999, José Luís Martinelli, un hombre de la Alianza que el 23 de marzo de 2002, en esa provincia gobernada por el justicialista Néstor Kirchner, se había hecho eco del reclamo de los desocupados del petróleo (...) acusando a la empresa de no emplear mano de obra local (Guerriero 21).

While the claim in Buenos Aires was "que se vayan todos"<sup>3</sup>, the chronicler describes how the mayor of Las Heras joins the unemployed in their protests against YPF. This difference, that emphasizes a contrast between center and periphery, also links local politics to the national rivalry between *radicales*<sup>4</sup> and *peronistas*<sup>5</sup>. The mayor's attitude can be explained as a symbolic rebellion against the provincial government led by Peronist, and soon to be president (2003-2007), Néstor Kirchner. As Guerriero points out, "En Las Heras existe un universo radical y otro peronista y esa división del mundo pasa de generación en generación. Peronistas y radicales no suelen ser amigos, salir juntos, mezclar familia" (51). This observa-

tion is particularly relevant as it underlines two features at the core of Argentine politics: the tendency of antagonizing political ideologies, and the "hereditary" nature of political polarization, which, in the case of Peronism and anti-Peronist parties, has endured for over 70 years.

Highlighting the presence of social movements in Las Heras, and the dynamics of local politics at the time, Guerriero's *crónica* connects to the broader context of Argentina, depicting a relevant moment in history that is generally condensed into the image of 2001's *cacerolazos*. These popular protests, in which people went out to the streets banging on pots and pans, became part of the Argentine cultural imaginary as a symbol of social resistance and rejection to political corruption. In this sense, the chronicler's choice to emphasize *piqueteros'* presence and politicians' actions suggests a close subjective identification of her own experience as an Argentine with the historical events occurring at the time.

This "Argentine cosmovision" is also explicitly expressed during her visit to one of Las Heras' most famous brothels, known by the name of "Via Libre". Before arriving to conduct an interview with the owner, the chronicler makes the following observation:

Eran las dos de la mañana. Al otro lado de la calle estaban las vías muertas y, unos cien metros más allá, el cementerio. La argentinidad, pensé, es muchas cosas, pero sobre todo ese gusto por poner las cosas del coger y del morir tan cerca la una de la otra. Aquí se coge, aquí se muere, y en el medio la vida, aunque allí estaba –y ya no está– el ferrocarril (Guerriero 159-160).

According to Guerriero, a sense of "Argentinity" is evoked in the encounter between *eros* and *thanatos*, represented by the physical spaces of the brothel and the cemetery, which are mediated by the line of life metaphorically expressed through the image of the train tracks. Moreover, the absence of the train traces the reader back to the country's socio-political and historical context, referring to the dismantled national railroad system. This image that the chronicler chooses to highlight serves, once again, as a symbol not only of Argentina's economic expansion and subsequent destruction across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also as a reminder of the unfulfilled promise of a developed nation, of the social trauma and sense of anomie and disintegration caused by the missing train connections.

Although Guerriero's gaze accounts for many of the interventions throughout the book, a different approach is seen when talking specifically about the suicides. Instead of presenting her subjectivity, the chronicler draws on both written sources and first hand testimonies in an attempt to shed some light on the matter. She quotes many articles from *La Ciudad* magazine in which people's lives and the circumstances surrounding their suicides are detailed, but also more general information related to those shocking deaths, such as a report describing the "*Programa de Jóvenes Negociadores*" that was implemented to address the problem (Guerriero

23). However, apart from these scattered mentions, Las Heras has no official records and, therefore, no meaningful acknowledgement of the suicides.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the problem is underestimated and treated as if it lacked importance reflects another cultural feature, in this case, a delayed response imbedded in Argentina's institutional system, where bureaucracy and standard procedures tend to be systematically defective or carried out with serious deficiencies, and even corruption.

Consequently, the invisibility of the suicides can only be reversed by people's testimonies. That is why Guerriero privileges the word of family and friends who knew the victims, giving them the opportunity to tell their own version of the events. These interactions, apart from contributing details related to the suicides, share similar narrative patterns which reveal a deterioration of the social fabric in Las Heras. During the conversations, teenage pregnancy, physical and psychological abuse, absence of parental figures, violent feuds, lack of communication, and traumatic divorce are only some of the issues that repeatedly emerge in the dynamics of these "*familias ortopédicas*" (Guerriero 19). One of the young women she interviews confesses "tengo un nene yo. Me quedé embarazada a los 13. De un ypefiano. Imagínate. Cuando le dije a mi vieja que era de un ypefiano gritó '¡La lotería!'" (Guerriero 110). This mother's reaction to her daughter's pregnancy also shows the social inequalities that surround Las Heras, creating a distinction between people who work for YPF, and those who don't benefit from the oil company. The extreme difference between these two social groups, brought up by the chronicler during an extensive reflection about the apparent exemplarity of the "*ypefianos*" and their families<sup>7</sup>, is connected to a nationwide pattern that becomes even clearer in Buenos Aires, where the structural poverty of *villas miseria*<sup>8</sup> coexists with the richest neighborhoods only meters away from each other.

The repeated mention of the country's capital throughout the *crónica* shows that Las Heras' local inequality is part of a broader system that perpetuates difference between center (Ciudad de Buenos Aires) and periphery (the rest of the national territory). When interviewing one of the families, a local named José points out that "Acá la Patagonia es lo último que hay. Los porteños no nos dan ni bolilla. (...) con lo que hay acá se podría mantener la provincia entera. En cambio, las cosas de acá se las llevan ustedes a Buenos Aires" (Guerriero 34). Likewise, another resident of Las Heras, in an exchange with the chronicler, reinforces José's statement: "Si Buenos Aires tiene luz, es porque se fabrica acá. Si tienen gas, es porque lo hacemos acá. (...) Ojalá la Patagonia fuera un país aparte (...) No habría que repartir nada" (Guerriero 71). Even the *piqueteros* highlight the vast differences between Buenos Aires and the South, as well as the national scope of the center/periphery division: "En Buenos Aires a nadie le importa nada de nosotros. (...) A los porteños no les importa nada de lo que pasa en el resto del país" (Guerriero 161). These testimonies evoke an old dispute that stretches back to the times of the Argentine Confederation (1831 – 1852), when the strategic location of the port of Buenos Aires, and the consequent

prevalence of this territory among other provinces, created a major quarrel between two political factions, the "unitarians" (*porteños*) and the "federalists" (*provincianos*), which is still being discussed today in economic and symbolic terms.<sup>9</sup>

Focusing the narrative on the social injustices in Las Heras, as well as on the circumstances and (lack of) consequences around the suicides, becomes a way of exploring subjacent problems of contemporary Argentina. These aspects take part in a complex projecting mechanism which turns suicides, and the frustration generated by local conflicts, into a synecdoche of the broader context of Argentina's socio-political situation. Thus, this *crónica* can be interpreted as a documentary narrative that discusses and questions core aspects of the fabric that shapes Argentina's cultural identity.

While Guerriero focuses on socio-political issues, Uhart dedicates the first of two sections of *Viajera crónica* to a selection of texts set in Argentina, paying special attention to local uses of language, as well as to linguistic features that are typical to the places she visits. These *crónicas* depict the locals' speech and naming patterns, highlighting not only the way in which language shapes their identity as a community, but also the complexities of a multidirectional process in which the contrastive relations between center and periphery become visible. In line with Guerriero's writing, Uhart combines her own subjective appreciations with written documents and oral testimonies, intertwining the three types of discourse to confront the idea of an homogeneous, linear and conflictless cultural panorama from a language usage perspective.

In "Todo puede suceder", while visiting the city of Esquel, Province of Chubut, the chronicler points out that "en las ciudades chicas, dicen 'para arriba' y 'para abajo', 'para afuera' y 'para adentro'. Adentro y arriba vienen a ser el centro. El centro tiene una virtud fundacional, fija" (Uhart 83). This observation of divergence from the *rioplatense* Spanish highlights the locals' conception of their surrounding space through a specific usage of words that contrasts that of Buenos Aires. Thus, Uhart shows how semantics account in part for the cultural identity of the place. Nevertheless, the fact that this difference is acknowledged as such also shows her own position as an outsider. This double dimension is reinforced in "A orillas del Paraná", where Uhart states that

todavía es pueblo Victoria, llamada la ciudad de las siete colinas: es pueblo en las expresiones de sus habitantes. Por ejemplo, no dicen 'camine siete cuadras y doble a la derecha'. Dicen 'sube para allá' o 'baja'. Subir es siempre ir al centro y bajar es ir hacia la periferia (Uhart 7).

Like in the previous fragment, linguistic expressions are perceived as manifestations of locality. But the statement made by the chronicler, who contradicts Victoria's official status as a city based on people's uses of language, also reveals the source of her views. The generalization she makes by pointing out the ways in which people speak in *pueblos*, is ultimately based on her own cultural back-

ground, situating her linguistic identity within Buenos Aires' speech patterns. Hence, the chronicler depicts the dynamics that underlie the relationship between center and periphery in terms of language usage.

"Gente que pinta y canta", a *crónica* set in El Bolsón, a small town in the province of Río Negro, also provides a good example of how the chronicler interprets the relation between language, local cultural cosmologies, and hegemonic positions:

En la feria no dicen 'mirá', dicen 'olé'. Nunca se me ocurrió que fuera tan importante oler, pero se ve que no es sólo una categoría de la feria. En un café del centro, Cecilia, urbana, elegante, vendedora de jubilación privada en Bariloche y granjera en El Bolsón, dice: Buenos Aires huele mal, está 'beschoso'. ¿Y eso qué es? 'Apeestado' (Uhart 91).

Here, the importance given either to the sense of sight or smell is what demarcates the division between central and peripheral positions, although the limits between them are often blurred. Cecilia comes from Bariloche, one of Argentina's popular vacation spots located in the province of Río Negro, but she identifies herself as part of the periphery in relation to Buenos Aires by emphasizing—as a local from El Bolsón's street market would do—how Argentina's capital "smells", instead of "what it looks like". Likewise, the chronicler notes an appropriation of the capital's lexicon by the local people: "Y se han mezclado los lenguajes, se puede escuchar a un paisano diciendo 'Me re-copa' o 'Es re-alucinante'" (Uhart 91). This mixture of languages further problematizes the heterogeneity and interchangeability of linguistic registers, accounting for a non-linear process crossing language and identity.

Uhart's personal interest in local *refranes* y *dichos criollos* ("proverbs and local sayings") is also a significant way of addressing language and its importance as a repository of cultural identity. This is referred to throughout many of the *crónicas*, even becoming the motivation for Uhart's travel to the village of Tapalqué, "una zona que engendra refranes propios, [que se] van repitiendo y modificando constantemente" (Uhart 67). Although they are originally born as oral utterances, many authors compile them in books that the chronicler is interested in acquiring. In "No pudo ser", she buys local author Ramón Rafel Capdevila's volume containing *dichos* y *refranes criollos* from Tapalqué, which becomes a crucial primary source structuring the narration. Reading Capdevila's book, she follows up on the different meanings conveyed by *refranes* and *dichos*, analyzing their cultural significance as indexes of popular wisdom, everyday situations, and people's character, including their virtues and defects. Therefore, this recollection of sayings presents the reader with a depiction of Tapalqué's cultural memory through a written testimony of its inhabitants long-living popular linguistic expressions.

However, what this documented source portrays as a typical

cultural feature from Tapalqué is challenged by villagers responses to the chronicler's questions and comments about *refranes*. Right after arriving to the village, she meets Beto, one of the locals, who reacts reluctantly when she shares her motivation for being there: "-A mí me dijeron que este era un pueblo que engendra refranes propios, criollos, que son de lo más ocurrentes. El hombre me dijo: -El que le dijo eso estaba mamado" [ebrio, alcoholizado] (Uhart 68). Furthermore, she faces a similar reaction when talking to her hostess, Lola: "Le pregunto si conoce a alguien que practique el arte del refrán. Me dijo: -¿Qué es un refrán?" (Uhart 69). Both Beto's and Lola's lack of engagement with what is at first glance presented as a traditional feature of the village problematizes the notion of cultural identity. This divergence also portrays the dialectic contrast between past and present. If Capdevila's book, published in 1955, presents *dichos* and *refranes* as cores of the local culture, the testimonies from the locals living there in the 21st century seem to dispute this vision. Thus, Uhart's *crónica* unveils the complexities and tensions of the notion of cultural tradition using both historical sources and people's first hand testimonies.

"La tierra Formosa" also contributes to linguistic exploration, focusing on people's first-hand accounts. In this *crónica*, the locals' identity is shaped both by native languages and Spanish. When she arrives to the city, the chronicler experiences the communicational difficulties that the coexistence of both linguistic backgrounds can bring: "A mi lado, dos señoras hablan en guaraní y se ríen mucho. -No entiendo nada -digo. -Mejor -me dicen-. Es muy grosero" (Uhart 29). This exchange accounts for a (dis)encounter which is addressed in more depth when she visits the National University and reads a letter written by Wichi students attending the institution: "Durante los primeros días de clase, nos sentíamos atemorizados por la enseñanza de un nivel muy diferente del acostumbrado por nosotros. Aún nos cuesta comprender muchas cosas" (Uhart 35). Despite these difficulties, cultural mediation through education and linguistic exchange appears as an important factor in Uhart's account of the villagers thoughts on this matter. The Chair of the University's Literature Department points out how the students addressed the linguistic challenges that emerged from the encounter of a "creole" based educational system with the native Toba and Wichi students:

Al principio fallábamos, porque como la cosmología de ellos es diferente, no lográbamos resultados. Recurrimos a un antropólogo y mejoró la cosa. (...) a los que hicieron el secundario en escuelas de modalidad aborigen les costaba comprender, por ejemplo, 'El árbol está en el jardín', porque para ellos el árbol corresponde al bosque (Uhart 34).

Likewise, a local woman recounts her and her daughter's experience working as facilitators: "Yo me capacité para hacer mediación, por ejemplo, para acompañar a los ancianos que no saben castellano a la capital, a hacer todo tipo de trámites. Mi hija es maestra

especial de modalidad aborigen”(Uhart 32).

These fragments are especially relevant to analyze the dynamics of a heterogeneous culture, not only for the community members, but also for the chronicler as an observer who aims to explore and understand this setting. Both the community and the chronicler are situated within the larger Argentine cultural context in which indigenous peoples and European descendants are all part of a common nation, and, therefore, are usually assumed to share a sense of identity despite their differences. In this sense, the chronicler positions herself as an ethnographer who observes life in the community, privileging the study of language and valuing discourse practices *in situ*. A parallel between the figure of the anthropologist, mentioned by the Literature Department’s professor, and the chronicler herself can be drawn as she assumes the role of a cultural mediator between the local communities and her readers, providing the latter with first hand testimonies that account for the contradictions of a plurilinguistic and multicultural context.

Finally, Uhart’s interest in recording people’s language is particularly relevant in “Córdoba”. In this *crónica*, she equally combines her own views with written sources and socially situated utterances to portray the Argentine province of Córdoba’s local humor, its particular dialect, and the different forms in which it is manifested: “El humor cordobés se expresa en el lenguaje callejero, en el que aparece la réplica recurrente, en los graffitis, en los piropos (...) chistes (...) Los apodos también son graciosos” (21). Referring to the *humor cordobés* as “language of the streets”, the chronicler highlights its importance as a source of living speech which combines both sharpness and cruelty. She also appeals to an authorized source from a local newspaper to characterize this humor as a cultural device that reflects Córdoba’s colonial past: “Según Carlos Shilling, escritor y periodista de *La voz del interior*, el humor cordobés es propio de vasallos: agresivo con los defectos ajenos y des-

calificador de conductas que se aparten del orden establecido” (21). According to the journalist, the power of *cordobés* humor lays in its corrosive nature, which is manifested through nicknames, jokes and wordplay that are orally transmitted. Likewise, the living testimony of people’s speech can also be found in the written language of the streets: the graffiti. The fact that the chronicler mentions and transcribes many of them in several of her texts underlines their significance as a manifestation of language’s permanent and ephemeral dimensions, reinforcing Uhart’s *crónicas* as valuable sources for depicting complex national cultural features.

This critical discursive analysis of *Los suicidas del fin del mundo* and *Viajera crónica* highlights their importance as valuable cultural documents. Despite their differences of scope and style, both volumes contribute to the broader discussion of Argentina’s hybrid cultural identity through presentations of socio-political issues and uses of language. Drawing upon literary and journalistic strategies, their writing enacts a political response to hegemonic narratives, displaying intertwined discourses which offer different views towards the problematization of an integrated national culture. The chronicler’s observations, alongside documented sources and first hand testimonies from the people, build a narrative based on multiple perspectives which are both contrasting and complementary, showing the complexities of cultural discourses and their circulation. In the same way, the volumes identify and question the tensions between center and periphery, both in symbolic and geographical terms, as a characteristic of Argentina’s cultural core. Overall, the two books become narrative tools to outline multiple threads of a heterogeneous culture, simultaneously discussing and confronting the past, engaging with the present, and projecting towards the future.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I use the term in Spanish to preserve its historical value, semantic density, and critical complexity in the context of Latin America. See Rotker (1992), Jaramillo Agudello (2012) and Darrigrandi (2013) for further discussion on this issue. About the genre and travel writing as a way of deep engagement with socio-political contexts see Forace (2007), and Angulo (2017), who specifically addresses the role of female contemporary journalists and chroniclers.

<sup>2</sup> “The *piquetero* movement gained national and international attention during Argentina’s economic collapse in December 2001, which removed the country from its position as one of the most stable and prosperous in Latin America. Angered over the government’s perceived mishandling of the country and its economy, thousands took to the streets in protests that brought together Argentines from nearly all socioeconomic sectors. (...) Without the support of traditional unions, or workplaces in which to strike, Argentina’s unemployed had to seek another way to express their discontent. Recognizing the power of disrupting commerce to gain the attention of government officials, those itching for change took to the

streets, employing a tactic called *corte de ruta* or *piquete* in which protestors impede the movement of traffic and merchandise on provincial, national or international routes by cutting off access to thoroughfares. Here originated the name *piquetero* to refer to these protestors, and the *corte de ruta* soon became a recognized form of collective action.” (Birss 2005).

<sup>3</sup> As Dinerstein 2003 describes in her article on Argentine movements of resistance and political reinvention in the dawn of the 21st century, “In December 2001, Argentina experienced a decisive crisis. A financial collapse accelerated by the massive flight of capital and the IMF denial of a new loan was followed by a popular insurrection which, by putting forward the slogan ¡que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo! [All of them out, not even one of them must remain] forced the resignation of national authorities” (187).

<sup>4</sup> “The Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), usually known as the Radical Party, is the oldest national political party in Argentina and one of the two parties that have dominated Argentine politics during the twentieth century.

Founded in 1891 to confront the Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN), a coalition that had controlled Argentine politics since 1880, the UCR won its first presidential election in 1916, ending thirty-years of continuous PAN political predominance. During its early years the Radical Party was led by Leandro Alem and fought the PAN with all methods available –words, votes, and guns– becoming the country's more destabilizing opposition force. After Alem's death in 1896, the party entered into rapid decline and by the turn of the century had disbanded. Hipólito Yrigoyen, Alem's nephew, began the reconstruction of the party in 1903, building on the ruins of the old political organization and winning the presidency in 1916 (...) Traditionally, historians have divided turn-of-the-century Argentina into two periods: 1880 to 1916, when the country was under the restrictively democratic PAN regime; and 1916-1930, when the Radical Party came to power, inaugurating a democratic period under universal suffrage with secret and compulsory voting – an era put to an end by the first military coup the country experienced in the twentieth century" (Alonso 1-2).

<sup>5</sup> "The phenomenon of Peronism is closely related to the person of Juan Domingo Perón [(1895 – 1974); president of Argentina during three periods (1946-1952; 1952-1955; 1973-1974)], an army officer who broke into the Argentine political scene in the 1940s as an influential figure of the military regime that had been established on June 4, 1943. (...) Perón's government inaugurated a new era in Argentine history characterized by the full incorporation of popular sectors into public life. Particularly during the first administration, the government promoted a strategy of economic growth and full employment based on a process of income redistribution via wage increases. This also included industry promotion by stimulating consumption and the expansion of the domestic market, the provision of subsidies and credit, and the addition of protectionist tariffs. Throughout Perón's two administrations, trade unions were strengthened under a corporatist scheme of state supervision and the working class' share of the national income rose dramatically (...). Peronism also played a crucial symbolic role via the politics of recognition (*dignificación*) of popular sectors that resulted in the democratization of everyday life interactions, such as

those in the workplace and public spaces, as well as the democratization of consumption patterns and leisure activities" (Peruzzotti 5-6).

<sup>6</sup> Like the chronicler emphasizes, without sparing sarcasm, "El hospital no tenía registro (las muertes no se catalogaban como 'suicidio'); el Registro Civil no tenía registro (los libros, decían, se envían una vez por año a Río Gallegos); la policía no tenía registro (la policía no tenía registro); el Municipio no tenía registro (el municipio, decía, no tenía por qué)" (Guerriero 83-84).

<sup>7</sup> "nadie lo dice en voz alta, pero hay 'ypefianos' y el resto del mundo y los 'ypefianos' comen en restaurantes como esos, viven en un barrio especial en casas especiales, tienen autos especiales y conservan el esquema familiar más tradicional que imaginar se pueda: esposa ama de casa, esposo que trabaja, hijos al colegio. Sus hijas no quedan embarazadas a los 12 años, los maridos no destrozan a golpes a sus esposas, sus hijos de 15 no se inyectan vino tinto. Los demás -el resto del mundo- tienen poco de algunas de esas cosas, demasiado de otras, y las dos partes se miran con bastante rencor y no poco desprecio" (Guerriero 108).

<sup>8</sup> This term, first adopted by Bernardo Verbitsky in his novel *Villa Miseria también es América* (1957) ("Villa Miseria is also [a part of] the Americas"), refers to marginal urban shanty towns or slums that can be found across Argentina, particularly in Buenos Aires. They are also euphemistically known as *asentamientos* ("settlements") or *villas de emergencia* ("emergency villages").

<sup>9</sup> "The *porteños* (people of the port city of Buenos Aires) were the chief advocates of centralism, which in effect meant control of the country by Buenos Aires, where the chief source of revenue, the customhouse, was located. They were opposed to, and by, many *provincianos* (Argentines outside of Buenos Aires provincia), whose gaucho armies fought for decades to maintain federalism, which meant virtual autonomy for each province. *Provincianos* also demanded tariff protection for their nascent industries and the end of Buenos Aires's status as the exclusive entrepôt of the country" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007).

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