

FashionNation:  
The Politics of Dress and Gender  
in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Argentine Journalism (1829-1880)

by

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The dissertation examines fashion narratives in Argentine periodicals ranging from 1829 to 1880. It considers how both male and female writers, from conservative as well as liberal political camps, created an entire discourse of fashion for specific political and/or ideological purposes. My hypothesis is that while fashion commentaries appear to offer little insight into the dynamics of social relations and politics, upon closer inspection, they reveal an entire network of negotiations and strategies that often involved issues of race, class and gender (all of which were highly political topics in the period of Argentine nation formation from the early 1830s to the late 1800s). Fashion was also a place where the meaning of “modernity” in a peripheral context was negotiated vis-à-vis metropolitan conceptions of the term as well as a place where the political and cultural strategies that would “modernize” Argentina were often debated.

The dissertation first considers the years 1829-1852 marked by the Federalist Juan Manuel de Rosas’ domination of Argentine politics, economics and social life and by the emergence of the prestigious Generation of 1837. The dissertation first examines how this Generation (whose members were principally from the Unitarist ranks) incorporated fashion into its writing and how fashion served to articulate many of its anxieties over nation formation, modernization and the changing gender roles brought about by Independence. The dissertation then considers writings from members of the Federalist ranks and how these latter writers used fashion and traditional dress for their own projects of state.

The second part of the dissertation considers periodicals published after 1852 and it focuses on the emergence of women writers and the major female fashion journals that flourished during this period. Whereas female journalism was practically inexistent before 1852, now these writers used fashion narratives to metaphorically discuss topics ranging from nation formation and politics, to changing gender roles after the Rosista dictatorship to modernity and the role of consumption in creating an ideal sense of citizenship and finally to public health, hygiene and women’s “immoral” participation in the public sphere through prostitution.

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## **1. Introduction**

In September of 1877 María Eugenia Echenique, at the time a well-known woman writer of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offered some “reflections” on the state of Argentina. In a rather pessimistic tone, she lamented her country’s failed attempt to achieve the progress promised by earlier generations of liberal intellectuals who, eager to eradicate Argentina’s perceived barbaric past and its vast expanses of desert (the pampa), hastily looked outward to Western Europe and the United States for solutions to the nation’s ills. Unfortunately, even as the great 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to an end, Argentina was still asleep and had yet to reach its elusive dreams:

¡Cuan léjos estamos, empero, de la realidad de tan bellos sueños, de tan risueñas ilusiones! Comparando nuestro progreso con el de otras naciones de fuera, quedamos inmensamente atrás, dormimos aun el sueño de la inercia y de la indolencia, estamos muertos!

Echenique continues her lamentations, and she relies upon an old, but nonetheless striking metaphor: Argentina is still a child unable to care for itself and unable to dress itself without looking to foreign models for help. She explains:

Todavía somos niños que no podemos vivir por nosotros mismos. Aun necesitamos del concurso extraño para vestir y hacernos de los objetos más necesarios á la existencia. Ninguna medida que saque al país de la postración en que se encuentra y haga vislumbrar un porvenir más risueño, menos desesperante que el presente. (“Algunas reflexiones sobre la actualidad”, *La Ondina del Plata*, Year III, No. 36, September 9, 1877)

Why would Echenique refer particularly to dress in her description (and lamentation) of Argentina’s problems? How would this example prove useful in persuading her reading public? Just what sort of importance could dress possibly have in the national imaginary? The following study will show that quite from occupying a trivial place in women’s magazines, fashion and national dress habits had occupied an important and strategic place in the Argentine lettered city since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism*; West, *Tailoring the*

Nation) It seems that, since the independence war, Argentina was obsessed with its appearance. Echenique was, therefore, merely capitalizing on an entire *discourse of fashion* and an entire history of *fashion narratives*<sup>1</sup> that had long been in use and that had long been useful in defining the nature of Argentine politics.

Indeed, beginning in the early 1830s—stemming from an increasing conflict that would culminate in the infamous civil war between *Unitarists* and *Federalists*—and spanning to national consolidation in 1880 with the federalization of Buenos Aires, writings on fashion became useful tools in the hands of the lettered elite. Interestingly, fashion narratives were often used to metaphorically discuss topics ranging from nation formation and politics, to the changing role of both men and women in the public sphere, to modernity and the role of consumption in

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<sup>1</sup> Fashion narratives, as I will refer to them throughout this study, are written commentaries in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine periodicals that deal with the topic of fashion and that are usually found in a special fashion column of any given publication. While many periodicals of the period contain several descriptive fashion articles (i.e. what to wear to parties, what to wear in the rain, how to fix one’s hair) fashion narratives are much more than mere detailed descriptions of the fashionable clothing and/or behavior of the period because they move beyond the descriptive and into the ideological. While no study of fashion can ignore that fashion functions as a system of signs (as shown by Roland Barthes’ pivotal text The Fashion System) this study will not attempt a structuralist reading of 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion narratives. However, Barthes’ distinction between fashion as a discourse—as represented in the realm of the visual where a “simulacrum of the real object must be created” (xii)—and a discourse of fashion—which emerges in the *written* description of the visual representation—is central to this study. While I will refer to both, “image clothing” and “written clothing”, the majority of this study will focus on written clothing because of the limitations of image clothing. Barthes explains: “The importance of the written garment confirms the fact that specific language-functions exist which the image, whatever its development in contemporary society may be, could not possibly assume. [...] Thus, every written word has a function of authority insofar as *it* chooses—by proxy, so to speak—instead of the eye. The image freezes an endless number of possibilities; words determine a single certainty.” (The Fashion System: 13) Additionally, although this study will not elaborate upon the semiotics of fashion narratives as Barthes explains in The Fashion System, it will occasionally consider certain instances where the color of clothing articles and/or positioning of bodies in pictorial representations relay specific political messages. In this sense this study of Argentine fashion history will consider the semiotics involved in the image. For additional information on fashion as a semiotic system see also Baudrillard The System of Objects.

creating an ideal sense of citizenship and finally to public health, hygiene and women's immoral participation in the public sphere through prostitution.<sup>2</sup>

The years encompassed in this study—1829 to 1880—witness many significant developments and foundational moments in Argentine political, literary and social history. With the wars of independence over, the region in the early 1830s would experience a protracted struggle for self-definition. What type of government would the region have, what role would Western political and cultural powers play in this form of government and in this process of self-definition, who would be the major actors in the establishment of an Argentine nation, what place would society's *others* (Afro-Argentines, the indigenous, women, the poor, the uneducated, to name only a few) have in this newly liberated region, what relationship would the central port city of Buenos Aires have to the rest of the region? These were just some of the many questions facing politicians, wealthy landowners and liberal intellectuals entering into what would become one of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina's most violent and bloody periods: the Rosista dictatorship (1829-1852). The fall of Rosas at the battle of Caseros (1852) however left only more unanswered questions for the ruling elite. Again, after the longstanding power of local *caudillo* rule, urban intellectuals faced some of the same pressing questions that had been postponed by Rosista politics. How could the region be united, what place would the port city of Buenos Aires have in this unification, how would Argentina become a modern nation, who would belong to this

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<sup>2</sup> Fashion narratives, in this sense, function as metaphoric devices and the concepts of construction and articulation are central features in the use of metaphor. Laclau and Mouffe ([1984]1999) point to the idea that metaphORIZATION is a process whereby the metaphor does not add an additional element to a "primary, constitutive literality of social relations", but rather it forms part of the "primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted." (Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, 110) That is, metaphORIZATION doesn't occur between identities that are already constituted but rather it constitutes them. This is an important consideration and one that this study will keep in mind through the pages that follow.



precarious *imagined community*, how could Argentina ‘catch-up’ to the modern world after more than 20 years of dictatorship?

Interestingly during this same period, as one explores the archives of periodicals, pamphlets, essays and novels—ranging from conservative to liberal ranks, from male to female writers, and from well-known writers such as Domingo F. Sarmiento to anonymous ones—it’s almost impossible not to notice the rather large presence of articles/commentaries written on fashion. It’s also almost as impossible not to notice how the politics and the socio-economic changes of the period were reflected in these fashion commentaries.

Consequently, many questions, ones that sparked this study, come to mind. Why fashion? What does fashion have to do with national politics, sexual politics, or with defining the subjects contained within the national space? How is fashion useful in reflecting modernity’s effect on gender relations? Similarly, how can fashion help in defining or promoting a sense of modernity? These are just some of the questions I hope to address in what follows.

In very simple terms, fashion implies the widespread acceptance of certain clothing styles, materials, use (or behavior) at any given time. However, fashion as a socio-cultural, historical, economic and political phenomenon extends well beyond the limits of this generalization. The U.S. economist Thorstein Veblen’s The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899), the German sociologist Georg Simmel’s Philosophie der Mode (1905), the English psychoanalyst J.C. Flügel’s The Psychology of Clothes (1930) to the more contemporary Roland Barthes’ Système de la Mode (1967) all attest to the wide range of theoretical consideration that the phenomenon of fashion has provoked in the last century.<sup>3</sup> However, to understand why

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<sup>3</sup> This is to name just a few of the more classic studies on fashion. See Carter’s Fashion Classics for additional readings in classic fashion theory. However, there is a growing body of contemporary scholarship in cultural studies dedicated to fashion. Some of the most influential,

fashion would become an important stage for discussing so many of the issues facing the budding Argentine nation, it is of utmost important to recognize fashion's relationship to the emergence of modernity in the Western world.<sup>4</sup> As most scholars on fashion agree, fashion is a truly *modern* phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> For Fine and Leopold, fashion is a "hybrid subject" that negotiates

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and those that have informed this study are: Breward's *The hidden consumer*, 1999; Craik's *The Face of Fashion*, 1994; Davis's *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, 1992; Entwistle's *The Fashioned Body*, 2000; Fine and Leopold's *The World of Consumption*, 1993; Lipovetsky's *The Empire of Fashion*, 1994; Mattingly's *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, 2002; Perrot's *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*, 1994; Steele's *Paris Fashion*, 1988; and Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams*, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that fashion did not have a history prior to the modern period. Some scholars, such as Carter, suggest that fashion critics should be weary of associating fashion too closely with modernity. Carter contends that fashion should be studied as a whole process that began well before the modern period, even though fashion as we understand it today is fundamentally rooted in the experience of the modern: "To simply equate 'fashion' with modernity leaves us with no means of naming those regimes of vestimentary change that existed before the arrival of full modernity. If we do this then all that remains before modernity are the repetitions of that old standby 'traditional society'." (*Fashion Classics*, xii-xiii)

<sup>5</sup> As several theorists have pointed out, concrete definitions of *modernity* are as numerous as they are conflicting. Breward and Evans explain: "Definitions of modernity are, however, as many as they are contradictory, particularly in terms of the meaning of the concept as it has been discussed by the social sciences and the humanities traditions. Like all such interpretations, modernity is thus a term in an abstract classificatory system, invented by scholars to make sense of the world." (*Fashion and Modernity*, 1) Felski echoes a similar approach to the topic of modernity and she suggests that it is difficult to calculate the emergence of modernity in a historical sense: "Whereas a political theorist may situate the origins of modernity in the seventeenth century and in the work of Hobbes, a literary critic is just as likely to claim that modernity has its birth in the mid or late nineteenth century. Rather than a precise historical periodization, modernity thus comprises a constantly shifting set of temporal coordinates." (*The Gender of Modernity*, 12) Following Marshall Berman, Breward and Evans further elaborate the differences between *modernization* and *modernity*: "'Modernisation' refers to the process of scientific, technological, industrial, economic and political innovation that also become urban, social and artistic in their impact. 'Modernity' refers to the way that modernisation infiltrates everyday life and permeates sensibilities." (*Fashion and Modernity*, 1) This study will follow Breward's and Evans' distinction between *modernization* and *modernity*: it will encompass *both* of these since it will consider not only the technological, industrial, economic and political changes affecting the century (modernization), but also the impact this had, particularly through the consideration of fashion, on the sensibilities of Buenos Aires inhabitants and their everyday lives (modernity). There are a series of characteristics that mark the modernization of Argentina and the subsequent effects that this had over the region that will be the focus of this study: the emergence of the nation-state and civil society after independence (and how race, class and gender issues were often at the heart of policy making), the economic changes that led to export-

between “highly fragmented forms of production and equally diverse and often volatile patterns of demand”. (The World of Consumption, 93) And because of fashion’s role in consumption and in negotiating forms of demand—both of which are intricately linked to the rise of the Industrial Revolution—many theoretical considerations of fashion, such as Polhemus and Procter’s pivotal study, understand it as a “system of dress” that is specific, historically and geographically, to western modernity. (Fashion and Anti-Fashion: An anthology of Clothing and Adornment quoted in Entwistle, The Fashioned Body, 43) Wilson, another pioneer in fashion theory, understands fashion in similar terms for she situates it as a *feature* of the development of Western modernity. For Wilson, fashion means change: “fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles: fashion in a sense *is* change.” (Adorned in Dreams, 3) Lipovetsky too links fashion to change and to the emergence of the modern period in the West:

[...] fashion attests to the human capacity to change, the ability of men and women to invent new modes of appearance. Fashion is one of the faces of modern artifice, of the effort of human beings to make themselves masters of the conditions of their own existence. (The Empire of Fashion, 24)

And, as Entwistle further explains, fashion found an important place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because the socio-economic conditions particular to this period in the West were optimal for its development:

Fashion thrives in a world of social mobility, a dynamic world characterized by class and political conflict, urbanization and aesthetic innovation, so it is not surprising that fashion flourished in the nineteenth century, when social upheaval reaches a new zenith with the French and the Industrial Revolutions. (The Fashioned Body, 105)

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led growth, urbanization, the emergence of an important culture industry (especially centered on journalism), improvements in public works and transportation, public health and educational campaigns and the important changes in the family structure as Argentina moved from a colony of Spain to an independent nation. Another major focus of this study will be to chart the changes in sensibility that were caused by this modernization with particular emphasis on how this was manifested through dress: changing fashion and dress patterns affected modes of sociability, as well as gender, race and class relations.

While the specificity of Argentine history cannot be entirely folded into Entwistle's understanding of fashion in the Western world (particularly France and England), many of the items she mentions as specific to fashion's ability to thrive—social mobility, class and political conflict and especially urbanization—were all very much present in the Argentine 19<sup>th</sup> century. This study relies upon understanding fashion as a modern phenomenon and one that, in Argentina, emerged with the formation of the nation-state and the rise of nationalism, both key features of the modern period.<sup>6</sup> (Anderson, Imagined Communities; Smith, Nationalism and Modernism) Essentially, it is this confluence—the emergence of the nation-state together with the emergence of an Argentine fashion system—that gives rise to this study. As the following chapters will explore, fashion became an important element in elite discourses on nation-formation precisely because it offered an imaginary space from which to conceive an appearance of the newly formed nation and from which to conceive the appearance of modernity in Argentina. Often times, many leading literary figures selectively appropriated or rejected fashion for political and economic purposes or to push for a particular social agenda. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism; West, Tailoring the Nation)

Another important consideration regarding fashion is its differentiation from dress—understood simply as the covering, or clothing and accessories, for the human body. Because dress too became a significant element in defining Argentine national identity in the face of what was often considered the cultural imposition of high European fashion, the distinction between

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<sup>6</sup> Smith clarifies this in terms of nationalism: “Historians may differ over the exact moment of nationalism’s birth, but social scientists are clear: nationalism is a modern movement and ideology, which emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Western Europe and America, and which, after its apogee in two world wars, is now beginning to decline and give way to global forces which transcend the boundaries of nation-states.” (Nationalism and Modernism, 1)

dress and fashion cannot be overlooked. Entwistle explains that the terminology surrounding fashion (such as *dress*, *clothing*, *costume*, *adornment*, *decoration*, and *style*) is often used interchangeably and in haphazard ways. The use of one term or another largely depends on the academic discipline of the theorist:

[...] while it is possible to discern a body of anthropological literature on ‘dress’ distinct from a sociological, historical and cultural body of literature on ‘fashion’, in practice the picture is more complex than this. Far from clearly employing one or other term and defining it precisely, there is a considerable degree of confusion in the various bodies of literature with many authors employing a number of different terms, often using them interchangeably. A review of the literature illustrates the fact that there is no consensus on the definition and use of these words and no agreement on precisely what phenomena they describe. (The Fashioned Body, 41)

For most theorists, despite the ambiguity surrounding the differentiation between dress and fashion, there is a clear correlation between *fashion* and *novelty*, *transition*, *change* and *modernity*. (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body; Wilson, Adorned in Dreams; Wilson and Ash, Chic Thrills) There is also theoretical consensus that fashion only emerges where the possibility for social mobility exists. (Flügel, The Psychology of Clothes; Simmel, “The Philosophy of fashion”; Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class; Wilson, Adorned in Dreams) The concept of dress, however, has been little elaborated in theoretical terms. Most of the consideration on dress has come from anthropology that breaks it down into two realms: *modish dress* and *fixed dress*. *Modish dress* is, for all practical purposes *fashion*, while *fixed dress* refers to “traditional” dress: the kimono, the sari, or the poncho—as the Argentine case will show. (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body: 45) This is not to say, however, that dress in Argentina was limited purely to utility. Quite to the contrary, traditional Argentine dress became the backdrop from which Unitarists would distinguish themselves from the “savage” Federalists and from which, in a similar manner, Federalists would differentiate themselves from the perceived elitist *afrancesados* Unitarists.

Although the relationship between *fashion* and *dress* is often considered theoretically ambiguous—this is so since it is often difficult to separate one from the other since they often mutually affect each other—this study will consider both dress and fashion together. They are, after all, interdependent and failure to consider them as two parts of a whole system would leave out a significant part of Argentina’s transformation from a budding region to a thriving Southern Cone nation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, failure to consider the importance of dress and focusing on only high fashion would leave out moments of “selective appropriation” that negotiate between exterior cultural impositions (such as high French fashions) and autonomous resistance to or adaptations of such cultural impositions.<sup>7</sup> The peinetón—a specifically Argentine fashion phenomenon (Saulquin, *La Moda en la Argentina*)—is a perfect example since it was developed from several exterior sources (particularly the Spanish *peineta*—a small hair comb—and the French *chignon*—a hairstyle that gathered long hair into a large bundle) and modified in the Argentine context.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, considering only *high fashion* would leave out the relationship between class and race in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine dress particularly because the large population of Afro-Argentines was often forbidden use of high fashion. (Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines*, 45) Failure to address the importance of dress would also leave out one of the most significant aspects of the time period: the role of *traditional* dress—the *poncho*, the *chiripá*, *botas de potro*, etc.—in the mutual construction of “otherness” that occurred in the Rosista period. Rosas and his federalist followers often used local dress to form a sense of *tradition* through dress (and to alienate urban Unitarist elites) while the Unitarist

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<sup>7</sup> The idea of “selective appropriation” stems from Chatterjee’s study of English colonial rule in India. See *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> West offers the following definition of the *peinetón*: “Derived from *peine* (‘comb’ in Spanish) and later, the *peineta*, the *peinetón* might translate into English as something much more than a ‘grandiose comb’. [...] So immense in its size and scope, the *peinetón* reached three yards in height and width at the culminating moment of its popularity.” (*Tailoring the Nation*, 79)

elites constructed their own sense of identity by opposing themselves to traditional dress. Exploring the relationship between these two forms of appropriation—either of high fashion from the Unitarist ranks or of traditional dress from the Federalist ranks—helps to understand this period, as Salvatore suggests, ‘from below’<sup>9</sup> rather than from only the point of view of elite descriptions of clothing that have been recorded in what Sommer aptly deems Argentina’s *foundational fictions* (such as Amalia or Facundo). (Sommer, Foundational Fictions)

As mentioned, fashion narratives in Argentina emerged almost simultaneously with the struggles for national definition that began in the early 1800s with independence from Spain and continued throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This period only officially ends in 1880 with the federalization of the city of Buenos Aires.<sup>10</sup> The almost simultaneous emergence of fashion narratives and nation formation afforded fashion a strategic place in lettered writings concerning national development especially since it came to involve the political, economic as well as social aspects of nation formation.<sup>11</sup> Fashion was initially political in Argentina because it served both

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<sup>9</sup> Salvatore explains his point: “Esta perspectiva, de una “historia desde abajo”, otorga importancia a una serie de instancias en las que los sectores populares se relacionan con el Estado: el sistema judicial, los ejércitos y milicias, las celebraciones públicas, las formas de vestir, las expresiones y el lenguaje políticos, los controles policiales a la circulación de personas, el cobro de impuestos y contribuciones, las prácticas eleccionarias, etc.” (“Consolidación”, 1998: 326)

<sup>10</sup> Many scholars have established the year 1880 as the foundational moment ending the struggles and violence surrounding the formation of the Argentine nation. (Botana, El orden conservador) Because this year witnesses the federalization of the city of Buenos Aires, many of the protracted efforts to establish the city of Buenos Aires’ hegemony over the region were settled. The city no longer held political or economic power over the struggling provinces. As Rock explains, Julio A. Roca’s defeat of the Buenos Aires provincial candidate Carlos Tejedor was central in this federalization: “[...] soon after the defeat of Tejedor the city of Buenos Aires was detached from the province and named the federal capital of the republic; standing armies in the provinces were abolished; and the province of Buenos Aires also lost its power to issue currency. Deprived of their center of government, civic leaders in the province soon turned to the construction of a new one, which gave birth to the city of La Plata some thirty miles from the capital.” (Argentina, 131)

<sup>11</sup> Argentine fashion history by no means ends in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Quite to the contrary, a plethora of new fashion publications emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the

Federalists and Unitarists in constructing an image of the appropriate political model for Argentina to adopt. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism; West, Tailoring the Nation) On the one hand, Federalists used high fashion as a way to promote an *Americanist* agenda: since high fashion was representative of the imperialist and invasive interests of Western powers, resistance to high fashions in favor of national/traditional dress easily promoted a pro-Federalist agenda in the national imaginary. On the other hand, for Unitarists, the incorporation of high fashion and fashionable conduct (as represented by the West, particularly France) was understood as a way to visually encourage Argentina's backward inhabitants to adopt the markers of civilization thought necessary to achieve modern nationhood or to actively exclude those unable to purchase the products of "civilization". (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism) In this way, in large part, fashion provided a metaphorical space for constructing and negotiating the differences between Europe (as a model for national development) and the Americas, and this was a topic that not only affected Argentina but the whole of 19<sup>th</sup> century post-colonial Latin America.

Fashion also had continued political importance as post-Caseros intellectuals faced problems associated with public health and prostitution. (See Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires) Many times, fashion writers addressed how the high fashions of the period exposed women to the dangers associated with these two issues. Women's pursuit of high fashion dangerously placed them outside of the home, thus exposing them to the public world of work

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20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period that best represents the extreme modernization of Argentina. (Some of these publications, such as Para ti are still circulating.) However, one of the central focuses of this study is the relationship between nationalism and fashion journals and since the year 1880 marks the complete and total unification of the region, at least in official terms, as well as the establishment of the Argentine Republic, later fashion journals are not pivotal to understanding the development of the Argentine nation. (For more information on fashion after 1880, see Susana Saulquin's La Moda en la Argentina, the only history of fashion in Argentina to date.)



(which, in the case of women workers many times spilled over into prostitution). Similarly, in the opinion of many writers (particularly male writers), women's desire to consume pricey fashionable objects invited risking prized virtue for pay since often times women sought work, not to support or feed their families, but rather to support their sartorial vices. Fashion, for many, was also objectionable since it exposed women to disease. It was thought that the corset and low-cut necklines predisposed women to illness and many public figures and health officials of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century passionately opposed high fashions for this reason. The topic of fashion also had economic implications in Argentina. Through high fashion, liberal elites could promote a strong transatlantic economy (because the high fashions of the time were produced mostly in France) and therefore strong principles of free trade—a cornerstone in 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal thought—through fashion consumption. (Adelman, Republic of Capital; Brown, A Socioeconomic History of Argentina, Katra, La Generación del 1837) This would also have important implications regarding the relationship between the city of Buenos Aires and the rest of the region's provinces: many liberal intellectuals hoped that such transatlantic trade would eventually promote an ideal sense of civilization in the perceived backward countryside. They also hoped that Buenos Aires' hegemony over the region would end *caudillo* rule over the semi-autonomous provinces, thus subjecting the provinces to a centralized form of government. Moreover, after the fall of Rosas in 1852, fashion had continued important economic implications in the growing consumer society that was sparked by increased industrialization and urbanization, a booming population, and a thriving middle class of consumers. Finally, fashion had important social implications in the construction of an ideal citizenry. On the one hand, fashion narratives from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were especially useful in delineating the racial and ethnic boundaries of the national space. Many writers, particularly those from the liberal

Generation of '37 made it clear to their readers that the Afro-Argentines would not form part of this new project—particularly because they were often depicted as naked or semi-naked savages unable to incorporate civilized dress codes into their daily lives. And indigenous dress, particularly for liberal intellectuals, clearly couldn't compare to the civilization afforded by European finery. On the other hand, fashion was also a useful tool for both male and female writers in negotiating the changing sexual politics of the period as Argentina moved from colony, to an area plagued by civil war to a nation. The once thought sacred divisions between public/private and male/female realms of activity were no longer clear-cut as Argentina struggled for definition. Fashion came to represent, for some, one of the main problems behind this dissolution of traditional values because it exposed women to the horrors of public life such as consumption and prostitution. For others it opened up an entire new world of possibilities. Women writers, in particular, were able to use fashion as a façade to discuss how the political and economic landscape of the city affected their lives. Since fashion was considered part of a “woman's world” many times it offered a non-threatening platform to clandestinely discuss politics. Even other women writers were able to use their fashion narratives to discuss sexuality, desire and prostitution without risking their own reputations.

These three instances—political, economic and social—of how fashion was useful in constructing an image of the Argentine nation point to the exclusive nature of the nation building project in Argentina. While initially, particularly in Europe, the nation was imagined as an inclusive category and a “liberating force”, the nature of Argentine nationalism was quite different.<sup>12</sup> (Nationalism and Modernism, 1) The nation in Argentina—and by extension we

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<sup>12</sup> Smith explains the intention of early nation-formation in Europe: “It broke down the various localisms of region, dialect, custom and clan, and helped to create large and powerful nation-

could add all of Latin America—was never an inclusive category.<sup>13</sup> While liberal elites, particularly the Generation of '37—often credited as the literary founding generation of the Argentine nation—struggled to create an image of a racially, ethnically and culturally homogeneous Argentina, the regions others<sup>14</sup> who fell outside of this idealized national citizenry struggled for a voice in this construction.<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, the development of the Argentine nation and Argentine nationalism—in political, economic as well as social terms—was highly gendered, often leaving little room for female participation other than acceptable domestic participation through wifehood and motherhood. This, of course, was not limited only to Latin America since a large majority of international nationalist movements—both past and present—were and continue to be especially gender exclusive. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, “Introduction”; Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments; Dubey, “The ‘True Lie’ of the Nation”; Heng, “A

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states, with centralized markets and systems of administration, taxation and education. Its appeal was popular and democratic.” (Nationalism and Modernism, 1)

<sup>13</sup> For more on this topic see: Albó, “Our Identity”; González-Stephan, Fundaciones and “Las disciplinas escriturarias de la patria: constituciones, gramáticas y manuales”; Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción de una nación; Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism; Ramos, Divergent Modernities; Sabato, The Many and the Few; and Shumway, The Invention of Argentina.

<sup>14</sup> For important studies on Argentina’s 19<sup>th</sup> century *others*, especially the Afro-Argentines, Rosas’ famous *indios amigos* and the rural poor see: Andrews, The Afro-Argentines; Aponte-Ramos, “Cuando la Pampa se colorea: los negros en la Argentina decimonónica”; Castro, The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture; Gelman, “El mundo rural en transición”; Goldberg, “Las Afro-Argentinas”; Lynch, Argentine Dictator: Juan Manuel de Rosas; Sabato and Romero, Los trabajadores de Buenos Aires; Salvatore, Wandering Paysanos. State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era.

<sup>15</sup> Duara mentions that this struggle against a *monologic* voice is more characteristic of the nation and nationalism than an idealized homogeneous national identity: “[...] the relationship among different identities is more complex than this. Nationalism is often considered to override other identities within a society—such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, gender, or even historical ones—to encompass these differences in a larger identity. However, even when or where such an encompassment has been temporarily achieved, the way in which the nation is represented and voiced by different self-conscious groups is often very different. [...] In place of the harmonized, monologic voice of the Nation, we find a polyphone of voices, contradictory and ambiguous, opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation.” (Rescuing History from the Nation, 10)

Great Way to Fly”; Hunt, Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution; McClintock, Mufti and Shohat (eds.) “Introduction”) Considering the specific case of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, this study will pay special attention to how the very nature of nationalism itself and how nationalist rhetoric, particularly that contained within *fashion narratives*, used by leading intellectuals served to mark the symbolic role of the female in the process of nation formation. First, the study will show that fashion narratives often reinforced ideologies of femininity—such as passivity and maternity—often by placing symbolic importance upon the body of the female as metaphor of the nation. Second, the study will consider how fashion narratives served either to establish or deconstruct—according to the author’s intent—the divide between public and private spheres as well as the activities commonly associated with each of these. The increasing confusion concerning this divide afforded fashion an important place since many times it was useful for *imagining* what women’s and men’s new roles in the national space should be. It was also useful for designating appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the ever-changing public sphere. Finally, in terms of gender, this study will consider the very *positive* role that fashion narratives had for women writers since through fashion they were able to successfully work within the exclusive parameters of nationalism to create an imagined community of their own. Thus by using fashion as a mainstay for their publications and as a reason for their “venture” into the public world of letters, post-Caseros women writers often not only debated the issues affecting the city’s changing landscape but they also certainly deconstructed some of the images that had been associated with women’s role in nation formation, particularly female passivity and lack of mobility in the public sphere. None of these developments could have occurred, however, had it not been for the explosion of literary activity afforded by the growth of journalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. (Auza, Periodismo y feminismo; Cavalaro, Revistas

argentinas del siglo XIX) Leaving aside momentarily the important link between what Anderson has deemed “print-capitalism” and the emergence of nationalism, fashion—because of its very public and ephemeral nature (Wilson, Adorned in Dreams)—could never have become a useful medium for writers without the increasing circulation of periodicals in *porteño* streets. (Anderson, Imagined Communities; Smith, Nationalism and Modernism)<sup>16</sup> While the printing press was introduced into the then River Plate Viceroyalty in 1776, it is only after independence that journalism truly began to flourish in Buenos Aires. (Rock, Argentina, 64; Sabato, “La vida pública en Buenos Aires”) Thus, the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Argentina, particularly in Buenos Aires, witnessed the confluence of three important pillars of the modern period: the birth of the nation and nationalism—with its gendered, racial, ethnic and class inclusions and exclusions—the rise of the printing press and literary culture and the rise of a fashion industry which was strongly linked to consumption, economic growth and increased mercantilism.

This study offers an examination of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine literary culture through the topic of fashion narratives and through the eyes of fashion writers. It relies upon several disciplines: fashion theory, gender studies, studies of the nation and nationalism, as well as studies of Argentine literature, politics, social and economic histories. This study’s importance, however, stems from its broad based approach to these disciplines. For example, many studies have either emphasized fashion as a semiotic system (Barthes, The Fashion System; Baudrillard,

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, following Anderson’s lead, explains the relationship between the printing press—that published in the vernacular as opposed to Latin—and nationalism: “Once in being, these print-languages encouraged the growth of national consciousness in a number of ways: by creating fields of communication below Latin and above the local spoken vernaculars; by fixing the language in a standard form and thereby inducing a sense of national antiquity; and finally by creating new languages-of-power in a new cultural hierarchy of dialects and languages. So the stage was set for the global diffusion of the idea of the nation.” (Nationalism and Modernism, 135)

The System of Objects) or studied fashion as a historical or economic phenomenon (Bell, On Human Finery; Bradley, A History of World Costume; Laver, A Concise History of Costume; Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class) or considered fashion in the context of social interaction, social theory or psychoanalysis. (Flügel, The Psychology of Clothes; Spencer, The Principles of Sociology; Simmel, “The Philosophy of fashion”, “The problem of style” “Fashion”) More recent studies however, especially those stemming from cultural studies on fashion, have shown the profound links between the semiotic, the historical, the social, the economic as well as the political features that involve fashion. (Breward, The hidden consumer; Craik, The Face of Fashion; Davis, Fashion, Culture and Identity; Entwistle, The Fashioned Body; Lipovetsky, The Empire of Fashion; Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie; Wilson, Adorned in Dreams) This study is intended to follow this contemporary line of study on fashion. To date, in the context of Argentina, studies on fashion have been limited to descriptive histories (Saulquin, La Moda en la Argentina) or have drawn attention to the need to study the topic of fashion in literature without detailed analysis. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism) Others have studied fashion without sufficiently linking it to the large-scale socio-economic and political movements that concerned the entire period of nation formation. (West, Tailoring the Nation)<sup>17</sup> Similarly, many classical theoretical texts concerned with the nation and with

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<sup>17</sup> The most comprehensive study of fashion in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina is Regina West’s unpublished dissertation Tailoring the Nation. The Narrative of Patriotic Dress in Nineteenth Century Argentina. This dissertation focuses primarily on the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and pays special attention to (a) the uniform and the “interconnectedness of the uniform to the political partisanship of an emerging national culture” (viii) and (b) women’s “involvement in the activities of the public sphere” (ix) through activities related to the battlefield or the use of the *peinetón*. However, West’s study is rather incomplete in scope: it offers little by way in consideration of the importance of traditional dress in Federalist rhetoric; it does not sufficiently consider race relations in Rosista Argentina; it considers a limited numbers of texts and it does not offer an in-depth consideration of fashion in post-Caseros Argentina

nationalism do not consider gender at length, or they consider gender irrelevant or secondary in the construction of the nation and nationalism.<sup>18</sup> Recent scholarship, however, has stressed the importance of studying gender issues in nation formation and nationalism so as to shed further light on the complexities of the process. (Heng “A Great Way to Fly”; Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation; McClintock, Imperial Leather; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, Woman-Natin-State) This study seeks to insert itself within this tradition of scholarship and as such it will study gender and nationalism together as a process of negotiation that is based on the simultaneous exclusion and participation of the female—depending upon the goal of the fashion writer—as either a metaphorical figure of the nation or a significant participant. However, in its consideration of gender, this study will not be limited to considering only the female and the construction of appropriate femininity in nationalist contexts, but also how the figure of the male was affected by nationalism and how many times fashion discourses were used in constructing appropriate forms of masculinity within the specific cultural/historical context of post-colonial Argentina.

Finally, this study is indebted to an important line of recent studies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine economic history that have shed significant light on the period. However, in terms modernization and how this promoted an important demand for consumer products, this study points to a need for further investigation in Argentina’s economic history. The historical scholarship that has most informed this study has pointed to the importance of transatlantic trade

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particularly in terms of consumption and its relationship to gender. This study is meant to extend beyond West’s initial findings as well as offer a more in-depth analysis of the period.

<sup>18</sup> The following texts have been helpful in forming the theoretical basis of the current study. However, these texts slight gender in their considerations of nation and nationalism: Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities; Bhabha, Homi K. (ed). Nation and Narration; Gellner, Ernest. Nations and Nationalism; Hobsbawm, Eric. Nations and Nationalism since 1780; Renan, Ernest. “What is a Nation”. In Nation and Narration; and Smith, Anthony. Nationalism and Modernism.

for Argentina's budding 19<sup>th</sup> century economy (Adelman, Republic of Capital); it has focused on the wool and hide industries as well as forming a better understanding of rural production in the development of Argentina's economy (Brown, A Socioeconomic History of Argentina; Sabato, Agrarian Capitalism and the World Market; Zeberio, "Un mundo rural en cambio"); it has explored the real experiences of workers in Buenos Aires. (Falcón, "Los trabajadores y el mundo del trabajo"; Sabato and Romero, Los trabajadores de Buenos Aires); and it has focused on the "dominant" groups in charge of leading Argentina towards modernization and nationhood. (Bonaudo and Sonzogni, "Los grupos dominantes entre la legitimidad y el control"; Sabato, The Many and the Few) While these studies have been most important in showing the complex nature of Argentina's economic development and that it was not, as was for so long believed, centered entirely around the city of Buenos Aires, to date, there exists no comprehensive history of consumption or its relationship to gender in Argentina. This study of fashion and fashion narratives points to the growing demand of the middle classes and how modernization was shaping not only purchasing patterns but the relationship that consumers, particularly women, came to have with the ever-changing public sphere.

Ultimately, the overall goal of this study is to reinterpret what "counts as meaningful history" and as meaningful literary work. (Felski, The Gender of Modernity: 22)<sup>19</sup> Since topics such as fashion and fashion writing (especially by females) have been slighted in the consideration of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine literature and cultural history, this study will show that

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<sup>19</sup> Felski comments further on the importance of considering ignored dimensions of culture when studying "literary and cultural history" related to women and modernity: "Those dimensions of culture either ignored, trivialized, or seen as regressive rather than authentically modern—feelings, romantic novels, shopping, motherhood, fashion—gain dramatically in importance, whereas themes previously considered central to the sociocultural analysis of modernity become less significant or recede into the background. As a result, our sense of what counts as meaningful history is subtly yet profoundly altered as the landscape of the modern acquires a different, less familiar set of contours." (The Gender of Modernity: 22)



fashion writing is a significant topic in—and one that offers insight into—the study of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine literary and cultural histories.

As part of a growing body of scholarship interested in re-examining the Rosista period from the Federalists perspective<sup>20</sup>, Chapter 1 “Forced Traditions, Forged Equality: Dress and Fashion, ‘Rosista’ Style” offers insight into how dress colored the landscape of the Federalist era (1829-1852). In terms of dress, one of the first manifestations of the disarray caused by the growing political and social conflicts of the Rosista period was the female *peinetón*. Often exaggerated in size, the *peinetón*’s principal importance was its ability to expose the growing instability of the traditional divisions between the public and private spheres. Essentially, the *peinetón*, particularly because of its large size, came to embody a struggle over public space and women’s access to it. (West, Tailoring the Nation, 121) Because of this, it often generated quite heated debates in the periodicals of the period. Perhaps even more significantly, the public debate over the *peinetón* exposed the gendered nature of nationalism and the symbolic role that women held in the creation of a national space. Because women were thought to sacrifice their virtue and their families to their headdresses, many writers were concerned for the future of the budding Argentine nation that was placed in jeopardy by these “selfish” women. Finally, for many journalists of the period, another alarming consequence of this fashionable headdress was the *feminizing* effect it had on the public sphere because it called so much attention to women’s dress. This, as Chapter 1 will more fully explore, also had consequences for the region’s males:

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<sup>20</sup> See Goldman, “Los orígenes del federalismo rioplatense (1820-1831)”; Myers, Orden y virtud: El discurso republicano en el régimen rosista; Salvatore, Wandering Paysanos and “Consolidación del régimen rosista (1835-1852)”.

according to many fashion writers men were becoming too preoccupied with their public appearances and through this preoccupation they too were endangering the nation's future.

The *peinetón* eventually became only one of many dress features used to pledge allegiance to Rosas: women were ultimately forced to engrave the famous slogans “¡Viva la federación y mueran los salvaje unitarios!” in their elaborate headdresses. This first chapter, therefore, will also consider how Rosas brilliantly manipulated dress to foster (and enforce) support for his political machine. The driving force behind Rosista politics was an urgent need to *organize* the chaos, especially the political chaos, inflicted upon the region by the wars of independence and the previous President Rivadavia's inability to diffuse the profound conflicts that were emerging among the Federalist and Unitarist ranks. Dress (and commentaries on dress in the official Rosista press) came to occupy an important place in Rosista politics particularly because the dictator was able to invest certain clothing—especially the *poncho* and the *chiripá*—and certain colors—particularly red—with his political message. By inventing a national tradition (Hobsbawm, The Invention of Tradition) around these garments and colors and by politicizing the everyday activities of the region's inhabitants, Rosas effectively created a large and powerful support base not only among landowners and conservative elites, but also the large masses of Argentina's poor, its rural folk and its Afro-Argentines. Additionally, by adopting *traditional* dress as the marker of Federalist politics Rosista rhetoric not only strategically rejected the role of European impositions in creating a national identity, but it simultaneously *othered* the Unitarian minority. Finally, Chapter 1 will consider how dress during this period served an important role, particularly for Unitarists, in maintaining the colonial status quo in terms of race. While Rosas was occupied with creating a power base amongst the region's subalterns, Unitarist elites were keen on depicting them—in particular the Afro-Argentines—as

the antithesis of high fashion. Bitter over their association with Rosista politics, many Unitarist writings of the period portrayed Afro-Argentines either as naked or semi-naked savages (Echeverría's El matadero) or as traitors to the enlightened Unitarist cause (Mármol's Amalia).

Chapter 2, “Challenging Barbarism and Waging Wars of Images: Argentina’s Men of Letters Find Fashion (1829-1852)” considers Unitarist appropriation of high fashion as opposed to the Federalist use of traditional dress. This chapter examines some of the most well-known Unitarist writers such as Domingo F. Sarmiento, Juan B. Alberdi, José Mármol and Esteban Echeverría, all of whom formed part of the prestigious Generation of ’37. Because of high fashion’s intricate link to modernity, the Unitarist elite quickly adopted it in their writings as a way to push for their *civilizing* agenda—which had clear Euro and ethnocentric overtones—on many fronts (especially the political and the social). In terms of politics, because Unitarist writers were dispossessed of political legitimacy by Rosas’ dictatorship—since participation in Rosista politics was impossible, since the *porteño* press was censored and since many writers were forced into exile—many Unitarists used fashion narratives as rhetorical devices to symbolically impose models of modernization into what they considered to be the backward practices of the area’s inhabitants. (This is particularly true for Alberdi as witnessed by his publication *La Moda*.) Fashion, for this generation of intellectuals also offered an avenue to articulate their concerns over some of the major dilemmas faced by the region. Canonical Unitarist writings—such as Facundo (Sarmiento), Amalia (Mármol), El matadero (El matadero)—and many periodical commentaries often expressed these dilemmas in terms of the binaries civilization vs. barbarism; Europe vs. Argentina and city vs. country. Interestingly, fashion fell into these binaries as the ultimate marker of civilization, European finesse and urban progress at least in terms of appearance. Chapter 2 will begin with an in-depth consideration of

the fundamental importance of journalism for this generation—especially while in exile—since it was ultimately one of the last fronts of resistance to Rosas’ political repression. It is, after all, through journalism that these writers published some of their most important works that have now become mainstays in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine literature. This second chapter will also consider how fashion narratives articulated and offered “resolutions” to this generation’s social concerns over race, class and ethnicity in Argentina. That is, through fashion narratives Unitarist writers offered their advice for how to exclude Argentina’s *others*. In terms of dress, Sarmiento, for example, sought to simply cover-up Argentina’s racially ‘inferior’ and poorly dressed populations with the civilization afforded by European dress. As he so vehemently wrote, *while the chiripá exists, there will never be citizens in Argentina*. (“Mientras haya chiripá no habrá ciudadanos.”) (Campaña en el ejército grande, 169) Alberdi, on the other hand, wrote Argentina’s *others* completely out of the Unitarist civilization project. In his well-known fashion magazine *La Moda* he offered clothing styles and modes of conduct that were often irrelevant to and unattainable by the large majority of Argentina’s inhabitants. Others, such as Mármol and Echeverría, clearly represented Argentina’s lower-classes and non-whites as infinitely inferior—even in terms of dress and taste—to their Unitarists counterparts. Chapter 2 also explores the relationship that the Generation of ’37 established between gender and fashion and in particular it considers how the generation conceived women’s role in nation formation through fashion articles. Often times these writers reinforced traditional roles for women—especially motherhood, domesticity and passivity—in their nationalist projects. These writers portrayed the female as the ultimate representative of the nation—it was especially important that she be perfectly adorned in the best of European fashions—therefore dispossessing the female figure of any agency to act or actively participate in national politics. (This is especially true of

Sarmiento's idealizations of the female in his writings while in exile.) Unitarists writers did however provide an alternative to this model through consumption since it offered a solution to the problem of the dissolution of the traditional divide between the public and the private. Participation in the public sphere through consumption—as opposed to work or prostitution—served to promote an important feature of the Unitarist agenda: it permitted women to introduce the products of modernity into the home, therefore modernizing Argentina from the inside out, without explicitly threatening the domestic sphere. (Mármol's Amalia, as Chapter 2 will more fully explore, offers a perfect example.) Finally, Chapter 2 will consider specific examples of how these writers incorporated fashion into the sweeping binaries that guided their thoughts on how to create an ideal Argentine nation. Clearly, with regards to civilization vs. barbarism, fashion narratives were essential for establishing the differences between what they considered to be markers of “civilization” (European suits for men, certain European materials and styles for women, as well as fashionable objects to decorate the home) as opposed to the savagery they associated with Argentine local culture (particularly gaucho dress and lower-class social activities). This metaphor even found itself into Alberdi's Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina, a document that would serve as the framework for the national constitution drafted after Rosas' departure in 1852. As Alberdi would explain: “In America, all that is not European is barbaric: there is no other division than this one.” (“En América todo lo que no es europeo es bárbaro: no hay más division que ésta”, Bases y puntos de partida, 209) This second chapter will also consider how fashion found its way into Unitarists debates over the role of the city in civilizing the perceived savage Argentine pampas. Time and again writers such as Sarmiento reiterated the differences between the *man of the city* and the *man of the country* in terms of dress: citizenship did not move outside the parameters of the city

since rural inhabitants were unprepared and undeserving of it.<sup>21</sup> Often times, as opposed to the finery and high fashion that characterized urban elite Argentines, rural inhabitants were described as filthy, mud laden beasts not particularly distinct from the animals that surrounded them. (Echeverría's El matadero offers perhaps one of the most convincing descriptions.) Even travelers to the region described rural women as pigs (puercas) and amazons who spent most of their time picking lice from their hair. Thus, much like Chapter 1 focuses on the strategies used by Federalists to reinforce a certain image for the future nation in the social imaginary, Chapter 2 discusses how Unitarists counteracted these federalists strategies through establishing their own particular, and elite, vision for the region through the appropriation of fashion.

Chapter 3 "After Caseros: Women Write on Fashion, Nation and Politics" is dedicated to the women writers that emerged and the short-lived periodicals they published after the defeat of Rosas at the battle of Caseros in 1852. Ranging from Rosas Guerra's *La Educación* to Juana Manso's numerous publications (*El Album de Señoritas*, *La Flor del Aire* and *La Siempre-Viva*) this chapter explores some of the strategies that women writers used to effectively penetrate the public sphere. Fashion, again, was an important starting point for many of these writers because it permitted participation in the public sphere without being overtly political. This is not to say, however, that these fashion narratives were not political. Quite to the contrary, they served to express these women's views on a wide range of topics from nationalism to the passivity caused by high fashion to women's right to freely circulate in the public sphere to the limitations that fashion caused for lower-class women. As opposed to the symbolic importance placed upon fashion (and women) by the previous generation of fashion writers (from both the Federalist and

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Sarmiento explained in Facundo that: "[...] el hombre de la campaña, lejos de aspirar a semejarse al de la ciudad, rechaza con desdén su lujo y sus modales corteses, y el vestido del ciudadano, el frac, la capa, la silla, ningún signo europeo puede presentarse impunemente en la campaña." (33)

the Unitarist ranks), these women writers focused on the *real* issues at hand for Post-Caseros women. In essence, these writers developed an alternative discourse on fashion that helped them to move away from the symbolic (and the mere act of writing and publishing formed part of this process) and into the creation of a more realistic picture of how women participated in the development of an Argentine nation after Rosas. Chapter 3 begins with an examination of the changing public sphere and forms of porteño sociability after the fall of Rosas. With the lifting of Rosista repression, the region once again found itself in a period of transition and redefinition. This had profound consequences on the public sphere: for the first time in well over 20 years public opinion emerged as a powerful element in policy making. (Sabato, The Many and the Few) This re-emergence of public opinion found an important ally in journalism—now uncensored—and in an increasingly literate population. Thus, a market was born for the consumption of periodicals and women’s periodicals, for the first time in Argentine history, flourished. For these women, fashion magazines were essential in reversing several ideas that had been firmly established by previous generations of fashion writers. For example, through their denunciations of the importance of high fashion, women writers dismantled the longstanding association of the female with bodily affairs as opposed to the male world of intellect (that is, they reversed the traditional mind/body dichotomy). By stressing the value of education for females and by deemphasizing the importance of appearance, these writers could discreetly push for this quite radical change in social policy while avoiding censure. Women also used fashion to criticize the city’s lack of appropriate sewer structures and health policies (a raging topic in the official “male” dominated press): instead of worrying about the symbolic filth that entered the domestic through women’s participation in the public sphere, these women writers were concerned with how the fashions of the day, such as long skirts and cumbersome

petticoats, literally introduced real filth (excrement, garbage, etc.) into the domestic sphere. Fashion narratives for these women were also useful in discussing national development and modernity. They used fashion to debate the very same dichotomies that emerged in the Rosista period (civilization vs. barbarism, city vs. country, Europe vs. the Americas). As opposed to the Unitarist generation however, these women writers used fashion to discuss the economic and cultural imperialism that the region faced. For example, many declared that Europe's high fashions were inappropriate to Argentina's reality (especially since the seasonal differences made high fashion very uncomfortable for Argentina's women) and that Argentina should be in the hands of local designers. (Manso, Album de Señoritas) The metaphor is striking: rather than incorporating foreign political and economic policies, Argentina's politicians should focus on local solutions to local problems. Finally, for these women, fashion was a useful topic for discussing the increasing role of consumption in women's lives. Rather than praise consumption as the solution to Argentina's ills (as the Generation of '37 had done) many of these new writers saw consumption as a limiting force for women since once again it reduced them to the realm of irrationality and compulsive behavior, not to mention that it effectively excluded a large part of Argentina's population—and this included themselves as many were poor women in charge of caring for their families—since only a select few could actively and consistently participate in the market. (It wasn't until later on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that access to consumer goods became easier.)

The last chapter of this study, "Fashionable Desires: Consumption and Gender in Post Caseros Argentina" focuses on the profound economic changes of the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, Chapter 4 explores the relationship between fashion narratives and a growing consumer society brought about by the fall of Rosas and rapid modernization. As



Argentina moved toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consumption was no longer contained within letrado discourses on its usefulness or evils and it began to change the social landscape of the city: department stores surfaced, Argentina developed a more dynamic trans-Atlantic economy, and a middle class flourished and was readily gaining access to consumer goods that had previous been unattainable. For many, particularly conservative fashion writers, the excesses of consumption were worrisome. This was so for many reasons: immigrants were increasingly consuming fashionable clothing such that it was difficult to differentiate them by dress alone; consumption was blurring already ambiguous gendered divisions (that is, men were once again becoming *feminized* by consumption's excesses while women were becoming *masculine* in their dress since they began wearing pants and acting like men!); and consumption's excesses were increasingly leading women down the path of prostitution and therefore disease since, according to many writers, they were willing to abandon morality so as to have the means to purchase fashionable items. This last chapter, therefore, begins with an examination of the magnitude of consumption in post-Caseros Buenos Aires. In large part, these consumption patterns reflected a profound change in Argentina's legal system: participation in the consumer market was no longer limited to the elite or white population (as opposed to the previous order whereby consumption was more strictly restricted by race and class) since now those who had the means could purchase consumer goods. As a result, lineage no longer served as the only site from which identity was formed. Now, consumption and market participation offered an alternative in identity formation. Many fashion writers were also concerned over the new possibilities afforded by consumption: it was relaxing the moral climate of the city, Afro-Argentines shopped along side middle and upper-class whites and women were becoming demanding in their fashion desires thus once again abandoning the home for the wonders of the

department store and for the female sociability that consumption facilitated. Consequently, this growing desire for fashionable objects opened a unique avenue for women writers to express desire and sexuality through fashion without outright association with immorality. To name just one example, one anonymous female writer published a rather erotic piece on the love and desire she felt for a dress she once owned. She even went so far as to describe her feelings as *ecstatic* when she touched her dress and that a *fever of enthusiasm* overwhelmed her as she trembled before it! (“Historia de un vestido”, *El Album del Hogar*, Year II, No. 3, July 20, 1879) Finally, this last chapter ends with an examination of how the raging debates of the period over public health and the need to enforce the rule of science over the chaos spread by modernization made their way into fashion narratives. On the one hand, fashion writers found yet another reason to criticize its excesses since certain fashions were thought to provoke disease in women (such as low-cut necklines). However, other fashion writers, especially female fashion writers, readily incorporated a more scientific approach to fashion in their writing since this way they could validate their fashion articles. Ultimately they were able to prove to their audiences that even fashion followed the general rules of science and that contemplations on the topic of fashion were not frivolous or mindless activities, but rather they required serious reflection and planning.

Thus, fashion, as the following four chapters will explore in more detail, was a chameleon-like topic—and one that had clear political, economic, and cultural implications in Argentina’s condition as a post-colonial nation—that was easily appropriated from both male and female writers, from all sides of the political divide, and from all sides of the fashion divide. Whether fashion writers embraced it or rejected it, fashion—its importance in the social imaginary of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina (in terms of race, gender and class) and its role in articulating the conflicts surrounding Argentina’s movement towards modernization and

modernity—couldn't be and wasn't discarded as a frivolous topic, but rather one that merited due consideration.

## **2. Forced Traditions, Forged Equality: Dress and Fashion, “Rosista” Style**

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina was not the idealized space elite *letrados* had dreamt of since independence. The dividing lines between class, gender, race and ethnicity in the early 1830s were not nearly as rigid as the upper class *criollos* would have liked. A bustling crowd of Afro-Argentines, poor women and children working in the public sphere, and an unbridled mass of day laborers marked the urban landscape of Buenos Aires. Clearly, there must have been a perceived need to order the chaos represented by the Argentine *gente del pueblo*: Afro-Argentine females often competed with their mistresses through dress, poor urban workers marveled at and perhaps even purchased imported goods from Europe (allegedly only obtainable by elites), and the red Federalist uniforms that would become the hallmarks of Rosas’ supposed anti-elite/ Anti-European stance were made from British materials.<sup>22</sup> As E.E. Vidal reminded his 19<sup>th</sup> century readers, even the elites demonstrated a rather hybrid form of dress: not entirely Spanish, English or French in origin, the dress of the Argentines was difficult to explain.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, as the traveler William MacCann commented, the area was so hybrid in terms of race that it could easily confuse the outsider thus making it difficult to believe that humanity parted from a common origin:

Ninguna ciudad de mundo—con seguridad—puede ostentar tan abigarrado concurso de gentes; es tan grande la variedad de los rostros, que acaba uno por dudar de que la especia

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<sup>22</sup> Salvatore interprets early periodical excerpts that help to understand the socio-economic atmosphere of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina: “By 1829, the *Gaceta Mercantil* featured, alongside notices of the arrivals of foreign vessels and the opening of public auctions, a series of advertisements indicative of the economic transactions of artisans, clerks, servants, and peasants. Through these ads we can infer that the boundaries demarcating elite from plebeian culture—the lines dividing the tastes of the ‘gente decente’ from that of the working classes—were not yet set. Black maids competing with the ladies of the house in elegance and fashion, peasants trying on the new boots imported from Europe, Federalist soldiers proudly wearing their red jackets made of British cloth speak of the blurring of the frontiers of distinctions and appearance that once regulated social interaction.” (*Wandering Paysanos*, 31)

<sup>23</sup> E.E. Vidal’s comments are quoted in West (*Tailoring the Nation*, 82)

humana proceda de un tronco común. La tez olivácea del español, el cutis cetrino del francés, y el rojizo del inglés, alternan con fisonomías indias, tártaras, judías y negras; mujeres blancas como el lirio y de radiante belleza forman contraste con otras, negras como la noche, mientras el porte y la indumentaria de las diferentes clases sociales contribuye no menos al desconcierto. (Viaje a caballo, 128)

Through several mediums, such as execution, violence, intimidation, or forced exile, Juan Manuel de Rosas would become just the person to try to organize and harness the chaos of post-colonial Argentina. Although urban Unitarists were often at odds with Rosas' Federalist political and social endeavors, Rosas—much like the Unitarist elite—was intent upon organizing and controlling what he also perceived to be the barbarism plaguing Argentina.<sup>24</sup>

While mostly overlooked, dress was an important factor in Rosas' harnessing of the “barbarism” that was early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina.<sup>25</sup> Rosas was able to selectively appropriate markers of “traditional” Argentine dress and incorporate them into Rosista rhetoric and practice so that they came to be significant elements in the consolidation and maintenance of his political machine. This chapter will examine the foundational moments whereby traditional dress—considered the antithesis of European high fashion often idolized by Unitarist elites—acquired political importance in the context of early 19<sup>th</sup> century struggles for national identity.

Since the peinetón emerges almost simultaneously with Rosas' consolidation of power, this chapter will first consider the emergence of the Argentine peinetón. Because this decorative

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<sup>24</sup> Domingo F. Sarmiento and Juan B. Alberdi were not the only leading 19th century figures to speak of “civilizing” and “populating” Argentina, especially the Argentine countryside. Juan Manuel de Rosas spoke in similar terms. In 1821, well before his lengthy dictatorship, he wrote: “Lejos, pues, de nosotros la ejecución de un proyecto de expedición: la paz es la que conviene a la provincia. Unos tratados que la afianzasen traería la civilización, la población y el comercio: serían el bálsamo que curase las heridas que anteriores descuidos y planes mal concertados abrieron a la vida, honor y propiedades de los habitantes de la campaña y a centenares de familias.” (“Segunda Memoria del Coronel Juan Manuel de Rosas”, Orden y Virtud, Myers, Jorge, 146).

<sup>25</sup> To date, Salvatore has offered the most comprehensive studies of dress under the Rosista period. See Chapter 4 “Class by Appearance”, Wandering Paisanos and “Consolidación del régimen rosista (1835-1852)”. Nueva historia Argentina. Vol III, 1999.

headdress is often considered a foundational moment of female agency through dress in the context of nation formation, it will prove to offer important insights into the early budding relationship between dress, politics and gender. (West, Tailoring the Nation) Second, this chapter will consider how dress became an essential element in the consolidation of Rosas' power. In particular, it will examine how Rosas created a sense of Argentine tradition through dress in the face of foreign (and domestic elite) opposition to his Federation. Finally, this chapter will consider the often forgotten population of Afro-Argentines who were many times discursively disavowed by the urban elite but who also played a large role in supporting Rosas' political practices.<sup>26</sup> As this chapter will show, Rosas was able to effectively control the hybrid masses, the *gente del pueblo*, of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in large part because of his strategic use of a Federalist dress code meant to level—at least superficially—the racial and class differences of the large majority of Argentine society while more importantly simultaneously *othering* the Unitarist elite.

### ***2.1. Entering a New World Order: Of Essence, Appearance and Peinetones***

El Misántropo  
[...]  
Un necio, que ha viajado  
Como viaja una pipa,  
Su aire riojano oculta  
Con inglesa levita.  
Ha olvidado su idioma  
y en una charla mixta  
a cada cosa de Londres  
o a Alemania me cita.

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<sup>26</sup> Salvatore (Chapter 4 “Class by Appearance”, Wandering Paisanos 2003), and Andrews (The Afro-Argentines, 1980) have considered “traditional” dress and the plights of the Afro-Argentines at length. Yet, Salvatore’s analysis considers *paisano* dress mostly through legal transcripts while Andrews’ study is not particularly interested in the dress of the Afro-Argentine population. To date, there does not exist a comprehensive study of the importance of dress, tradition, and race in the periodicals of the Rosista period.

Aquí no hay cosas buenas,  
ni educación pulida,  
ni modas, ni paseos,  
ni gentes que sean finas.  
No hay lances amorosos,  
nadie se desafía...  
¡Vaya! Sin ir a Europa  
Se ignora lo que es vida.

(El Constitucional September 12,  
1827)

This poem serves as a point of departure when considering a major decision with which 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals and policy makers had to wrestle: what role should European cultural, political and economic models play in the construction of an Argentine Republic? Fashion, in this sarcastic poem, is the main avenue of expression for several key issues. First, the *riojano* clearly tries to cover-up his supposed *backward, American* identity through European dress and the selective forgetting of his native language. Second, the poem clearly expresses the opinion that the future, at least for those represented by the *riojano*—a provincial prototype clearly marked by his lack of cosmopolitan finesse—lie not in the recovery or exaltation of provincial and/or an assumed Argentine identity, but rather in Europe and the assimilation of European manners. Most importantly, there is no mention of any Spanish influence in the manners or clothing selections of the polished *riojano*. In this poem, Spanish colonial heritage had no place in the new Argentina. To the dismay of many, such as the anonymous author of the poem, the imitation of European models was leading to a lack of national pride of epidemic proportions.

In effect, a pressing issue facing Latin American political leaders and intellectuals after the independence period was how to enter into a new socio-political order that was no longer based on the Spanish monarchy. This is to say, how or whether to negotiate between previously established colonial paradigms and those considered to be modern (represented by Western

Europe, particularly England and France). On the surface, the options were clear-cut: the *desespañolización* of Latin America and therefore socio-cultural and politico-economic decolonization; blatant *americanismo*; or the imitation of European models. (González-Stephan, Fundaciones, 42)

These options, however, were not so clear-cut since socio-cultural and political ties to the Spanish monarchy were not as easily destroyed in reality as they were in theory and since the division between an outright *americanismo* and the imitation of European models was practically impossible.<sup>27</sup> Rather, the socio-political and economic features of 19<sup>th</sup> century nation building and modernization would acquire a more *hybrid* nature<sup>28</sup>: they would rely on several sources, both foreign and domestic, for inspiration. Because of the hybrid nature of Latin America's socio-cultural composition, the modernization of Latin America, a project strongly undertaken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, would result not in one all encompassing sense of modernity, but rather in multiple modernities. (Cornejo-Polar, Escribir en el aire: 190) Most importantly, the imposition of modernizing paradigms initiated by *letrado* elites resulted in a breach between what González-Stephan has aptly articulated as *essence* and *appearance*: what only appeared to be modernized was sufficient enough to “cover up” underlying socio-political and cultural issues of dependency on foreign models and the outright inappropriate nature of foreign models in the Latin American context. (Fundaciones, 42)

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<sup>27</sup> As Hunt's study of the French Revolution suggests, the transition between old and new regimes in most revolutionary contexts is never clear-cut and there is usually continuity between new and old orders. (Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution, 55)

<sup>28</sup> Cornejo Polar's development of *hibridez* in the context of Andean literature is central to this point. Polar examines how a *discourse of homogeneity* began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a response to the hybrid nature of the Andean region in terms of ethnicity, language and culture. (Escribir en el aire, 91) Polar's examination of hybridity in the Andean region can be applied to other contexts, such as 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine fashion since fashion became a cultural manifestation affected by the various racial, ethnic and political struggles of the period.



In the specific case of Argentina, one of the first outward manifestations in terms of fashion of these not so clear-cut boundaries and the discrepancies between *appearance* and *essence* can easily be traced to the peinetón. This headdress was a hybrid form of the original Spanish *peineta* and the French *chignon* and it appeared in the late 1820's and early 1830s.<sup>29</sup> The Argentine version of this large hairpiece was exaggerated in size since it could measure up to one yard in length and width. (West, Tailoring the Nation: 83) It would eventually become the object of satire in several lithographs and it would generate debate on the role of fashion in women's lives in the leading periodicals of the period.<sup>30</sup>

As a specifically Argentine fashion phenomenon, the peinetón represents an interesting juncture in terms of the political and socio-cultural moment in which it emerged. On the one hand, it is an almost grotesque form of the Spanish *peineta* which would therefore, in a satirical fashion, point to the rejection of the earlier Spanish model. (This would also echo the rejection of any Spanish influence on the riojano's clothing choice from the aforementioned poem.) Similarly, the modification of the original peinetón can be understood as one of the first manifestations of cultural independence from Spain.<sup>31</sup> West clearly states this:

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<sup>29</sup> The most comprehensive study of the Argentine peinetón to date is Regina West's unpublished dissertation Tailoring the Nation. The Narrative of Patriotic Dress in Nineteenth Century Argentina. West attributes the peinetón's hybrid nature to Spanish and French influences: it was a mixture between the Spanish *peineta* and the French *chignon* the latter of which "incorporated tortoise-shell combs that secured ornately women hair onto the top of a woman's head, its extended height leading to the style's portrayal as a hair fashion for giraffes." (Tailoring the Nation: 82) My study of the peinetón in this section intends to amplify and situate West's initial findings within the larger context of nation building and the assignation of appropriate gender roles after independence. Furthermore, this study seeks to further some of West's affirmations and to complement West's shortcomings.

<sup>30</sup> The most well known lithographs exaggerating the size of the peinetón and its effects on porteño life are contained in the series "Extravagancias de 1834" produced by C.H. Bacle.

<sup>31</sup> Several theorists have highlighted the endurance of Spanish fashion in Argentine dress well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Saulquin, La Moda; Cano Rossini, La mujer mendocina ) However, this tends to be true more of the provinces than of Buenos Aires. Spanish dress was replaced by

As an early nationalist response to foreign monarchical rule, the headdress had reflected women's desire to distance themselves from the customs of Spain. (Tailoring the Nation, 102)

While West's affirmation may seem logical at first glance, the cultural independence that the *peinetón* represents is however limited. What the *peinetón* most likely represents is a significant development in Argentine fashion history: the modification of the Spanish *peineta* results in a somewhat transcultured Argentine product that reconciles complete cultural independence and blatant imitation.<sup>32</sup> The most prominent studies on transculturation (Rama, La Ciudad Letrada ; Moraña, Políticas de la escritura) discuss the process in terms of narrative. As Moraña explains, in Rama's vision, the writers of transcultured narrative (the *transcultadores*) created the indispensable bridges from where regional cultures were "rescued" whereby the effects of modernization were, in a sense, mediated and whereby the hegemonic project of urban elites was modified. (Políticas de la escritura: 139) However, the concept of transculturation can easily be applied to other socio-cultural phenomenon such as fashion. While the *peinetón* was not derived from any indigenous article of clothing, it was however, a product formed from

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French and English fashions in Buenos Aires much earlier than in the provinces. The primacy of Buenos Aires over the provinces and its role as the focal point for development is a major issue concerning 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine socio-cultural and economic development. These points will be discussed below.

<sup>32</sup> Understood simply, transculturation (the combining of one or more elements, both indigenous and exogenous) points to a sort of cultural "plasticity" (Rama, La ciudad letrada, 1982) that resists changes produced by the entrance of modernity—understood in the most general sense of the term—into Latin America. The theory of transculturation suggests, at least in terms of literary production (in which Rama is most interested) that certain Latin American authors incorporate the "new"—meaning foreign influences—with the "old" (regional, indigenous modes of cultural production) to create a new and completely "genuine" Latin American product. While the concept was developed to articulate the entrance of modernity into Latin America with specific reference to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as Moraña suggests, as a "critical praxis" (Políticas de la escritura, 137) to highlight Latin America's alternatives to the destruction of the nation-state and dictatorial repression, the term should not be limited only to a 20<sup>th</sup> century practice. For a brief overview of the development of the term, see Moraña, Políticas de la escritura, page 144, footnote 1.

several exterior sources (particularly Spanish and French) and modified in the Argentine context.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the peinetón could best be understood as an Argentine example of “selective appropriation” (Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments) whereby certain markers or products considered “modern” (because of their West European origins) are appropriated by colonial and post-colonial peripheries in an attempt to “appear” transformed while maintaining—or in the case of Argentina, creating—a certain sense of individuality from colonial imposition.<sup>34</sup> Or perhaps the peinetón is one of the clearest examples illustrating the dialectic established by Gonzalez-Stephan: the gap between *essence* and *appearance* is part and parcel of 19<sup>th</sup> century modernization and nation building.

The most important point of interest in the case of the peinetón is that this was a product established and made popular by elite females, *for females*.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps for this reason writers and

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<sup>33</sup> Other articles of clothing however were developed from the mixing of European and indigenous dress (especially the attire of the typical Argentine *gaucho*.) These “fashions” however would never be accepted as *haute couture* and rather would come to signify provincial and/ or traditional identity. As I will explain below, Rosas was masterful in appropriating this type of dress for his political goals and social agendas. See Assunção’s Pilchas Criollas for a detailed explanation of *gaucho* dress.

<sup>34</sup> Chatterjee explains this concept in the context of Indian resistance to British colonization whereby colonial subjects created two domains, the “material” and the “spiritual”. In the “material” domain, “[...] Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated.” (The Nation and its Fragments, 6) However, the “spiritual” domain—which coincided with the domestic sphere—became the true site of Indian identity that bore the “[...] ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity.” (The Nation and its Fragments, 6) Thus, as an act of passive resistance to colonial rule, “selective appropriation” allowed for the maintenance of a pre-colonial cultural identity. Chatterjee also comments on the importance of dress for colonial Indian women since their dress became clear markers of national identity: “Once the essential femininity of women was fixed in terms of certain culturally visible spiritual qualities, they could to go schools, travel in public conveyances, watch public entertainment programs, and in time even take up employment outside the home. But the ‘spiritual’ signs of her femininity were now clearly marked—in her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanor, her religiosity.” (The Nation and its Fragments, 130)

<sup>35</sup> Several critics have rejected the idea that a male designer invented the peinetón. See especially Saulquin (La Moda en la Argentina). The most important point here is that the female acceptance of the peinetón made it popular. Some sources suggest that the peinetón became so popular that

artists alike expressed hostility toward the peinetón. It was too costly; it demanded too much attention; it distracted women from their domestic duties and most importantly, it limited male participation in the public sphere.<sup>36</sup> Consider the poem “Abajo peinetas!” (*La Gaceta Mercantil* January 28, 1833) where a male author complains about the effects of the peinetón:<sup>37</sup>

[...]  
Mujer hay que trabaja  
cuatro meses o cinco  
ayunando al traspaso  
y ayunando sus hijos,  
y sin ver que no tiene  
camisa ni corpiño,  
ni lumbre en la cocina  
ni sal para el hervido  
[...]  
Casi todas las modas,  
o fundado o fingido,  
tienen algún prestado

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it had to be manufactured *outside* of Argentina to keep up with demand. Ironically, the Argentine version of the peineta, used specifically and only in Argentina, was manufactured in France to be sold in Argentina. An article in *The British Packet* claims this to be true: “Nos informan que dado el *penchant* que existe en Buenos Aires por esos colosales peinetones, una cantidad de ellos ha sido traída de Francia, hechos expresamente para este mercado.” (22 de octubre de 1831 in *The British Packet*, de Rivadavia a Rosas, 1826-1832 pages 369-370) If this practice were true, it would eventually reverse as the French fashion industry developed and expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Entwistle (*The Fashioned Body*) and Perrot (*Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*)

<sup>36</sup> West explains: “At a time when the public sphere struggled with the anguish of civil war and frequent changes in political leadership, the comb represented the public redistribution of gender roles and deeply affected the way in which women were portrayed politically and poetically.” (*Tailoring the Nation*, 81) However, West stresses how the peinetón mostly affected women’s lives and their changing roles in public life. As I will argue below, the peinetón was scandalous not so much because it paid public attention to specifically *elite* women (West downplays the role of class and race in peinetón use), but rather because it appeared to interrupt male interaction in the public sphere. West attributes the peinetón with too much weight in the empowerment of early 19<sup>th</sup> century females, when in all likelihood, the “scandal” over the peinetón was more about how it affected men than about the liberties it afforded women.

<sup>37</sup> Most of the references on the *peinetón* used in this section can be found in Verdevoye’s *Costumbres y costumbrismo en la prensa argentina desde 1801 hasta 1834* pages 322-331. Regina West also studies several poems related to the peinetón in chapter three “Fashion as Metonymy” in *Tailoring the Nation*. West also offers a rather comprehensive appendix of relevant poems published in leading early 19<sup>th</sup> century periodicals.

que disculpa el capricho;  
mas esta, ciertamente  
por más que la examino,  
ni encubre alguna falta  
ni descubre atractivo.  
Solo sirve de estorbo  
de gasto y de martirio  
[...]  
Dichoso Adán que libre  
gozaste de paraíso  
sin que Eva te pidiese  
ni peineta ni rizos.

A similar critique of the peinetón written by “El Tacaño” (The Stingy Man”) is found in *El Censor Argentino* no. 57, July 4, 1834:

Pues peineta ha de haber, vive Dios y de moda, aunque el niño no vaya a la escuela, o que el marido esté descalzo, aunque no haya cómo pagar el alquiler de casa, aunque la señora esté entrampada con la lavandera, en la tienda, en la pulpería; aunque las medias y las camisas estén llenas de funcidos.

According to the authors of these fragments, the women who wear the peinetón use this fashion as a pretext to abandon the home and domestic duties and they subsequently financially ruin their husbands. In the case of the first poem, the term sacrifice (from the verb *ayunar*) is significant since it joins together several evils of the time period. First, the female is sacrificing her integrity by working outside of the home only to buy a peinetón (“Mujer hay que trabaja / cuatro meses o cinco”) and consequently in doing so she is sacrificing the well being of her children (“ayunando al traspaso / y ayunando sus hijos). Also, in her pursuit of fashion she is ignoring her duties in the kitchen since there is neither fire for the stove nor salt for the stew (“ni lumbre en la cocina / ni sal para el hervido”). In the end, the female is reduced to the biblical

figure of Eva: her weaknesses to and desires for fashion lead to the ultimate destruction of man (and future men).<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, these examples point to the role of the female not only as a real mother but also as a metaphorical mother-of-nation. The familial model became important in the 19<sup>th</sup> century precisely because the national struggles for independence and subsequent national identity formation threatened to disrupt traditional values and the place that the female occupied both in the private and public domains.<sup>39</sup> As Anthias and Yuval-Davis have pointed out, the roles for women during moments of national formation are usually clear-cut and prescriptive. (Woman-Nation-State, 7) Women who step out of such boundaries risk becoming the nation's "others".<sup>40</sup> The reproduction of future national citizens and the maintenance of the domestic sphere were priorities for the successful development of the nation,<sup>41</sup> since according to Anthias and Yuval-

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<sup>38</sup> Chambers explains that in other Latin American contexts, particularly theatre, women were ridiculed and made aware of the dangers they faced if they ventured into the public sphere. "In the years following independence, theater depicted home as the proper place for women. Plays, such as *Las convulsiones* by Luis Vargas Tejada (Colombia, 1828) and *Frutos de la educación* by Felipe Pardo y Aliaga (Peru, 1829), ridiculed intellectual women and dramatized the dangers posed to and by women in the public sphere." ("Letters and Salons", 57)

<sup>39</sup> Doris Summer clearly makes this point in her study of the relationship between national romances and the construction of citizenship. See Foundational Fictions. The National Romances of Latin America. As I will discuss below, this disruption of traditional family norms together with the political-economic upheavals of the period helps to solidify Hobsbawm's claims to the "invention of traditions" under periods of extreme socio-cultural and political turmoil. ("Introduction: Inventing Traditions")

<sup>40</sup> These "others", as González-Stephan explains, numbered quite high in the period after independence when national constitutions were written: "[...] prácticamente 90% de la población pasaba a convertirse en esa "otredad", bien fuese por razones de insolvencia económica [...] por insuficiencia étnica [...] por diferencia sexual (mujeres, homosexuales) y deficiencias físicas o mentales (los enfermos, ebrios, locos)" ("Las disciplinas escriturarias", 36). Women already bordered on "otherness", at least in terms of the law. Deviant behavior—such as stepping outside of prescribed gender roles—was not well tolerated by patriarchal societal norms.

<sup>41</sup> As I will discuss below, the reproduction of future national citizens was a major concern for the Generation of '37, especially Sarmiento and Alberdi both of whom were particularly concerned with the demographics of the developing Argentine nation. (Torrado, Historia de la familia, 129)

Davis, some of the most significant ways that women participate in national processes is through reproduction—both the physical reproduction of new national citizens and the ideological reproduction of proper values to offspring. (Woman-Nation-State, 7) The authors further explain:

Women are controlled not only by being encouraged or discouraged from having children who will become members of the various [...] groups within the state. They are also controlled in terms of the ‘proper’ way in which they should have them—i.e. in ways which will reproduce the boundaries of the symbolic identity of their group or that of their husbands. (Woman-Nation-State, 9)

Since female reproduction—both real and symbolic—can be closely linked to state sponsored projects, then a threat to family order (i.e. the dissolution of the nuclear family) could also be considered a threat to the order imposed by the state. The family, in all of late colonial and 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America, was often considered a metaphor for or an extension of a patriarchal state. Taylor (Magistrates of the Sacred)—with specific reference to the colonial period—discusses how the colonial system was based on the family metaphor, crowned with the “father King” and the “mother Church”. Socolow further explains the importance of the family to Latin American social organization:

The centrality of the family—the nuclear family and the extended kin group—to social organization was a Mediterranean cultural value that the Spanish and Portuguese transplanted to America. This importance of family meant that marriage, the institution that created new families, was viewed by church and state as crucial to an orderly social organization in the colonies. (The Women of Colonial Latin America, 60)

This paradigm did not change after the wars of independence since the organizing norms related to family life still followed the colonial order and viewing women as “citizenship machinery” still held an important sway in the patriarchal imagination. (Alexander and Mohanty, “Introduction”)<sup>42</sup> However, while colonial norms in terms of marriage and reproduction

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<sup>42</sup> The norms did not change until 1869 when the Civil Code (still in use today) was sanctioned. See Historia de la familia en la Argentina moderna (1870-2000) for a comprehensive analysis on the Argentine family.

remained intact, they were threatened by the chaos of the independence wars and by the fact that the state in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina was weakened by civil war (*Unitarios vs. Federales*).<sup>43</sup> Thus, the perceived dissolution of the nuclear family as an organizing factor in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine society became a major concern for intellectuals, politicians and leading public figures alike.<sup>44</sup>

While seemingly unrelated, often times fashion—as the satirical poems mentioned here illustrate—served as a way to *imagine* the respective roles that family members (and citizens of the nation) were to play and to *critique* those who stepped out of their roles however briefly. Indeed, domestic life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was destined to become a stage for the re-enactment of appropriate—or inappropriate—behavior. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century publications were clear on this point. For example, an anonymous writer in *La Argentina* was adamant about the role of women in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine society: women should shine through the family (i.e. as a mother and faithful wife) and not through any sort of participation in the public sphere. The writer explains:

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<sup>43</sup> The fear of the dissolution of the nuclear family was also extended to males. An article titled “Solteros” deemed single men useless to the country: “Muy mal estamos con esta clase de gente. No sirven á la patria, ni cuidan de sí mismos. La autoridad debería pensar seriamente en el destino que les ha de dar. Estamos tan convencidas de lo perjudiciales que son, que á nuestro juicio los escluiriamos de intervenir en los comicios públicos, los dedicariamos exclusivamente á la milicia, y á sufrir todas las cargas del Estado. El hombre casado es precismanete un defensor del órden. [...] Una muger virtuosa lo espera con mil caricias, los hijos le muestran el fruto de sus trabajos, y todo lo estimula á nuevas adquisiciones para no burlar las esperanzas de personas que tan vivamente interesan su corazon.” (*La Argentina* No. 4 Domingo 21 de noviembre de 1830)

<sup>44</sup> Aside from metaphorically representing a patriarchal social order, the creation of nuclear families for the elite—in colonial and also 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America—was also closely aligned to real socio-economic concerns. As Socolow explains in the context of colonial Latin America, marriage was a major driving force behind the unification of elite families and the perpetuation of elite rule: “For the elite of colonial Latin America marriage was part of a strategy employed in cementing family alliances and furthering family and kin interests. Marriage was used to create crucial social, political, and economic ties with individuals and groups seen as important for a family’s survival or to recruit members into an occupational elite.” (*The Women of Colonial Latin America*, 79)



Las señoras de nuestro país sobrepasando á las de todas las naciones en hermosura, debían tratar de escederlas en todas las bellas cualidades propias de su sexo, y distinguirse como tiernas madres, y fieles esposas más bien que como frenéticas partidarias. [...] En medio de su familia, es donde ha de brillar una mujer privada. (November 14, 1830)

Another article in the same publication furthers this argument. Here the anonymous author “El Dios Marte” responds to a previous article on fashion and he blames fashion and a lack of appropriate, gender specific education for the downfall of Argentine women. He highlights the case of a young woman who entered school with an already appropriate level of knowledge for her social position (she knew how to milk cows and harvest wheat—i.e. produce food for her future children). However, upon entering school, she learned French, acquired a taste for elegant dress and fell ill when her father would not give in to her fashion desires. In this author’s opinion, the superficiality of fashion and the uselessness of non-gender specific education lead women to ignore their obligations as mothers:

*Sra, editora Paisana querida. Tiene V. en mi concepto los cascos á la gineta, es mujer á la moda. Déjese V. de fruslerías, y vamos al grano. La educación de las niñas está muy descuidada. De nada sirve bordar y hablar Latin, si se ignoran las obligaciones de una madre de familia. Una pobre sale de nuestros colegios, llena de superficialidades, hará la suerte de un marquesito que no la admitirá para su esposa porque no tiene dinero, entretanto ni ella gustará, ni habrá zapatero que la quiera para su mujer, porque para tener señoras que manden y coman de valde, no se necesita apurarse. [...] La hija de Chingolo, que sabía ordeñar y sembrar trigo, vino al colegio, fue hablando frances, pidiendo ridículo y corsé, su padre no se lo dio, la muchacha se empezó á enfermar [...] La mujer aprenda á cuidar una casa, educar bien á sus hijos, dar buen ejemplo á su familia, que todo lo demás es peta. Nada hacemos con marquesas, mugeres son las que necesitamos. A dios charlatana, recibe un suspiro de tu adorador. *El Dios Marte* (January 30, 1831)*

Yet, other articles from the same period found some usefulness to fashion, as long as it did not interfere with the establishment of the family paradigm. For some, fashion and adornments represented the physical manifestation of interior qualities. The author of the following fragment quickly extends this metaphor to national identity: a country is much more

respectable when its inhabitants are properly housed and dressed. The anonymous writer from the publication *El Martir ó Libre* explained this position:

Una Republica que nace en el orbe político, que empieza á formar sus costumbres y sus gustos, debe medir la estensión de sus gastos con arreglo à sus recursos; los trages y los adornos de las habitaciones, son la muestra exterior de las calidades de las personas que las posen, y es tanto mas respetable un pais cuanta mayor es la magnificencia de sus moradores: sin embargo la ececiva profusion en los ciudadanos seria una ruina en las familias, al paso que la decencia sencilles y buen gusto real seria su merito, conciliando prudentemente la extensión de sus facultades con los deberes de su categoría. [...] Nada hay mas util para endulzar las costumbres y civilizar los modales de la juventud que el gusto de las modas, ellas al paso que estimulan á la industria y al trabajo fomentan el comercio del pais, clasifican gradualmente el carácter de las personas, y concluyen por hacer a todos aseados y atentos. (No. 9, July 17, 1830)

In this author's opinion, fashion is a clear way to "sweeten" and "civilize" Argentine youth:

Un clamor general se oye en todos tiempos con acentos lastimosos de los ancianos contra los jóvenes por las extravagancias de las modas, sin reparar que en aquella misma edad aquellos las usaban del mismo modo contra el torrente de sus mayores, y que esa variedad esta en razon de la mas o menos civilizacion del pais donde se cultivan, como cual quiera otro ramo de industria para la utilidad comun. [...] tal es el espiritu de critica que reina generalmente en las personas antiguas respecto de las modernas. (No. 9, July 17, 1830)

Here we see an early manifestation of the paradigm that would mark a large part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: civilization vs. barbarism (soon to be articulated by Sarmiento in *Facundo* 1845). Fashion was clearly becoming a way to imagine the appearance of a civilized and modern Argentina in the face of the *personas antiguas* still clinging to tradition. For this author, there is nothing more useful than fashion to stimulate industry and commerce and more importantly to "classify" the character of the inhabitants of the national space and to outwardly represent interior qualities. This quote therefore foreshadows what would become a raging war of images (Gruzinski, *Images at War*) between Unitarists and Federalists, whites and non-whites, elites and non-elites.

Returning to the peinetón, another point of conflict over its use was related to public space. Mattingly closely links the relationship between gender, clothing and public appearance:

First, gender, inscribed on and around women's bodies, was constructed largely in the visual impact created by their clothing and appearance. Second, gender aligned women with location, a specifically assigned 'sphere'. "(Mattingly, Appropriate[ing] Dress: 1)

The use of the peinetón appeared to blur the assigned sphere for women between public and private space and it certainly created the conditions necessary for the creation of a "third-space" (Masiello) so that 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine women were able to go beyond these prescriptive binaries. (Entre civilización y barbarie, 8). Perhaps it is for this reason that the peinetón caused such public scandal: it demanded public attention and it affected public life in very real, and perhaps more importantly, symbolic ways. To begin with, by using the peinetón the female was not outside of the economy, but rather she was participating in the economy and through consumption she was re-defining the parameters of an early modern identity. Also, since a booming middle class was being born out of mercantilism (Brown, A Socioeconomic History of Argentina) and the journalism industry was also rapidly growing, male *letrados* were quick to recognize and to capitalize on the potential of the literate, bourgeois woman: it was precisely the bourgeois woman who had the means to purchase peinetones. (Auza, La literatura periodística, Periodismo y feminismo, El Periodismo de la Confederación) While many journals criticized the new role of the female in public through the use of the peinetón, such criticism also afforded a reading public of females interested in the debates surrounding peinetón use. Many publications, as the excerpts I have selected show, recognized that the literate, consuming female was strategically located: as mother (or future mother) she could serve as an ideological transmitter of ideology and as consumer she could willingly purchase not only periodicals but also the additional products of "civilization" contained within them provided that she was effectively

persuaded. (Masiello Between Civilization and Barbarism, Anthias and Yuval-Davis Women-Nation-State) In addition, with the emergence of modern nationhood, caste and nobility no longer served as privileged markers of identity<sup>45</sup> and production/consumption became a fundamental area from which identity, affiliation and difference, class and status were negotiated and/ or consolidated. (Bourdieu in García Canclini, Consumidores y ciudadanos, 36)

On a similar note, West has linked the general disapproval of the *peinetón* to the fact that it called obvious attention to the female in an ever-changing public sphere. (Tailoring the Nation, 121)<sup>46</sup> In fact, the presence of the *peinetón* in public became so cumbersome (because of its size) that porteño women were able to mandate legal orders forcing men to give way. Saulquin explains:

[...] la cuestión es que los grandes peinetones llegaron a tal desmesura en sus proporciones que las mujeres que no querían resignar el paso en las angostas veredas porteñas, consiguieron que se dictara una ordenanza de policía reglamentando el derecho de paso a la mujer que caminaba por la mano derecha.” (Saulquin, La Moda en la Argentina, 42)<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Doris Sommer’s analysis of “foundational fictions” in terms of the need to root legitimacy in generative power as opposed to genealogy is an essential part of this process: “Without a proper genealogy to root them in the land, the creoles had at least to establish conjugal and then paternity rights, making a *generative* rather than a *genealogical* claim.” (Nation and Narration, 87)

<sup>46</sup> West refers to an ever-changing public sphere in terms of gender relations. These changes are representative of the changes also articulated by Landes’ study of women in the French Revolution whereby the bourgeois public sphere after 1789 became increasingly “masculinist”. See especially “Introduction” Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution.

<sup>47</sup> Also, as West mentions, one of the most obvious ways for males to combat the growing presence of the female in the public sphere was to link her to prostitution. The poem “Abajo peinetas!” (La Gaceta Mercantil January 28 1833) demonstrates this: “La que de la fortuna / goza el favor propicio / exita con su ejemplo / a la otra del vecino./ Pues vanidad y envidia / son grandes incentivos, / que no miden distancias / ni observan equilibrio./ Y así, la ilustre dama, / la de linaje indigno, / la que su honor conserva; / la que lo ha prostituido / no forman diferencias / de clases y destinos, / si el respeto y la altura / por las peinetas mido.” In the case of this poem, class has nothing to do with the final outcome of a woman’s life since fashion desire is much more powerful.

Thus, to a certain extent, the peinetón did allow elite porteño women to move beyond the boundaries of traditional modesty norms inherited from Argentina's colonial past. (Socolow, The Women of Colonial Latin America) An almost grotesque extension of the female body, the peinetón's emergence interestingly coincided with a marked interest in the body and the re-definition of the body's political relationship to the state. As Charnon-Deutsch and Labanyi point out, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is important in the Western world since certain scientific and economic advancements in Europe helped to redefine the public and private spheres. ("Introduction", Culture and Gender, 2) Additionally, nineteenth century science and its relationship to the female body were evolving.<sup>48</sup> What clothed the female body also came under close scrutiny in the 19<sup>th</sup> century since it witnessed a marked shift in importance away from male dress to female dress. This shift was deemed the "Great Renunciation" and it was characterized by a noticeable increase in simplicity for male dress.<sup>49</sup> Men adopted the somber suit—still a mainstay of

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<sup>48</sup> Medical "discoveries" such as the differentiation from the previously established one-sex system to a two-sex system began changing attitudes towards the connection between sex and gender in the Western scientific/philosophical tradition. Thomas Laqueur's text Making Sex sheds light on this important shift that essentially created the sex/gender system. Previously the one-sex system—in place until "sometime in the eighteenth century" (149)—dictated the differentiation of males and females based on gender differences rather than anatomical sexual differences since females were assumed to possess an inverted penis and testicles. (62) However, the two-sex system differentiated males and females based on their sexual differences since males and females were recognized as possessing two different anatomical structures. The result, for Laqueur, is obvious: "Sex then, as today, determined status, gender." (139) Laqueur's analysis serves to show the relationship between bodies, culture/politics and science and how cultural beliefs and/or political necessities explicitly determine the function of science when considering the body. Therefore, it is not surprising that the control of women's bodies and sexualities became a central concern of many states. This observation can be connected to the state for the state provides a similar exercise of power over the female body: "[...] the state engages in an almost microscopic surveillance of women's bodies and continues to bring more and more areas of daily life under its jurisdiction, even when it lacks the capacity or authority to do so successfully." (Alexander and Mohanty, "Introduction", xxiii)

<sup>49</sup> This shift is witnessed in the dress habits of the emerging male bourgeoisie. One should not forget however that between the aristocrat of the *ancien régime* and the new bourgeois, the dandy also stands out as an important figure in men's fashion history. Entwistle, following

contemporary male dress—while women’s fashion became increasingly complicated, cumbersome and limiting. Entwistle not only links this to the Industrial Revolution but also to the rise of democracy in Western Europe:

The cries of democracy came from a bourgeoisie who had to work for a living, whose wealth was not the product of inheritance but their own labour. [...] A renunciation of ‘decadent’ plumage on the part of the bourgeois male signaled one’s commitment to a life of industry, sobriety and work as opposed to a life of aristocratic idleness, sloth and leisure. (The Fashioned Body, 154)

Additionally, as Veblen long ago suggested, idleness and leisure became increasingly associated with the female as so too did extravagant dress. The appearance of the crinoline and the reappearance of the corset in the 19<sup>th</sup> century certainly attest to the fact that female clothing became not only increasingly elaborate but inhibiting as well. (The Theory of the Leisure Class)

However, with the growing complexity of the relationship between the public and the private realms and with the increasing importance placed upon female dress as a symbolic show of male potency, female participation in the public sphere was increasingly limited to display (such as the Sunday promenade) and not to the functional participation in the emerging public sphere of politics and public opinion. (Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 7)<sup>50</sup> Hence, the *peinetón* represented a sort of anomaly: it was overtly public but limiting,

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Baudelaire’s lead, describes the dandy: “As a figure who made it his occupation to be a man of leisure, who prided himself on his aesthetic superiority, seeking distinction through the exercise of his exquisite taste, the dandy is a contradictory character, part modern hero, part aristocrat.” (The Fashioned Body, 127) The figure of the dandy played an important role in shaping the opinions of early Argentine intellectuals, especially Domingo F. Sarmiento.

<sup>50</sup> The relationship between women and the Argentine state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became increasingly difficult. As opposed to the colonial period, the rights of women under the new Republic were drastically limited. Especially after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a woman’s right to work, to own land, to manage money and to claim rights to her children was significantly limited. Donna Guy explains: “The enactment of new national laws after 1852 did little to protect women’s legal right to work. [...] the civil code enforced after 1871 severely restricted women’s civil rights, especially if they were married or had not attained majority. Considered minors, they were completely under the control of husbands or fathers and technically could not

it permitted female consumption which only ultimately served to boast male potency, it mandated additional space for females in the public arena while simultaneously inhibiting functional participation because of its size, and it called attention to the female body in the public sphere while it also served to spark debate on the “true” purpose of the female (domesticity, motherhood, modesty, etc.) as opposed “public” women. The peinetón would also later on offer a space to voice opinion in national politics since the famous slogans supporting Rosas’ *Federation*, “¡Viva la Confederación Argentina!” and “¡Mueran los Salvajes Unitarios!” were often engraved on the elaborate headpieces. (West, Tailoring the Nation, 101) Some peinetones also contained engraved centerpieces containing the profile of Rosas. Once again, however the peinetón serves an ambiguous role: those women who engraved such slogans on their headpieces had little choice but to support Rosas.

While it may be the case that the peinetón permitted porteño women a certain public presence—if not always a political voice—it is often overlooked that the peinetón had perhaps more significant implications for males in the public sphere. In most of the satirical lithographs and sarcastic poems of the period, it appears that the difficulties the *peinetón* caused for *males* in the public arena were just as problematic. Consider C.H. Bacle’s well-known lithographs whereby those most affected by the *peinetón* are the male figures. In “Peinetones en casa”, for example, there is a male figure that is widening the doorway with a sort of sledgehammer and in this representation the male is characterized in an almost subservient position to the female who is trying to pass through the doorway with her headpiece. Here, the *peinetón* not only symbolically but also quite literally leads to the destruction of the home while it also subjects the male to an unpleasant task and menial labor (something despised in Spanish cultural norms for

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manage their own money or property; nor could they work without patriarchal permission. (Sex and Danger: 44)

men of the upper classes). A different lithograph “Peinetones en la calle de la Victoria”—while almost too obvious for its critique of women in the public sphere—more directly represents the “dangers” of the peinetón to men. The viewer immediately notices that even though the women pass by with ease, those affected are the males. This is quite indicative of the legal mandate passed that permitted women to occupy additional space in public. On the far right, the viewer sees a male bending over as if mortally wounded in combat, while the figure directly to his left appears to suffer from impalement. To the far right, the viewer sees a male figure contemplating safe passage through the hallway while yet another to his right is pushed off the road. “Peinetones en la Alameda”, yet an additional example, offers a similar representation. Here, the males are practically lifted into the air by the “sail” formed with the peinetón and wrap that usually accompanied it. Clearly, in these representations male circulation in the public sphere is interrupted which also interrupts an important step in the construction of a modern *bourgeois* identity: the development of “arenas of public discourse” from which the female is usually excluded. (Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, 70) Fraser explains this “arena” following Habermas:

It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it a [*sic*] site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. (“Rethinking the Public Sphere”, 70)

In the cases presented by Bacle’s lithographs, any sort of interaction between males in the public sphere is interrupted by the dangers of the *peinetón*. Another representation, “Peinetones en el teatro” is distinct in its representation since here men are prohibited from enjoying the benefits of culture. And finally in “Peinetones en el baile” the peinetón clearly leads to the ridicule of men in the public sphere as the central male figure loses his hairpiece (indeed a symbolic castration!) and the woman on the right appears to be laughing at him.



Another alarming feature of the peinetón to 19<sup>th</sup> century males was the apparent feminization of the public sphere caused by the increasing amount of attention paid to women's fashion in the early 19th century. This is due largely in part to the changes in the fashion industry occurring at the turn of the century. While the emergence of fashion as a discursive mode in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—both in Europe, particularly France<sup>51</sup>, and in Argentina—is intricately bound to the emergence of modernity and the shift to capitalist modes of production (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body), there were several changes in fashion history that led to this 19th century culmination. First, the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe—deemed the classical period of fashion (Tseëlon, “Fashion and the Signification of Social Order”)—witnessed the increased development of trade and the relaxation of sumptuary laws that previously prohibited non-nobles the use of certain colors and fabrics. Since the emerging bourgeoisie began participating more actively in “aristocratic dress”, these four centuries also simultaneously witnessed the bourgeoisie's use of different fashions indicative of status to challenge the traditional feudal order. It is not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century however that fashion gained a further reaching scope when coupled with the Industrial Revolution and with the introduction of fashion advertising through periodicals. (Entwistle The Fashioned Body , Perrot Fashioning the Bourgeoisie; Wilson Adorned in Dreams) One of the most important links between the increased production of periodicals—especially fashion periodicals—and print-capitalism as a tool in the formation of nationalism is the simultaneous emergence of “ready-made” fashion and fashion paraphernalia in

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<sup>51</sup> Besides the numerous fashion magazines that were published in France's 19<sup>th</sup> century (such as *La Mode* 1829, *La Sylphide* 1839, *Le Moniteur de la Mode* 1843 and *La Mode Illustrée* 1860 among hundreds of additional publications) other prominent French literary figures were preoccupied with fashion's new role in modern life. Consider for example Balzac's Traité de la vie élégante, Baudelaire's preoccupation with the artist-flâneur's attire (see Steele 1988:90) Flaubert's Madame Bovary, or Bertall's La Comédie de notre temps who was most preoccupied with men's dress. For an excellent overview of 19<sup>th</sup> century French fashion narrative see Steele, chapter 5 “The Black Prince of Elegance” in Paris Fashion, 1988.

Europe as commodities for mass consumption. (Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie, 41) Now, not only was fashionable clothing mass-produced but also periodicals began mass-producing images and patterns that the emerging bourgeoisie could easily reproduce.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mass production and mass consumption of fashion garments and paraphernalia (i.e. fashion magazines, newspapers, pictorial representations and patterns) became clear markers of distinction and individuality *at the same time* that they signaled uniformity and a sense of belonging to a certain community of consumers and a certain class marked by and accepting of similar ideologies. (Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie; Steele Paris Fashion) As Breward suggests, this invasion of fashion into 19<sup>th</sup> century public life—made possible in large part through journalism and the “great renunciation” of male fashions—led to a drastic feminization of the public sphere precisely because it confused women’s role in public spaces: once again through consumption the female became an active participant in the economy. (Breward The hidden consumer: 3) Breward explains:

The concurrent expansion of a metropolitan department-store culture, backed by the growth of advertising and family magazines who promoted luxury as a virtue, has led many recent commentators to make grand claims for a new feminised public sphere, revolving around the act of acquiring fashionable goods. (The hidden consumer: 4)

An article titled “Caprichos de las modas” from *El Iris* (April 22 1833) attests to this growing preoccupation of the feminization of the male:

La mayor tirania de la moda es haberse introducido en los términos de la naturaleza, la cual por todo derecho debiera estar exenta de su dominio. [...] Lo que es sumamente reprehensible, es que se haya introducido en los hombres el cuidado del afeite, propio hasta

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<sup>52</sup> Perrot explains the link between 19<sup>th</sup> century developments in the garment industry—made possible by the Industrial Revolution—and looking *bourgeois*: “The rapid growth of the textile industry, the sizeable development of the ready-made industry, the unprecedented impact of the department stores that distributed the product of that industry, the parallel decline of the centuries-old trade in used clothes, and the improvement in living standards made possible the process that eventually made everyone look like a bourgeois.” (Fashioning the Bourgeoisie, 4)

ahora privativamente de las mugeres. Oigo decir que ya los cortesanos tienen tocador, y pierden tanto tiempo en él, como las damas.

In this fragment, the male is considered *feminine* in his use of a dressing table and because he spends too much time preparing himself. In other cases, however, what seemed most threatening about fashion was that *men* were not able to control its whimsical and arbitrary nature. This same writer from *El Iris* (1833) expresses his disapproval of fashion for this very reason:

La moda se ha hecho un dueño tirano, y sobre tirano, importuno, que cada día pone nuevas leyes, para sacar cada día nuevos tributos; [1] [...] Antes, la nueva invención esperaba a que los hombres se disgustasen de la antecedente, y a que gastasen lo que se había arreglado a ella: atendíase al gusto, y se escusaba el gasto; ahora todo se atropella: se aumenta infinito el gasto, aun sin contemplar el gusto. (*El Iris* April 22, 1833)

Here it is fashion that serves as the *true* tyrant (ironically Rosas would soon assume the position of national tyrant) and fashion is perceived to make laws, certainly taking power—at least power over female consumers—out of the hands of men. Yet, another article, while offering advice on proper clothing care, implicitly ridicules the steps that men now take to conserve their wardrobes, since for many men fashionable clothing was very expensive and not easily replaceable. Interestingly, the author compares the care of clothing to the military practice of taking care of one's weapon:

No puede negarse que la mitad de lo que esteriormente vale el hombre está en la tienda, como suele decirse, o en el vestido; es igualmente cierto que por legítima consecuencia debemos cuidarlos para que duren, especialmente lo que no pueden ejercer sus generosos rasgos en pro de tenderos y sastres [...] Ahora bien según observaciones hechas por el resquicio de la puerta del tocador de algunos jóvenes de buen tono, para quitarse la levita o frac bajo las mismas miras económicas, se practica una especie de evolución militar en 4 tiempos, como antiguamente el echarse armas al hombro a saber: Uno, se impele con ambas manos la parte superior del frac o levita desencajándolo de sobre los hombros y colodrillo, y quedando en posición pendiente hacia atrás. Dos, con otro impulso dado en las solapas bajan las mangas hasta el codo. Tres, la mano derecha tira por detrás de la espalda la extremidad de la manga izquierda. Cuatro, igual maniobra hace la mano izquierda tirando la manga de la derecha, y queda la pieza en dicha mano izquierda, casi doblada y en disposición de tenderla en los brazos de un sofá, sin que pierda nada de su

inviolable elegancia y bellas formas, debidas a ballenas, algodones y otros tentemozos de esta especie. (*La Gaceta Mercantil* January 10, 1832)

In this case, high fashion has replaced weaponry in terms of public importance. Here the male is reduced to clothing care at a time when not only were colonial standards of male virility still important in identity construction, but also when national politics and national dilemmas (the growing hostility between Unitarists and Federalists, threats of foreign invasion and territorial disputes, and the problem of hostile Indigenous tribes) clearly demanded attention.

The previously mentioned poem “¡Abajo peinetas!” (*La Gaceta Mercantil* January 28 1833) highlights a different sort of *feminization* of the male:

[...]  
Ni ya puede en los bailes  
lucir el atractivo  
en arcos y figuras  
de diferente giro:  
que al alto balconaje  
los moños y atavíos  
amenazan tropiezos  
con riesgo del bolsillo;  
y hay militar valiente  
que tiembla en tal conflicto  
de una peineta rota  
más que de un basilisco.

In this case, the male is not *feminized* by his interest in fashion, but rather it is fashion and in particular the cost of the peinetón, that causes fear—clearly a feminine attribute—in the bravest of soldiers. The implications for post-revolutionary Argentina couldn’t be more obvious: if fashion could easily defeat even the bravest of soldiers, Argentina would be rendered defenseless in the face of this fashion invasion.

The topic of fashion did however open an avenue of expression for clandestine male writers who were quick to take advantage of a growing group of female consumers. The case of

the periodical *La Argentina* represents the best example.<sup>53</sup> The selections quoted above offer proof that this publication often used fashion as a pretext not only to reinforce the role of the female in the home but also to critique the political atmosphere of the moment leading up to Rosas' dictatorship. Fashion became a meeting ground between sexual politics—i.e. the politics of reinforcing women's role in the domestic sphere—and the politics of constructing a national identity.

This avenue of expression also offered some interesting rebukes to the poetry published by males against peinetón use. On February 15<sup>th</sup> 1833, *La Gaceta Mercantil* published a reply to the poem “¡Abajo peinetas!” whereby the anonymous author “Mil damas agraviadas” (speaking on behalf of a thousand offended women) offered a poem titled “Represalia del sexo femenino al Poeta oriental que desea ver las peinetas abajo. Marcha bélica.” Strategically relying upon military metaphor, the poem begins with a call to arms, so to speak, since women's right to use the peinetón have been trampled upon:<sup>54</sup>

A las armas corramos, amigas,  
Nuestros fueros hollados se ven,  
Al poeta oriental atacemos  
Y a sus huestes no demos cuartel.  
Coro

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<sup>53</sup> There appears to be disagreement as to whether this publication was edited by a male or female. West suggests that the editor was female. (*Tailoring the Nation*, 89) However, Auza—whose information is based on Antonio Zinny's analysis—affirms that the editor was indeed a male, Manuel de Irigoyen. Auza explains: “La investigación en torno a la identidad de la supuesta redactora concluye con una respuesta pero también con un desencanto, pues tras las columnas impresas no se oculta una mujer, sino un hombre.” (*Periodismo y feminismo*, 23) This study follows Auza's lead in considering the editor to be Manuel Irigoyen and not an anonymous female. It is certainly important that Manuel Irigoyen would also become one of the main sponsors—through journalism—of Rosas' Federation. (Lynch, *Juan Manuel de Rosas*, 190)

<sup>54</sup> It is unclear whether this poem was truly written by a female. In any case, through circulation, it certainly offered at least the *appearance* of a female group united in its interests. As we have seen in the case of *La Argentina* it was very common for men to publish as if they were women. For more information see Auza *Periodismo y feminismo en la Argentina: 1830-1930*.

Él provoca a la guerra, atrevido,  
Prodigando epítetos, sin cuentos;  
A pasados, presentes, futuras,  
Y de locas nos trata insensato!

[...]

The poem then proceeds to dialogue on certain topics present in the aforementioned poems/fragments:

no es impropio en las damas el brillo  
De diamantes, collares, cadenas,  
Mas un hombre *atabiado*, es *chocante*,  
E irrisible se tome esa penas.

Coro

Los anillos en manos que deben  
Empuñar el fusil o la espada,  
Al desprecio provocan sin duda  
De la viuda, soltera y casada.

Coro

Es preciso que sea muy fatua  
La muger que de un hombre adornado  
Forme juicio prudente y no espere  
Que el *Monito* le salga...castrado.

As “mil damas agraviadas” explains, adornment, at least for women, isn’t at all inappropriate. The author is clear on the role of fashion for men however: rings should never be worn on the hands (of men) that should only be handling weapons of war. Again, the woman must be careful about just *how* much importance she places on her diamonds, necklaces and chains, since a very ridiculous and superficial woman (*fatua*) runs the risk of not recognizing that her equally narcissistic partner might just be castrated! The feminization of the male due to fashion, and even the risk of his complete castration by his interest in fashion, takes center stage in this sarcastic poem. The author continues to critique the common opinion that it is only women who pursue their fashion desires:

[...]

Ved amigas a un hombre parado  
(Y si es flaco, ¡más lindo será!)  
Con los muslos formando canutos  
Y las piernas de Guasipicuá.

Coro

Dice el *hombre* que del alimento  
Os priváis por comprar la peineta;  
Registrad los bolsillos de muchos  
Y hallaréis que no tienen *peseta*.

Coro

El sombrero de felpa lustroso  
Mucho fraque, cadenas, botones,  
El lavado se debe y el sastre  
Por cobrar anda los calzones.

Coro

La camisa de lienzo grosero,  
Un pedazo de fino en el frente,  
Los cuellitos postizos muy tiezos;  
Y adiosito, ya soy un paquete.

Coro

El reloj de aparente figura  
Anda siempre también ordenado  
Que por falta de *monis se dice*  
No anda...o se ha quedado.

[...]

In the case mentioned here, the male is equally as guilty as the females charged by previous newspaper articles and poems. While males often criticize fashion for placing women outside of traditional spaces and occupations and thus for the ultimate destruction of the home, the author here argues that men are equally guilty since they spend just as much time (and apparently money) on their appearances. If there is no “wood for the fire”, or “salt for the stew” (“Abajo peinetas!” *La Gaceta Mercantil* January 28, 1833), clearly it is because there is little money left in men’s pockets.

The author ends with a comical reply to the commentary that women who pursue their fashion desires are reminiscent of Eve. The author states that while it may be true that Adam was happier since he didn’t have to pay for and put up with a peinetón, so too was Eve much

happier since she didn't have to deal with a "paquete" (the *dandy*)! Thus, this author seeks to find a common ground where men and women are equally responsible for the excesses of fashion (be it the use of the peinetón or the frac), but she/he also finishes by ultimately blaming the peinetón rage on men since they produce it and offer it to the female public:

Si de Adán fue la suerte, que Eva,  
Peinetón y añadidos no usara  
Más feliz Eva fue, que no tuvo  
Un *paquete* que la molestara.  
Coro

En la moda de los peinetones  
La ambición de los hombres se muestra  
Pues son ellos los que la fabrican;  
¡Paguen ellos! La culpa no es nuestra.

[...]

There was however one woman who spoke out on early 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion (especially its excesses) in her short-lived periodical *La Aljaba*. This was Petrona Rosende de Sierra and she was the only female of the period known to have published her own newspaper.<sup>55</sup> Fashion for this female editor certainly became a meeting ground between sexual politics and the socio-political landscape of the early 1800s. By approaching fashion from a conservative view point and my reinforcing traditional gender roles (while she herself was certainly breaking them), Rosende de Sierra was able to open up a small space for herself in an overwhelmingly male sphere of journalism and she was able to dialogue with the major debates concerning her period, including Rosismo.

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<sup>55</sup> Auza explains that the editor of the publication offered little information about her true identity for the obvious reason of wanting to avoid harassment. However, through Antonio Zinny, historiographers of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine journalism have been able to verify that *La Aljaba* was indeed published by Petrona Rosende de Sierra, a native of Uruguay. See pages 142-144 Auza, [Periodismo y feminismo](#).



First, Rosende de Sierra was consistent in her support of motherhood (which would become a common point of departure for later female publicists, especially Juana Manso). By reinforcing woman's central role as a mother, Rosende de Sierra was able to enter the public world of letters without major harassment from her contemporaries and without destabilizing patriarchal norms. The most important slogan best representing her stance would become "¡Buena madre; tierna esposa; y virtuosa ciudadana!!" (No 8, 10 de diciembre de 1830) Here, motherhood, wifedom, and citizenship all converge: only a good wife and mother can be a good citizen, hence for Rosende de Sierra the role of the female in the process of nation formation is prescriptive and non-threatening to the traditional order of early post-colonial Argentine society. Also, this author's emphasis on the role of the mother as a transmitter of ideology (proper values, etc.), served to reinforce the idea, time and again, that it is the mother's responsibility to teach the perils of vice and greed. What is more, almost mirroring a previous cited fragment (*La Argentina*, November 14, 1830), she reminds her readers that it is in the home where the female shines brightest. On December 3, 1830 she wrote:

[...] debe la madre desde ese momento hacer que sus hijas aborrezcan al vicio, huyan de las que los tienen; mas que, las compadezcan y hagan todo el bien que les sea posible. [...] A la verdad, que no puede la majestad de una muger ostentarse nunca con mayor dignidad: no, nunca la muger está mas bien colocada: nunca brilla con mayor esplendor la tea de sus prerrogativas que en el trono doméstico, representando en él, el asilo de las virtudes, por el cetro que tiene en sus manos simbolizado en la moral y la religion: ¡cetro invencible!! que no será quebrantado con toda la fuerza de los vicios.... ¡Qué hermosa sería la sociedad si fuese decorada en su interior, por cuadros tan agradables!!! (*La Aljaba* no. 6)

Unlike some previous male writers (such as the anonymous writer from the publication *El Martir ó Libre* No. 9, July 17, 1830) however, Rosende de Sierra insists that the interior qualities of the national space are those that matter more than the exterior show of splendor or civilization. This would also show itself to be true in her articles on luxury or the excesses of

high fashion. In an article from December 3, 1830 titled “Lujo” she begins by placing fashionable (and by extension lazy) women’s honor in question since they appear to cause the demise of families and since they paralyze commerce by entering into too much debt:

¡Qué honorífico, que digno de alabanza sería para las señoras esperar siempre de sus esposos el tono que deban tener sus adornos! y que de sus modestos labios se oyeran las siguientes palabras (cuando algunas de las *milenarias* le echasen en rostro, que su traje no era á la moda *tal*, ó *cual*, “mi esposo no es afecto á esa ó á aquella moda; no gusta de las modas que arruinan las familias; y yo soy de su opinion:” que á otra se le oyera contestar á las personas que de puro ignorantes y ociosas quieren gobernar las casas ajenas, y hacer *de un loco ciento*; “yo no usaré modas que pongan con el tiempo á mi esposo á las puertas de la deshonra; no quiero verlos cargar el enorme peso de las ditas: no usaré modas que paralicen las especulaciones de su comercio, al contrario las fomentaré con mi economía, y con mi industria. ¿De qué me servirá lucir ahora, derrochando lo que en la edad mas avanzada he de necesitar precisamente, para vivir con decencia?” ¡Ah! ¡qué corona tan luminosa cercaría la frente de una esposa que asi raciocinase!! (*La Aljaba* No. 6)

As Rosende de Sierra explains here, if only women were able to rationalize as in the exemplary (and imaginary) cases she offers to her readers, then the debates over fashion and excess (including perhaps the peinetón) would be practically inexistent and the family unit would be safeguarded from danger. This again is in the hands of the mother as the all-important teacher of values:

[...] ¿Como podria esperarse que una muger se duela de los sudores que vierte el hombre para conseguir la subsistencia de una crecida familia, y de los compromisos en que podria colocarlo la falta de orden y economía, si nunca oyó de la boca de su madre, de que modo debia conducirse en su estado de casada? .... ¿Si jamás vió ni oyó otro ejemplo que el de continuas guerrillas y riñas, causadas por las aspiraciones desmedidas de sobresalir á otras, en los adornos y las galas, y querer alternar con las personas mas acaudaladas de su tiempo? .... Sería pretender un imposible querer que los hijos del cangrejo anden al contrario que el padre. Por esto una madre, que lo sea en toda forma, debe poseerse bien del lugar que ocupa, y evitar que sus hijos la acusen de ser la causa de su desgracia. (*La Aljaba*, December 3, 1830, no. 6)

Rosende de Sierra criticizes those mothers who teach their children improper values concerning adornment, excess and sumptuary competition.<sup>56</sup> She is steadfast in maintaining this rather conservative position since it certainly boosted her popularity among her male contemporaries. As proof of this, she was sure to include praise for her conservative views on the excesses of luxury in the *correspondencia* section of her magazine evidenced by her publication of a letter titled “Los 10 esposos que os respetan como mereceis y B.V.P. ”. Beginning with a battle call for Rosende de Sierra to continue her war against vice and laziness (caused largely in part by fashion), part of the letter reads:

Batid, valiente Aljaba, todos los vicios; atacad el ocio, la murmuracion que es el vicio de que mas adolecen las mugeres ignorantes; ese enemigo que ya habeis empezado á combatir, no lo dejeis respirar; ponedle sitio á la plaza en que se ha atrincherado, hostilizad de diario, y lograreis hacerle capitular; os hablo del *destructor lujo*; no ceseis en vuestro empeño aunque haya aun quien le de armas, *por la prensa*, contrariando en ello los buenos principios. (*La Aljaba*, December 7, 1830, No. 7)

Even as this author still emphasizes the central role of motherhood in female education, she does however use her conservative stance on fashion to oppose certain points of a gender specific education such as sewing and those other abilities that allow women to shine in society, but not necessarily in the domestic realm as wives and daughters. She explains:

Es un error el pensar que la educacion solamente consiste en poseer habilidades para lucir en la sociedad. Una niña que lee, escribe, borda, toca, canta, y baila; con la posesion de esos adornos no se crea educada; esa habilidades hacen lo que los rivetes, ó guarniciones

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<sup>56</sup> In another article from December 17, 1830 titled “Vanidad”, the author offers similar advise to readers suggesting that vane people are usually hated by their peers: “Las personas que se dejan dominar por la vanidad, son al fin muy desgraciadas: mientras poseen recursos para alimentarla en nada piensan mas que deslumbrar con un brillo aparente: [...] Las personas vanas son generalmente aborrecidas de sus iguales, asi como de sus inferiores; ellas no hallan en la adversidad quien las compadezca ni socorra en su miseria, y sí, ven escrito en los semblantes de los que antes despreciaban, el secreto placer de verse en cierto modo vengados de los ultrajes que antes sufrieron vanidad y petulancia: generalmente este es el tiempo en que se vuelven mas insoportables las gentes vanas, entonces suponen liberalidades que nunca tuvieron; caridad que nunca ejercieron, y todos merecen el nombre de ingratos, aun en medio de la miseria hallan siempre el medio de dar alimento á su loca fantasia.” (*La Aljaba* No. 10)

en los vestidos, que no son los que cubren la desnudez: nada será una niña con todos esos adornos si no conoce de que modo ha de desempeñar sus deberes en la sociedad; la que no sabe como debe ser hija, no sabrá ser madre ni esposa: las obligaciones de hija no las poseerá solo con saber que las personas que la alimentan y con quienes vive con sus padres [...]. (*La Aljaba* December 14, 1830, No. 9)<sup>57</sup>

While Rosende de Sierra's conservative stance to boost male support may not be surprising (given the hostile climate to women writers of the period), what is however most intriguing about this early 19th century publication is the attitude with which the author enters into political debate. Surprisingly, this author did not appear to support Rosas' growing *Federalista* movement even though her magazine was published through the official Rosista press (*la Imprenta del Estado*) from which other Rosas supporters (such as Pedro de Angelis) launched their all-out campaign in support of the emerging leader. (Auza Periodismo y feminismo, 143) The first article concerning politics, titled "Deber de las damas argentinas con respecto á la sagrada causa y engrandecimiento de su patria", appears on December 28, 1830 and it calls on women of Buenos Aires and the interior provinces to unite against the Unitarist/Federalist conflict that was dividing the region:

¡Sexo influyente!!! ha llegado el momento mas crítico, y mas oportuno para manifestar lo que podeis sobre el corazon de los hombres. ¡Argentinas de todos los pueblos del interior! con vosotras hablo, compatriotas cordobesas, tucumanas, salteñas, santiagueñas, y todas, unid vuestros ruegos con las porteñas; postrémonos todas antes los hombres, alzemos nuestras manos, lloremos; .....federales y unitarios queden desarmados por nuestras suplicas; y por nuestras lagrimas, sean enmohecidos los filos de sus espadas: todos llenos de un mismo sentimiento; todos poseídos de unos mismos deseos, sean presentados por nosotras en el templo de la reconciliación [...] (*La Aljaba*, No. 13)

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<sup>57</sup> Auza also offers an explanation for Rosende de Sierra's conservative stance on female education: "Se ve así que *La Al jaba* trataba de incorporar una concepción integral de la educación atendiendo al desenvolvimiento de la virtud, de la moral, de la religiosidad y del cultive de la inteligencia personal de la mujer como una manera de lograr su perfección como ser humano. La ignorancia, la ociosidad, la frivolidad o la mera habilidad manual a que se reducía el catálogo educativo de su época, constituía el blanco de las críticas de la señora de Sierra a lo largo de todos los números de su revista, mas no por malos en sí, sino por insuficientes." (Periodismo y feminismo, 151)

Rosende de Sierra's call for women of all provinces to come together and form a united front in the face of political factionalism marks the important articulation of an (female) imagined community of national participants. Additionally, as Masiello explains, it wasn't casual that women eventually enter 19<sup>th</sup> century political life in Argentina since for many women the end to political unrest was the necessary condition for female emancipation (however said emancipation was understood by particular female participants in public life):

Si bien es cierto que Sarmiento es la voz dominante del siglo XIX argentino, ya que arma el proyecto nacional de mayor envergadura, habría que considerar también la crítica del rosismo ofrecida por la voz femenina. En ese campo, las mujeres se declaran en contra de las guerras internas y celebran, después de Caseros, el inicio de la democracia. Para ellas, emancipar a la patria es condición previa de la emancipación de la mujer. La mujer y el espacio público, 9)

Unfortunately, Rosende de Sierra's implicit stance against nationalist politics would also mean the end of this unique publication. One of the last numbers of the publication includes a sarcastic poem (apparently written by the editor) that alludes to the violence caused by Rosas, the *brute of all brutes* and the *tiger of all tigers*, (my translation) as the author of the poem would refer to him. The poem was published on December 31, 1830 and it ends with the apparent disapproval of the *tyranny* (caused by Rosas and his Federalist followers) of the era.<sup>58</sup>

¿Porqué de tantos heroes  
La sangre fuè vertida?  
¿Porqué tantos valientes  
Inmolaron su vida?

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<sup>58</sup> The poem begins by evoking the wars of independence and the promises made to the nation's sons, only to result in a similar sort of slavery to the excesses of civil strife since the vows taken after independence have been ignored: "Las vanas pretensiones/ La ambicion desmedida/ A la razon sucumban/ Tenga la patria vida.// Vuelva aquel feliz tiempo/ En que todos unidos/ Sacudimos el yugo/ A que fuimos uncidos.// Las cadenas que fueron/ Con valor quebrantadas/ No yá, por nuestras manos/ Vuelvan á ser labradas.//Nuestros hijos reclaman/ Los goces prometidos/ Y salir del abismo/ En que se ven sumidos.// Su clamor es muy justo,/ Sus quejas son debidas,/ Pues el mal los agobia,/ Y sufren mil desdichas.// Ante el Dios de los Cielos/ Su libertad juramos/ Y hoy somos los primeros/ Que a estos votos faltamos.

¡Para ver hoy esclavos  
A los mismos que un día  
Libertarlos quisieron  
*De la cruel tiranía!!!*

¡Al aspecto horroroso  
De la tronante guerra  
Los montes se estremecen  
Los cerros bambolean!!

La tierra en sus entrañas  
Tragar quiere á las fieras  
Las aguas en los mares  
Parece que se alteran!!

En fin el hombre solo  
A quien la pasión ciega  
Rinde siempre tributos  
Al Dios de su fiereza

Mas bruto que los brutos,  
Mas cruel que las Panteras,  
Mas tigre que los tigres  
De sangre se alimenta.

Given the political climate of the 1830s, it certainly appears that Rosende de Sierra's comments are directed towards Rosas: the singular man who is blinded by his passion (for power) and who feeds on blood seems similar to the figure often evoked by Unitarist descriptions of the *tirano*. Perhaps Rosende de Sierra's final farewell to her public offers the best clue as to her political position. As she claims, she must stop writing due to the *agitated state of the country*:

Aviso a los señores que favorecen a la que suscribe. Ésta suspende sus trabajos por hallarse indispueta de salud y porque en el *estado actual* del país se hallan los ánimos en un estado tal de agitación y efervescencia, que rechazan todo otro sentimiento que tienda a distraerlos del objeto de que están ocupados; mas este motivo no podrá impedirle que rinda las más expresivas gracias a todos los señores y señoras que la han honrado leyendo los artículos de la editora de *La Aljaba*. (January 14, 1831 cited in Auza Periodismo y feminismo, 161)

Rosende de Sierra's opinions on national politics meant the certain death of *La Aljaba* since a climate of intolerance already existed in Buenos Aires, and since this climate was steadily growing. Clearly, a woman writer bent on offering her opinions through the public medium of journalism couldn't sustain such a publication whose life was, as Auza explains, "[...] irremediabilmente condenada a ser efímera." (Periodismo y feminismo, 161) Nonetheless, Rosende de Sierra's early publication would be vindicated by the outpour of female journalism after the battle of Caseros and the final fall of Rosas.

## ***2.2. The Brute of all Brutes, the Tiger of all Tigers: Rosas, the Rosista Dress Code and the Othering of the Lettered City***

Rosas se hizo un inmenso prestigio en la campaña de Buenos Aires, se rodeó de los gauchos, inspirándoles una idolatría ciega y convirtiéndolos en sus más dóciles instrumentos—han dicho muchos. ¿Pero cómo hizo esto y de qué medios se valió.—Eduardo Gutiérrez Los Dramas de la Tiranía: Juan Manuel de Rosas, 3

This quote goes to the heart of Rosas' hold on power: even over the impossibly chaotic countryside the Federalist leader was able to strategically associate himself with the gauchos (and also forge a relationship with the *indios amistosos*) while at the same time practically paralyzing crime.<sup>59</sup> Yet, as Gutiérrez asks, *how*—aside from violence and intimidation of Unitarist opposition—was he able to do so, considering that none of the post-independence

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<sup>59</sup> Lynch explains that Rosas' ability to maintain the borders—aside from forts and a military presence—rested largely on his relationship with the *indios amistosos*: “Estos fueron entonces los tres elementos de la política de frontera de Rosas: asentamientos con fuertes, protección mediante guarniciones militares, y un frente intermedio, a manera de amortiguador, con los indios amistosos.” (Juan Manuel de Rosas, 42)

governments before him had attained said stability (especially the government of Rivadavia)? Rosas, in large part, was able to organize the “unorganizable” because he masterfully manipulated the importance of visuals in the social imaginary of Argentina and because he created an *imagined* national space necessary to foster identification with said space.<sup>60</sup> (Anderson, Imagined Communities, 1991) Rosas’ enforcement of the use of red ribbons (and other paraphernalia, as I will discuss below) to show support of the Federation offers an important example. Through the constant visualization of power, the dictator was able to *politicize* the everyday which enormously increased, “[...] the points from which power could be exercised and multiplied the tactics and strategies for wielding that power.” (Hunt, Politics, Culture and Class: 56)<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Rosas was able to encourage the large majority of Argentine society (especially the lower classes, the non-whites of the region and the rural inhabitants) to participate in national politics—because of this politicization of the everyday—in ways that urban elite Unitarists were unable, or unwilling, to do. By including the large majority of the population in his Federalist project, and by simultaneously excluding most urban Unitarist elites from participating, Rosas was able to obtain the “blind idolatry” mentioned by Gutiérrez that made his followers his most docile instruments of power.

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<sup>60</sup> Although in the context of Mexico, Gruzinski highlights the important influence of the image in the Westernization of Latin America that began as soon as “[...] Columbus set foot on the beaches of the New World”. (Images at War, 2) Gruzinski’s analysis has some relevance to the case of Argentina since in large part the Unitarists depended on the influence of the image to Westernize (i.e. civilize) the “backward” nature of Argentina, especially rural Argentina and since the Federalists relied on exactly the opposite images to identify national from non-national.

<sup>61</sup> Hunt suggests this to be true in the case of the *cockade* during and after the French Revolution. She mentions the October 1789 march to Versailles where women mobilized in defense of the mandatory use of the tri-colored cockade: “No doubt the women knew they were defending the Revolution when they marched to Versailles, but no speech about “the Revolution” could have mobilized them the way the cockade did. They marched when they heard that the soldiers at Versailles had trampled the tricolor cockade and worn in its place the white of the Bourbons or the black of the aristocratic counter-revolution.” (Politics, Culture and Class, 58)



Dress, for Rosas, was one of the most important aspects in the idolization of his Federation since he would come to use dress as a marker of the distances between what was considered traditional of Argentina and what was considered a “modern” imposition. As I have mentioned, dress clearly colored the political landscape of the Argentine 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is no where more important than in the period known as the *Rosista Federation* whereby the opposition between *modern* and *traditional* dress was understood as an affiliation with liberal (Unitarist) or conservative (Federalist) political ideals. This association with dress also meant quite possibly death and certainly political persecution at the hands of Rosas and his secret police (the *mazorca*) if one were on the wrong side of the political equation.<sup>62</sup> Much of the theoretical discussion on dress and politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (particularly Masiello, 1997 and West, 1997) has rightly linked Unitarist dress (and Unitarist admiration for high fashion) to modern, liberal political ideals and Federalist dress (and Federalist disdain for high fashion) to conservative political ideals. The theoretical discussion on this relationship has primarily rested on the literary production of the Generation of '37 as a major component in the “invention” of a political relationship to dress, particularly a *modern* relationship to European fashion. While there is a growing body of scholarship interested in re-defining the Rosista period, scant attention has been paid to the discursive venues manipulated by the Federalists to create a sense of tradition through

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<sup>62</sup> Salvatore explains that Rosas effectively eliminated his political adversaries in the following ways: “Para un régimen comprometido en una guerra “Santa” contra los unitarios, una forma efectiva de excluir a los opositores consistió en etiquetarlos de ‘unitarios’. Listas de unitarios, confeccionadas por los jueces de paz, circulaban entre los distintos juzgados y policías, sirviendo de advertencia o amenaza para los opositores al régimen. Aquellos incluidos en estas listas estaban sujetos a intimidaciones, golpizas, prisiones, confiscaciones y últimamente el asesinato.” (“Consolidación”, 33) Part of the process of “labeling” the Unitarists consisted in establishing clothing norms whereby Unitarists were marked by color choice, article choice (for example the *frac* versus the *poncho*), and style of beard. This point will be discussed in more detail below.

dress.<sup>63</sup> In light of this, this section will first consider how Federalist dress became associated with conservative politics and which discursive venues Federalists manipulated. Second, it will show how Federalist dress formed part of an “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”) that was manipulated both by the Unitarist and Federalist discourses on dress and fashion. Thus, this section will shed light on how Federalist dress has come to be associated with conservative politics (and Unitarist dress with liberal politics) not because there is an inherent relationship between *liberalism and fashion* or *conservatism and traditional dress*, but rather because this relationship is a constructed one.

Dress is not in and of itself traditional or modern, rather it is the discourse—both written and visual—surrounding dress that gives it political meaning.<sup>64</sup> This is to say that the markers of traditional dress in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina—the *chiripá*, the *poncho*, *botas de potro*, the *calzoncillo* etc.—were not inherently traditional, but rather they were made traditional both by Unitarist and Federalist strategic appropriations of them.<sup>65</sup> While urban Unitarist elites adopted European markers of modernity to put forth an image that best represented their political agenda,

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<sup>63</sup> For studies of the Rosista period that problematize traditional historiography see: Chiaramonte “Ciudadanía”; Salvatore “Consolidación del régimen rosista”, Myers Orden y virtud and Lynch Juan Manuel de Rosas.

<sup>64</sup> This is not to be confused with *high fashion*, which is indeed associated with modernity. (Entwistle The Fashioned Body; Craik The Fashion of Fashion; Wilson Adorned in Dreams)

<sup>65</sup> While the categories of analysis used to map the political and socio-cultural landscape of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina are helpful (civilization vs. barbarism; city vs. country; liberal vs. conservative, etc.), it goes without saying that they should not be understood as static. (González-Stephan Fundaciones, 67) The case of the first Unitarist president in Argentina serves to prove the slippery nature of convenient categorization. Rivadavia was perhaps the liberal leader *par excellence* of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. Yet, as Rock explains, many of his policies were conservative: “Yet alongside there liberal impulses was Rivadavia’s conservative desire to recreated Buenos Aires in its late-eighteenth century guise as a commercial and financial entrepôt, with merchants and bankers controlling the economy and the state; his notion of strong, active and centralized authority was in some respects more neo-Bourbon than liberal.” (Rock, Argentina, 98) Therefore, these “convenient” dichotomies will be used throughout this study although I am aware of the limitations associated with them.

it is not often considered how those from the Federalist ranks also manipulated dress for their own political purposes.

To begin, it is certainly important to point out why markers of modernity, such as high fashion, would become targets for Rosas and his followers. As Lynch explains, Federalists detested the Unitarists especially because the liberalism they sponsored threatened to undermine *order and tradition*:

Si había algo para Rosas más detestable que la democracia, era el liberalismo. La razón por la que odiaba a los unitarios no consistía en que ellos querían una Argentina unida, sino que eran liberales que creían en los valores seculares del humanismo y del progreso. Los identificaba como francmasones e intelectuales, ‘hombres de las luces y de los principios’, subversivos que socavaban el orden y la tradición, y a quienes hallaba responsables en último término de los asesinatos políticos que habían desatado la brutalidad en la vida pública argentina desde 1828 hasta 1835. (Juan Manuel de Rosas, 165)

Obviously, by establishing federalism as the “traditional” and most obvious way of life for Argentines, Rosas and his propaganda machine could settle many of the concerns that arose during the Rivadavia era. One such concern, of course, was the role of European models in setting the pace for Argentine development as well as the increasingly important role of the city of Buenos Aires over the entire area. Rosas, the 19<sup>th</sup> century *caudillo* par excellence, would come to signify the antithesis of Rivadavia’s fascination with European models, and he was often able to do so through his symbolic appropriation of national dress. An article titled “Falta de orgullo nacional” in *La Gaceta Mercantil*—one of the official organs of Rosas’ regime—foreshadows the relationship that Rosista politics would develop with foreign influences and rapid urbanization:

La maldita manía de ser Misteres, Monsieurers, Monseñores, etc. etc., etc., o de ser Ingleses, Franceses, Italianos, Alemanes, habiendo nacido en la América del Sud, en las Provincias Unidas donde se produce tanto caballo y tanta vaca, ha producido tantos males a los Argentinos como una epidemia. [...] Por desgracias nuestra, va un Mendozino o Sanjuanino pechando barriles a Buenos Aires, y viene Inglés. Va un Riojano con sus

naranjas, un Cajamarquino con su algodón, un Tucumano con sus bateas, o un Cordobés con su piquiyín, y en un mes de escuela regresan (hablamos de los de poco seso) con otra (*sic*) idioma, otras propensiones, otra hora de comer, y en fin otro hombre sustituido al que había antes. (February 9, 1830 in Verdevoye Costumbres y Costumbrismo, 1994: 250-251)

In this fragment, the author does more than highlight the *illness* that imitation is causing for Argentines: he strategically points to how the traditional products that serve as markers of provincial identity (wine from Mendoza and San Juan, oranges from La Rioja, wool from Catamarca, tubs from Tucumán, piquiyín plants from Córdoba) become insignificant in Buenos Aires. The metaphor is striking: one enters the urban realm with a certain provincial and proto-Argentine identity—and its symbols—and leaves speaking another language (foreign) and becomes only a substitution—and a degraded one at that—of the person that originally entered. This fragment also goes to the heart of one of the major debates concerning liberalism and conservatism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina: the role of Buenos Aires in establishing the *pace* and *tone* of development for the rest of the region.<sup>66</sup> The author continues his critique:

Por desgracia algunos compatriotas nuestros, lo menos que son, es americanos, olvidan su lazo y manea por tomar un lente o un látigo, y andan tropezando donde no hay población, ni con quién encontrarse, o corriendo en las pequeñas aldeas. Ven un aturdido extranjero que no saben su educación, la causa por que está entre nosotros, sus principios, su moral y demás calidades que se precisan atender para proponerse un modelo, y ya lo imitan sin más que ser extranjero. Bien puede ser un facineroso que fuga

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<sup>66</sup> For Unitarists, especially Sarmiento, only the city represented progress and civilization. His attitude towards the city and the dress of its inhabitants is quite different from the one projected in these Federalist fragments. In Facundo he writes: “The inhabitants of the city wear European dress, live in a civilized manner, and possess laws, ideas of progress, means of instruction, some municipal organization, regular forms of government, etc. Beyond the precincts of the city everything assumes a new aspect; the country people wear a different dress, which I will call South American, as it is common to all districts; their habits of life are different, their wants peculiar and limited.” (The Argentina Reader, 86) Notice here how Sarmiento strategically aligns foreign dress with civilization while local dress—that is, South American dress—is aligned with the “peculiar” countryside. This also serves to show how Unitarist elites created meaning surrounding 19<sup>th</sup> century dress as well: many negatively portrayed traditional dress in an attempt to push for modernization through the use of modern dress. This point will be addressed more specifically in Chapter 2.

de su Madre Patria; no obstante no le faltan monos que quieren asimilársele, y si el gringo como con el cabo de la cuchara, algunos mui al grano tono, mui a la moderna, ya toman caldo con el cabo asimismo, aunque nuestro héroe solo tome huevos, sin embargo, es preciso excederlo en la moda. Esta es la gente, decía el otro día un observador en que ha echado profundas raíces el partido de Unidad, y los devotos de Rivadavia. (February, 9, 1830 in Verdevoye Costumbres y Costumbrismo, 1994: 250)<sup>67</sup>

Here, the author offers not only a critique of the role of foreigners in the country (something that would occupy the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century—especially the latter half) but also he criticizes Argentine ignorance in dealing with foreigners. This too echoes Rosas' supposed hostility to any foreign presence in Argentina and his supposed defense of national customs and traditions.<sup>68</sup> As he warns, since not all foreigners are representative of civilization and progress (two of the mainstays of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism) it isn't wise to *imitate* them solely on their origin since Europeans too can be “backward” (such as eating with the wrong end of a spoon) and even traitors to their own fatherland. More importantly, the author criticizes the role of Unitarists—Rivadavia's devotees—in spreading the idea that all that is foreign is representative of modernity and good taste and by extension civilization.

Thus, in large part, Rosas, as the leader of the *Federal* movement, was able to successfully harness fears initiated by earlier liberal projects (such as those begun by President

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<sup>67</sup> One of the reasons Rivadavia's name is mentioned together with foreign immigration is due to his agenda of ‘civilizing’ Argentina through such immigration. Castro explains further: “As early as 1812, Rivadavia was calling for the immigration of Europeans to destroy the ‘degrading Spanish heritage’ that held the country from progressing. In 1818 Rivadavia clearly stated the role to be played by immigration, ‘...it is the practical and perhaps the only way of destroying the decadent Spanish caste system and habits and to create a new homogeneous (e.g., European), industrious and moral society.’” (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture 2001: 9)

<sup>68</sup> While several authors have mentioned that Rosas was not particularly anti-European (especially because of his relationship to the English), Rosas was nonetheless often perceived of as “anti-European” and “Pro-American” because of the protectionist policies he enforced. For example, in 1835 he decreed the *ley de aduana*, a customs law that heavily taxed luxury items entering Argentina from Europe. Originally the tax was 16% on foreign goods, but under Rosas taxes on manufactured products like shoes, clothing, furniture and cognac were raised to 35%. (Lynch, 142)

Rivadavia in the 1820s).<sup>69</sup> As Salvatore reminds us, for his supporters, Rosas was the solution to the chaos caused by liberalism, especially the fear of European invasion—real and symbolic—and of losing national autonomy:

Para sus admiradores [...] Rosas fue un hacendado y agricultor progresista, un líder aclamado por los sectores más pobres de la población, un gobernante sagaz que supo comprender la necesidad de pacificar el país antes de organizarlo constitucionalmente, un defensor de la soberanía nacional frente a las agresiones de las potencias europeas más poderosas. (“Consolidación”, 326)

Salvatore highlights that Rosas’ power was centered on four components: 1.) the need for rural harmony and stability; 2.) the importance of the perceived threat represented by a gang of elite conspirators (i.e. *los unitarios*)<sup>70</sup>; 3.) the defense of a “Sistema Americano” and finally; 4.) the total imposition of “order” at the economic, political and social levels. (“Consolidación”, 1998: 337) In terms of social control, one of the most significant ways Rosas was able to successfully defend national sovereignty—at the symbolic level—was through the power of

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<sup>69</sup> Conservatism, in the terms of Rosas’ *Federation* has often been associated with: a.) protectionist policies in terms of exterior trade (thus limiting the liberal values of free trade); b.) the return of traditional values inherited from the colonial period; c) with this, the essential role of the family unit as symbolic of public order; d.) the close relationship between the state and religious institutions; e.) the privilege given to provincial autonomous identity. (Rock, *Argentina*, 106-108) While for the liberals of the period, the Rosista experience meant a return to the *backwardness* of the colonial period— “un regreso a tradiciones de gobierno de la época de la Colonia”—for Rosas’ supporters, it meant increased stability and order in a period of true political and economic chaos. (Salvatore, “Consolidación”, 333) Lynch’s “Introducción” (Juan Manuel de Rosas) offers an excellent synopsis of how *federalismo* has been interpreted historically. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 9-18)

<sup>70</sup> In a letter to Juan Facundo Quiroga dated December 20, 1834 Rosas mentions that the Unitarists were *contaminating* Argentina and that they formed part of a conspiracy against the development of a federal congress: “We now see the present turbulent condition of the provinces: all of them are contaminated by Unitarists, by political strategists, by aspiring officeholders, by secret agents of other nations, and by the Freemasons who have all of Europe in a frenzy. What hope can there be for the calm and tranquility needed to enter into an agreement of federation, the first step that is needed to achieve a federal congress.” (The Argentina Reader, 77)

dress and through the association of the Unitarists as the elegant “others” of the Federation.<sup>71</sup> Rosas did this through various venues. First, he made use of the *divisa* and *moño* mandatory and he skillfully linked terror to the symbols of Rosismo. By the early 1830’s the use of Federalist symbols was mandated by law and the famous slogans *¡Viva la Federación y Mueran los Salvajes Unitarios!* (“Long live the Federation and death to the Unitarist savages”) became obligatory on all documents related to public affairs, newspapers, and personal letters. (Rock Argentina, 106) Rosas’ terror was quickly linked to clothing since failure to comply with the mandate or failure to dress according to federal standards could mean death at the hands of the *mazorca*. Lynch explains:

Los mazorqueros eran los verdaderos terroristas, reclutados en sectores inferiores a los de la elite rosista, y que constituían grupos armados para salir en misiones diversas. Realizaban registros casa-por-casa, destruían todo lo que fuera azul e intimidaban a los propietarios; actuaban sobre la base de informes policiales tales como este hombre ‘no ha prestado ningún servicio a la federación. Es de chaqueta muy unitaria’; arrestaban; torturaban; y mataban. (Juan Manuel de Rosas, 226)

This association however was not slow in coming: it began the first day Rosas took power for the second time with *suma de los poderes públicos*—full public power.<sup>72</sup> National

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<sup>71</sup> Part of being a *buen federal* meant adopting the articles of clothing indicative of the Federation. For men this included: the obligatory use of the federal *divisa* on his coat and hat, men of the countryside typically wore *calzoncillos* or the *chiripá* (as opposed to European trousers) and *botas de potro* which were literally shoes made from horse legs (in the city men typically wore *botas fuertes* that had soles). Federal dress for men frowned upon the use of the *frac* (dress coat), *levita* (frock coat), *chaleco* (waistcoat), *corbata* (tie), and *zapatos de charol* (European style dress shoes). For women federal dress included: the obligatory use of the Federal *moño* in the hair and typically the use of the red fabrics, ribbons, etc. Pilchas criollas offers the most comprehensive analysis of “traditional” 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine dress. For the Generation of ’37 many of these articles of clothing were the ultimate signifiers of barbarism. The most convincing example is Echeverría’s description of ‘traditional’ dress in El matadero: “La figura más prominente de cada grupo era el carnicero con el cuchillo en mano, brazo y pecho desnudos, cabello largo y revuelto, camisa y chiripá y rostro embadurnado de sangre.” (100)

<sup>72</sup> Salvatore highlights the landscape of the national celebration of Rosas’ inauguration: “El 13 de abril Rosas prestó juramento ante la Legislatura y asumió del mando. Ese día la ciudad se vistió de fiesta. Se tapizaron los balcones, ventanas y puertas con colchas color damasco, rojo o

celebrations, parades and public dances—all of which contained women “federalmente vestidas”—reinforced Rosas’ presence and power in the public imagination. (*Gaceta Mercantil* 23 abril 1835)<sup>73</sup> Children were obligated to wear the federal uniform at school, and representations of the most notable Unitarist figures, dressed in blue, were often publicly burned. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 189-193) *Carnaval* parades also served as a way to undermine the social hierarchy of the elite Unitarists since Federalist and members of the Argentine lower classes—particularly the Afro-Argentines—would mock Unitarist “high fashion” and the use of the *levita* and the *frac*. (Salvatore, “Consolidación”, 358) Additionally, in his public discourses, Rosas appropriated the term *gaucho* so that in the public mind-set this figure came to embody “un modelo de virtudes nativos”: a model of native—and by extension, traditional—dress. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 1984: 121)<sup>74</sup> Vicente Fidel Lopez, in his Historia de la República Argentina (1913) described Rosas’ *gaucho* dress, particularly when visiting the countryside:

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amarillo. Se regó el suelo de hinojo. Se cubrieron los postes con hojas de laurel y sauce. [...] En la esquina del Cabildo se construyó un arco del triunfo. Hacendados y labradores, ‘ciudadanos ilustres’, jefes militares y funcionarios de gobierno arrastraron el ‘carro triunfal’ construido para la ocasión, mientras los cívicos guardaban el hilera el paso de la comitiva oficial. El clero se sumó a los festejos, aceptando que el retrato de Rosas fuese venerado en el altar de las iglesias de cada parroquia.” (“Consolidación”, 327)

<sup>73</sup> Lynch adds that many public ceremonies involving the military served to associate the color red—through military uniform—with Rosas’ power: “En otra ceremonia, organizada por el ejercito, llevaron por las calles un gran retrato de Rosas en un carruaje adornado con banderas y trofeos militares y arrastrado por sus seguidores vestidos con chaquetillas rojas. La adulación se convirtió en idolatría, y los retratos del Restaurador ocuparon los altares de las principales iglesias.” (Juan Manuel de Rosas, 174)

<sup>74</sup> This is radically different from Sarmiento’s appropriation of the *gaucho* in Facundo as the icon of Argentine barbarism. In a passage from Facundo Sarmiento describes this pampa inhabitant through his characteristic dress: a poncho under one arm, a dagger in the hand of the other. “Now begins the public life of the gaucho, as I may say, since his education is by this time at an end. These men, Spaniards only in their language and in the confused religious notions preserved among them, must be seen before a right estimate can be made of the indomitable and haughty character that grows out of this struggle of isolated man with untamed nature, of the rational being with the brute. It is necessary to see their visages bristling with beards, their countenances as grave and serious as those of the Arabs of Asia, to appreciate the pitying scorn with which



Pero este mismo hombre pesado y campechano en la ciudad, era el centauro más ágil, más esforzado y más brutal que jineteaba en los campos del sur. Allí vestía el chiripá de bayeta colorada, la camisa ceñida al cuello con un pañuelo del mismo color y sin nada más que cubriera el busto. (Rosas en los testimonios de su época, 19)

Darwin too, in his famous travels through Argentina, noticed how Rosas was able to captivate the public (and achieve the power of a despot) by adopting gaucho dress. He explains his understanding of Rosas and an episode whereby a supporter of Rosas was set free (even though he had been accused of murder). Thus, Darwin highlights the means through which Rosas was able to guarantee certain freedoms to his followers:

Empleando tales medios, adoptando el traje de los gauchos, ha sido como ha adquirido el general Rosas una popularidad ilimitada en el país y como consecuencia un poder despótico. Un comerciante inglés me ha afirmado que un hombre, arrestado por haber asesinado a otro, respondió cuando se le interrogó acerca del móvil de su crimen: “Le he dado muerte porque habló insolentemente del general Rosas”. Al cabo de una semana se puso en libertad al asesino. Quiero creer que ese sobreseimiento fue ordenado por los amigos del general y no por éste. (Charles Darwin Viaje de un naturalista, in Rosas en los testimonios de su época, 36)

On a similar note, Rosas was able to link his Federation to dress and religion since he required all priests to wear the *divisa*, since he commanded that portraits of himself be placed in the alters of every parish and since the Mazorca often checked churchgoers, especially women, after Mass to ensure use of the *moño*. (Saulquin, La moda, 39) As Ramos Mejía explains, Rosas’ Federation wasn’t political in nature, rather it was religious for the *plebe*, the common people, since Rosas became a *gaucho-like* god in the public imagination:

La *Federation* no fue para ellos un partido, una idea política de gobierno, fue un sentimiento religioso más bien: una especie de providencia para la plebe, un Dios manso y terrenal, un Dios *muy gaucho*, como decía el populacho de las campañas para expresar lo que es espontáneo, fácilmente servicial, alegre y amigo. (Rosas y su tiempo, 206)

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they look on the sedentary denizen of the city, who may have read many books but who cannot overthrow and slay a fierce bull, who could not provide himself with a horse from the pampas, who has never met a tiger alone and received him with a dagger in one hand and a poncho rolled up in the other, to be thrust into the animal’s mouth while he transfices his heart with his dagger.” (The Argentina Reader, 89)

Thus Rosista propaganda and practice made God appear *gaucho-like* in an apparent attempt to make the populace identify God's miracles and his role in social life to that of Rosas' role as national leader. Fitte explains:

Fue así que la Iglesia se vio obligada a tolerar la entronización de la imagen del dictador, colocando su retrato en los lugares destinados al culto, y lo ofreciera a la forzosa veneración de los fieles.[...] En esta forma, la mentalidad popular se veía inducida a identificar en sacrílega conjunción al Dios Creador que había salvado a designio la importante vida de Rosas en el complot descubierto, con la persona misma del Restaurador, que en la tierra aparecía como ungido para distribuir los dones celestiales. (Crónicas de Rosas 1975: 55)

Finally, Rosas' propaganda proliferated in domestic and public life alike since he mandated that his portrait be stamped onto all objects, from plates and playing cards, to snuff and cigarette boxes and ladies handkerchiefs: "No hubo objeto de uso doméstico o público que no tuviera estampado un retrato, al óleo, al lápiz, a la acuarela o al pastel, en litografía, en daguerrotipo, en viñetas de imprenta, divisas, medallas, monedas o naipes." (Ramos Mejía, Rosas y su tiempo, 361) Rosas' use of certain colors even had an international aspect since foreign merchants and manufacturers were careful not to market Unitarist colors for Argentine consumption:

Foreign merchants dealing with the Buenos Aires market understood well the art of selling under Federalist hegemony. They knew that light blue and green fabrics were unsalable under the Rosas regime, and that fabrics of different tonalities of red had an expanding market. As they could do little to influence local politics and ideology, they took porteños' color preferences as a given and sent an inordinate proportion of scarlet and 'claret red' fabrics to Buenos Aires. Other colors not demanded in Buenos Aires could find purchasers in Río de Janeiro, Lima, or other centers of distribution. (Salvatore, Wandering Paysanos, 152)

Accounts from several travelers to the region also attest to the politicization of the everyday through the enforcement of Rosas' symbols in the public arena. C.S. Stewart's Brasil and La Plata; The Personal Record of a Cruise published in New York on 1856 serves as a

perfect example.<sup>75</sup> Stewart traveled to Buenos Aires in 1851, just one year before the fall of Rosas. His first impression of the city echoes the fact that Rosas literally painted Buenos Aires red. Rosas' officials, dressed in red and military uniforms, picked him up and he was driven away in a red carriage. As Fitte explains, the chaplain was overwhelmed by the color:

A nuestro Capellán, le asombran los colores dominantes en todo lo que se ofrece a su vista; primero las paredes encaladas de blanco, y en el resto una constante exhibición de rojo, ya sea en chalecos, cintas de sombreros, puertas, ventanas, faroles, etc., todo ello como adhesión 'al hombre extraordinario que mantuvo un reino indisputado de terror'. (Crónicas de Rosas, 20)

Stewart continues with his description of Buenos Aires: soldiers lined the streets dressed in "ponchos granates" (deep red ponchos) and "chiripás", local women lacked the latest in European dress, the local peons dressed with the "pintoresca vestimenta del país", and the traveler saw more and more *federally dressed* soldiers, with their knives visibly hanging from their waists as he came closer to Rosas' house. (Fitte Crónicas de Rosas, 1975: 22) Rosas' house was equally impressive to the traveler who could not help but notice the predominance of red:

Vuelve a sentirse impresionado por el color rojo que domina por doquier, ya sea en las prendas de vestir de los contertulios, como en la colgaduras y alfombras que adornan la espaciosa habitación, entre cuyos muebles un piano y un arpa ocupan lugar conspicuo." (Fitte, Crónicas de Rosas, 23-24)

Stewart's meeting with Rosas also left an impression on the traveler. He described Rosas, the most 'extraordinary caudillo', in the following terms:

Es el más extraordinario caudillo de Sud América, poseyendo todos los elementos de carácter para el éxito de un déspota: firmeza, energía, sagacidad, astucia, inescrupulosidad en sus propósitos e inquebrantable crueldad. [...] No hay probablemente otra ciudad en el mundo civilizado en que todos aquellos que no sean sospechados de delitos o actividades políticas, gocen de mayor seguridad para su vida, integridad física y propiedades. La policía es perfecta. Un desconocido, especialmente si es extranjero,

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<sup>75</sup>This information is provided by Ernesto Fitte's text Crónicas de Rosas, which also recalls several other narratives of the Rosista period from several other writers and political participants of the era.

puede transitar por las calles a cualquier hora de la noche, con perfecta tranquilidad. Hurtos, robos, asaltos, no se conocen; y si un pañuelo o cartera llevando marcas que permitieran identificar a su dueño, se pierden en la calle, a buen seguro le será devuelto o fácilmente encontrado en poder de la policía. (Fitte, Crónicas de Rosas, 26)

Again, the common themes mentioned by nearly all historians of the Rosista period are echoed: Rosas' exceptional personality (and his exceptional disciplinary character as the supreme caudillo of the land) allowed him to create one of the most secure environments of the time period.

Perhaps it is through the control of the press that Rosas was able to best create a *traditional* image of himself and of *federalismo*. And it is through the press that Rosas was best able to control the elite Unitarist opposition. Among many other moves that would unravel the advances made by the liberal Rivadavian reforms in the 1820s, Rosas dismantled the university system, repressed all intellectual activity not in support of his Federation and most importantly he denied the right of free press. (Goldman "Los orígenes"; Ternavasio 1998; Lynch Juan Manuel de Rosas)<sup>76</sup> Not surprisingly, it is at this time that commentaries on fashion and dress were used as rhetorical strategies and metaphorical devices.<sup>77</sup> While many intellectuals against Rosas' policies used fashion as an alternative medium in their newspaper publications for the expression of their political views (Masiello Between Civilization and Barbarism), so too did

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<sup>76</sup> Rosas even burnt opposition newspapers in the Plaza de la Victoria (the main plaza of Buenos Aires at that time now called La Plaza de Mayo) and he only permitted the existence of an official press that he directly controlled and censored. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 74)

<sup>77</sup> As part of the improvements brought by the creation of the Viceroyalty in 1776, the printing press made its way into Buenos Aires. Rock explains: "Cultural resources also expanded, with the first theatres and the importation of printing presses from Spain, which enabled pamphlets and newsletters to circulate." (1987: 64) Nineteenth century Argentina witnesses a confluence of factors that made fashion an important topic: the arrival of the printing press and the increased circulation of periodicals; the "great renunciation" and the emergence of "ready-made" fashions in Europe; the emergence of fashion journals instead of fashion dolls; the domestic political problems that pitted Unitarists against Federalists and the need to construct a sense of national identity after independence.

Rosas and his followers capitalize on fashion narratives. Federalists used fashion narratives as a medium for they were able to stress the uniform dress code put forth by Rosas as a means of belonging to the dictator's political machine. Rosas' strict control of the press also allowed him to not only put forth an image of himself as a believer in Argentine tradition and custom, but also to constantly remind all readers of their obligations as good Federalists (*buenos federales*). The dictator often used the press to publish hundreds of flyers containing poems and persuasive images of himself (often dressed in military uniform and sometimes in gaucho attire) all of which heralded the wonders of the Federation and condemned the *asquerosos unitarios*. For example, an early poem praising *los colorados* (Rosas' soldiers), was publicly circulated and it contained very vivid descriptions of soldier dress, setting them apart from civilians because of their red uniforms and their bravery. Again, Rosas appears as the restorer of law and order:

Milicianos de Sur, bravos campeones  
Vestidos de carmín, púrpura y grana,  
Honorable legión americana,  
Ordenados, valientes escuadrones;  
A la voz de la ley vuestros pendones  
Triunfar hicisteis con heróica hazaña,  
Llenándoos de glorias en campaña  
Y dando de virtud grandes lecciones;  
Gravad por siempre en vuestros corazones  
De Rosas la memoria y la grandeza,  
Pues restaurando el orden os avisa  
Que la Provincia y sus instituciones  
Salvas serán si *ley* es vuestra empresa  
La bella *libertad* vuestra divisa. (In Pradère Rosas: su iconografía, 18)

On a similar note, many of the Federalist publications of the time included lengthy poems praising Rosas and federalism, and they more importantly included lengthy lists of representatives who offered their services to the Federation (Brigadier Rosas, and not yet Governor with full powers, was always at the head of each list) as well as all others who contributed funds for the all important civic celebrations (soon to be one of the hallmarks of

Rosas' regime).(*El Iris: Diario del medio día, político, literario y mercantil*, April 25, 1833)<sup>78</sup>

Alfred Brossard, a French diplomat in Buenos Aires, commented on just how closely Rosas controlled what the press produced:

En oposición a esto, el general Rosas está muy preocupado de los medios por los cuales un gobierno puede actuar sobre la moral de los pueblos. Es así que adjudica una gran importancia a las materias relativas a la instrucción pública, porque para él la instrucción pública y la religión son medios de influencia política. [...] Es por el mismo motivo que interviene activamente en la prensa diaria. Mantiene periódicos en Francia, Inglaterra, Portugal, Brasil y Estados Unidos, y dirige él mismo sus diarios de Buenos Aires: *La Gaceta Mercantil*, el *Archivo Americano* y el *British Packet*. [...] Cada uno de los artículos que publican estas últimas hojas es escrito o dictado, o al menos revisado y corregido por el general Rosas; cada uno de ellos está concebido, sea en vista de Europa o América, para un fin preciso y debe producir un efecto determinado. (Rosas en los testimonios de su época, 79)

Clearly, one of the “determined effects” desired by Rosas was that his *letrados* construct him as a man of the *pueblo*. Pedro de Angelis—Rosas’ official intellectual—was perhaps the dictator’s best weapon on this symbolic war front.<sup>79</sup> In his publications, de Angelis often described Rosas as a simple man, one who did not need to rely on formalities in his dealings with people, and who did not resort to exquisite dress. Rather, Rosas relied on his simple military uniform. In *Archivo Americano* (1843) de Angelis wrote:

En la cumbre del poder, rodeado de un pueblo agradecido y ansioso de tributarle sus homenajes, el Gobernador de Buenos Aires los ha siempre desechado con el mismo tesón que otros ponían en solicitarlos. *Sin guardias*, como Washington, sin ninguna insignia del mando, en su traje sencillo de miliciano, afable y cortés para con todos, lo hemos

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<sup>78</sup> Auza explains that Buenos Aires journalism in 1830 (and beyond) was dominated by Federalist publications. These publications would soon come under control of Rosas once he assumed office with full power (April 13, 1835): “Dominaba en Buenos Aires en ese año de 1830 la prensa calificada como federal que formaba un compacto y aguerrido coro. Según el meticoloso indagador del periodismo de esa época que fue Zinny se publicaban diecinueve periódicos de los cuales trece eran nuevos, si bien la mayoría de ellos de vida fugaz y, al año siguiente, se publicarían treinta y uno, de los cuales los nuevos alcanzarían a veintiuno.” (Periodismo y feminismo en la Argentina, 140)

<sup>79</sup> The most well known publicists of Rosas’ Federation were Pedro de Ángelis, Nicolás Mariño, Luis Pérez, Manuel de Irigoyen, José Rivera Indarte and Lucio V. Mansilla. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 190)

visto algunas veces presidir la mesa en su quinta, y ofrecer indistintamente un asiento a los que iban a visitarle. [...] Los ciudadanos, los extranjeros, los empleados de la administración, los de sus propias oficinas, podían hasta comer con *el sombrero puesto* delante de él, si les agradaba. (In Myers *Orden y Virtud*, 272)<sup>80</sup>

De Angelis' suggestions are subtle but not insignificant: Rosas was not like Washington, the figure of U.S. democracy *par excellence*; Rosas' military dress was a clear show of his power as leader; and Rosas, unlike the *unitarios afrancesados*, gave no preference to foreigners since he treated them just as he would a typical citizen. In de Angelis' descriptions of the dictator, not only is he an excellent citizen, but he also lives the modesty that he preaches to his followers:

El Sr. Rosas es un excelente ciudadano: desdeña la gloria comprada con la sangre, detesta los honores adquiridos con los crímenes, desprecia las riquezas que no se ganan con el trabajo. Su vida pública no presenta hecho alguno que esté en oposición con estos elógios; y si no temiésemos ofender su modestia, encontraríamos en su vida privada muchas pruebas que los confirman. (*Rosas en los testimonios de su época*: 1970: 30)

In one of his most influential essays, “El General Rosas y los Salvajes Unitarios”, de Angelis offers a comprehensive defense of Rosas, hoping to explain the actions of the dictator in light of Unitarist opposition. Published over the span of several years in *El Archivo Americano*, de Angelis establishes Rosas, again, as the only individual able to stabilize the chaos initiated by Unitarist opposition. As de Angelis explains, Rosas' taking over of the press was a necessary evil in this war since “turbulent spirits” (i.e. Unitarists) had taken it over, thus abusing the guarantees that constitutional order had promised to all:

El recuerdo de los males pasados, y el voto casi unánime de evitar su reproduccion, dejaban muy poco que hacer á los que fueron llamados á la direccion de los negocios. Pero los espíritus turbulentos se apoderaron de la prensa, viciaron las elecciones,

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<sup>80</sup> This description of Rosas and his *manners* compare drastically to Alberdi's “rules” for social conduct in *La Moda* which often described how to *properly* greet visitors, how to dress *properly* for visits, etc. all according to European rules of conduct. For example, in “Reglas de urbanidad para una visita” Alberdi wrote: “Enseño lo que he visto, lo que se usa, lo que pasa por bello entre gentes que pasan por cultas. [...] Es mas *romántico*, mas *fashionable* el dejarse andar en brazos de una dulce distracción, y hacer como Byron, o como M.Fox [...] asi se estila en Paris y en Londres.” (December 2, 1837)

invadieron la tribuna, y abusando de las garantías con que ampara á todos el órden constitucional, conspiraron en secreto para derribarlo. Este crimen fué cometido por hombres que habian medrado en una época, que habia sido una escuela de inmoralidad y prevaricacion. (“El General Rosas y los Salvajes Unitarios” No.3, June 30, 1843)

In two additional articles, de Angelis takes advantage of his position as official intellectual of the Rosista period to show how Rivadavia was out of touch with the reality and customs of the region and its inhabitants, and most importantly to show that reaching for European “civilization” could not fulfill the social, political and economic needs of the region:

D. Bernardino Rivadavia [...] sobre quien pesa la responsabilidad de nuestras mayores desgracias, entregado á sus abstracciones, sin el menor conocimiento de su pais, en oposicion con las ideas y las costumbres de sus compatriotas, emprendió una reforma radical en todos los ramos de la administracion pública [...] lo único que le ocupaba era adquirir renombre de sabio, y acreditar que estaba á *la altura del siglo*: de donde le vino el dictado de *Padres de las Luces*, que sus adherentes le daban por lisonja, y sus émulos por ironía. [...] Lo que deseaba el pueblo era conservar, no derrumbar las instituciones útiles, crear sin precipitación, y con oportunidad, las que faltaban, y dar á la condicion de sus habitantes: y no eran por cierto las colecciones de conchas, ni las escuelas de declamacion dramática, las que podian llenar estos deseos. (“El General Rosas y los Salvajes Unitarios” No. 4 July 8 1843 and No. 6 August 31, 1843 respectively)

Perhaps most important in de Angelis’ construction of Rosas in the press is the way in which the intellectual paints the dictator as a man of traditional family values, one who only through patriotic duty sacrifices his desire to be just a family man. In article 14, August 31, 1844 de Angelis explains that due to public support, Rosas had no other option than to serve his country:

Por mas costoso que fueres para el General Rosas el sacrificio de renunciar á los goces de la vida privada, no pudo evitarlo: la opinion pública estaba tan fuertemente pronunciada á favor suyo, que el dia en que los Representantes del Pueblo lo proclamaron Gobernador y Capitan General de la Provincia, no hicieron mas que expresar el voto unánime de sus representados.. (“El General Rosas y Los Salvajes Unitarios”)

De Angelis often mentioned how Rosas’ ambitions were motivated only by his ultimate desire to “entregarse con seguridad al cuidado de su familia y de sus valiosos intereses”. (“El General Rosas y Los Salvajes Unitarios”, No. 9, July 20, 1844) This, as I will discuss below,



helped to establish Rosas, not as the ‘father of reason’ (Rivadavia), but rather as the symbolic, but yet very legitimate father, of the Argentine Republic.

Finally and most specifically related to dress, in this lengthy publication Pedro de Angelis was certain to always represent the Unitarists as impostors, as always wearing disguises for political gain. Unlike the Federalists who needn’t hide behind disguises because of their true interior qualities, de Angelis claimed that Unitarists were only capable of recognizing superficial exterior appearances. As such, they dressed the part as traitors. He explains that the Unitarists ...

Son hombres que viven de *impresiones*, según su fraseología, y sea tal vez este el motivo que los haya decidido á volverse anarquistas. [...] Se ha dicho con verdad, ‘que no hay quien se parezca mas á un hombre de bien como un tunante’; y esto explica el enigma que presentan los Unitarios á los que solo se fijan en las exterioridades. (“El General Rosas y los Salvajes Unitarios”, No.3 June 30 1843)

In another article de Angelis describes an episode whereby Unitarists dressed as Federalists in order to “conspire” against public order and to celebrate, clandestinely, the death of a Federalist Brigadier. In de Angelis’ terms, the Unitarists are always traitors conspiring against Rosas’ ‘legitimate’ government, whether dressed in European attire or the uniform of the holy Federation:

La mayor parte de las desgracias que han oprimido á los pueblos del interior reconocen el mismo origen á saber, la facilidad con que sus gobiernos admitían los servicios de los enemigos del pais, de los salvajes Unitarios que con el disfraz de federales se insinuaban en la intimidad de los gobernantes, para conspirar despues contra el orden público. [...] Desgraciado en este encuentro, el Brigadier Latorre cayó en manos de su enemigo y fué alevosamente asesinado en un calabozo por las guardias mismas que lo custodiaban. Su muerte fué decretada en un baile que los salvajes Unitarios daban en Salta para celebrar el triunfo del caudillo español de Jujui: y con la esperanza de encubrir la atrocidad de este crimen, fueron, en la hora mas avanzada de la noche á gritar disfrazados en la plaza *Viva Latorre!* Simulando una revolucion, que debia servirle de pretexto para inmolarlo. (“El General Rosas y los Salvajes Unitarios”, No 16. December 11, 1844)

Other writers of the time period, particularly travelers to the region who had no political stake in their writings, described Rosas as a little too traditional in his manners and mode of

living. As William MacCann explains, although Rosas was as skilled as any of the gauchos that might have surrounded him, his way of life bordered on medieval:

En la casa del general Rosas se conservaba algunos resabios de uso y costumbres medievales. La comida se servía diariamente para todos lo que quisieran participar de ella, fueran visitantes o personas extrañas; todos eran bienvenidos. [...] Su natural chocarrero e inclinado a las bromas pesadas y chascos, contribuyó a darle popularidad entre la soldadesca y su influencia personal sobre las milicias se hizo entonces muy considerable, aunque no era más que un subalterno. Como hacendado supo ganarse las voluntades del paisanaje y aventajaba a todos los gauchos en alardes de prontitud y destreza, en domar potros salvajes y en tirar el lazo, acreditándose también como un excelente administrador de estancias. (Viaje a caballo, 210-211)

Aside from establishing himself as a man of tradition through the press, through the same medium Rosas and his *Federalist* supporters were also able to push for traditional gender values through dress. On the one the hand, as we have seen in the cases of *La Argentina*, *El Iris*, and the other numerous publications mentioned above, many *Federalist* magazines criticized fashion because it threatened the traditional—i.e. colonial—family order. Also, much like the debates previously mentioned surrounding male use of high fashion, Rosas’ control over the press was centered on *feminizing* Unitarist males who opted for foreign fashions over local dress. (Therefore, it is not surprising that the periodicals *feminizing* male use of fashion were also well-known Federalist publications.) This, as Salvatore explains, was not only present in the press but also in the Mazorca’s actual slaughtering practices of political opponents which often focused on humiliating and feminizing its victims: “El método preferido por los mazorqueros fue el degüello a cuchillo, realizado luego de someter a las víctimas a humillantes rituales de feminización o sadismo.” (“Consolidación”, 331)<sup>81</sup> An early article from *La Argentina*—during

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<sup>81</sup> This is clearly what happens to the Unitarist victim in Echeverría’s *El matadero*. The short story ends with the symbolic rape of the Unitarist by the Federalist savages whereby the Unitarist is placed face down with his four appendages tied to a table in an obvious subservient position. It appears that the Unitarist will soon be penetrated with a corn cob (the symbol of the Mazorca): “En un momento liaron sus piernas en ángulo a los cuatro pies de la mesa volcando su cuerpo

the first period of Rosismo—eerily foreshadows the bloodshed that would mark the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it touches on the femininity that was so despised in the “new generations” of men who needed to be forced into line (*hacer entrar en camino*):

Es muy superficial esta juventud de la nueva cosecha, a nadie guardan consideración. No saben mas que empaquetarse bien, salir echando plantas, como gente de mucha importancia. Desde este momento les declaramos la guerra y si el tal petimetre no se rinde, y se pone á nuestra disposición para salir cuando mas no acomode, le ha de pesar su imprudencia. [...] Poco á poco los hemos de hacer entrar en camino, por que están muy orgullosos. (December 19, 1830)

The comments in this fragment appear to make reference to the emerging generation of intellectuals—such as the members of the Generation of ’37—that was increasingly aware of the power of persuasive dress. As this author complains, the new generation was superficial, it knew only how to pretend to be important and to look good (literally “package itself well” *empaquetarse bien* in a dandy-like fashion). The “war” that this author declares on this “juventud de la nueva cosecha”, immediately brings to mind the struggles for power that were already erupting between Unitarists and Federalists. Additionally, the binaries established in this fragment help to associate this new generation with modernity, fine dress and subsequently femininity in comparison to the older, more traditional, more “macho” generations. The establishment of such binaries is also an important move in establishing Rosas as the omnipotent

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boca abajo. Era preciso hacer igual operación con las manos, para lo cual soltaron las ataduras que las comprimían en la espalda. Sintiéndolas libres el joven, por un movimiento brusco en el cual pareció agotarse toda su fuerza y vitalidad, se incorporó primero sobre sus brazos, después sobre sus rodillas y se desplomó al momento murmurando: --Primero degollarme que desnudarme, infame canalla. // Sus fueras se habían agotado; inmediatamente quedó atado en cruz y empezaron la obra de desnudarlo. Entonces un torrente de sangre brotó borbolloneando de la boca y las narices del joven, y extendiéndose empezó a caer a chorros por entrambos lados de la mesa.” (Echeverría *El matadero*, 114) However, in this case, Echeverría, a Unitarist, uses this *femininity* for a completely different purpose: to gain sympathy from his audience for the abuses of the Federalists savages. Masiello explains that this was a common strategy for the Generation of ’37 since Unitarist opposition felt that women were the best agents of resistance to Federalist excesses. (*Entre civilización y barbarie*, 34)

male figure of the time period. Thus, the feminization of the public sphere—while causing public scandal—also permitted Federalist publications, and Federalist supporters of the Federation to strategically emphasize the paternal characteristics of Rosas.

Rosas himself made his paternalistic attitude towards his political career clear by his first letter of acceptance to the governorship in 1829. He wrote to the people of Buenos Aires:

Ved, mis amigos, la expresión de mis deseos: ser vuestro: y que los días de mi mando sean paternales. La salud de la Provincia es mi única aspiración; y el bien, el reposo y la seguridad de todos mi principal desvelo. Unid, Habitantes de Buenos Aires, vuestros sentimientos a los de ...*Juan Manuel de Rosas* Buenos Aires, Diciembre 8 de 1829. (Pradère, *Rosas: se iconografía*, 24)<sup>82</sup>

By establishing himself as a father figure (which he was especially able to do because of his unique relationship with his own daughter, Manuela), Rosas was able to establish his political legitimacy through parameters that were easily understood by the masses: obedience and loyalty (the foundations of his Federation) were also concepts easily identifiable as a child's obligation to a parent. By utilizing the press to characterize the Unitarists as effeminate, he not only stripped these elites of masculine characteristics, but he also stripped them of any association in the public imagination with virility, power, or the possibility to protect and provide for the large masses of poor people.

Pedro de Angelis again proved to be useful. In “Ensayo Histórico sobre la Vida del Excmo. Sr. Don Juan Manuel de Rosas” (1830) de Angelis explained how Rosas often dropped his activities to help out and take care of those in need. He reminds his readers that it is for this

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<sup>82</sup> Rosas also assumed a rather paternalistic attitude towards increasing the population of the frontier areas. In an attempt to increase birth rates in the desolate areas on the outskirts of the Buenos Aires province, Rosas was known to round up urban prostitutes and ship them to the frontiers, in hopes they would procreate. MacCann comments: “Hace algunos años, el general Rosas ordenó que fueran recogidas en Buenos Aires todas las mujeres de dudosa moralidad y después se las envió a esta frontera con instrucción de mantenerlas en la comarca para contribuir al aumento de la población”. (*Viaje a caballo*, 72)

reason that Rosas gained the trust and compliance of his followers since he essentially acted as a father protecting orphaned children:

Su benevolencia no tenia límites. ¡Cuántas veces no se le ha visto abandonar sus tareas, por amparar á un desgraciado, proteger á un huérfano, transar un pleito! ¿Qué hay que estrañar que esta conducta le hubiese grangeado la estimacion de los habitantes de la campaña? Los que piensan que la popularidad del Sr. Rosas no sea duradera, no saben, ó aparentan ignorar que se funda en beneficios, á que los individuos corresponden á veces con ingratitud, pero que los pueblos olvidan difícilmente. (In Rosas en los testimonios de su época, 27)

Rosas' paternal attitude, especially towards the Afro-Argentines, would prove to be a strategic appropriation of fatherhood since it certainly gained him the reputation as the "[...] father of the black, of the Indians and of the poor" and more particularly as, "[...] the one who love black-folk because he is wise." (*El Gaucho*, September 4, 1830)<sup>83</sup> As Castro explains, Rosas' strategic appropriation of the Afro-Argentines and his use of the color red to symbolize his Federation were very important to his official image:

In the Rosas government's official image, Rosas is presented as the only Argentine leader who granted blacks an equal status to whites. His contemporary supporters for his position usually give the following statements. Rosas supported and respected blacks and served as the good father to all the poor '...father of the black, of the Indians and of the poor,' or the more general attribute of being the 'father of the poor...he's the one who loves black-folk because he is wise.' He is also specifically credited with freeing blacks from slavery 'our father Rosas who gave us liberty'. [...] He selected the color red as his symbol, according to one author, because red was the favorite color of blacks. Red was the color associated with King Balthazar, the African king of the "Three Kings" [*los reyes magos*]. (The Afro-Argentines in Argentine Culture, 42)

Other poems from the time period also attest to the role of Rosas as the father of the poor, once again boasting a virile public image in the face of the weak, *afrancesados* Unitarists. One particular poem mimicking Afro-Argentine quotidian language, not only mentions Rosas' father-like characteristics, but also the inability of those who governed before (i.e. the Unitarist Rivadavia) to even think of the plight of the *moreno*:

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<sup>83</sup> This poem is quoted in Castro's The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture page 61.

Que viva d. Jua Manue,  
El señó goberadó  
Padre de todos los pobres  
El gobernadó mijó.

...  
otro cuando gobernaba  
ninca piensa en los moreno  
Lo tiene sive y más sive,  
y esi no nueri sé bueno.

(Originally published in *El Gaucho* October 6, 1830. Reproduced by Castro The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 44)

Travelers to the region went so far as to characterize the entire area as paternalistic and as still pertaining to biblical times. As MacCann described, biblical accounts could be easily adapted to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina:

El género de vida y los sentimientos de estos pobladores tienen mucho de las épocas patriarcales; falta un solo elemento para realizar aquellas escenas y asociaciones primitivas: son las tiendas. De vivir en tabernáculos, las narraciones de los tiempos bíblicos se adaptarían a la vida de estas pampas en el momento actual. [...] Ahora comprendo cabalmente las costumbres nómadas y los hábitos domésticos descritos en el Antiguo Testamento. Las posadas y hoteles no existen en las pampas y el viajero debe atenerse a la hospitalidad de las gentes.” (Viaje a caballo, 29 and 49 respectively)

Why would Rosas and Federalist supporters alike want to establish a sense of tradition and paternal order through dress? What did the Federalists have at stake in this symbolic power struggle between the markers of modernity and those of tradition? On the one hand, as Salvatore (“Consolidación”) and Andrews (The Afro-Argentines) both explain, Rosas had much to gain by winning over public support of his Federation. Andrews describes Rosas as the first in a long line of populist leaders to control the Argentine masses:

Even more threatening to the Unitarists, however, was Rosas’ adept use of the urban and rural non-elites as a base of political support. Though Rosas initially served as a spokesman for the estancieros, he rendered his political position almost impregnable by also cultivating and winning the support of the province’s workers. In so doing he became the first in a succession of Argentine populist leaders who have always horrified the Unitarists and their political descendants. (The Afro-Argentines, 16)

By cultivating an image of himself and his followers as anti-elite, Rosas' power machine appealed to those who often felt alienated by the *gente decente* of Argentina's upper classes. Instead of pushing for an image of a homogeneous—i.e. white, upper class Argentine nation—Rosas was able to harness the “chaos” of the heterogeneity that more accurately represented the true social composition of the region at that time. Equality through dress in the Federation translated into one of the principles of Rosismo: social equality. Through dress, the *gente del pueblo* could effectively channel their class grievances, and *morena* house servants could easily accuse their mistresses of having blue dresses in their closets while federal men, “los matarifes y carniceros podían burlarse de la vestimenta de los jóvenes educados de clase alta.” (Salvatore, “Consolidación”, 365)<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand, Rosas' appropriation of “tradition” through the symbols associated with Federalist dress is reminiscent of Hobsbawm's “invented traditions”.<sup>85</sup> As Hobsbawm explains, many times traditions or things symbolic of traditions are invented at moments where ‘rapid transformations of society’ actually weaken or produce the perception of a weakening of previous social patterns. (“Introduction”, 4) The years between 1810 and 1852 offer a perfect example of how the rapid transformations of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine society—the wars of independence, the civil wars following independence, the civil war between Federalists and Unitarists—created a sense of chaos and a perceived need to order that chaos at least in symbolic terms. Castro echoes this point in terms of Rosas' coming to power:

The collapse of the Rivadavian Argentine Confederation ushered in an era of instability (a crisis in hegemony) that was filled by the emergence of a “charismatic man of

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<sup>84</sup> Amalia by José Mármol and El matadero by Estabén Echeverría both refer to these points.

<sup>85</sup> Hobsbawm defines this concept: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” (“Introduction”, 1)

destiny,” Juan Manuel de Rosas, and his *saladero* class affiliated with the interior federal elites, the dormant political force. The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 49)

By inventing a tradition (the use of red ribbons, Federalist dress, etc.), by reinforcing his power and the order represented by the Federation through dress and by establishing himself as the legitimate father-figure of the region, Rosas was able to successfully control a large majority of the population who feared most a loss of tradition. Also, by using Unitarist dress and high fashion as a contrast, Rosas—the *caudillo* par excellence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—was able to create a sense of Argentine tradition through the appropriation of rural gaucho dress not because it dress was inherently traditional, but because Rosas and his followers *made it* or *invented it* traditional.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, dress is not inherently modern or traditional. Rather it is the discourse—written, verbal or iconographic—surrounding dress that gives it meaning. As one last proof of this affirmation, I offer the example of the *poncho* (mentioned previously as a characteristic gaucho article of clothing). Interestingly, the poncho was traditional and modern at the same time but in two different geographical locations. For Rosas and his followers it was the traditional counterpart to the modern European *frac*. However, for Europeans, particularly the English, the *poncho* became high fashion in the streets of London—at the same time Rosas (and Sarmiento and the rest of the) Generation of '37 heralded that *poncho* as traditional. In 1851 Manuel Moreno, an Argentine ambassador to London wrote to Rosas:

En este último invierno se ha introducido en Londres el uso del poncho por la calle o para viajar; hay tiendas donde se venden ya fabricados en Inglaterra y puede decirse que ha sido moda, mayormente entre la juventud, aunque inferiores a los de nuestro país en su tejido, durabilidad y en sus coloridos. (In Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 162)



Another example is found in Woodbine Parish. In an article titled “El progreso de la civilización en Sud-América” published in *Archivo americano*, the English diplomat commented on the fact that the ‘traditional’ attire and the belongings of the Argentine gaucho were manufactured almost entirely in England:

Entre los campesinos, las manufacturas de Inglaterra han llegado á ser un artículo de primera necesidad. El gaucho se viste completamente de éllas. Tomad y observed todo su atavio; examined todo su traje y lo que no sea hecho de cuero crudo, es de manufactura inglesa. El vestido de su muger tambien procede del telar de Manchester; la olla en que prepara su comida, el plato en que come, el cuchillo, el poncho, las espuelas, el freno—todo le vá de Inglaterra. (No. 15, October 10, 1844)

These final quotes serves to prove that it is the meaning given to dress that makes it modern or traditional at any given time. Rosas’ political machine depended upon the *othering* of the Unitarists to boost popular support for his regime (especially from the rather large population of Afro-Argentines). Codifying dress as traditional or modern, for Rosas and his followers, was an essential component in this process.

### ***2.3. Rosas and the Afro-Argentine: The Relationship of Race and Dress in the Rosista Era***

In 1855 Sarmiento wrote a letter to Mariano de Sarratea about the exterior and almost perfect appearance of Buenos Aires:

Buenos Aires es ya el pueblo de la América del Sur que más se acerca en sus manifestaciones exteriores a los Estados Unidos. Mezclándome con las muchedumbres que acuden a los fuegos en estos días y llenan completamente la plaza de la Victoria, no he encontrado pueblo, chusma, plebe, rotos. El lugar de los *rotos* de Chile lo ocupan millares de vascos, italianos, españoles, franceses, etc. El traje es el mismo para todas las clases, o más propiamente hablando no hay clases. (In Natalio R. Botana Los nombres del poder, 34)<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The commentaries on dress in this quote echo Sarmiento’s previous observations on dress and status in the United States. In *Viajes* (1847) he wrote on the *far west* and how even there—far from civilization—there was perfect equality: “[...] hay igualdad perfecto de aspecto en la población, en el vestido, en los modales, y aun en la inteligencia; el comerciante, el doctor, el sheriff, el cultivador, todos tienen el mismo aspecto. [...] La igualdad es pues, absoluta en las

Sarmiento's comments are significant: at least in his mind by 1855 there were no visible traces of *gente del pueblo* (especially those that formed the power base for Rosas' Federation); the *rotos* of Chile did not exist in Argentina since they had been replaced with the whites of Europe; and dress had come to symbolize the homogeneous composition of the city since there were no class distinctions. Apparently, Sarmiento saw a white, well-dressed Buenos Aires upon returning from exile.<sup>87</sup>

Historical descriptions of the city however are quite different from Sarmiento's idealized Buenos Aires. Andrews describes the city in 1870 in the following terms:

Although larger, having grown from 40,000 to 187,000, in many ways it was still 'the big village' that its inhabitants affectionately called it. The downtown area was still small, most of the city's streets were unpaved and poorly drained, the buildings were one or two-story constructions in the colonial style, and the traditional social relationships between the *gente decente* and the *gente del pueblo* survived essentially unchanged from the colonial period. (The Afro-Argentines, 20)

In Andrews' Buenos Aires there are certainly *gente del pueblo*, which inevitably points to the fact that class differences existed.<sup>88</sup> This discrepancy points to one of the major issues of 19<sup>th</sup>

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costumbres y en las formas. Los grados de civilización o de riqueza no están expresados como entre nosotros por cortes especiales de vestido. No hay chaqueta, ni poncho, sino un vestido común y hasta una rudeza común de modales que mantiene las apariencias de igualdad en la educación." (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción, 237)

<sup>87</sup> Yet only two years later, Sarmiento would recognize the 'problem' of the Afro-Argentine population in an article titled 'un escandalo' published in *El nacional* in 1857. In this article, Sarmiento is concerned with the gender imbalance between unmarried white women to white men since it appeared that white women might have to enter into bi-racial marriages. Castro explains: "According to the municipal census he cited (he does not give the reference) there was an excess of 10,623 creole women to creole men (he seems to be using the term to mean white.) Who would these women marry, nonwhites? The implied scandal was that these women would indeed have to marry nonwhites." (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 35)

<sup>88</sup> Andrews describes the social composition of *gente del pueblo*: "The *gente del pueblo*, on the other hand, consisted of a fragmented, divided mass of individuals separated into competing social groups by several determinants. One of the most important was race. While the *gente decente* prided itself on its racial homogeneity, the non-elites were divided into a bewildering variety of racial estates, codified by Spanish colonial legislation and arranged in a carefully

century discussions on the nation and national identity: the distances between the elite, lettered visions of an *imagined* national space and the *real* national space were as vast as the large areas of pampa yet to be “civilized”.

Perhaps most interesting in Sarmiento’s comment is not what he pretended to see, but rather what he pretended *not* to see: the large and unmistakable presence of Afro-Argentines in the city. This final section will examine the relationship between fashion, dress and race in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine nationalism by considering the following points: a.) what were the major driving factors behind 19th century Argentine nation building and what role did elites play in the construction of nationalism; b.) how was fashion related to this national project and why did a discourse on fashion fail to exist for Afro-Argentines; and c.) how did the discursive disavowal of fashion for Afro-Argentines interpellate both whites and non-whites alike.<sup>89</sup>

Fashion played a significant part in maintaining the racial/ethnic hierarchies in place since colonial times. As Andrews explains, the colonial system of *régimen de castas* clearly delineated dress between the *gente decente* and the *gente del pueblo*, particularly the Afro-Argentine component:

Colonial legislation imposed a lengthy series of restrictions on the free blacks’ liberties, some of them dating from medieval Spanish legal usage, others of them new limitations created in response to New World realities. These controls, known as the *Régimen de castas*, were instituted in order to slow or halt the process of race mixture in the New World and to reserve the highest social and economic positions in the society for

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established hierarchy. Whites cherished their racial status as their most precious and inalienable asset, an inheritance which entitled them to unquestioned legal superiority over nonwhites.” (The Afro-Argentines, 18)

<sup>89</sup> In this essay, I will consider only the Afro-Argentine component of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina fully aware that they were not the only racial element in Argentina’s heterogeneous population. I will not consider the relevance of indigenous dress or its importance in the construction of 19<sup>th</sup> century national identity because the indigenous population was never considered part of the national project unlike the Afro-Argentines who formed a significant part of Rosas’ political power base. The Afro-Argentines, unlike the indigenous, posed a problem to the liberal intelligentsia’s reflections on citizenship and their criteria for national belonging.

European and American-born whites. [...] The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, along with the blacks of the rest of the empire, were forbidden to carry arms, wear certain types of clothing such as silks, lace, or pearls, walk through city streets after nightfall, hold civil, ecclesiastical or military office, buy or sell alcohol, be educated in the same schools as whites, and so on and on in a list that must have seemed *ad infinitum* to the people who lived under its dictates. (The Afro-Argentines, 45)

Several accounts of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries point to the restrictions placed on Afro-Argentines in terms of dress. For example, the *regimen de castas* mentioned by Andrews is clearly echoed in the case of the *mulata* in El lazarrillo de ciegos caminantes, one of the only existing samples of colonial literature that describes the situation of the Afro-Argentines in the pre-independence period. The text reminds the reader that, “No permiten a los esclavos, y aun a los libres, que tengan mezcla de negro, usen otra ropa que la que se trabaja en el país, que es bastantemente grosera.” (Concolorcorvo, 59) The text then reveals the story of a *mulata* woman in the Córdoba region who paraded in the streets “muy adornada” for her social position (apparently wearing clothing that was imported) who was subsequently stripped and publicly whipped for having transgressed the social boundaries established between race and clothing. Clearly fashion in Argentina, in terms of a civilizing agent, was destined for the educated, upper classes and the project of modernizing Argentina through fashion was best kept in the hands of the elites.

Fashion therefore was a significant tool in maintaining a white, elite social order. However, fashion could have only served such a purpose in the context of a racially heterogeneous reality. Despite popular belief that Argentina was (is) primarily a *white* country, Afro-Argentines formed a significant part of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine society. While it is difficult to estimate the correct numbers of Afro-Argentines that populated the city (because of statistical misrepresentation), Andrews concludes that the Afro-Argentine population experienced sustained growth throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lynch suggests that at one point the Afro-

Argentine population made up almost 30% of the population of Buenos Aires. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas, 128) Originally as slaves and later as *libertos* the Afro-Argentine population dominated many areas of the work force and social life as domestics, vendors, soldiers, publicists, artisans (mostly at the apprentice levels), shoemakers and tailors. They organized into nations and mutual societies, they often held *candombes* in the Rosista years as well as the 1850s and 1860s and they successfully developed a presence in public life through the press, especially towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Andrews The Afro-Argentines; Sabato “La vida pública”)<sup>90</sup> And one certainly cannot forget the presence of the Afro-Argentines in the Rosista period: the Afro-Argentines made up a large part of Rosas’ military machine; in the city of Buenos Aires they served as a major component of popular support for the Federation; they were reputed as having served as informants against Unitarists<sup>91</sup>; and in the Rosista era they gave “especificidad y dinámica a la política del período” through ‘native’ dress, public parades, national festivities and African societies (Salvatore, “Consolidación”, 1998: 355)<sup>92</sup> Despite active participation in Argentine society, the Afro-Argentines have been successfully written out of the annals of

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<sup>90</sup> Sabato describes the emergence of mutual aid societies for Afro-Argentines in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “En la década de 1850 se observa la aparición de asociaciones con fines específicamente mutuales y culturales: las sociedades Abaya, Protectora Brasileña, del Carmen y Socorros Mutuos, de Morenos Criollos Nuestra Señora de Luján. Ellas mantenían, de todas maneras, funciones de tipo festivo, ritual y religioso que heredaron de las Naciones.” (“La vida pública”, Nueva historia argentina, 178) Andrews also offers a compelling analysis of Afro-Argentine community life in chapter 8 “Community Organizations: The Quest for Autonomy”. (The Afro-Argentines)

<sup>91</sup> Andrews suggests that there is no direct proof to back up this claim. However, this topic does appear often in literary texts—such as Amalia—suggesting that there may be some truth to these claims: “After the fall of Rosas, several Unitarist writers claimed that the city’s black servants had formed a spy network for the dictator. Domestics in Unitarist households allegedly reported on their employers to Rosas and his secret police, with usually disastrous results for the families involved. There is no evidence of this at all in police or government documents from the period, but the charge was repeated so frequently that there may be some truth in it.” (The Afro-Argentines, 100)

<sup>92</sup> In fact, as Castro affirms, the *candombes* of the Afro-Argentines actually replaced the earlier patriotic parades of whites. (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 43)

history. As Andrews explains, through statistical omissions—intentional or unintentional—the Afro-Argentines have been made invisible:

Demographic distortions in turn form part of a larger phenomenon, that being the obscuring, be it intentional or unintentional, of the role of the Afro-Argentines in their nation's history. [...] Much is made of their role as common soldiers, but there is only passing mention of those black men who rose to be officers commanding battalions and regiments. Little is said about the Afro-Argentines' mutual aid societies, which predated those of the immigrants. Nothing is said about the black writers, artists, intellectuals, and journalists who blossomed in the city in the nineteenth century. (The Afro-Argentines, 6)

Why is the Afro-Argentine component excluded in the large majority of the canonical works on nation formation and national identity in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina? Much of this has to do with nationalism and with the white lettered elites in charge of constructing narratives of national identity and a principally white *imagined community*. (Anderson, Imagined Communities, 1991) Nationalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America was based in large part on a series of exclusions in terms of race (Balibar "Racism and Nationalism"), ethnicity (Cornejo-Polar Escribir en el aire, Moraña Indigenismo hacia el fin del milenio) and gender (Masiello Between Civilization and Barbarism; González-Stephan Fundaciones) among other categories.<sup>93</sup> The case of Argentina is no different since the construction of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine nationalism was also based in large part upon exclusivist principles, or what Shumway deems a "mythology of exclusion".<sup>94</sup> These exclusivist principles began in many ways with the elite members of the Argentine *lettered city* (Rama, La ciudad letrada) all of whom envisioned a homogeneous

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<sup>93</sup> Additional members of these "others" were the poor, the sick, the mentally ill, homosexuals and criminals. (González-Stephan, "Las disciplinas escriturarias": 36).

<sup>94</sup> Shumway explains the approach of his text based on the principle of exclusion: "This book considers another factor in the Argentine equation which is often overlooked in economic, social, and political histories: the peculiar divisive mind-set created by the country's nineteenth-century intellectuals who first framed the idea of Argentina. This ideological legacy is in some sense a mythology of exclusion rather than a unifying national ideal, a recipe for divisiveness rather than consensual pluralism." (The Invention of Argentina, x)

Argentina where differences of class, race, and ethnicity were reconciled.<sup>95</sup> For some, such as Alberdi, this reconciliation would be achieved through harnessing Argentina's heterogeneity. For example, in his Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina, which served as a map for the Argentine Constitution of 1853, Alberdi wrote:

Quiero suponer que la República Argentina se compusiese de hombres como yo, es decir, de ochocientos mil abogados que saben hacer libros. Esta sería la peor población que pudiera tener. Los abogados no servimos para hacer caminos de fierro, para hacer navegables y navegar los ríos, para explotar las minas, para labrar los campos, para colonizar los desiertos; es decir, que no servimos para dar a la América del Sur lo que necesita. Pues bien, la población actual de nuestro país sirve para estos fines [...] Es un error infelicísimo el creer que la instrucción primaria o universitaria sean lo que pueda dar a nuestro pueblo la aptitud del progreso material y de las prácticas de libertad. (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción, 231)

Here, Alberdi clearly envisioned an Argentine society based on class difference: the owners of the written word and knowledge would be *men* like him and his Generation, while all of the others, the *gente del pueblo* would serve to make the dreams of the *lettered city* a reality. For others this reconciliation would occur through the incorporation of difference (or through the selective ignoring of difference). Sarmiento argues in Argirópolis that the reconciliation of racial/ethnic differences in Argentina would occur by injecting Argentine racial inferiority with the perceived superior blood of European immigrants:

Nosotros necesitamos mezclarnos a la población de países más adelantados que el nuestro, para que nos comuniquen sus artes, sus industrias, su actividad y su aptitud de trabajo [...] La habilidad política de un gobierno americano estaría, pues, en mostrarse no sólo dispuesto a recibir esos millones de huéspedes, sino en solicitarlos, seducirlos, ofrecerles ventajas, abrirles medios y caminos de establecerse y fijarse en el país. (Argirópolis 150-158)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ramos explains: "The new states *had* to be consolidated, a project that entailed the delimitation of borders and territories, the generalization of authority under a central law capable of submitting particular interests in conflict with one another to the project of a new homogeneity, a national homogeneity that was linguistic as well as political." (Divergent Modernities, 3)

<sup>96</sup> Ramos explains that for Sarmiento, the reorganizing of the public sphere would mean the incorporating the other: "Accomplishing the task of reordering the public sphere task would

As Halperín-Donghi reminds us, the mostly white<sup>97</sup> *lettered city* found its legitimacy through the ownership of “ideas”: in their privileged position as owners of knowledge and the written word (*los dueños de la letra*) the lettered elites could put forth their political and social projects:

La hegemonía de los letrados se justifica por su posesión de un acervo de ideas y soluciones que debiera permitirles dar orientación eficaz a una sociedad que la Nueva Generación ve como esencialmente pasiva, como la material en la cual es de responsabilidad de los letrados encarnar las ideas cuya posesión les da por sobre todo el derecho a gobernarla. (Halperín Donghi Proyecto y construcción, 11)

The lettered elite, especially the Generation of '37, understood that high fashion was a medium through which their visions of racial homogeneity could be symbolically achieved. They also clearly understood their role as leaders in promoting a modernized version of a future Argentina through fashion.<sup>98</sup>

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entail the incorporation, not the alienation of the other. And the first step toward this would be the representation of barbarism in discourse. One would have to listen to the other's stories, which had remained inaccessible to the knowledge possessed by the lettered intellectual or *letrado* ...” (Divergent Modernities, 11) However, Ramos does not allude to how discrepancies in Sarmiento's discourse—such as the blatant exclusion of the Afro-Argentines in most of Sarmiento's writings and the unwillingness on behalf of Sarmiento to listen to the Afro-Argentine discourse—point to even the exclusive politics of deciding which “othered” accounts were worth listening to.

<sup>97</sup> I say *mostly white* since not all of the urban elites were of “pure” heritage. Although urban elites favored an idealized vision of a white Argentina, it is ironic that the first Unitarist president, Bernardino Rivadavia—heralded as the icon of progress and civilization by Unitarist elites—was rumored to have African ancestors. For this reason, his political opponents often referred to him as “Dr. Chocolate”. (Andrews, The Afro-Argentines, 83)

<sup>98</sup> Alberdi mentions this very early on in *La Moda*: “Es preciso que haganlos la declaracion de los principios que deben reglar nuestros juicios en punto á modas, para evitar de un golpe toda controversia.—La moda, participa entre nosotros de la indecisión que afecta todas nuestras cosas sociales. No tenemos modas dominantes, como no tenemos ideas, ni costumbres dominantes. Entre tanto, es menester caminar á la homogeneidad; y como para llegar a un punto comun, es indispensable partir tambien de un punto comun, bueno es entenderse sobre este punto comun de arranque.” (number 3, page 3, 1837) I will refer to this quotation in more detail in Chapter 2.



Because high fashion served as a point of departure for *imagining* a homogenous—and particularly white—national space, it is not surprising that the relationship between high fashion and the Afro-Argentine community in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina is practically inexistent.<sup>99</sup> The relationship that did develop between Afro-Argentines and fashion—through the eyes and the writings of the lettered elites and government officials—was not beneficial to the *image* of the Afro-Argentine in the social imaginary. Castro explains that three specific ‘symbolic roles’ were developed with regard to the Afro-Argentine:

If the symbolic role that the Argentine black has played in Rioplatine folk culture used as a model, it is threefold: the black as valiant and loyal, the black as evil, and the black as caring but simple (a variant is the black as a buffoon.) (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 65)

In terms of dress, I would add additional roles to Castro’s list. On the one hand, Afro-Argentines were described as the antithesis of high fashion either through their *nakedness* or through their *bestiality*.<sup>100</sup> One early description of African slaves relates a case where some slaves were freed and they subsequently roamed the streets of Buenos Aires. What disgusted

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<sup>99</sup> There are several pictorial representations of the Afro-Argentine. Typically these lithographs depict Afro-Argentines in clothing “suitable” to their professions or their social rank, such as pastry vendors and washwomen. The most famous pictographs are those of César Hipólito Bacle (who also published several pictographs of the peinetón).

<sup>100</sup> For example, many times the Afro-Argentine population was described as *bestial* through their participation in the *candombes* and in the maintenance of their “savage” customs from Africa: “Había entonces en Buenos Aires más de veinte mil negros, distribuidos en innumerables sociedades, cada una con su nombre bárbaro, sus hábitos y reyes, según los usos y jerarquías que probablemente traían desde sus tierras africanas. Alrededor de la ciudad formaron un conjunto de colonias libres y los domingos y días de fiesta ejecutaban sus bailes salvajes, hombres y mujeres a la ronda, contando sus refranes en sus propias lenguas y al compás de tamboriles y bombos grotescos. La salvaje algazara que se levantaba de aquel extraño concurso, atronando al aire, la oíamos—dice un testigo a quien copiamos—como un rumor siniestro desde las calles del centro, semejante al de una aterradora invasión de tribus africanas enloquecidas por el color de la sangre.” (Ramos Mejía, Rosas y su tiempo, 208-209)

local official was not that they died of hunger, but that they walked around naked.<sup>101</sup> Other commentaries describe how local elites dreaded *carnaval* often because the participation of the Afro-Argentines in *carnaval* and the sound of their drums approaching brought with them the image of their naked bodies.<sup>102</sup> Ramos Mejía describes *carnaval* and the Afro-Argentines that participated in the street parades:

Los rítmicos gruñidos de esos músicos en delirio dejaban una impresión dolorosa en el espíritu, porque aun cuando el negro, como ya he dicho, no era singunario ni cruel, la extraña mascarada sugería el presentimiento de lo que serían aquellas pobres bestias una vez enceladas por la acción de su *chicha* favorita o por el cebo apetitoso del saqueo, consentido y protegido por la alta tutela de Restaurador. [...] Las negras, muchas de ellas jóvenes y esbeltas, luciendo las desnudeces de sus carnes bien nutridas, revelaban en sus formas abundantes y, en sus rostros alegres, un ánimo satisfecho y despreocupado. Las gráciles Venus exponían con indolencia las mamas rotundas como una expresión de su poder fecundante: parecían grandes racimos de uva negra y de ágata estriado de oro, y sus bocas golosas de vendimiadoras untadas de hez prorrumpían en gritos de triunfo. (Rosas y su tiempo, 208)

In yet another example, one specific Afro-Argentine figure was compared to the devil because of his extra-human ability as a *payador* (famed gaucho guitarists known for their improvisational skills). His name was “Juan sin ropa” (Juan without clothes) once again marking the *nakedness* of the Afro-Argentine together with his evil-nature. The legend of “Juan sin ropa” began with the creole *payador* Santos Vega who was famed to be the supreme *payador* of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Santos Vega was challenged by “Juan sin ropa” and was ultimately defeated when after two days and nights he ran out of words. Local legend claimed that only the

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<sup>101</sup> Andrews describes the case: “Most of these abruptly freed slaves were in no condition to fend for themselves, as evidenced by the fact that they had attracted no buyers in a labor hungry society, and almost all of them died in the streets shortly after being ‘freed’. The viceroy corroborated the council’s complaints and forwarded them to the king, though he seems to have been more offended by the Africans’ nakedness than by their desperate situation.” (The Afro-Argentines, 29)

<sup>102</sup> Again, Andrews describes this case through a reference by V.F. López: “V.F. López echoed this, recalling how the families would shudder when they heard ‘the sinister sounds from the streets of the center, like a threatening invasion of African tribes, black and naked. Lust and crime ruled the city, with the African drums underlying all.” (The Afro-Argentines, 101)

devil (i.e. Juan sin ropa) could have such an ability so as to defeat the human Santos Vega.<sup>103</sup> As Castro explains, this legend would grow to have much more symbolic importance as the struggle between real men and the devil or even the battle between the native (and white) creole and the “challenges of the gringo and modernization.” (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 71) Most interesting however is the relationship that developed between the dress of this individual and his race: his lack of clothing not only marked his savageness but also his evil nature (both in large part because of being Afro-Argentine). José Mármol’s *foundational fiction* Amalia also equates the Afro-Argentines to beasts (and to Rosas’ politics) when describing the arrival of the *afrancesada* Florencia Dupasquier at the house of staunch Federalist María Josefa. In this description, Florencia manages to pass through the masses of Afro-Argentines, ducks, chickens and all of God’s other creatures with the force of her entire spirit (and a perfumed handkerchief!):

La joven pisó el umbral de aquella puerta y tuvo que recurrir a toda la fuerza de su espíritu, y a su pañuelo perfumado, para abrirse camino por entre una multitud de negras, de mulatas, de chinas, de patos, de gallinas, de cuanto animal ha criado Dios, incluso una porción de hombres vestidos de colorado de los pies a la cabeza, con toda la apariencia y las señales de estar, más o menos tarde, destinados a la horca, que cuajaba el zaguán y parte del patio de la casa de doña María Josefa Ecurra, cuñada de don Juan Manuel de Rosas, donde la bella joven se encontraba. (Amalia, 178)

On the other hand, if the Afro-Argentines were not depicted as *savage* through a lack of clothing, they were depicted merely as additional adornments in the elite repertoire of fashionable objects. Some narratives do exist that describe the use of fashions by Afro-Argentine women, but this use is only symbolic of white wealth. For example, the anonymous writer “El Tacaño”, describes peinetón use by his Afro-Argentine slaves:

Tengo cinco hijas y mi mujer seis—a 300 pesos cada una son 1800 pesos, sin contar con las trompadas de mis negras que también llevan peinetas, medias de seda y las pasas muy

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<sup>103</sup> This episode is narrated in Castro The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture pages 70-71.

peinadas, porque dice la señora y las niñas que esto contribuye al decoro de la casa [...]. P.D. “Este es el nombre que me da mi mugercita. ¡Qué perla! Si ella supiera que yo había escrito estos renglones! Qué pelotera! (*El Censor Argentino* no. 57, July 4, 1834)

Here the Afro-Argentine women wear peinetones only as an extension of wealth and as an additional “decoration” to the owner’s home, but not because they are actively participating through consumption in Argentine high fashion. A British traveler to Argentina in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century made a similar comment whereby the female Afro-Argentine slaves were rather *pulidas* (polished) for their social position because they often accompanied their *señoras*:

Las mujeres esclavas a menudo ocupan un lugar que más parece de amigas que de esclavas o sirvientas. Acompañan a sus señoras cuando éstas salen de visita, y se sientan en el suelo de la sala para esperarlas presenciando los bailes que a menudo se realizan entre los miembros de la familia. Este roce trae como consecuencia que las muchas esclavas sean corteses y pulidas, imitando a sus superiores. (*Cinco años en Buenos Aires*, 137)<sup>104</sup>

Clearly, one of the concerns hinted at in these examples is that Afro-Argentine females might compete—through dress—with their white mistresses (not at all uncommon in other contexts, such as Cuba), thus luring eligible creole men into interracial relations. Rosende Petrona de Sierra, the director of *La Aljaba* mentioned above, was more specifically worried about the impact that Afro-Argentine’s desire for fashionable goods would have on the domestic sphere. She mentioned that luxury was destroying the home in large part because it sparked desire among the ‘domestics’ (i.e. Afro-Argentine females) to mimic their mistresses. The author explains her point of view in an article titled “El lujo es perjudicial à la tranquilidad domestica”:

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<sup>104</sup> Andrews also echoes this: “Slaves dominated or formed a major part of the work force in any number of occupations. They were probably most visible in the field of domestic service. As in other Spanish American colonial cities, no family that aspired to high social status in Buenos Aires could do without its retinue of black servants. [...] Foreign visitors to Buenos Aires occasionally charged that these domestic skills were a strictly secondary consideration, the servants having been purchased primarily for ostentation.” (*The Afro-Argentines*, 31)

Es esta una verdad que no admite la menor duda: se ve turbada la tranquilidad de innumerables casas por los excesos del lujo: [...] Las madres con su ejemplo provocan los deseos de las hijas é hijos; y todos juntos despiertan en los domesticos las mismas pasiones y deseos: el cómo se satisfarán unos y otros, es el punto de la dificultad. [...] mas adelante las quejas; en seguida las imprecaciones, en pos de estas los denuestos; y así se arma una guerra implacable entre ambos á dos [...] (No 11 21 de diciembre 1830)

The Afro-Argentines are however most often associated with dress—and not fashion—through their participation in Rosas’ regime.<sup>105</sup> For example, Rosas used the Afro-Argentines to harass the Unitarist members of society still living in Buenos Aires. It was common for Afro-Argentine bands—under the strict approbation of Rosas—to go from one Unitarist house to another singing the national anthem and condemning the *unitarios asquerosos*. The band would then ask for money from the Unitarist household. Ramos Mejía mentions that the Afro-Argentines wore special federal attire at these times, a red poncho and the chiripá:

El conjunto pintoresco de la banda merece resucitarse como rasgo de las costumbres de aquellos tiempos. Componíanla generalmente tres, cuatro o hasta cinco negros vestidos de poncho y sombrero alto con divisas. Algunos con chiripa colorado y otros con pantalones y ojotas, pues entonces no se usaba la alpargata. [...] Terminada la sonata, el negro principal, y mientras los otros vaciaban los chorros de saliva que brutales resoplidos habían depositado en los cobres, entraba sombrero en mano hasta el primer patio y pedía a la sirvienta que ‘avisara al amito que se iba la banda’. A los efecto del cobro o con fines de espionaje, había *agregados* que soplaban *a frío*, pero que aumentaban el número a fin de que la gratificación por cabeza fuera más copiosa. (Rosas y su tiempo, 368)

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<sup>105</sup> Castro reminds us however that not all Afro-Argentines supported Rosas and thus to a certain extent the relationship between the Afro-Argentine and Rosas has not been fully explored. “Not all blacks were pro-Rosas: “As already demonstrated, blacks fought on all sides during the Federalist-Unitario conflict. Black soldiers fought on the side besieging the city of Montevideo and on the side defending it. Blacks supported Urquiza during and after the struggle against Rosas. Many examples can be cited to support these wide ranges of black loyalty. For example, on May 25, 1838, as part of the patriotic celebrations in Buenos Aires commemorating the events of 1810, thousands of blacks showed their loyalty to the porteño governor with a mass demonstration in Plaza Victoria (now part of the central downtown Plaza de Mayo.)” (The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 47)

Not only did these bands serve to locate Unitarist households throughout the city, but as this quote indicates, they additionally served as spies for Rosas.<sup>106</sup>

While defining people by dress served as part of Rosas' political control of the population<sup>107</sup>, it also served the Unitarists well to disassociate themselves from the *gente del pueblo*, many of whom were Afro-Argentines. Andrews explains:

The Afro-Argentines and Rosas thus became inextricably linked in the mind of the Unitarists. The racism of the white Unitarists combined with their hatred of Rosas and the Federalists to transform black people into a recurring symbol of the alleged barbarism and savagery of the Rosas years. (The Afro-Argentines, 1980: 100)

Andrews offers an example of how Unitarists lashed out at Rosas' acceptance of the Afro-Argentine community.

When in 1838 Rosas invited the African nations to dance in the central plaza to celebrate Independence Day, the fury of the Unitarists knew no bounds. The anti-Rosista poet Juan Cruz Varela commemorated the event in this poem: "To the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 1838"

*To the jeers of a proud people,*

*African bands of low-born slaves*

*Go rambling through the streets and squares.*

*Their barbarous cries, their savage dances,*

*On that day are a purposeful outrage*

*Of the new Caribbean, an abortion of the South."* (The Afro-Argentines, 1980: 100)<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> There also existed the *locos de Rosas* who memorized long poems praising the Restorer of Law (Rosas) and lambasting disgusting Unitarists. These poems would be recited in public plazas and throughout the streets of Buenos Aires. (Ramos Mejía, Rosas y su tiempo, 368)

<sup>107</sup> Salvatore explains: "In one aspect at least the classificatory apparatus of Rosismo was effective. If forced paysanos to mind the clothes they wore. In addition to displaying relative well-being or poverty, country folks know, their clothes were used by authorities as indicators of class, criminality, and potential service to the army. Appearance, they discovered, could mean the difference between forced recruitment and freedom." (Wandering Paysanos, 136)

<sup>108</sup> Aponte-Ramos points to the fact that the characterization of the Afro-Argentine as savage and pathetic also served to implicitly attack Rosas: "Dentro de este extenso grupo escritural se

Here again the Afro-Argentines are represented as “savages”, as the true *barbarians* of Argentina, through their celebration of native dances. Varela also makes reference to the new Caribbean in the South possibly hinting at the freedoms Afro-Haitians enjoyed in Haiti and most definitely hinting at his disapproval of the liberties allowed under Rosas’ regime of the still enslaved Afro-Argentines.

Since the Unitarists so despised the strong relationship of the Afro-Argentine population with Rosas’ Federation, none of the works written by Unitarists of the period contains references to high fashion among the Afro-Argentines. Also, since one of the ways that Rosas catered to the common people of the area was through equality in dress, the Unitarists strove to mark their perceived superiority over Afro-Argentines through dress. Because a marked discourse on high fashion begins primarily with the Generation of ’37, it is not surprising that this generation and its followers would develop a discursive disavowal of the Afro-Argentines in terms of fashion. Fashion thus served to symbolically secure the role of the urban intelligentsia as a modern elite since only the wealthy could acquire the markers necessary to put forth this image. Fashion served to delineate who belonged (and who didn’t belong) to the *gente decente* of Argentine society. Esteban Echeverría’s El matadero paints a compelling picture of the Afro-Argentine since the dialectic between *civilized white* and *savage black* is reiterated time and again. The text begins with a description of the slaughterhouse:

No quedó en el matadero ni un solo ratón vivo de muchos millares que allí tenían albergue. Todos murieron o de hambre o ahogados en sus cuevas por la incesante lluvia. Multitud de negras rebuscotas de *achuras*, como los caranchos de presa, se desbandaron por la ciudad como otras tantas harpías prontas a devorar cuanto hallaran comible. Las

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constituye el argentino negro como un elemento exógeno, un elemento disturbador en maridaje con los federales, usurpadores del gobierno de manos de sus regentes naturales. Son ficcionalizados como una corte cómica y patética, alusión a un gobernante bajo e incapaz.” (“Cuando la Pampa se acolorea”, 735)

gaviotas y los perros, inseparables rivales suyos en el matadero, emigraron en busca de alimento animal. (El matadero, 94)

Here again the *negras* of the text are depicted as savages since they are compared to dogs and seagulls looking for scraps. These *negras* are looking for anything at all to eat and as such they are reduced to bestial scavengers. The description continues:

A sus [the *carnicero*] espaldas se rebullían, caracoleando y siguiendo los movimientos, una comparsa de muchachos, de negras y mulatas achuradotas, cuya fealdad trasuntaba las harpías de la fábula, y, entremezclados con ella, algunos enormes mastines olfateaban, gruñían o se deban de tarascones por la presa. (El matadero, 100)

Here, the *negras* and *mulatas* are prancing about the intestines and pools of blood left by the slaughterer and their ugliness matches only the ugliness of mythical harpies: wretched birds with women's heads.<sup>109</sup> The description of the Afro-Argentine women continues:

Hacia otra parte, entre tanto, dos africanas llevaban arrastrando las entrañas de un animal; allá una mulata se alejaba con un ovillo de tripas y resbalando de repente sobre un charco de sangre, caía a plomo, cubriendo con su cuerpo la codiciada presa. (El matadero, 102)

Compared to the elegant dress described in Sarmiento's publications from Chile and Alberdi's writings in *La Moda*, the Afro-Argentine body in this fragment isn't at all covered with fashionable dress, but rather it is intermingled with putrid body parts. This serves as yet another symbolic attack on the perceived collusion between Rosas and the Afro-Argentine community.

In another section, the image of an upper-class female pastime—knitting—is compared to the masses of Afro-Argentine females who are “un-knitting” (unraveling) intestines, not yarn, and who are separating the pieces of fat from slaughtered animals:

Acullá se venían acurrucadas en hileras cuatrocientas negras destejiendo sobre las faldas el ovillo y arrancando uno a uno los sebitos que el avaro cuchillo del *carnicero* había dejado en la tripa como rezagados, al paso que otras vaciaban panzas y vejigas y las

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<sup>109</sup> The *achuradoras* were typically Afro-Argentine women that salvaged tripe, organs, lungs and putrid meat from the slaughterhouses. They would later sell this meat to the Afro-Argentine community and poor whites. (Andrews, The Afro-Argentines, 37)



henchían de aire de sus pulmones para despositar en ellas, luego de secas, la achura. (El matadero, 102)

These images are in stark contrast to the arrival of a Unitarist:

¡Allí viene un unitario! [...] ¿No le ven la patilla en forma de U? No trae divisa en el fraque ni luto en el sombrero. /—Perro unitario. /—Es una cajetilla. /—Monta en silla como los gringos. /La Mazorca con él. / ¡La tijera! / [...] Trae pistoleras por pintar. / --Todos estos cajetillas unitarios son pintores como el diablo. (El matadero, 110)

The Unitarist depicted here wears the symbolic beard in the shape of a “u” and he is using a saddle, unlike the *gauchos* who used only an animal hide and a large blanket for a saddle. Most importantly, the Unitarist serves to link federal dress not only to support of Rosas, but also to the institution of slavery. He does not wear the mandatory *divisa*, since, as he says, uniform dress is for slaves, not for free men. (El matadero, 112) After the Unitarist dies—because of his own anger and resentment toward the savage crew at the slaughterhouse—Echeverría ends the text with sarcasm:

Llamaban ellos salvaje unitario, conforme a la jerga inventada por el Restaurador, patrón de la cofradía, a todo el que no era degollador, carnicero, ni salvaje, ni ladrón; a todo hombre decente y de corazón bien puesto, a todo patriota ilustrado amigo de las luces y de la libertad; y por el suceso anterior puede verse a las claras que el foco de la federación estaba en el matadero. (El matadero, 114)

For Echeverría the true beasts of the Federation are the butchers, the savages (Afro-Argentines?), the thieves and the throat-cutters (a clear reference to the *Mazorca* which usually killed Unitarists by cutting their throats), not the poor Unitarist victims, ironically, the friends of liberty (at least for the white, wealthy, elite.)

José Mármol’s *foundational fiction* Amalia offers additional insight into the relationship between high fashion and race relations in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. This text contains lengthy passages of detailed descriptions of Amalia’s house and the foreign articles and furniture with which it is adorned. The novel is sure to pay special attention to the use of blue (*celeste* or *azul*)

in its depiction and it is sure to adorn Amalia's house with imported objects.<sup>110</sup> In blatant contrast to the Afro-Argentine women in El matadero, Amalia is described through her use of high fashion and by her paleness. She is lavishly adorned with European fashions: it is the same clothing that appears to make her at once the ultimate signifier for the ideals of the new Argentine woman and of the new Argentine nation since, as Hanway argues, in Amalia, the nation-space exists only through this protagonist's clothing and in her boudoir.<sup>111</sup> (Embodying Argentina, 20) The images surrounding Amalia however are very different for the Afro-Argentines of the novel. There are no descriptions of Afro-Argentine dress and at the very beginning of the novel, Daniel asks Amalia to dismiss all of her servants. Thus the text characterizes the Afro-Argentines as traitors to the national cause and as such there is no space

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<sup>110</sup> Marmól describes Amalia's house in the following terms: "El piso estaba cubierto por un tapiz de Italia [...] Una cama francesa, de caoba labrada [...] cubierta con una colcha de raso color jacinto, sobre cuya relumbrante seda caían los albos encajes de un riquísimo tapafundas de Cambray. [...] de la corona se desprendían las ondas de una colgadura de gasa de la India [...] Al otro lado de la cama se hallaba una otomana cubierta de terciopelo azul [...] A los pies de la cama se veía un gran sillón, forrado en terciopelo del mismo color que la otomana. [...] una mesa de palo de naranjo [...] contenía sobre una bandeja de porcelana de la India, un servicio de té para dos personas, todo él de porcelana sobredorada. [...] Un sillón de paja de la India, y dos tuburetes de damasco blanco con flecos de oro [...] dos grandes jarras de porcelana francesa estaban sobre dos pequeñas mesas de nogal [...]" (Amalia, 93-94) These images will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

<sup>111</sup> Amalia's dress is radically different from the "savage" nakedness of the Afro-Argentines as previously described. It is also drastically different from the common dress of the Afro-Argentine washwomen who occupied a significant position in the public sphere. Marmól describes Amalia on her wedding day: "Vestía un traje de gro color lila claro, con dos anchos y blanquísimos encajes, recogidos por ramos de pequeñas rosas blancas con tal arte trabajadas que rivalizaban con las más frescas y lozanas de la Naturaleza. Su cuello no tenía más adorno que un hilo de perlas [...] y unas bandas de encajes de Inglaterra caían hacia la espalda, sostenidas por la rosa blanca que ella misma había elegido esa mañana. Un chal del mismo encaje [y] la única alhaja que [...] se había decidido a ponerse, era, en su brazo derecho, un brazalete de perlas con un broche de zafiros." (Amalia, 815) Again the color blue (present in Amalia's sapphire) and imported clothing from England serve to distinguish not only Amalia's social position but also her political allegiance to the Unitarist cause.

for the Afro-Argentine—save Daniel’s one loyal servant—in this foundational fiction. Hanway explains further:

Mármol’s attitude towards race is clearly deterministic: the language used to describe African-Argentines shows that Mármol—like many of his countrymen—did not consider African-Argentines to be part of a future national family. [...] He considers African-Argentines to be potential agents of Rosas. Whereas Rosas befriended marginalized groups, such as the poor and African-Argentines, this movement of inclusion [...] was clearly not part of the Unitarist construction of an exemplary citizen. (Embodying Argentina, 26-27)

The discursive disavowal of the Afro-Argentines by elites therefore was an attempt to wipe them from the public imagination. As such, this disavowal formed part of the process of making Afro-Argentines disappear from history much like they disappeared in the national censuses. After the fall of Rosas, there is practically no mention of high fashion and its relationship to racial difference even though the Afro-Argentine population gained increasing access to porteño social life through the press. (Sabato, “La vida pública en Buenos Aires”) Castro mentions that attitudes about the ‘inexistence’ of the Afro-Argentine (such as Sarmiento’s attitude quoted at the beginning of this section) were not uncommon in Argentine history since elites have often been unable or unwilling to recognize the presence and contributions of Afro-Argentines. If the Afro-Argentine has entered into elite versions of history, they have been included only as part of Rosas’ tyranny:

The measure of marginality of the Afro-Argentine is the level of denial among Argentines of an effective and real contribution of the black to Argentine culture. One Argentine author sadly lamented: ‘we have permitted the entry of the black into our history only as part of the Rosas tyranny.’ (Castro, The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 9)<sup>112</sup>

It also appears—due to an obvious lack of fashion narratives and periodicals directed by Afro-Argentines dealing with the topic of fashion—that the Afro-Argentine community, except

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<sup>112</sup> Castro quotes José Luis Lanuza’s *Morenada* Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1946: 8.

for a very limited few, failed to use fashion as a discursive venue in part because the Afro-Argentine community as a whole was struggling to emerge from the poverty inflicted by slavery and racial prejudice.<sup>113</sup> If the Afro-Argentine did emerge in Argentine popular culture through fashion, he/she was usually ridiculed due to the improper adaptation of the correct 'rules' of usage. They were often ridiculed in the press and in satirical songs for using exaggerated forms of high-class dress, perfumes and manners. (Castro, The Afro-Argentine in Argentine Culture, 111)

It is most likely that fashion did not emerge as a discursive venue for the Afro-Argentines because the Unitarist elite that took charge after Rosas' fall was still bitter over the role Afro-Argentines had played in the Federation and this elite strove to erase Afro-Argentine public participation from national memory.<sup>114</sup> Much like the Afro-Argentines began disappearing in official records and official memory, so too did the representation of the Afro-Argentine as the anti-aesthetic fade. Elite discourses on high fashion served as one more mechanism in making the Afro-Argentine community invisible.

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<sup>113</sup> This may also have to do with a lack of unity among the associations and the nations. There were indeed some prominent Afro-Argentines in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina and the periodical *La Broma* best represented their higher class interests. However, as Andrews explains, this publication did not represent the large majority of Afro-Argentines that resented the elitist stance the paper took: "In retrospect, *La Broma* and the class that it represented must be judged guilty of the charges brought against them by *La Juventud*, charges of promoting class division over racial unity. *La Broma* spoke for a black middle-class intensely desirous of escaping the stigma of its racial status and being accepted as equals by the white middle class." (The Afro-Argentines, 194)

<sup>114</sup> Andrews explains: "The city's whites had long disdained and scorned the nonwhite castes, but following the trauma of the Rosas years the Unitarists' fear of and aversion toward the nonwhites was more intense than ever. Those people formed *la plebe*, the mob, the supporters of Rosas and barbarism. Given the opportunity to rebuild the province and the country after Rosas' fall, the liberals put faith in European immigration and racial mixing to eliminate this undesirable element and rescue the country from its malaise." (The Afro-Argentines, 109)

As we will see in the following chapter, Unitarists appropriated fashion for many of the same reasons that Federalists did. They certainly understood the power of persuasion through dress and imagery. However, the elite Generation of '37 would appropriate fashion not to rhetorically and symbolically praise the traditional aspects of the emerging Argentine nation, but rather to cover it with the markers of Western modernity while simultaneously excluding the large majority of *gente del pueblo*.

### **3. Challenging Barbarism and Waging Wars of Images: Argentina's Men of Letters Find Fashion (1829-1852)**

Pero así es este mundo de engaños i disfraces. Jentes se encuentran que no parece lo que son; gentes que no son lo que parecen; jentes que son ni mas ni ménos lo que parecen; jentes que no sospechan lo que son; i aun jentes que no disimulan lo que querrian parecer. ¡Para todo, hai jentes en este mundo! (Domingo F. Sarmiento *Progreso* de 23 de noviembre de 1842)

The world of disguises and deceptions to which Sarmiento refers here is precisely the world in which the Unitarist lettered elite found itself exiled from Rosas' Federalist Argentina. Much like Rosas used "traditional-national" disguises to harness and control—at least in symbolic terms—the chaos of the postcolonial period, so too would liberal intellectuals manipulate the power of dress (particularly high fashion) for political purposes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, dress is not inherently conservative (and therefore traditional) or liberal (and therefore modern), rather it is the discourse surrounding dress that provides meaning in any given context. High fashion, however, presents a different case. The appropriation of high fashion, as opposed to Rosas' appropriation of the poncho and the chiripá, served a different strategic purpose for early 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarist intellectuals. This is so because fashion is most certainly associated with modernity. Moreover, the major key concepts that materialize in theoretical discussions on fashion help to integrate it as a major component in the development of modernity in the West.

Several theorists have located fashion as one of the many markers of modernity: fashion's capacity to highlight change helps to understand it as specific, historically and

geographically, to western modernity. (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body; Lipovetsky, The Empire of Fashion; Wilson, Adorned in Dreams; Polhemus and Procter, Fashion and Anti-Fashion) For Flügel, modish dress was “a fact that must be regarded as one of the most characteristic features of modern European civilisation [*sic.*]”. (Quoted in Rouse, Understanding Fashion: 73) Fashion has also been understood in terms of forming part of “the civilizing process” in Europe because it served to distinguish the civilized citizen from the barbaric other both within and beyond Europe’s boundaries. (Wilson, Adorned in Dreams: 13)

As this chapter will explain, fashion narratives in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine nation formation formed part of the civilizing mission in the “Europeanization” of Argentina as well as part of a rhetorical strategy for imposing modernization. In the case of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine intellectuals, this civilizing mission can be understood on two fronts: 1.) there is a clear *Eurocentric* focus on modernization models since *lo americano* is incorporated into a European urban bourgeois model centered mostly on England (especially in terms of capital) and France (in terms of cultural prestige) and 2.) there is an obvious *ethnocentric* modernization goal since the proposed models are imposed on the various ethnic/racial components of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. Therefore, there is a process whereby social homogeneity is achieved through the symbolic violence exercised by the image of a civilized, well-dressed, white Argentina.

Several liberal intellectuals of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the intellectuals known as the Generation of '37, would take every opportunity to associate European fashions with the introduction of modernizing paradigms into the perceived “barbaric” and ‘backward’ Argentina of the period. Quite ironically, both Unitarist and Federalist leaders alike saw dress and fashion as a way to negotiate, in symbolic terms, their political conflicts. However, where Rosas sought to pseudo-democratically include the large and unbridled masses of *gente del*

*pueblo* by embracing traditional dress and rejecting the effeminate and unattainable likes of European high fashion, the Unitarist elite saw fashion as one way (among many others) of symbolically leveling Argentina's heterogeneous society. In the case of fashion, this leveling was played out through exclusion since only a select few could purchase the necessary markers of civilization. For this generation the distances between *essence* and *appearance* (mentioned in Chapter 1) were of little consequence: it was through a civilized and modernized appearance (and not through adherence to traditional norms) that Argentina could become (at least superficially) a modern nation.<sup>115</sup> In large part, for this generation, a modern Argentine nation would be born not only out of the true violence inflicted upon the outcasts of the lettered city (the *Afro-Argentinos*, the *mestizos*, the *indios*, the *gauchos* and country hicks, the illiterate, and any other "other" deemed necessary to exclude according to national need) but also by the exercise of symbolic violence. Moraña explains that this is part and parcel of the ideological and discursive construction of the nation:

Si la historia es discurso, y por tanto, relato, mistificación, selección fáctica, lingüística, escrituraria, puede aceptarse que haya en la construcción discursiva e ideológica de la nación una cuota de silencio y olvido, más o menos premeditado o tendencioso, que permita organizar el sistema de exclusiones y privilegios—es decir el ejercicio de la hegemonía—y reproducir masivamente su registro simbólico. Y no hablamos aquí del olvido culposo, individual, privado, defensivo, sino del institucional y sobreimpuesto a los valores y sentimientos de una comunidad, cuya fuerza de decreto se filtra en las conductas públicas, sobredeterminando las lecturas del pasado, las estrategias políticas, los balances históricos. (Políticas de la escritura: 177)

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<sup>115</sup> This is especially true in the case of Domingo F. Sarmiento. And this, as González Stephan explains, also led to a superficial sense of modernity (one that was concentrated in the city) and ultimately to conservative governments that supported the traditional elite. She explains: "[...]se cubrió el atraso del campo y la miseria de las masas populares con la parafernalia de un progreso epidérmico concentrado en las ciudades; se desarrolló una política económica liberal hacia los mercados europeos y se mantuvieron gobiernos conservadores, que, bajo los lemas de orden, paz y progreso, permitieron el fortalecimiento y modernización de las elites tradicionales." (Fundaciones: 44)



Keeping in mind precisely these points, this chapter will trace the emergence and subsequent development of a discourse on fashion that was first articulated by the Generation of 37. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism)<sup>116</sup> That is, this chapter will consider how this young, and mostly elite generation of intellectuals, would incorporate fashion into its political rhetoric. In this way, this chapter will consider how fashion became a *locus* from which many of the major debates concerning Latin American national development of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were put forth.<sup>117</sup> I will begin with a consideration of the importance of journalism, not only as a product of modernity and as an essential element in nation formation (Anderson, Imagined Communities), but as a tool, and perhaps one of the few remaining tools, at the disposition of Unitarist elites, many of whom wrote from exile. As I will show, newspapers were important because they helped to define the emerging national space.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> In Between Civilization and Barbarism, Masiello explains how a *discourse on fashion* was first articulated in the publication *La Moda* directed by Juan B. Alberdi: “A curious discursive irony entered *La Moda*’s discussions on fashion. On the one hand, elegance of style symbolized European civilization and represented a dramatic break with the unsavory crassness of Rosas’ regime, suggesting that if fashion could be imported acceptable from England and France, then ideas about liberal reform could also cross the Atlantic.” (Between Civilization: 23)

<sup>117</sup> This chapter will focus mostly on the writings of Domingo F. Sarmiento, Juan B. Alberdi, José Mármol, and Esteban Echeverría. These figures will be considered not because they are perhaps the most well-known in the literary canon, but because they are those who most frequently manipulated fashion for political purposes. It goes without saying that although these intellectuals are collectively grouped under the rubric of the Generation of ’37, their writings and ideas are often at odds with each other. One of the most comprehensive overviews of these four figures can be found in Katra’s La Generación del ’37. This chapter recognizes that the political writings of these figures diverge on several points and that they change throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This makes a detailed consideration of such writings difficult to achieve in a single chapter. But, because this chapter is concerned with writings on fashion produced by these individuals, it is possible to consider how certain ideological/political positions taken by each member form part of a whole without simplifying or generalizing the positions taken by each individual writer.

<sup>118</sup> Interesting new approaches to Anderson’s Imagined Communities have shed light on the relationship between newspaper culture and Latin American nationalism as well as the limitations of Anderson’s study. (See Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth Century Latin America, Castro-Klarén and Chasteen eds.) Contrary to what

From this starting point, this chapter will then consider how fashion and fashion narratives formed part of the bustling dialogue concerning Latin American modernity and nationhood. As such, the following topics will be considered with relation to fashion: a.) homogeneity in terms of race, class and ethnicity; and b.) consumption as identity formation and its relationship to the role of women (particularly the symbolic role of women) in an emerging modern Argentina.<sup>119</sup> Finally, this chapter will conclude with a consideration of how fashion also served the liberal intellectual agenda to articulate some of the major reductive binaries that guided 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine socio-political and economic development: civilization vs. barbarism, Europe vs. the Americas, city vs. country and Unitarists vs. Federalists.

Ultimately this chapter will seek to shed light on why this so-called *effeminate generation* (Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism*) so readily adopted fashion into its socio-political discourses. I contend that it did so not because of any true *effeminate* persuasion (or because of superficial interests in fashion), but rather because of fashion's persuasive, "civilizing" power and because of its usefulness as a strategic device to combat the perceived barbarism and the traditionalism of the Rosista regime.

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now seems a common-place belief, Chasteen explains that newspapers did not define the national space before independence (as suggested in *Imagined Communities*), but rather they flourished together with said space: "Newspapers did not define 'national space' on the eve of independence, as suggested in *Imagined Communities*, but they did work that way later in the nineteenth century. [...] Anderson's remarks on Latin America per se have had little impact in Latin American studies. Reference to the chapter on Creole pioneers rarely appears in Latin Americanist citations of Anderson. Instead, Latin Americanists cite *Imagined Communities* to invoke the book's overall interpretive project and (especially among critics) draw on his theorization of the central role of the print media in imagining national communities." ("Introduction", *Beyond Imagined Communities*: x and xxi respectively)

<sup>119</sup> Consequently, this also points to the changing roles for men in the public sphere which I will discuss in much less detail. There is certainly room in this area for a more detailed analysis of 'maleness' and masculinity in post-colonial Argentina.

### ***3.1. Early Argentine Journalism and National Politics: The Challenges of the Post-Independence Period***

Ser grande en política, no es estar a la altura de la civilización del mundo, sino a la altura de las necesidades de su país. (Echeverría, Dogma socialista, 1944: 42)

Nation formation was one of the most pressing issues faced by the River Plate region and its intellectuals after independence. Even though the body of scholarship produced by the Generation of '37 crossed all literary genres, one common theme runs throughout the numerous volumes this generation produced. This common thread, of course, is the importance of forming a new nation based not on old models (or the institutions inherited from the Spanish monarchy), but on new ones specific to the reality of the River Plate region. Myers explains:

La obra de los escritores románticos del '37 abarcó todos los género—filosofía, historia, economía, novela, drama, poesía, periodismo político, etc.—, pero en todos ellos aparecía una problemática común que los mancomunaba: el de la nación, cuestión típicamente romántica que en un país nuevo como la Argentina se intensificaba por la indefinición propia de una Estado de creación reciente. Toda su obra, en cualquier género, acerca de cualquier tema, debía estar necesariamente supeditada a las necesidades que imponía un país nuevo, cuya tarea primordial era alcanzar un conocimiento adecuado de su propia realidad, para así poder definir su identidad nacional. (“La revolución de las ideas”, Nueva Historia Argentina:384)

But, how could one know the true nature of the region? To start, this process would require an almost immediate demarcation of boundaries between public and private, national and non-national, citizen and non-citizen, material and symbol realms. (Ramos, Divergent Modernities; González Stephan, “Las disciplinas escriturarias”; Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments; Dunleavy, “The State”) These demarcations would lead not only to the “reassuring fratricide” that has marked many struggles for national definition (Anderson, Imagined

Communities)<sup>120</sup>, but also an “ejercicio de la imaginación” and the exercise of preferential treatment. (Moraña, “Fructuoso Rivera”: 91) Much like local caudillos (including Rosas), intellectual elites too were preoccupied with the chaos facing the region after the wars of independence since race, class, ethnicity, gender, and linguistic and political differences (not to mention economic incompatibilities between the loosely tied regions) somehow needed to be reconciled if a national unit were to be formed.<sup>121</sup> The choices for many liberal intellectuals were prescriptive: this “reconciliation” would occur either through a politics of exclusion and/or extermination (González Stephan, Fundaciones: 55; Pratt, “Las mujeres”:52) or incorporation vis-à-vis miscegenation and the right bonds of matrimony (Sommer, Foundational Fictions) or by disciplines imposed from above—i.e. national constitutions that excluded society’s “others”. (Katra, “Rereading *Viajes*”: 78; González Stephan, “Las disciplinas escriturarias”)<sup>122</sup> Much like Rosas, who viewed the *gente del pueblo* as docile subjects easily placed under his control, the lettered elite too assumed the right to orient the masses that they saw as essentially passive. (Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 11) In the case of early Argentine Unitarists living under Rosas, literary and journalistic endeavors were some of the only available tools in the demarcation of boundaries, in the selective process of remembering, “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawm, “Introduction”) or conveniently forgetting certain elements of the colonial past. (Ramos, “El don de la lengua”; Achugar, “La fundación por la palabra”; González Stephan, “Las disciplinas escriturarias”) These literary tools became particularly important since many times

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<sup>120</sup> For “reassuring fratricide”, see Chapter 11 “Memory and Forgetting”, Anderson, Imagined Communities: 187-206.

<sup>121</sup> For a brief discussion of the economic difficulties facing the region see González Bernaldo de Quirós, Civilidad y política, 2001: 33.

<sup>122</sup> González Stephan expands on the topic of “extermination” in terms of ethnicity: “[...] los gobiernos establecieron una serie de medidas que hicieron efectiva la unidad nacional, inclusive a costa del exterminio de etnias que no se avenían al modelo de nación que se quiso implantar.” (Fundaciones, 2002: 55)

liberal intellectuals were dispossessed of political legitimacy due to Rosas' control of national politics or simply because they were living in exile.<sup>123</sup>

The “spirit of modernity” that leading intellectuals/politicians wished upon the Argentine Republic in formation would not have been easily introduced to a privileged reading public had it not been for journalism. (González, Journalism: 3)<sup>124</sup> Journalism, a modern “mass-produced industrial commodity”, was an indispensable factor in nation-formation and in the process of modernizing the newly liberated River Plate region. (Anderson, Imagined Communities: 34)<sup>125</sup> Through it, the creation of boundaries and the incorporation/exclusion of diverse social elements and the relationship between state policy and *letrado* projects could be debated, disputed and perhaps eventually enforced through law. In addition, because of the relationship between literary production and journalism, Argentine writers were able to “reach for the modernity” they felt was best represented by Europe and the United States. (González, Journalism: 14) Finally, as

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<sup>123</sup> For example, from exile several of the members of the Generation of '37 collaborated in the following periodicals: Miguel Cané and Andrés Lamas *El iniciador*; Alberdi *El nacional*; José María Gutiérrez y Rivera Indarte *El talismán* and *El tiroteo*; Florencia Varela *El comercio del Plata*; Sarmiento *El Mercurio* and *El Progreso*. This list is just a brief overview of the major periodicals. There were many more periodicals of ephemeral circulation. See Katra, La Generación: 79 and Cavalero, Revistas argentinas: 45-82.

<sup>124</sup> Ramos further explains that the journal (or chronicle) became an instant solution to Latin America's lack of a reading public (as compared to the European *literate sphere*): “[...] in Latin America, even up until the beginning of the twentieth century, no such publishing market had as yet been established. Hence, some functions of the novel in Europe—for instance, its representation (and domestication) of a new urban space—would only appear in Latin America by means of (literary) forms considered marginal or minor in Europe. An example of this is the chronicle, tied in a general sense to the journalistic medium.” (Divergent Modernities: 80)

<sup>125</sup> In this case, Anderson is referring specifically to the book as “the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity.” (Imagined Communities:34-35) He extends the book's importance to the newspaper, understood as an “extreme form” of the book. Anderson however, does not make a distinction between literature and journalism. Aníbal González does consider them as two distinct forms, but he highlights the possibility of studying them together since they form “dynamic systems” that “come together”. (Journalism: 6) This chapter will consider literature and journalism in the same way for several of the novels to be analyzed were first *folletines* that formed part of literary journals.

part of this project, journalism could disseminate information rapidly and on a regular basis to a select, educated public (conveniently leaving out those who could not read and therefore belong to this public)<sup>126</sup>. It contributed to the formation of the “imagined communities” necessary to foster individual—and mostly educated, white and upper class—identification with a limited national space. (Anderson, Imagined Communities) It was after all through journalism that most of the mainstays of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine national literature would be published: Sarmiento’s Facundo, Echeverría’s El Matadero and La cautiva, Mármol’s Amalia, Gutierrez’s Juan Moreira, and many others would first appear as newspaper supplements (*folletines*).

Journalism, especially in Buenos Aires, blossomed after the introduction of the printing press in 1776. (Rock, Argentina: 64) From the few major publications of the very early 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the *Telégrafo Mercantil* (1801), the *Semanario de Agricultura, Industria y Comercio* (1802) and *Correo de Comercio* (1810), this limited journalism, particularly after the *Revolución de Mayo* and later under the presidency of Rivadavia, would turn into hundreds of new, albeit short-lived, publications.<sup>127</sup> Even the early years of Rosismo witnessed Argentine journalism rival the presses of large metropolises. (Cavalero, Revistas Argentinas: 45)<sup>128</sup> This would soon

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<sup>126</sup> This is not to say that whoever did not belong to the community of lettered elites was completely excluded from the lettered “network” as François-Xavier Guerra calls it. Guerra explains that even those who could not read might have had access to the written word: “Many texts were printed specifically for reading aloud. Among these were *bandos* (public proclamations of law), obviously, but also various sorts of broadsheets, notices, *pasquinades* (tracts/posters), and lampoons.” (“Forms of Communication in the Creation of Nations”: 10) This is certainly true in the case of Rosas’ use of religious and civic holidays to “spread” his message. See Chapter 1.

<sup>127</sup> Cavalero offers one of the most comprehensive summaries in Revistas Argentinas del siglo XIX. For more information on early 19<sup>th</sup> century periodicals, see Chapter 1 especially pages 34-38, which list and describe most of the major publications of the period.

<sup>128</sup> One of the most important publications for the emerging Unitarist elite was the *Argos de Buenos Ayres*. This publication was taken over by *The Literary Society of Buenos Aires* under the direction of Julián Segundo de Agüero. As Shumway explains, this publication would be the prototype for subsequent liberal periodicals: “*El Argos*, which means vigilant person in Spanish,

change once Rosas imposed the *Decreto de Imprenta* in 1832: the appearance of some 200 periodicals from 1820 to 1830 would be reduced to no more than 5 periodicals published at any one time. All of these, of course, were under the direct control of Rosas' political machine. (Cavalaro, *Revistas Argentinas*: 51) It was under this repression that liberal intellectuals began, what José Mármol deemed, a journalistic war:

Vosotros no andáis con tino  
En la guerra periodista:  
Si os coge Rosas la pista  
Os costará el pescuezo un desatino.<sup>129</sup>

Sarmiento, one of the most outspoken members of his generation, clearly understood the role of journalism in waging war not only against Rosas but also the barbarism that he perceived to be plaguing his homeland.<sup>130</sup> In fact, he would comment on its importance much before contemporary critics would praise its role in identifying nations and in providing transnational communication. From his exile in Chile he wrote:

Por el diarismo el mundo se identifica. Las naciones, como hermanas ausentes, se comunican sus prosperidades o sus desgracias, para que sean gustadas o sentidas por todos sus miembros; por el diarismo los individuos anuncian sus necesidades i llaman a quien puede satisfacerlas; por el diarismo el comercio se estiende, las noticias i datos que a sus medras interesan, se vulgarizan; i por el diarismo, en fin, el pueblo ántes ignorante i privado de medios de cultura, empieza a interesarse en los conocimientos i gustar de la

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serves as an early prototype for liberal porteño journalism generally: urbane, internationally focused, austere without being unstylish, informed, unabashedly supportive of intellectual elitism, unwavering in its loyalty to liberal causes, disdainful of popular classes and culture, and excruciatingly tasteful.” (*The Invention of Argentina*: 87)

<sup>129</sup> José Mármol included this in a letter directed to the *Gaceta Mercantil* in Buenos Aires in an attempt to explain his position as a writer and an exile of Rosista Argentina. The article is titled “El autor de *El Peregrino* a los señores redactores de la *Gaceta Mercantil* de Buenos Aires” and it was published in Montevideo, Imprenta del Comercio del Plata, 1846. In Mármol, José, *Manuela Rosas y otros escritos políticos del exilio*.

<sup>130</sup> It certainly appears that Sarmiento and his fellow Unitarist colleagues all exiled in Chile were successful in their campaign against Rosas since the Argentine dictator sent a special envoy to Santiago to negotiate with the Bulnes government. This envoy, Baldomero García, was to persuade the Chilean government to control Unitarist opposition in the Chilean Press. (He was ultimately unsuccessful). (See Jaksić, “Sarmiento and the Chilean Press”: 47)

lectura que los instruye i divierte, elevando a todos al goce de las ventajas sociales, i despertando talentos, jénios e industrias que sin él, hubieran permanecido en la oscuridad. (“El Diarismo”, Obras completas I, 1887)

Here Sarmiento shows his awareness of the power of journalism since not only does it help nations, like separated siblings, to communicate, but it also fosters commerce (a topic to which Sarmiento will return time and again) and civilization since it supplies otherwise ignorant populations with the necessary information for them to, literally, come out of the darkness. (Noticeably, Sarmiento is not specific about just *how* these ignorant masses would read and interpret such information or whether or not they actually did so.) That the ‘ignorant masses’ read and understood the information contained in the journal’s pages, as Ramos explains, was not as important as *initiating* the project that would subject the orality of the perceived ignorant masses to the law of the written word. In this way, enlightening the masses formed a major part of the symbolic battle in nation formation since,

Transforming the barbarian into a reader, subjecting his orality to the *law* of writing [...] was one of the projects tied to the will to generate a national space. Journalism, then, was a pedagogical invention basic to the formation of citizenship. (Divergent Modernities: 89)

In the same article, Sarmiento continues his argument suggesting that while the press is indeed a powerful civilizing agent, it is only in modern civilizations with freedom of the press (unlike Argentina of the period) that its benefits can be enjoyed:

Los diarios han ejercido una influencia poderosa en la marcha de los civilización i en el movimiento social que ejecutan los pueblos modernos; i sus ventajas i el inmenso desarrollo que dan a la cultura, artes i comercio, solo pueden ser comparados a los males que por otra parte causan, cuando la efervescencia de las pasiones, el rencor de partido i la irritacion alimentan sus pájinas. (“El Diarismo” in *Nacional*, May 15 to 29, 1841)

Sarmiento’s implicit critique of Rosas continues:

Sin imprentas, sin ideas, sin intereses que ventilar, sin derechos i por lo general sin conocimiento de ellos, ¿de qué utilidad, ni de qué interes podian ser las publicaciones periódicas, para unas poblaciones que vegetaban en la oscuridad mas vergonzosa, i en la



inacción de espíritu, consiguiendo a un gobierno extraño a los intereses locales, i que hacia de la América del Sur un simple apéndice de la monarquía española. (“El Diarismo”, Obras completas I, 1887)<sup>131</sup>

As Sarmiento suggests here, censored journalism serves no other purpose than to maintain the ignorant masses content in following colonial norms, thus making South America (more specifically Argentina) a simple appendage of the Spanish Monarchy and not a truly independent nation. Sarmiento stresses that especially in the context of post colonial Latin America where commerce and agriculture are lagging behind, and where the spirit of entrepreneurship needs to be stirred from centuries of sleep, periodicals need to circulate freely:

En países tan nuevos como el nuestro, en que la instrucción no está generalmente difundida; en que no hai grandes motivos de contacto entre los habitantes; donde los principios en que reposa nuestra forma de gobierno no son suficientemente comprendidos por la mayor parte de los ciudadanos; donde el comercio se arrastra mas bien que se mueve, i la industria i la agricultura vejetan lentamente, se necesita, mas que en otro país alguno, que los diarios circulen con profusión, difundiendo conocimientos; despertando el espíritu de empresa; comunicando avisos que activen las transacciones comerciales [...]. (“Sobre la lectura de periódicos”, Obras completas I, 1887)

What Sarmiento is speaking of in these early articles on journalism clearly points to 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal values.<sup>132</sup> Liberalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina supposed a series of economic

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<sup>131</sup> It should be said that for many members of the Generation of '37, not all of society's members were fit to publish in the presses. For Félix Frías, complete freedom of the press could lead to the freedom of evil: “...permitir, so pretexto de la libertad del pensamiento, de la prensa más propiamente dicho, que escritores no educados ni en el corazón ni en la mente, ataquen la moral pública, penetren con sus críticas calumniosas en el hogar doméstico, blasfemen de Dios, insulten sus ministros, adulen los torpes instintos de la plebe, y prediquen doctrinas corruptoras y subversivas de todo orden social, es permitir la libertad del mal, es permitir la licencia y la demagogia, y confiar la conciencia de un pueblo Nuevo y necesitado de buenas lecciones a la dirección de los maestros del vicio y de la mentira.” (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 155) Comments such as these clearly point to the elitist character of some of the members of the Generation of '37.

<sup>132</sup> It is important to remember the collusion of romanticism with liberalism and that many of the literary texts produced by this generation reflected the political and ideological conflicts of the period. (Katra La Generación de 1837: 9; Sommer Foundational Fictions: 102) Since one of the driving factors behind this generation was the importance of material progress (as witnessed in Sarmiento's comments on education, commerce, entrepreneurship and freedom of the press), it is

and political practices of which the following are just the tip of the iceberg: 1.) free trade and entrepreneurship 2.) foreign investment 3.) land colonization and development as well as open navigation of Argentina's rivers 4.) freedom of speech and the division between church and state<sup>133</sup> and 5.) the primacy of the port city of Buenos Aires and its hegemony over the region, in economic as well and political and cultural terms. (Rock Argentina: 98; Andrews The Afro-Argentines: 14)<sup>134</sup>

José Mármol, another member of the Generation, also commented on the antiquated nature of a press controlled by the state. For Mármol, the Argentine press under Rosas became the apologist of dictatorship:

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not surprising that exterior manifestations of material progress (such as fashion) were essential to the transmission of ideological values.

<sup>133</sup> In terms of Sarmiento's rejection of governments (like Rosas') that make South America a simple appendage of the Spanish Monarchy, it's important to highlight that this rejection was an essential element in liberal thought and in the new conception of the intellectual, not as colonial scribe, but as a modern man of letters. The division of church and state (first undertaken by Rivadavia) was pivotal in this new conception of the role of the modern intellectual. Myers explains: "El hecho de recibir su educación en un establecimiento del Estado, que por su organización tanto como por su ideología rectora estaba netamente deslindado de cualquier relación orgánica con la religión oficial, hizo de esta generación intelectual la primera que pudo concebir su lugar en la sociedad y en la cultura en términos 'modernos', en vez de hacerlo en los términos heredados del Antiguo Régimen. [...] Éste sería concebido en términos de su autónoma frente a los poderes constituidos de una sociedad como el Estado, la Iglesia, las corporaciones y clases tradicionales, en reemplazo del 'letrado' colonial o del 'clerc' de la tradición medieval, cuyo papel social estaba determinado por la exigencia constitutiva de servir al orden político establecido y de defender y propagar las 'verdades reveladas' de la fe." ("La revolución de las ideas": 389)

<sup>134</sup> The model adopted in Argentina was based in large part on liberalism as developed in Western Europe and the United States. Bushnell y Macaulay explain the case in Latin America: "If there was a common denominator of all these developments, including independence itself, it was the progressive opening of Latin America to influences from northern Europe and the United States—influences which prior to independence had been transmitted through Spain and Portugal or clandestinely but henceforth entered directly and openly. Another way of saying much of the same thing is that Latin America in the course of gaining independence opted for an essentially liberal model of development, in principle not unlike that adhered by Great Britain, the United States and, most of the time, also France. (The Emergency of Latin America, 12)

En la República Argentina, la libertad de la prensa dejó de existir con el nacimiento político de Rosas y se prostituyó entonces convirtiéndose en apologista de la dictadura. (“De la prensa periódica” in *La Semana* No 1, April 21, 1851 in Manuela Rosas y otros escritos: 230)

Other young intellectuals, such as Rafael Corvalán in *La Moda*, more explicitly criticized Rosas’ control of the press. In *La Moda*, one of the few periodicals published under Rosas’ censorship, Corvalán (and the other members of the editorial committee) were able to disguise many of their critiques under the rubric of fashion and by expressing constant, albeit superficial, adoration for Argentina’s dictator. In one of the last editions of the periodical (which was destined to close prematurely because of censorship)<sup>135</sup>, Corvalán explained how the atmosphere created by Rosas’ politics were favorable to Argentina’s growing intellectual movement (which, as is well known, was quite contrary to the truth)<sup>136</sup>:

Las luces pues, no tienen sino motives de gratitud, respecto de un poder que no ha restringido la importacion de libros, que no ha sofocado la prensa, que no ha mutilado las bibliotecas, que no ha invertido la instrucción pública, que no ha levantado censura periódica, ni universitaria. Las luces no tienen mas enemigos que los restos consuetudinales del antiguo régimen, cuya demolicion, no es de la mision oficial, sino esclusivamente de la prensa literaria y moralista. (“Trece de abril”, No. 22, April 14, 1838)

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<sup>135</sup> Katra explains that while no measures were taken against the editors of the publication, it was nonetheless forced to discontinue publication: “Después de escasas semanas de publicación, el gobierno ordenó el cierre de la revista; Rosas no había considerado necesaria una forma similar de censura contra ningún otro órgano de la prensa. Sin embargo, no se impuso sanción alguna contra los organizadores de la publicación. Durante algunos meses pudieron continuar con sus actividades sin trabas. Pero el mensaje era claro: Rosas no deseaba ningún tipo de diálogo con los militantes prorreformistas de la generación joven.” (La Generación de 1837: 66) While Katra insists that this publication was not explicitly anti-Rosista—due to Alberdi’s early and somewhat sympathetic attitude towards Rosas—it is clear that Rosas perceived this publication a threat.

<sup>136</sup> While Alberdi was the director and main editor of the periodical, he did not write all of the articles contained in its pages. This edition, number 22, was directed by Rafael Corvalán, and the article to which I am referring here was not signed by Alberdi—*figarillo* was his penname—so it is assumed that Corvalán is responsible for all articles in this number not expressly signed by other writers. Some of the most well-known contributors would be Juan Gutiérrez, the Rodríguez Peña brothers, Carlos Tejedor and Carlos Eguía, V.F. López, Manuel Quiroga Rosas and José Barros Pazos. (Weinberg, El Salón Literario: 88; Katra, La Generación de 1837: 65)

In this small paragraph embedded in a larger text on Christianity, the author speaks precisely of the limits placed on Argentina's young men of letters: Rosas did in fact restrict the importation of books, he held public book burnings in the Plaza de la Victoria, he suffocated the press and he forced many book stores to close and sell off their books (such as Marcos Sastre's most important library where the Sal6n Literario held its meetings). Most significantly, Rosas practically dismantled the University of Buenos Aires, which had been founded during Rivadavia's liberal and short-lived presidency. (Lynch, Juan Manuel de Rosas: 174)

Journalism was also embraced by the Generation of '37 because of its changing nature: as a product of modernity, uncensored journalism would never adhere to traditionalism since not to change, in the words of M6rmol, would be absurd and backward. ("De la prensa peri6dica": 228) Ramos explains the importance of journalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America in this light since it came to represent the *other* of "traditional temporality":

The modern newspaper, like no other discursive space in the nineteenth century, embodies the *segmented* temporality and spatiality distinctive of modernity. [...] The newspaper not only erects the new (the *other* of traditional temporality as a principle for organizing its themes, which would be as promotional (in the advertising sense) as they were informative; the newspaper also *delocalizes*—even in its graphic layout of material—the communicative process. (Divergent Modernities: 123)

M6rmol, like many of his Unitarist contemporaries, understood that the press was the only forum from which writers and politicians could express their changing opinions:

Los hombres y las ideas de hoy, buenas y salvadoras, son generalmente malas y peligrosas ma1ana, seg6n las distintas situaciones, seg6n las diversas peripecias de esa vida agitada y variante que constituye el estado normal de los pueblos revolucionados; y el escritor, como el hombre de Estado, como el pueblo mismo, tiene entonces que cambiar de voz y de discurso en ese foro inmenso que se llama prensa. ("De la prensa peri6dica" in *La Semana* No 1, April 21, 1851 in Manuela Rosas y otros escritos: 229)

Since journalism was perceived as modern because of its capacity to change and constantly renew itself and its topics of interest, fashion, also because of its dependence on constant change

and renovation came to occupy an important space in the field of early Unitarist journalism. While before the 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion journalism was practically inexistent in the Western world, it certainly bloomed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of many changes in the fashion industry. Previously, in 18<sup>th</sup> century Paris for example, fashion dolls were manufactured and sent to neighboring regions. These fashion dolls were circulated within a small community of elite designers and did not reach a mass audience of possible consumers. However, with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and the mass production of garments as well as reading materials—especially the periodical—fashion took center stage as one of the main objects of consumption and bourgeois desire, and it was announced principally through the periodical. (Steele, Paris Fashion: 27)<sup>137</sup> In Argentina, journalism and fashion found themselves intertwined at an important juncture in nation formation since they both came to signify, for intellectual elites, change, modernity, progress and freedom—of speech and expression.

Many of these intellectuals saw Rosas' imposition of a Federalist dress code as yet one more limitation on their freedom. For Mármol, Rosas' reforms had done nothing more than cover the national body with the symbols of the nation's disgraces. As he explains, for young *porteño* girls, these forms:

[...] han cubierto sus inocente cabezas con moños rojos y adornado sus cuellos y sus vestidos con cintas y colores simbólicos—simbólicos de la desgracias de la patria--, y las han arrastrado a las orgías de la mazorca, a bailar con los ejecutores de Rosas. (“De la

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<sup>137</sup> Perrot also explains the link between 19<sup>th</sup> century developments in the garment industry—made possible by the Industrial Revolution—and its relationship to looking *bourgeois*: “The rapid growth of the textile industry, the sizeable development of the ready-made industry, the unprecedented impact of the department stores that distributed the product of that industry, the parallel decline of the centuries-old trade in used clothes, and the improvement in living standards made possible the process that eventually made everyone look like a bourgeois.” (Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: 4)

prensa periódica” in *La Semana* No 1, April 21, 1851 in Manuela Rosas y otros escritos: 288)<sup>138</sup>

For Sarmiento, the obligatory use of the color red and Federalist dress was a clear materialization of terror. (As he explains, this terror not only invaded the public sphere but it also managed to find its way into the most sacred of private spaces: the family). As opposed to the liberty and civilization Sarmiento attributes to the *frac* and the *corbata*, Rosas’ imposition of Federalist dress served only to distance Buenos Aires from other American nations who mocked them for their degradation (as represented by Rosas’ famous parties):

La América entera se ha burlado de aquellas famosas fiestas de Buenos Aires y mirádaslas como el colmo de la degradación de un pueblo; pero yo no veo en ellas, sino un designio político, el más fecundo en resultados. [...] La cinta colorada es una materialización del terror que os acompaña a todas partes, en la calle, en el seno de la familia; es preciso pensar en ella al vestirse, al desnudarse, y las ideas se nos graban siempre por asociación. (Facundo: 169)

The concerns of this young generation, and their growing relationship to fashion and Rosas’ imposition of a Federalist dress code would soon find an outlet in one of the first magazines dedicated specifically to fashion in Buenos Aires. This was *La Moda—gacetín semanaria de música, de poesía, de literatura, de costumbres, de modas*, which, in many ways, was a continuation of *el Semanario de Buenos Ayres* previously published by the members of the *Salón Literario*. With this publication a series of important issues emerge concerning the role of fashion and consumption in the *imagining* of a modern Argentine nation outside the restrictions Rosas placed upon the Generation of ’37.

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<sup>138</sup> Sarmiento (much like Mármol states here) also explained how the Mazorca victimized women since they were punished for not wearing the federal ribbon: “La historia de la cinta colorado es muy curiosa. Al principio, fue una divisa que adoptaron los entusiastas; mandóse después, llevarla a todos, para que *probase la uniformidad* de la opinión. Se deseaba obedecer, pero al mudar de vestido, se olvidaba. La Policía vino en auxilio de la memoria: se distribuían mazorqueros por las calles, y sobre todo, en las puertas de los templos, y a la salida de las señoras, se distribuían, sin misericordia, zurriagazos con vergas de toro.” (Facundo: 103)

### ***3.2. Fashion's Appearance at the Intellectual Round Table: Consumption, Citizenship and the Ideal Unitarist***

*La Moda* was published at an important juncture in Argentine journalism. Before Rosas would effectively shut down the freedoms afforded by independence, a new sort of experimental journalism was beginning to appear in Buenos Aires. Journals were becoming more reader friendly and more accessible to an increasingly literate (although still limited) public through the introduction of a variety of topics, such as art, music, theatre, and fashion. (Cavalaro, Revistas Argentinas: 53)<sup>139</sup> This is evidenced with the very first number of *La Moda* in which the editors state their mission to offer:

[...] nociones claras y breves, sin metafísica, al alcance de todos, sobre literatura moderna, sobre música, sobre poesía, sobre costumbres, y muchas otras cosas cuya inteligencia fácil cubre de prestigio y de gracia la educación de una persona joven... (*La Moda*, "Prospecto", No 1, November 18, 1837).

As Weinberg explains, Alberdi's purpose for publishing an apparently 'frivolous' magazine was to avoid the political as well as economic obstacles associated with the *Semanario* since this previous publication quickly lost its public support due to its blatant political and ideological nature. (El Salón Literario: 87) Other critics have diluted the political importance of *La Moda* by suggesting that its pages made very serious attempts to avoid friction with the emerging dictator, if not to win him over. Katra, for example, explains his position on *La Moda*:

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<sup>139</sup> This is not to say that there was a large reading public. Not unlike other struggling Latin American nations of the period, literacy, especially in Buenos Aires and especially for women was considerably low. While statistics on literacy for the 1830s are limited, according to the first population census recorded in September of 1869, among 1,836,490 inhabitants in the entire country, only 360,000 declared to be able to read. Of course, most of the literate citizens of Argentina lived in Buenos Aires or other urban centers. (Auza, Periodismo y feminismo: 70) However, statistics on the literacy rates for both male and female inhabitants in mid 19th century Argentina show that the female reading population almost equaled that of the male, which provided for quite a large female reading urban population. By the year 1855, the "literate population of Buenos Aires rose to 48% of the total number of the city's inhabitants (51% for males and 44% for females) [...] These [percentages] were exceptionally close for this period of history." (Fletcher, "Patriarchy and Medicine": 92)

Por cierto, parece evidente que los editores de *La Moda* hicieron un esfuerzo serio, si no de congraciarse con el régimen de Rosas, por lo menos de no producir más fricciones. Cada número, sin excepción, iba encabezado por el lema “Viva la federación”. Por otro lado, las alabanzas a Rosas en los diferentes números estaban bien ubicadas en la línea de pensamiento que Alberdi había expresado en sus *Fragmentos*, algunos meses antes, y en su discurso inaugural ante el Salón Literario. (La Generación de 1837: 66)

However, *La Moda*'s use of the slogan “Viva la federación” bespeaks not of any true support of the Federation but rather to the fact that by the early 1830's this slogan was mandatory on all documents of public affairs (including newspapers), whether or not such documents genuinely supported the dictator. (Rock, Argentina: 106) What more importantly hints at Ktra's suspicion that *La Moda* sought to appease tense relations with the dictator is his reference to Alberdi's Fragmento preliminar al estudio del derecho (1837). This document appears to point to a contradiction in Alberdi's thought since instead of blatantly denouncing the excesses of Rosas' regime, Alberdi tries to understand Rosas as a product of the time period.<sup>140</sup> The young Unitarist wrote:

El Sr. Rosas, considerado filosóficamente, no es un déspota que duerme sobre bayonetas mercenarias. Es un representante que descansa sobre la buena fe, sobre el corazón del pueblo. Y por pueblo no entendemos aquí la clase pensadora, la clase propietaria únicamente, sino también la universalidad, la mayoría, la multitud, la *plebe*. [...] Así, si el despotismo pudiese tener lugar entre nosotros, no sería el despotismo de un hombre, sino el despotismo de un pueblo: sería la libertad déspota de sí misma; sería la libertad esclava de la libertad. (In Chiaramonte, Ciudades, provincias, Estados: 632)<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Alberdi's initial position towards Rosas' dictatorship would differ radically from the positions taken by Esteban Echeverría, Florencia Varela, Miguel Cané among many others (and especially later on Domingo F. Sarmiento, with whom Alberdi would have heated debates and who Alberdi would largely criticize in his *Cartas quillotanas*.) As Ktra explains, Echeverría's blatant exclusion from *La Moda* represents the ideological rift between the two young members of the Salón Literario. (Ktra, La Generación de 1837: 66)

<sup>141</sup> Sarmiento made very similar comments about Juan Facundo Quiroga (a Federalist *caudillo* from La Rioja province who was eventually assassinated at the hands of Rosas) when he described him (as all other *caudillos*) as nothing other than a mirror reflecting the savagery of the times: “Facundo, en fin, siendo lo que fue, no por un accidente de su carácter, sino por antecedentes inevitables y ajenos de su voluntad, es el personaje histórico más singular, más notable, que puede presentarse a la contemplación de los hombres que comprenden que un caudillo que encabeza un gran movimiento social, no es más que el espejo en que se reflejan, en



In this fragment, Alberdi articulates exactly what Rosas stood for in the time period: a man who not only represented the landed elite (or conservative intellectuals) but also the *gente del pueblo*. According to Alberdi's comments here, Rosas' despotic nature was not necessarily motivated by personal desire, but by the despotic nature of the masses, of which Rosas was part.<sup>142</sup> The Federalist leader only came to power because of the "buena fe" of the people. Alberdi seems to suggest that while Rosas may be not 'modern'—to the liking of Unitarist elites—he is none-the-less a reflection of the state of the region. This is not to say that Alberdi's understanding of Rosas is indicative of support for his politics, but rather that Alberdi makes a clear attempt to understand how Rosas came to power over a significant portion of Argentine society.<sup>143</sup>

Alberdi's statements and the metaphors he uses surrounding dress in *Fragmento preliminar* appear to be much more contradictory than his comments on Rosas. These early comments seem to differ from the ideas put forth in *La Moda* and by the rest of his generation. In all reality, the writings on dress in *Fragmento preliminar* hint at more of a collusion with Rosas' appropriation of national dress than the admiration for the European fashion that abounds in *La Moda*. Alberdi writes:

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dimensiones colosales, las creencias, las necesidades, preocupaciones y hábitos de una nación en una época dada de su historia." (Facundo: 20)

<sup>142</sup> Sarmiento, again, would form a similar assessment in Facundo, since he asks rhetorically: "De eso se trata: de ser o no ser *salvaje*. ¿Rosas, según esto, no es un hecho aislado, una aberración, una monstruosidad? ¿Es, por el contrario, una manifestación social; es una fórmula de una manera de ser de un pueblo? ¿Para qué os obstináis en combatirlo, pues, si es fatal, forzoso, natural y lógico? ¡Dios mío! ¡Para qué lo combatís!" (Facundo: 18)

<sup>143</sup> Years later, in 1847, Alberdi would again praise Rosas in a controversial text, La República Argentina 37 años después de su Revolución de Mayo. While unconvinced of Rosas' efficacy as a dictator, he praised the effects of Rosas' dictatorship on his generation since it forced many of them to emigrate, thus increasing their knowledge of the world and leading to their maturation as intellectuals. (See Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 16)

¿Qué nos deja percibir ya la luz naciente de nuestra inteligencia respecto de la estructura actual de nuestra sociedad? Que sus elementos, mal conocidos, hasta hoy, no tienen una forma propia y adecuada. Que ya es tiempo de estudiar su naturaleza filosófica, y vestirles de formas originales y americanas. Que la industria, la filosofía, el arte, la política, la lengua, las costumbres, todos los elementos de civilización, conocidos una vez en su naturaleza absoluta, comiencen a tomar francamente la forma más propia que las condiciones del suelo y de la época les brindan. Depuremos nuestro espíritu de todo color postizo, de todo traje prestado, de toda parodia, de todo servilismo. Gobernémonos, pensemos, escribamos, y procedamos en todo, no a imitación de pueblo ninguno de la tierra, sea cual fuere su rango, sino exclusivamente como lo exige la combinación de las leyes generales del espíritu humano, con las individuales de nuestra condición nacional. (In Chiaramonte, Ciudades, provincias, Estados: 632)

Alberdi uses metaphors of dress to hint at the need to develop national resolutions to national problems: Argentina should purify its spirit by casting off all borrowed clothing, and by studying the true nature of the region and dressing it in ‘original forms’. (This, the reader will remember, is similar of Rosas’ appropriation of the poncho and chiripá as true, original forms of national identity.) Alberdi would not return to these metaphors since once *La Moda* appeared, his incorporation of European fashions into Argentine society took center stage.<sup>144</sup> Alberdi’s references here do however echo a common consensus among this young generation about the need to separate Argentina’s future from its Spanish colonial past since part of this process, in Alberdi’s words, requires leaving behind servility. (Katra, La Generación, 2000: 55)<sup>145</sup> This preoccupation with colonial heritage (as articulated by Mármol and Sarmiento previously) also finds its way into *La Moda*’s pages. An article titled “Últimas modas francesas”, published in the first number of the periodical provides evidence:

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<sup>144</sup> Soon after Alberdi’s *Fragmento Preliminar* and his address to the Salón Literario, he would radically change his position on Rosas’ leadership (especially once forced into exile). See Katra, La Generación: 72-75.

<sup>145</sup> Katra highlights this as one of the defining features (as well as one of the features of general consensus) of the Generation of ’37: “Un cuarto tema de acuerdo generacional era la contribución muy negativa que atribuían a la experiencia de su país como colonia de España. En particular, ponían el acento en la herencia colonial de instituciones sociales débiles y la ignorancia y falta de experiencia de la población en las prácticas republicanas.” (La Generación: 55)

Esta moda es una renovacion elegante de otra antiquísima. En los rincones de muchas casas de Buenos Aires, deben existir arrumbadas aquellas pesadas sillas en que se sentaban nuestros pacificos abuelos, asiento vestido de piel punzó, ó de otra tela de seda, asegurada por tachuelas de morrudas cabezas amarillas: á veces la moda se asemeja á estas coquetas jovencitas que despues de haber agotado las novedades del gusto se ponen á imitar á las señoras viejas, por un refinamiento de coquetería. La edad média es la vieja que arremeda la moda del dia.” (No. 1 November 18, 1837)<sup>146</sup>

Here, what appears to be a critique of the use of antiquated fashions really points to the nature of Argentina’s colonial past and the fact that this past has not been purged from Argentine society. The article begins by describing a new fashion that has reached Argentina (perhaps Rosas’ regime). In all reality, this new ‘fashion’ is an old one (the exercise of absolutism instead of democracy) since in many of Buenos Aires’ houses the scarlet chairs—again referencing Rosas—that Argentina’s ‘pacific grandfathers’ (i.e. pre-independence forefathers) sat on can still be found lurking in the corners. That is to say, Rosas’ regime has the same qualities as the Spanish monarchy, much like a recycled fashion changes little from its original version. The article then ends with a final biting piece of suggestive sarcasm: the current fashion of the day (Rosas’ politics) imitates medievalism.

Also, Alberdi’s call to avoid outright imitation and rather combine the “general laws of the human spirit” (*Fragmento preliminar*) with Argentina’s “condition” does not differ drastically from his peers since many other members of the generation suggested that Argentina would do best to incorporate several European and North American elements (from political and economic

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<sup>146</sup> Alberdi, who often signed his articles as *figarillo* stemming for Larra’s penname *figaro*, offered another example in the third edition of the publication. In “Reglas de urbanidad para una visita”, No. 3, December 2, 1837 Alberdi critiqued Argentine literature and society for following the same customs as in the “time of the King”: “A propósito de loros: hay dos cosas esenciales en toda casa de gusto: --un loro, y un perro faldero. Puede suplir al loro una cotorra, que debe estar indispensablemente alojada en una jaula de zuela vieja, con ventanita baja por donde la cotorra saque la cabeza para decir sus gracias de costumbre. Las costumbres literarias del loro y de la cotorra, como las de nuestra sociedad, siguen las mismas que en tiempo del Rey. En vano ha habido una revolucion Americana: el loro, como si fuese vizcaíno de nacion, ha querido entrar en la revolucion.”

reforms to European immigration) so as to modify them in the Argentine context.<sup>147</sup> This stems directly from the major tenets of the *Salón Literario*: these young intellectuals saw their role as “interpreters” of European thought who would then in turn create new and original thought appropriate to the region. Myers explains how the activities of the *Salón Literario* molded the generation’s approach to national politics:

[...] la lectura individual debía ceder el lugar a una práctica compartida de lectura, donde las ideas aprendidas en los libros llegados de Europa debían ser objeto de intensa discusión por parte de los miembros de la asociación. Pero donde la nueva asociación superaba a sus antecesoras era en su concepción de los resultados de sus actividades: la creación de saberes enteramente nuevos, ‘originales’, sobre la base de un aprendizaje sintético de las teorías y comprobaciones contenidos en los libros europeos de la bien surtida librería de Sastre. (“La revolución de las ideas”, *Nueva Historia Argentina*, 1998:397-398)<sup>148</sup>

Thus, the fashion narratives contained in the first number of *La Moda* are highly political since they attack both Rosas and his adherence to certain colonial practices. And, closer inspection of the articles contained within the entire publication allows the reader to understand that Alberdi took this journalistic endeavor quite seriously. Because of the censure to which *La Moda* was subject, the publication most likely had to deny any serious project. For example, on

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<sup>147</sup> Alberdi’s famous slogan “Gobernar es poblar” offers a perfect example of how this generation sought to “better” Argentina through the incorporation of European elements, in this case, European immigration. Sarmiento too certainly thought that white immigration would help to infuse Argentina’s perceived inferior races with the blood of progress and order. He explained this clearly in *Argiropolis*, published in 1850: “Nosotros necesitamos mezclarnos a la población de países más adelantados que el nuestro, para que nos comuniquen sus artes, sus industrias, su actividad y su aptitud de trabajo [...] La habilidad política de un gobierno americano estaría, pues, en mostrarse no sólo dispuesto a recibir esos millones de huéspedes, sino en solicitarlos, seducirlos, ofrecerles ventajas, abrirles medios y caminos de establecerse y fijarse en el país. (150-158)

<sup>148</sup> Sarmiento also mentions in *Facundo* that Rivadavia’s liberal approach to politics was based on the desire to improve upon French republicanism: “Rivadavia viene de Europa, se trae a la Europa; más todavía, desprecia a la Europa; Buenos Aires (y, por supuesto, decían, la República Argentina) realizará lo que la Francia republicana no ha podido, lo que la aristocracia inglesa no quiere, lo que la Europa despotizada echa de menos. Esta no era una ilusión de Rivadavia, era el pensamiento general de la *ciudad*, era su espíritu, su tendencia.” (92)

one occasion Alberdi addressed his reading audience and stated that his mission was one only of publishing frivolities:

Yo no me ocupo sino de frivolidades, de cosas que á nadie ván ni vienen, como son las modas, los estilos, los usos, una que otra vez las ideas, las letras, las costumbres, y asi, cosas todas de que los espiritus sérios no deben hacer caso [...]"("Mi nombre y mi plan" No. 5, December 16, 1837)

Yet these "frivolous" articles on fashion, style, letters, customs and things to which "serious spirits" shouldn't pay attention, contain very specific references to the political and cultural atmosphere of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Buenos Aires.<sup>149</sup> In the same article, Alberdi also mentions that as part of his plan, he only intends to copy and imitate ideas from Argentina's *madre patria*, clearly a contradiction compared to any of his previous writings (and again clearly an attack on the resilience of colonialism in the newly liberated Argentina):

He explicado ni nombre: voy á explicar mi plan, que poco tiene que explicar, á la verdad. Soy hijo de español, y ya se sabe que todo hijo de español no debe hacer toda su vida sino lo mismo que hizo su padre; no debe ser mas que una imitación, siempre copia, siempre rutina, como v.g. nuestra patria, de su madre patria. ("Mi nombre y mi plan" No. 5, December 16, 1837)

*La Moda* then comes to represent an important starting point for the study of this generation, since many of the major concerns of the period are contained implicitly within its pages and most interestingly, many of these concerns are expressed through fashion narratives. For example, through fashion, Unitarist elites were able to *imagine* the national space as something other than its true composition and they were able to perceive public space as an open space for principally

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<sup>149</sup> Many of the publication's readers noticed the biting criticism contained within its pages. Apparently an article was published in the *Diario de la Tarde*, stating that *La Moda* did nothing more than parody porteño society to which *La Moda* replied defending itself: "Y no vaya otra vez D. Severus o D. Simple á escribir en el *Diario de la Tarde*, que nosotros hacemos la parodia de nuestra sociedad en estos artículos. Nosotros no hacemos otra cosa que tipos ideales de fealdad social, presentándolos como otros tantos escollos de que deba huirse." (No. 4, December 9, 1837) The publication's denial of any serious socio-cultural or literary endeavor speaks volumes about its true intent.

white circulation. An article on the first page of the third number of *La Moda* explains the *fashionable* way to visit others and to conduct oneself in an idealized public space:

Para hacer una visita, no es necesario saber la hora; que la sepan los serenos, y los maestros de escuela. Es más romántico y más *fashionable* el dejarse andar en brazos de una dulce distracción, y hacer como Byron, ó como M. Fox, si posible es, de la noche día y del día noche. [...] así se estila en Paris y en Londres. (*Figarillo*, “Reglas de urbanidad para una visita”, No. 3, December 2, 1837)

This fragment introduces an important point as far as the distance between the reality of the social composition of Buenos Aires and the ideal for urban elites: while, as Alberdi suggests here, the *fashionable* and highly praised French or English might have had the luxury to let themselves be carried away by “sweet distractions”, the social conditions of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Buenos Aires certainly did not permit such free and distracted circulation. The constant struggles between Unitarists and Federalists and the increasing migration from the provinces to the city of Buenos Aires—between 1810 and 1859 the number of immigrants from Europe and migrants from the provinces almost doubled in the city—made the public sphere a dangerous place for the “gente decente” of Buenos Aires, especially women, to show off their knowledge of proper European conduct and European fashions. González Bernaldo, for example, paints a compelling picture as to why elite women might retract from the public sphere where dead dogs and cats littered the streets and where passing horsemen could easily splatter their fine clothing with filth (particularly excrement) from the streets:

¿Cómo imaginar una tertulia entre paseantes decentes, cuando las calles no pavimentadas contaban con numerosos pozos de barro dentro de los cuales se tiraban a veces gatos y perros muertos, que despedían olores nauseabundos? ¿Y qué decir de esa costumbre de los hombres de atravesar la ciudad a caballo como si se estuviese arreando ganado, que convertía al paseo cotidiano de las damas en una riesgosa empresa, de la que (en el mejor de los casos) la vestimenta resultaba regada con aquella mezcla de barro y estiércol? (“Vida privada y vínculos comunitarios”: 150)

Szuchman explains what the conduct of the upper classes more realistically would have been:

A systematic review of the archival evidence and the journalistic literature of the nineteenth century leaves the observer with the impression that the values of all the elites and political authorities defined the street and virtually all public space as inappropriate environments for decent youth. For example, government authorities rushed to rectify a schedule in a public school in 1833 that had resulted in the students waiting outdoors for their classes to begin, an act considered by the minister of government to be “an evil thing”. These preoccupations expressed an equation that the elites had drawn between conspicuous behaviour and the social practices asserted to be characteristic of the *gente de pueblo*. Public space was reserved for those men—and for certain types of women, mostly belonging to the lower classes—whose trades required them to be manifest. (Order, Family and Community in Buenos Aires: 104)

According to Szuchman, in stark contrast to the commentaries in *La Moda*, the elites were those who defined the public space as unacceptable. *La Moda*'s insistence that public appearances should be romantic and fashionable points to a breach between idealism and reality since it is unclear whether or not the suggestions in this fragment were meant to be considered possible. What is clear in Alberdi's description is how the incorporation of certain models—in this case, practices of conduct—were not appropriate to the social body and the political reality of Argentina in that particular period. In all reality, those who belonged to a social class sufficiently accommodated to put Alberdi's recommendations to use would more than likely not be found wandering distractedly through the city.<sup>150</sup> Articles such as this represent a clear

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<sup>150</sup> Myers (“Una revolución en las costumbres”) and González Bernaldo (“Vida privada y vínculos comunitarios”) offer conflicting views on the changing roles of elite sociability after independence. Myers highlights several forms of elite sociability that were explicitly public: the theatre, religious and civic festivities, Sunday promenades at *La Alameda* (a public walkway constructed before independence), public bathing at beaches, a growing café culture, and so on. He explains: “En los teatros, en los paseos públicos y en las orillas del río, la elite desarrollaba una sociabilidad cuya característica más evidente era su naturaleza pública, su exposición sin mediaciones a la mirada de personas que no pertenecían a su reducido círculo.” (“Una revolución en las costumbres”: 128). González Bernaldo, on the other hand, explains that the porteño elite increasingly separated itself from the public eye as the political and social circumstances of the period became increasingly dangerous. “La ‘gente decente’, como solía autodenominarse el patriciado porteño, tiende a abandonar estos ámbitos de encuentro cotidiano para retraerse a ciertos espacios menos accesibles a una ‘plebe’ que la situación política ha transformado en peligrosa, pero también más aptos a una nueva sensibilidad y gusto por la privacidad. Constatamos así, a lo largo del siglo XIX, una tendencia, que podemos detectar ya en las últimas

attempt to *conceive* or *imagine* how residents of Buenos Aires should conduct themselves in an ambiguous playing field where elite supremacy over the *gente del pueblo* needed to be symbolically reinforced. Public appearances at religious and civic festivities, dances and strolling all offered opportunities for the elite to display—especially through their fashionable attire and conduct—hegemony over the increasingly empowered lower-class followers of Rosas. In this particular fragment, Alberdi uses fashionable conduct as a way to symbolically re-conquer a public sphere dominated by Rosista politics and also as a way to integrate elite conduct into the changing social order of the period. Myers explains that perhaps one of the most important tasks for early Argentine intellectuals (particularly the intellectuals of the Rivadavia period and later the Generation of '37) was the promotion of *modes of sociability*. Such modes were understood as a central element in maintaining River Plate independence from monarchical traditions:

Tanto para los publicistas ilustrados de la etapa rivadaviana como para los escritores románticos una década y media más tarde (y también para más de un publicista rosista, aunque procesaran esta visión dentro de una matriz interpretativa muy distinta), la promoción de la sociabilidad de los sectores de elite se presentaba como una de las tareas más urgentes que debería resolver el Estado, y de cuya resolución dependiera la supervivencia misma de una sociedad independiente en el Río de la Plata. (“Una revolución en las costumbres”: 116)

Finally, Alberdi’s suggestions on fashionable social conduct also point to a very early expression of what Ramos terms “strolling” (in the context of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America), which is reminiscent of the activities of the European *flâneur*. Ramos explains:

The stroller is a curious subject. S/he sets out to expand the boundaries of his or her private domain in the chronicle. By strolling, not only does s/he reify the flux of the city, turning it into material for consumption and incorporating it into that curious receptacle, or showcase, that is the chronicle; the chronicler-stroller also seeks out, in the touristic digression that individualizes and distinguishes him or her from the urban mass, the signs for a virtual shared identity in the features of certain others. (*Divergent Modernities*, 2001: 130-131)

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décadas del siglo XVIII, a la segregación social del espacio urbano, ligada a la instauración del espacio íntimo.” (“Vida privada y vínculos comunitarios”: 150)



In this sense, more than suggesting the emulation of the activities described in *La Moda*, Alberdi is mapping out the identity parameters for a modern city-dweller since strolling is “corollary to the production of luxury and fashion, within an emergent culture of consumption [...]” (Ramos, *Divergent Modernities*, 2001: 128) What on the surface appears to be a superficial description of European public conduct then reveals itself as embedded within much larger topics of concern: strolling is a natural consequence of fashion and consumption, both of which are embedded within the larger context of a growing industrial and cultural/political revolution (affecting both the public and the private spheres) of which many members of the Generation of '37 took part.

In the same number of *La Moda*, the author describes the latest hairstyles for young women and he speaks of the importance that Argentine women conform to the more sophisticated world of European fashion. More notably, the article draws a very obvious correlation between fashion and what appears to be the indecisive nature of Argentine culture<sup>151</sup>:

Es preciso que háganlos la declaración de los principios que deben reglar nuestros juicios en punto á modas, para evitar de un golpe toda controversia.—La moda, participa entre nosotros de la indecisión que afecta todas nuestras cosas sociales. No tenemos modas dominantes, como no tenemos ideas, ni costumbres dominantes. Entre tanto, es menester caminar á la homogeneidad; y como para llegar a un punto común, es indispensable partir también de un punto común, bueno es entenderse sobre este punto común de arranque. (“Modas de Señoras”, No. 3, December 2, 1837)

First, in this fragment, it’s important to point out how the latest female hairstyles become metaphors for cultural identity since they offer a platform from which to envisage the “indecision” regarding Argentina’s social problems. That is to say, ‘indecision’ in this case refers to the lack of a sense of dominant fashions, which also spills over to the realm of a lack of

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<sup>151</sup> As noted before (ch.1, n.83).

dominant ideas, customs (and perhaps a lack of dominance over the socio-cultural changes affecting the traditional elites of the region). The article points to the need to solidify a sense of identity based on a liberal, *criollo* agenda which—as several critics already cited have pointed out—is based on a white, upper-class, educated notion of national identity. In the case of the Generation of '37, this mention of the lack of dominance facing the region clearly stresses how their particular position under Rosas was anything but dominant: Federalist dress was increasingly imposed upon them (from articles of clothing to the shapes of beards), Federalist customs were clearly disturbing progress and order (that is, among many of Rosas' other practices, public throat cuttings and executions were disturbing “progress” in the liberal sense of the notion), and Afro-Argentines and the lower classes dominated the public scene. The common point of departure imagined in this fragment refers to one that will lead to a sense of a homogeneous identity (white, upper-class, educated, primarily male) as opposed to the heterogeneity of the real social composition of the region.

Sarmiento also spoke of homogeneity in terms of race. Unlike Alberdi, he felt that Argentina's racial composition had already become homogeneous and that it represented the *wrong type* of homogeneity. For this intellectual, the fusion of European, Indigenous and African blood was the cause for the “love of laziness” that marked 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina:

Por lo demás, de la fusion de estas tres familias ha resultado un todo homogéneo, que se distingue por su amor a la ociosidad e incapacidad industrial, cuando la educación y las exigencias de una posición social no vienen a ponerle espuela y sacarla de su paso habitual. Mucho debe haber contribuido a producir este resultado desgraciado, la incorporación de indígenas que hizo la colonización. Las razas americanas viven en la ociosidad, y se muestran incapaces, aun por medio de la compulsión, para dedicarse a un trabajo duro y seguido. (*Facundo*: 31)<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Sarmiento was also quick to recognize the “fortunate” fact that Rosas' political endeavors had nearly wiped out the male Afro-Argentine population. So, this “black spot” in Argentina's racial composition, for Sarmiento, was becoming less and less of a problem (as compared to the “problem” of the indigenous populations). In *Facundo* he explains how the Afro-Argentine

Interestingly, in this fragment Sarmiento indirectly references the figure of the Argentine *gaucho* since this inhabitant of the pampas was understood as a hybrid mix between Indian, Spanish and African bloods. (Rock, Argentina: 48) For Sarmiento, this mestizo cowboy of the pampas was yet another figure to be excluded from the national project. In several instances (and in several different publications), Sarmiento affirms that this is so, in no small way, because of the gaucho's attire and his rejection of the clothing of "civilized" men: "Es implacable el odio que les inspiran los hombres cultos, e invencible su disgusto por sus vestidos, usos y maneras." (Facundo: 37)<sup>153</sup>

Sarmiento also articulated the relationship between citizenship, race and dress in the figure of the Argentine gaucho. For Sarmiento, the gauchos—who were not only racially mixed but who also appropriated European and indigenous dress resulting in a hybrid mixture of attire—would need to disappear if citizenship was to move beyond the limits of the city. He explained this clearly in Campaña en el ejército grande while discussing the attire of Rosas' soldiers (many of whom were gauchos and Afro-Argentines): "Mientras no se cambie el traje del soldado argentino ha de haber caudillos. Mientras haya chiripa no habrá ciudadanos." (169) This echoes

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collusion with Rosas ultimately led to their destruction: "Los negros, ganados así para el Gobierno, ponían en manos de Rosas, un celoso espionaje en el seno de cada familia, por los sirvientes y esclavos, proporcionándole, además, excelentes e incorruptibles soldados de otro idioma y de una raza salvaje. [...] La adhesión de los negros dio al poder de Rosas, una base indestructible. Felizmente, las continuas guerras han exterminado ya la parte masculina de esta población, que encontraba su patria y su manera de gobernar, en el amo a quien servía." (Facundo: 179)

<sup>153</sup> Katra further explains Sarmiento's exclusion of the "indio" in terms of education: "[...] in *De la educación popular* (1849), his work most noted for its enlightened promise of instruction (and therefore progress) for the masses of his continent, Sarmiento excludes the Indian on account of his 'ineducability' (*OC*, 11:212), just as he excludes people of mixed blood, who are 'incapable or inadequate for civilization' (11:38). ("Rereading *Viajes*": 76)

what Sarmiento had previously maintained in Facundo: the inhabitants of the countryside *lacked* the clothing of citizenship<sup>154</sup>:

[...] el hombre de la campaña, lejos de aspirar a semejarse al de la ciudad, rechaza con desdén su lujo y sus modales corteses, y el vestido del ciudadano, el frac, la capa, la silla, ningún signo europeo puede presentarse impunemente en la campaña. Todo lo que hay de civilizado en la ciudad, está bloqueado allí, proscrito afuera, y el que osara mostrarse con levito, por ejemplo, y montado en silla inglesa, atraería sobre sí las burlas y las agresiones brutales de los campesinos. (33)<sup>155</sup>

On a much larger scale, all of these examples point to the emergence of a new developing relationship between dress and national belonging: consumption of goods that were indicative of a certain level of ‘civilization’ (at least in the eyes of the Unitarist elite) became the privileged space from which citizenship (as understood in a democratic system) and national identity could be articulated. That is, with the emergence of modern nationhood, caste and nobility no longer served as privileged markers of identity<sup>156</sup> and production/consumption became a fundamental area from which identity, affiliation and difference, class, race and social status were

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<sup>154</sup>The term *ciudadano* has a two-fold meaning in Spanish. It can refer to a citizen (as in a citizen of a nation) or to an inhabitant of the city. In this case, Sarmiento’s use of the term is suggestive of both meanings since not only is he referring to the gaucho as the antithesis of the city dweller, but he is also referring to the *gaucho*’s place in the Argentine nation.

<sup>155</sup>Hanway further explains the relationship between the gauchos and the Unitarist projects of state: “The gaucho is another example of the contradictions concerning race in nineteenth century Argentine literature. As early as the 1820s, visitors to the pampas recorded the fact that the gaucho’s racial status varied. In *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier*, Richard Slatta cites Sir Francis Bond Head, a British mine owner, who described the gauchos as ‘all colors, black, white and red.’ While historically, the gaucho was a person of mixed-race descent, the representation of the gaucho’s racial categorization changed during the nineteenth century. In the 1850s the gauchos are represented in literature as *mestizos* and therefore, in the views of Mármol and many others, undesirable figures. The projection of the gaucho as a *mestizo* (considered to be a negative racial category in the nineteenth century) may relate to the gauchos’ perceived status as allies of Rosas and the *caudillos*: as such they represented a threat to the white, urban elite who favored the Unitarist cause.” (Embodying Argentina: 10)

<sup>156</sup>Doris Sommer’s analysis of “foundational fictions” in terms of the need to root legitimacy in generative power as opposed to genealogy is an essential part of this process: “Without a proper genealogy to root them in the land, the creoles had at least to establish conjugal and then paternity rights, making a *generative* rather than a *genealogical* claim.” (Nation and Narration: 87)

communicated.<sup>157</sup> Halperín Donghi explains this in the specific context of Argentina: the accumulation of wealth quickly became associated with the modernization of the region.

In mid-nineteenth-century Argentina, a new criterion for social differentiation was emerging: wealth. Only insofar as that criterion was universally accepted would the economic modernization of the country be possible. (“Sarmiento’s Place”: 22)

García Canclini, following Bourdieu’s lead, also explains this in more general terms regarding modern and democratic societies:

En sociedades modernas y democráticas, donde no hay superioridad de sangre ni títulos de nobleza, el consumo se vuelve un área fundamental para instaurar y comunicar las diferencias. Ante la relativa democratización producida al masificarse el acceso a los productos, la burguesía necesita ámbitos separados de las urgencias de la vida práctica, donde los objetos se ordenen—como en los museos—por sus afinidades estilísticas y no por su utilidad. (García Canclini, Culturas Híbridas: 36)

Many of the members of the Generation of ’37 understood the democratizing effect of fashion<sup>158</sup>, and for this reason, among others, they adopted it as a strategic site from which to defy Rosas’ authoritarian grasp on the national economy as well as to promote liberal political values.<sup>159</sup> *La Moda*, for example, was one of the first to say so:

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<sup>157</sup> Myers explains that this was precisely the case in early 19<sup>th</sup> century *porteño* society whereby elites had to ‘reinvent’ their place in the social order. Now traditional class and family alliances took a backseat to the more important accumulation of wealth and power through individual merit: “En este contexto intelectual y cultural transformado, la noción misma de ‘elite’ no podía sino experimentar algún cambio. En la creencia de la mayoría de la población, la pertenencia a ella dependía ahora fundamentalmente de la posesión de algún mérito individual reconocido por los demás miembros de la sociedad, como la acumulación de riquezas, de capital social y/o de poder.” (“Una revolución en las costumbres”: 114)

<sup>158</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky, a well-known fashion theorist, explains how the “desire for fashion” emerged out of fashion’s increasing democratization: “The democratization of appearance was matched by the extension and eventual generalization of a *desire for fashion*, a desire previously confined to the privileged strata of society.” (The Empire of Fashion: 63)

<sup>159</sup> This is not to say that the members of the Generation of ’37 had a unified vision of democracy in the Argentine context. Nor is it entirely possible to group the members of the generation under the all-encompassing rubric of “liberals” since these members often disagreed. As Halperín Donghi brilliantly explains, after the fall of Rosas, many members of the Generation of ’37 largely disagreed on *what* Argentina’s political system should be (and these differences were formed well before the fall of Rosas). Halperín Donghi offers the following categories of

[...] la legislación, la moralidad, la educación, la ciencia, el arte, lo mismo que la moda es la democracia. [...] M. Tocqueville ha conseguido dar una cuenta fiel de todos los fenómenos sociales que presentan los Estados Unidos de Norte América; por que, en efecto, todo parte allí de la igualdad y propende á la igualdad de las clases. La democracia resalta allí tanto en los vestidos y en las maneras como en la constitución política de los Estados. (“Modas de Señoras”, No. 3, December 2, 1837)

Sarmiento also described the effects of dress in the United States and he spoke of political equality in terms of clothing:

La igualdad es pues, absoluta en las costumbres y en las formas. Los grados de civilización o de riqueza no están expresados como entre nosotros por cortes especiales de vestido. No hay chaqueta, ni poncho, sino un vestido común y hasta una rudeza común de modales que mantiene las apariencias de igualdad en la educación. (Educación popular, in Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 237)

Both of these fragments use the example of the United States to express the relationship that was felt to exist between democracy (especially in terms of political equality) and what covered the U.S. national body. However, there is an important distinction between these two approaches. *La Moda* speaks primarily of fashion, and not dress, as a form of democracy whereby the democratization of fashion leads to the equality of classes and political equality in terms of the state. This points to Alberdi’s early position (as the leading editor behind the publication) towards what Halperín Donghi terms “progressive authoritarianism”. Halperín Donghi explains the long-term goals of the political elite belonging to this camp as well as its relationship to the non-elites outside of political power:

[...] esa élite contará con la guía de una élite letrada, dispuesta aceptar su nuevo y más modesto papel de definidora y formuladora de programas capaces de asegurar—a la vez que un rápido crecimiento económico para el país—la permanente hegemonía y creciente prosperidad de quienes tienen ya el poder. Mientras se edifica la base económica de una nueva nación, quienes no pertenecen a esas élites no recibirán ningún aliciente que haga

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analysis of liberal thought: 1.) the reactionary alternative (Félix Frías); 2.) the revolutionary alternative (Echeverría); 3.) a new society ordered according to reason (Mariano Fraguero); 4.) progressive authoritarianism (especially in the case of Alberdi); and 5.) socio-cultural progress as a requirement for economic progress (Sarmiento). (Proyecto y construcción: 23-41)

menos penoso ese período de rápidos cambios e intensificados esfuerzos. (Proyecto y construcción: 20-30)<sup>160</sup>

In *La Moda*'s mention of fashion, what the editors are hinting at is perhaps not a true desire for class equality—since already after the wars of independence and especially under Rosas, class and race grievances found more relief than in any other period of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine history (Katra, La Generación: 25)—but rather a desire for equality, especially political equality, of the educated lettered elite. In terms of political equality, it is important to remember that this equality was meant to include only “official” citizens of the nation, thus it excluded the large majority of the population—especially women, Afro-Argentines and indigenous populations. While many times citizenship was intricately linked to voting rights (González-Stephan, “Las disciplinas escriturarias”, 1995), in the specific case of Argentina “citizenship” and its relationship to voting rights was ambiguous. As Sabato explains, contrary to popular belief, the limitations on voting (as established by the Constitution of 1821) were not as strict as they would later on become. Ideally, any adult male, born or naturalized in Argentina could vote. This does not mean that voting rights were regularly exercised. (La política en las calles: 13)<sup>161</sup> Sabato does, none-the-less, make an important distinction in that the political right to vote didn't necessarily spill over into citizenship since such a citizenship is understood as a community of equals that directly or indirectly participates in the exercise of political power, which clearly did not happen with every adult male in Argentina. (La política en las calles: 171) Echeverría's position on citizenship and national belonging in his Dogma Socialista offer a paradigmatic example: citizenship is not a right before the nation-state, but rather is a result of democratic

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<sup>160</sup> In this case, Halperín Donghi is referring to Alberdi's conception of the role of the elites as expressed in Bases y puntos de partida, which would be the foundation for the new Argentine constitution after the fall of Rosas.

<sup>161</sup> Andrews, to provide just one example, explains that often times guilds kept non-whites from voting. (The Afro-Argentines: 46)

institutions established by said nation-state (which is consequently established primarily by ruling elites):

Y por pueblo entendemos hoy como entonces, socialmente hablando, la universalidad de los habitantes del país; políticamente hablando, la universalidad de los ciudadanos: porque no todo habitante es ciudadano, y la ciudadanía proviene de la institución democrática. (28)<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, returning to the case of *La Moda*, by affirming the democratizing power of fashion—especially because 19<sup>th</sup> century changes in the fashion industry made products more readily available to a growing middle-class—the publication was looking first to criticize the *lack* of democracy (in the elite liberal sense) in Rosista Argentina as well as to secure a legitimate base from which to imagine a type of pseudo-social equality that by its very nature alienated those unable to attain the likes of high fashion (or citizenship).<sup>163</sup>

Sarmiento's mention of dress in the previous fragment, however, points to a very different position on class and its relationship to dress and national belonging. While Sarmiento's

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<sup>162</sup> Adelman explains Echeverría's somewhat inconsistent position and resultant resolution concerning citizenship: "There is a basic paradox however: how were people, still unprepared to exercise their rights owing to their intellectual and spiritual prematurity, expected to know what was good for the nation, and therefore to be able to distinguish between the competing legitimacies of caudillos and youthful *homes de letters*? Echeverría's resolution is somewhat arbitrary: he distinguished between a socially constituted *pueblo* embracing all inhabitants of the region, and a politically formed citizenry including those able to exercise public rights responsibly. Only citizens, in the end, were entitled to choose their preferred legitimacy. [...] According to Echeverría's formulation, then, not all inhabitants were citizens even if they were members of society. Indeed, citizenship, along with the political rights that flowed therefrom, itself had to be earned *through* the building of state institutions, and did not antedate the state." Republic of Capital: 177-178)

<sup>163</sup> Katra explains that only a very select few legitimately fought for the democratic participation of the masses after independence: "La mera idea de una masa de plebe federal amenazando a la sociedad elitista y europeizante debe de haber despertado el más profundo horror en las mentes de la población de Buenos Aires. Sólo una pequeña minoría de la elite educada de dicha ciudad había luchado a favor de la participación democrática de las clases populares. Muy por el contrario, sus principales valores y actitudes derivaban del papel social jerárquico de la colonia española. Estos valores de clase y raza profundamente implantados sobrevivirían, de una manera modificada, en las perspectivas históricas que más tarde abrazarían los militantes de 1837." (La Generación: 27)



conception of race clearly did not seek to elevate the indigenous or Afro-Argentine populations to the likes of the middle-classes, his ideas on dress point to how he saw consumption as one of the major ways to “improve” lower-class society. At least, in this way, its often ambiguous racial background could be covered with an appropriate mask. This is neatly linked to his understanding—much of which resulted from his travels throughout the United States—of the relationship between economic progress and socio-cultural progress. Halperín Donghi explains how Sarmiento’s approach was quite different from Alberdi’s more hesitant stance on the lower classes:

El ejemplo de los Estados Unidos persuadió a Sarmiento de que la pobreza del pobre no tenía nada de necesario. Lo persuadió también de algo más: que la capacidad de distribuir bienestar a sectores cada vez más amplios no era tan sólo una consecuencia socialmente positiva del orden económico que surgía en los Estados Unidos, sino una condición necesaria para la viabilidad económica de ese orden. La imagen del progreso económico que madura en Sarmiento, porque es más compleja que la de Alberdi, postula un cambio de la sociedad en su conjunto, no como resultado final y justificación póstuma de ese progreso, sino como condición para él. (Proyecto y construcción: 36)

Sarmiento, rather than completely excluding the lower classes from his conception of nationhood—which is not to say that he did not express some anxiety toward the complete leveling of socio-economic barriers—wanted to bring the lower classes to an appropriate level of civilization, in the same sense that he wished to ‘inject’ Argentina’s racial inferiority with the blood of European immigration.<sup>164</sup> Again, when speaking of the U.S., Sarmiento mentions that there is no other impediment to civilization than a population who refuses appropriate dress (as did the ‘inferior’ populations of Argentine society):

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<sup>164</sup> Therefore, in a sense, Sarmiento developed a two-fold discourse on fashion and dress: on the one hand, in articles addressing his upper class audiences (as will be discussed briefly) Sarmiento emphasizes the importance of high fashion in civilizing—*a lo europeo*—the cultural backwardness of Argentina. On the other hand, he also wrote extensively on the role of clothing consumption in democratizing the illiterate masses (even though these articles, most likely, were still directed towards an upper-class literate public).

No hay obstáculo mayor para la civilización de la muchedumbre que el que opone la forma de los vestidos, que en nuestros países tiene un carácter especial en las clases inferiores de la sociedad, de cuyo uso resulta para lo que la llevan inmovilidad del espíritu, limitación de aspiraciones por lo limitado de las necesidades y hábito inalterable de desaseo y perpetuo desaliño...Nótese este resultado sobre todo en los Estados Unidos, donde la gran mayoría sabe leer, escribir y contar con muy diminutas excepciones. Aquel espíritu de progreso no se milita al simple vestir que desde el más ínfimo leñador hasta el banquero es uno mismo en sus formas diversas de paltó, levita, frac, sobretodo, sin más diferencia que la calidad de las telas, sino que se extienden a la forma de las habitaciones, al amueblado, menaje y a los aperos de labranza, y demás utensilios domésticos. (Educación popular, in Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 251- 252)

For Sarmiento, Argentina's inferior classes desperately needed to break their relationship to their traditional forms of dress so that democracy could spread throughout the region. Interestingly, Sarmiento saw that this was possible through consumption. On one particular occasion, he explained that this was possible through the consumption of shoes. In this article published in Chile, Sarmiento metaphorically creates an ideal space whereby elites and lower classes could exist peacefully together, each in its own place. He begins the article "La Venta de Zapatos" (*Mercurio* de 21 de abril de 1841) by explaining how democracy in Chile was found neither wrapped up in a poncho (*Rosista* style in Argentina) nor disguised with the frac (*Unitarist* style, again in Argentina), but rather it was found openly (albeit at night since the light of day could danger it) in the selling of shoes:

La democracia existe en Chile, i no encubierta, ni embozada en poncho, ni disfrazada con fraque; se muestra a cara descubierta, aunque de noche, porque la luz del dia la perjudica. La democracia está, ¿sabe dónde? ¡*En la venta de zapatos!* (Obras completas I, 1887)

Sarmiento continues with his description:

Allí la igualdad no es una quimera, ni la libertad un nombre vano. Nada de fraques, nada de nobles, ni patrones, ni coches, ni lacayos con galones i penachos, ni clases, ni distinciones, ni calabazas. Igualdad, comercio, industria, todo es una sola cosa, un ser homogéneo, una síntesis; en fin, la república llena de vida i animacion, el pueblo soberano, el pueblo rei. El lugar mismo donde esta escena se pasa, lleva las señales del triunfo de la democracia. (Obras completas I, 1887)

In this space, marked principally by the buying and selling of goods, resides the triumph of democracy. As Sarmiento so clearly explains, the markers of high society (and consequently civilization) that so harshly divide civilization from barbarism, citizen from non-citizen, elite from non-elite are somehow broken down in this idealized space where industry, commerce and equality reign supreme. Consumption apparently leads to one homogeneous mass where social distinctions and wealth no longer distress or harass the lower classes. In this perfect space, happiness rules the order of the day:

En la venta de zapatos del sábado, el pueblo llamado tal, el pueblo llano, el tercer estado, el pueblo pillo, trabajador e industrioso, en fin, por si no he dicho nada todavía, aquello que nuestras buenas i decentes jentes llaman canalla, plebe, vulgo, muchedumbre, populacho, chusma, multitud, que se yo que otros tratamientos honrosos, se reúne al frente de aquel portal, que es su conquista, a vender sus artefactos, a comprar lo que necesita, a ejercer su industria, su capacidad, i su malicia. Aquí las distinciones sociales no le humillan, no lo insulta la riqueza, ni esbirros lo incomodan, ni lo celan importunos vigilantes. La alegría reina en todos los semblantes [...] (Obras completas I, 1887)

Clearly, Sarmiento praises this space as the site for the true negotiation of many of the major problems facing the 19<sup>th</sup> century republics. Yet, wouldn't such a place seem problematic to Sarmiento since he was certainly ambivalent about how much lower classes should participate democratically in government?<sup>165</sup> And wasn't Sarmiento one of the intellectuals who most

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<sup>165</sup> Sarmiento's ambivalence to class is certainly related to his background since he was from humble origins (as he explains in Mi defensa, 1843). Halperín Donghi points out that Sarmiento would often "flip-flop" in his approach to class issues. On the one hand, he understood the struggle against Rosas as a battle between the wealthy, enlightened sectors and the often lower-class Federalists. On the other, through what some have deemed "archaic ideals" he often supported the plight of the poor man and his attempt to better himself through discipline and education. Halperín Donghi explains: "Admittedly he had defined his struggle against Rosas as a battle on behalf of the rich and enlightened classes whom he believed oppressed by federal domination. But at the same time he would proclaim—amidst the universal exaltation of the individual struggle for prosperity—his disdain for 'the path leading only the wealth' and his poor man's solidarity with the poor, straining against the solidarity of the wealthy in their defense of property. [...] As Alberdi was to denounce, Sarmiento's faith in education as the main instrument for change reflected his loyalty to an essentially archaic ideal." ("Sarmiento's Place": 22 and 27 respectively)

poignantly praised the likes of high fashion for its powers of civilization in the face of the overwhelming poorly dressed (and poorly prepared) masses? Sarmiento's article does not abandon his previous (and later) emphasis on the importance of high fashion. In fact, his additional comments in this article fit snugly with his position on class and democracy whereby the lower classes of society needed to participate in a system where only a small few held true positions of power, and the true means to civilization. He explains:

[...] Bajo sus elevadas arcadas se han aglomerado las tiendas aristocráticas, la ostentación del lujo, el brillo de las artes, y las elegancias de la moda. Pero ni aquí se echa de menos el triunfo democrático; pues a más de estar a derecha e izquierda flanqueadas por los representantes del bajo comercio, engastados en la muralla, como los santos e imágenes en las calles de Valencia, tienen a su frente los cajones que las han barricado cerrándoles el paso y la luz del sol, y tendiéndolas presas bajo una oscura galería que solo por los extremos puede ser invadida. (Obras completas I, 1887)

Here Sarmiento offers a compelling metaphor: even the market place represents an ideal political system for the period. The "aristocratic stores" are flanked by those of the masses thus closing off the path and the light of the sun (a clear reference to the "lights" of the Enlightenment) and maintaining this limited space in the dark, invaded only by the extreme outside (perhaps Europe?). This metaphorical market place, while liberating for the masses, was still able to maintain a hierarchy whereby high fashion was limited to a select few. This of course, represents Sarmiento's position on how only high fashion should be for the elite few, much like a democratic system should be based on clear-cut hierarchies. Halperín Donghi explains that Sarmiento was indeed ambivalent when it came to complete equality of the classes:

Sin duda esta imagen del cambio económico-social deseable no deja de reflejar la constante ambivalencia en la actitud de Sarmiento frente a la presión de los desfavorecidos en una sociedad desigual; si quiere mejorar su suerte, sigue hallando peligroso que alcancen a actuar como personajes autónomos en la vida nacional; la alfabetización les enseñará a desempeñar un nuevo papel en ella, pero ese papel habrá sido preestablecido por quienes han tomado a su cargo dirigir el complejo esfuerzo de

transformación a la vez económica, social y cultural de la realidad nacional. (Proyecto y construcción: 36-37)<sup>166</sup>

The article “La Venta de Zapatos” seems to offer a perfect example for Halperín’s Donghi’s assessment: Sarmiento seems to suggest that the lower classes should be allowed to “better their luck” (and through consumption, it certainly appeared that they could), as long as they did not threaten those who provided the conditions for such improvement. That the fashionable stores (like the limited number of intellectuals and upper-classes able to purchase goods within) be somewhat obscured seemed to be a reasonable risk to take provided that the idealized space mentioned by Sarmiento in this article functioned properly.

While this metaphorical space may have only been a dream (for Sarmiento and his Unitarist contemporaries), its description represents an important *attempt* at creating a community and a public of consumers. This, as Ramos explains, was important since the intellectual would become a sort of “guide” through the labyrinth of the “ever-more refined and complex market of cultural goods, contributing to the materialization of a rhetoric of consumption and publicity [...]”.(Divergent Modernities: 113-115)<sup>167</sup> One compelling example in the development of a rhetoric of consumption is José Mármol’s Amalia. Published in Montevideo as a literary supplement (in *La Semana*), Mármol’s Amalia serves as an important point of departure for considering both the role of consumption in the *imagining* of a new national (and modern)

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<sup>166</sup> Katra echoes Halperín Donghi’s assessment of Sarmiento’s form of “liberalism”: “The word ‘liberal’ in this context did not refer to the promotion of democracy or equality—in the short run, at least. Instead, it referred more to the constitutional principles upon which the state and the economy were to be organized. Specifically, these point to the need for 1) a progressive authoritarian regime guided by a small, educated elite; 2) laissez-faire economic activities with an international orientation; and 3) full religious liberty.” (“Rereading *Viajes*”: 79)

<sup>167</sup> Ramos explains this in the context of late 19th century *modernismo*. His understanding of a rhetoric of consumption can clearly be articulated in the writings of the Generation of ’37 far before *modernismo*—with its political and cultural repercussions—emerged in Latin America.

identity and the role that the figure of the female came to occupy in this space through consumption.

Argentina's most well known "foundational fiction" (Sommer)<sup>168</sup> Amalia has sparked critical attention recently because it lends important insight into gender roles and the public/private spheres in the Rosista period.<sup>169</sup> As Masiello (Between Civilization and Barbarism) has brilliantly pointed out, Amalia offers a narrative space whereby the political endeavors that marked the Generation of '37 were played out through gender. In this way, for liberal elites, the female and female attributes came to embody resistance to the barbarism of the Federalist movement so much so that the traditional role of the male as head of the family (either as husband or father) became *feminized* within the context of the domestic sphere. Inversely, the representation of the female became more masculine since the fictive women in this romance were vested with patriarchal powers.<sup>170</sup> In the field of body studies, Hanway has mentioned that although the body of the female protagonist becomes important symbolically because of the refinement of her private space<sup>171</sup>, it is nonetheless rendered static and fragmented, and therefore

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<sup>168</sup> Teodosio Fernández even claims that Amalia is the first novel produced in the River Plate region. ("Introducción": 42)

<sup>169</sup> In fact, Doris Sommer understands the domestic sphere as the main stage for the development of the novel because more than just for political reasons, the reader wants the heroes to survive for the purposes of romance. Mármol interweaves the romances with the political occurrences to such an extent that the romance, presumably the 'insubordinate' second story within the main picture, becomes more important: "We want them to survive because we increasingly desire their institutional and mutual union: Daniel's union with Florencia, but even more passionately, Amalia's union with Belgrano [Pedro]." (101)

<sup>170</sup> Masiello explains: "In America, a feminization of values was destined not only to challenge the frontier but to offset barbarism in men themselves. This mode of gender shifting resulted in a fluid representation of sexuality for men and women. Often, the center of family authority—assigned to husband or father—became highly feminized in representation, while the traditionally feminine roles of wife and mother became invested with patriarchal power." (Between Civilization and Barbarism:20)

<sup>171</sup> In most cases, the public sphere in Amalia is described in terms of the "symbols" of Rosismo and the Federalist characters (who imitated real-life participants in the dictatorship) and their

outside of time in its representation. (Embodying Argentina: 20) In this sense, for Hanway, the novel presents *less* of a gender revolution and *more* of a continuance with past gender norms. Others, such as West, following Masiello's lead, have focused on the importance of dress and its relationship to the politics of the period. West has shown how "one's grooming and overall appearance had serious political and social ramifications" so it's easy to see how Amalia's flair for high fashion and the predominance of the color blue served to wage symbolic war on the Federalists from within the domestic sphere.<sup>172</sup> (Tailoring the Nation: 3) Fernández, in a similar light, explains how Amalia's beauty and refinement easily reflected the refinement of the Generation of '37:

En *Amalia* los antirrosistas [...] representan la civilización, y en consecuencia son los depositarios del talento, la inteligencia, la sensibilidad y la belleza [...] Incluso la hermosura innegable, famosa en su época, de Agustina Rosas de Mansilla, resulta federal y aldeana, y palidece ante la belleza de Amalia Sáenz de Olavarrieta, que es un dechado de lo urbano y de lo culto, en sus maneras, en su forma de vestir y de amar, en la decoración refinada de su casa, donde lee las *Meditaciones poéticas* de Lamartine. ("Introducción": 46)

While all of these affirmations shed light on the novel's portrayal of gender, none of the aforementioned studies considers how consumption made the representation of Amalia—as a

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actions are described in terms of their barbaric Federalist dress. See, for example, the opening chapter "Traición" (65); the description of *El comandante Cuitiño* (chapter V: 136); the description of Federalist men at meetings (chapter XIII: 228); or the descriptions of Daniel in public when disguised as a Federalist (chapters VIII and IX: 315 and 329 respectively).

<sup>172</sup> David Viñas (1964) pointed this out, in much less detail, before Masiello and West. Viñas begins by counterposing Mármol's literary descriptions of Rosas' and Amalia's houses respectively. He notices how the descriptions of Rosas' house hold back on detail, while the descriptions of Amalia's house manage to "[...] lograr un tono de 'leve y vaporosa neblina', de imprecisión e irrealidad, de subrepticia y reiterada remisión a 'Italia', a lo francés, a 'Cambray', y a la India." (Literatura Argentina, 132). Viñas insists that Mármol does this on purpose, for very political reasons: "Mármol *intencionadamente* desarrolla el paralelismo Rosas-Amalia, rusticidad-urbanidad. Qué duda cabe. Es lo que subyace y conforma la arquitectura del libro, vinculándolo con la teoría inicial de la generación del 37: la síntesis entre lo americano y lo europeo; [...]. (Literatura Argentina: 133)

political and gender rebel—possible.<sup>173</sup> Felski, for example, explains that women were often centered at the heart of modernity through consumption and that any study of women and the 19<sup>th</sup> century should factor in its importance. While Felski is interested in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, her approach to women and consumption is particularly useful for the case of Amalia since this novel attests to the emergence of a growing capitalist market:

In the late nineteenth century, the consumer was frequently represented as a woman. In other words, the category of consumption situated femininity at the heart of the modern in a way that the discourses of production and rationalization examined previously did not. Thus consumption cuts across the private/public distinction that was frequently evoked to assign women to a premodern sphere. (The Gender of Modernity: 62)

In the case of Mármol's novel, it is in large part through the *consumption* of fashionable goods that Amalia is able to transform her domesticity into political rebelliousness because of the changes affecting the domestic sphere after independence. Unlike the Federalist criticism of fashion's role in destroying the domestic sphere, in the case of Amalia the crisis brought upon the public/private divide by the political happenings of the period finds a viable resolution through consumption. In what follows, I will explain how the female protagonist is able to effectively participate in the public sphere—and as such, she is able to introduce modern/unitarian products into the home—without threatening the sanctity of the domestic. Thus, she participates in the public and political world surrounding her while simultaneously reinforcing the 'comforts' of the domestic. In Amalia, as compared to the Federalist discourse

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<sup>173</sup> There is some debate as to when “consumer society” was born. As Scanlon explains, some scholars locate its birth toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century while others contend that consumer society began emerging as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For an extensive bibliography on this debate, see pages 10-11 “Introduction”. Scanlon (ed.), The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader, 2000) It is my opinion that consumer culture in Buenos Aires began well before the modernization boom at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is made evident by the discourse of consumption surrounding (and the importance placed upon) fashion in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina.



surrounding fashion, the female protagonist's flair for fashion rescues the domestic from the savagery of the public.

In this novel, the constant presence of the color *blue* (the Unitarist color of choice) and the author's preference for decorating the novel with imported products is perpetuated most often either through the protagonist's clothing selection—there are almost entire chapters dedicated to describing Amalia's attire—or through her selection of foreign luxuries. It's important, for example, to consider the very detailed description of Amalia's bedroom (the ultimate signifier of domesticity and intimacy) and the foreign articles and furniture with which it is adorned. It is also important to pay special attention to the use of blue in its depiction:

Toda la alcoba estaba tapizada con papel aterciopelado de fondo blanco, matizado con estambres dorados, que representaban caprichos de luz entre nubes ligeramente azuladas. [...] El piso estaba cubierto por un tapiz de Italia [...] Una cama francesa, de caoba labrada [...] cubierta con una colcha de raso color jacinto, sobre cuya relumbrante seda caían los albos encajes de un riquísimo tapafundas de Cambray. [...] de la corona se desprendían las ondas de una colgadura de gasa de la India [...] Al otro lado de la cama se hallaba una otomana cubierta de terciopelo azul [...] A los pies de la cama se veía un gran sillón, forrado en terciopelo del mismo color que la otomana. [...] una mesa de palo de naranjo [...] contenía sobre una bandeja de porcelana de la India, un servicio de té para dos personas, todo él de porcelana sobredorada. [...] Un sillón de paja de la India, y dos tuburetes de damasco blanco con flecos de oro [...] dos grandes jarras de porcelana francesa estaban sobre dos pequeñas mesas de nogal [...] (93)<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> The elegance of this space differs drastically from Mármol's several descriptions of the Federalist public sphere. Take for example the following description whereby *honorable* citizens were forced into the safety of their homes. Note here how Mármol describes the infiltration of elite social spaces (the café, *confiterías*, etc.) by Rosista hordes, pointing towards the changing forms of elite sociability under Rosas whereby the public sphere became increasingly dangerous: "La comunidad de la Mashorca, la gente del Mercado, y sobre todo las negras y las mulatas que se habían dado ya carta de independencia absoluta para defender mejor su madre causa, comenzaban a pasear en grandes bandas la ciudad, y la clausura de las familias empezó a hacerse un hecho. Empezó a temerse salir a la vecindad. Los barrios céntricos de la ciudad eran los más atravesados en todas direcciones por aquellas bandas; y las confiterías, especialmente, eran el punto tácito de reunión. [...] Los cafés eran invadidos desde las cuatro de la tarde. Y ¡ay de aquel que se presentase en ellos con su barba cerrada o su cabello partido!" (*Amalia*: 666-667) (Part of this fragment is quoted in González Bernaldo, "Vida privada": 151)

These descriptions of imported articles ranging from Italy and France to India serve a double purpose. Clearly, in line with the opinions of the aforementioned critics, they highlight the importance of the domestic sphere as a discursive space for liberal ideological premises (because the color selection of the articles and their foreign origin hint at support for Unitarist politics). Consequently, this fusion of the private sphere with the public in Mármol's text (because of the clear political implications associated with the color and origin choice of Amalia's belongings) reflects the radical changes affecting the structure of the Argentine family after independence. As Myers explains, the domestic sphere was no longer a refuge from political torment. Rather it was yet one more area of life conquered by the political:

Todos los ámbitos de la vida privada—desde perspectivas de las elites—parecían sucumbir ante la movilización política permanente que había desencadenado la Revolución, transformándose así en objetos de la acción explícita de un Estado que se sentía impelido a moldear costumbres y prácticas que una sociedad civil imperfecta y parcialmente pulverizada no estaba en condicionales de hacer. (“Una revolución en las costumbres”: 112)<sup>175</sup>

On the other hand, descriptions such as these serve to reinforce the role of consumption in creating an ideal domestic sphere that while politicized, still remained safe from public hostilities and open to the “civilization” afforded by foreign products. In the case of Amalia, civilization—compared to the barbarism of Rosas' public arena—is born in the protagonist's house. In this sense, Mármol seems to suggest that the new nation could become civilized from the inside out. Sommer comments on this textual aspect and manipulation of public/private space in function of

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<sup>175</sup> Kuznesof and Oppenheimer further explain how the shift from the colonial to post-independence periods strengthened the importance of family ties and further complicated the relationship between public and private worlds: “Throughout the colonial period kinship was a major basis of political and economic organization, only somewhat subdued by the strength of royal government and competition with other corporate groups. In the nineteenth century the absence of effective government after independence and the disappearance of other corporate organizations created a vacuum into which the family moved as the dominant political and economic actor.” (“The Family and Society in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: An Historiographical Introduction”: 219)

a national Unitarist political agenda to “domesticate” the unrestrained public sphere through the constant description of a “civilized” domestic one:

[...] we could add that, at some level, the Unitarists understood their mission as “domesticating” the wild outdoors, and at another the exiles who managed to escape also wanted to come home, to be domestic. (Foundational Fictions: 84)

Through Amalia’s careful selection of sophisticated adornments for herself (and her house), the female protagonist is able to establish an identity that moves well beyond the traditional role of the female as a passive member of society to one who takes an active role—through consumption—in creating ideal conditions within the politicized domestic sphere. This is exemplified by a conversation that Amalia has with *la señora de N...* (a fellow Unitarist supporter) at the one and only Federalist dance Amalia ventures to attend.

(señora) ¡Ah! ¿Es usted la señora viuda de Olavarrieta? Tengo mucho gusto en conocer a usted. He oído su nombre muchas veces; y por cierto que en cuanto he oído, no hay nada de exagerado.

(Amalia) Yo creía, señora, que en Buenos Aires había sobradas cosas de que ocuparse para hacer a una pobre viuda el honor de acordarse de ella.

(señora) ¡Una pobre viuda, que no tiene rival en belleza, y que, según dicen, ha hecho de su casa un templo de soledad y buen gusto! ¡Ah, señora! ¡Si usted supiera qué pocas son las cosas bellas y de buen gusto que nos han quedado en Buenos Aires, no se resentiría entonces la modestia de usted! [...] El buen gusto—prosiguió—hace muchos años que ha desaparecido de Buenos Aires. ¡Oh! ¡Si usted hubiera visto nuestros bailes de otro tiempo! ¡Qué mujeres! ¡Oh, eso era elegancia y buen gusto, señora!

(Amalia) Perdón, señora, yo no he tenido el honor de decir a usted cómo pienso.

(señora) ¡Qué gracia! ¡Si desde que se sentó usted a mi lado me lo dijo!

(Amalia) ¿Yo?

(señora) Usted, sí, señora, usted. Fisonomías como la suya, maneras como las tuyas, lenguaje como el suyo, trajes como el suyo, no tienen, ni usan, ni visten las damas de la federación actual. Es usted de las nuestras, aunque no quiera. (Amalia: 305-313)

Here, Amalia's house is compared to a temple, as one of the only remaining places of good taste in an increasingly violent public sphere. And, Amalia herself, the language and manners she uses and the clothing she chooses, all point to her differentiation (allowed in part through consumption) from the women of Rosas' federation. Mármol takes this one step further when he continues to describe the dangers of Rosista dances—which were also parochial dances, hence the collusion between Rosas and the Catholic church—for honorable (Unitarist) women. These women must participate in these pestiferous orgies out of fear of persecution or because of paternal influence and even worse, they had to come into contact with most degraded and criminal of beings, the Mazorca. As the novel explains to its readers, Rosista society offers the inverse of “normal” societies:

En el estado normal de las sociedades, en toda reunión pública, se trata de poner en competencia la cultura o el talento, la elegancia o el lujo. [...] en las famosas fiestas parroquiales, todo era a la inversa, porque el ser moral de la sociedad estaba ya invertido. [...] Y la joven inocente y casta, llevada allí por el miedo o la degradación de su padre; la esposa honrada, conducida muchas veces a esas orgías pestíferas con las lágrimas en los ojos, tenían luego que rozarse, que tocarse, que abrazarse en la danza, con lo mas degradado y criminal de la Mazorca. (*Amalia*, 2000: 518)

Amalia's *conspicuous consumption* also reflects significant changes in consumption patterns affecting post-Revolutionary Argentina: with the dismantling of the monarchical mercantile system, Buenos Aires became increasingly active in transatlantic trade with France and especially England such that *porteño* streets were often flooded with European products. (Brown, *A Socioeconomic History of Buenos Aires*, 1979: 78)<sup>176</sup> It is only towards the end of the Rosista period that commerce in the city slowed down considerably.<sup>177</sup> It is also important to

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<sup>176</sup> Transatlantic trade increased so much after independence that “commercial societies” were formed, composed mostly of British merchants. Cansanello explains that one of these groups, formed in 1810, became known as the *Santa Alianza* (the Holy Alliance) because it only accepted English merchants. (“Economía y sociedad”: 261)

<sup>177</sup> There are several references to this in the novel. See especially pages 251 and 306.

point out that this period is marked by a dramatic rise in ‘popular consumption’. Salvatore explains:

With penetrating insight, Halperin Donghi (1982) suggested long ago that the tremendous increase in textile imports of the early 1820s was chiefly due to ‘popular consumption’. The insatiable appetite of the lower classes for British textiles fed the first ‘consumer boom’ of the post-independence era. [...] The lists included the zarazas (printed chintz) with which slave clothes were made, the bramantes (Brabant linen) for making the peasants’ and peons’ drawers (or leggings), the paño estrella (a type of cotton cloth) of which soldiers’ uniforms were made, as well as the fabrics of privilege: satins, tafetans, and cashmeres. (Wandering Paysanos: 31)

It makes sense that Unitarist writers who felt increasingly threatened by the blurring of class and race differences under Rosas would strive to create their own markets of consumption intended for elites. Certainly, through the elaborate descriptions of Amalia’s attire and her furnishings, a *discourse of consumption* began to take shape, and this served as a stage for some of the major ideological concerns of the novel and it served to represent many of the conflicts surrounding gender issues in the period. More specifically, such a discourse of consumption helped to imagine a modern identity for the (wealthy) female but within the confines of the domestic sphere. Giles explains that recent criticism has neatly linked consumption and identity formation such that it is through the home that many women are able to participate in the public sphere. Whereas before consumption was seen as a passive form of public participation, it is now being considered an essential and active part of women’s participation in modernity:

Until recently theorists have tended to see consumption as subordinate to production. Consumption is seen as frivolous, passive, even decadent, while production, understood as work, is perceived as noble, dignifying and a source of pride. Such distinctions, of course, have gender implications: passivity and frivolity are congruent with the passivity and narcissism culturally attributed to women. [...] More recently consumption has been seen as an active process through which people can forge identities and participate as citizens, and the home a key site for the working out of this process. (The Parlour and the Suburb: 102-103)<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> This process would reach its highest point with the emergence of the department store at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the increasing importance placed on the visual aspect of shopping.

The consumption of fashionable goods also forges a sense of modern identity since, as Baudrillard explains, consumption provides for the “ultimate realization of the private individual as a productive force”, the private individual of course being one of the main pillars (and main creations) of modern society. (“The Ideological Genesis of Needs”: 76) Amalia became a productive force through consumption, especially since, in the case of the adornments and clothing in her house, it is she, apparently, who acquired them since she had long been widowed and since these adornments existed before the introduction of Eduardo (her soon to be fiancée and short-lived husband) into her home.<sup>179</sup> As the novel explains, this ill-fated protagonist lost both her father and husband at a young age:

El coronel Sáenz, padre de Amalia, murió cuando ésta tenía apenas seis años; y en uno de los viajes que su esposa, hermana de la madre de Daniel Bello, hacía a Buenos Aires, sucedió esa desgracia. [...] ¡El señor Olavarrieta amaba a Amalia como su esposa, como su hermana, como su hija, y el señor Olavarrieta murió un año después de su matrimonio, es decir, año y medio antes de la época en que comienza esta historia! ¡Ya no le quedaba a Amalia sobre la tierra otro cariño que el de su madre, cariño que suple a todos cuantos brotan del corazón humano; único desinteresado en el mundo y que no se enerva ni se extingue sino con la muerte; y la madre de Amalia murió en sus brazos tres meses después de la muerte del señor Olavarrieta!”(240- 241)<sup>180</sup>

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This topic will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4. (See Giles, “Shopping and the ‘Ideal Home’”, *The Parlour and the Suburb*: 104-117)

<sup>179</sup> It is unclear, in the novel, just how Amalia acquired her clothing and the articles described in her house. In one conversation at the dance, there is reference to the purchase of French clothing through the mail since Buenos Aires had been left with little available merchandise for purchase. Agustina speaks to Amalia: “Aquí no hay nada hoy; las tiendas están vacías, y si no hubiera sido por Florencia, no hubiera hoy tenido un vestido con que venir al baile. Ahora sólo llegan de encomienda los vestidos de Francia. Pero es preciso tener quien los mande de allí, ¿no es verdad? [...] Dicen que todo lo que usted tiene se lo hizo traer de Francia, ¿es cierto? [...] ¡Oh, qué felicidad!” (340-341) Here, Amalia is one of the few wealthy residents of Buenos Aires to have “contact” with the civilized world of French fashion.

<sup>180</sup> One could make the argument that Amalia’s consumption only serves to objectify her as a commodity in the exchange between men. (See Rubin, “The Traffic in Women”, 1975 and Doane *The Desire to Desire*, quoted in Felski *The Gender of Modernity*: 64) However, Amalia’s atypical case (since neither her husband nor father directly controlled her consumption) allows for a different interpretation of consumption’s role in constructing an identity for the female protagonist.

Additionally, in a conversation with Eduardo, Amalia explains that she has alleviated the cruelty of her destiny through consumption. She admits that her consumption of what others would consider childish possessions has helped her to isolate herself not only from personal hardship but also from what she calls the barbarism of “backward American society”. Consequently, these childish possessions (books, a piano, her garden) all represent an important level of civilization according to Unitarist standards:

¡Sí, soy feliz! ¿Por qué negarlo?—prosiguió Amalia—. Un destino cruel parece que esperó mi nacimiento para conducirme en el mundo. Todo cuanto puede hacer las desgracias de una mujer en la vida, lo selló en la mía la naturaleza. La intolerancia de mi carácter con las frivolidades de la sociedad; los instintos de mi alma a la libertad y a la independencia de mis acciones; una voluntad incapaz de ser doblegada por la humillación ni por el cálculo; una sensibilidad que me hace amar todo lo que es bello, grande o noble en la naturaleza; todo esto, Eduardo, todo esto es comúnmente un mal en las mujeres; pero en nuestra sociedad americana tan atrasada, tan vulgar, tan aldeánica puedo decir, es más que un mal, es una verdadera desgracia. Yo tuve la dicha de comprenderla, y entonces quise aislarme en mi patria. Para vivir menos desgraciada, he vivido sola después que quedé libre: y acompañada de mis libros, de mi piano, de mis flores, de todas esas cosas que otros llaman puerilidades, y que son para mí necesidades como el aire y como la luz, he vivido tranquila y...tranquila solamente. (*Amalia*: 359)

The female protagonist in this novel interestingly swings back and forth between the private and the public spheres: as a consumer she actively participates in a growing capitalist economy, yet her participation in this sphere is “correct” since she never puts her honor at stake. As Felski explains, this interaction with the public is typical since failure to do so could likely associate the female with prostitution, especially since in terms of fashion, there is no female equivalent to the dandy or the flâneur:

The identification of modernity with masculinity is not, of course, simply an invention of contemporary theorists. Many of the key symbols of the modern in the nineteenth century—the public sphere, the man of the crowd, the stranger, the dandy, the flâneur—were indeed explicitly gendered. There could for example, be no direct female equivalent of the flâneur, given that any woman who loitered in the streets of the

nineteenth-century metropolis was likely to be taken for a prostitute. (The Gender of Modernity: 16)<sup>181</sup>

Thus, the individuality given to the protagonist through consumption is non-threatening since the consumption of luxury goods—to be displayed primarily in the home—offered a guarded space from which women were free to participate in a very public phenomenon (fashion and the consumption of fashionable goods) without risking association with prostitution or working class females. This type of consumption allowed gender roles to appear more fluid within the protected space of the domestic sphere while essentially rendering the gender transformations in the novel quite conservative and certainly class based. This conflict points to the contradictory nature of the Generation’s stance toward women and fashion. On the one hand (as in the case of Amalia here), liberal intellectuals supported the use of foreign fashions and “paraphernalia” in the bourgeois home as an attempt to “civilize” Argentine society from the inside out while at the same time maintaining the purity of the domestic sphere. (This is true of Mármol, as witnessed here, as well as Alberdi in *La Moda* and Sarmiento in several other writings to be discussed below.) Yet, since fashion is a very public phenomenon, its “civilizing power” is rendered much less effective when taken out of its designated sphere. So, at the same time that liberal intellectuals hailed the role of fashion in “civilizing” the barbaric masses—since it could serve as an example of how one should dress and behave in public—these same intellectuals stressed the importance of containing fashion for women in the private sphere.

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<sup>181</sup> Donna Guy explains that this indeed was true of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina: “[...] women who sought work in the same public places were always suspected of supplementing their income with the proceeds of sin. [...] Those who took in laundry or sewing were also suspect. Many of them *did* supplement their incomes, as did their European counterparts, as clandestine prostitutes. Others did little to arouse such suspicions, but their visibility as working women led to accusations. In a society where working women were the exception, female wage labor in public places was equated with sexual commerce.” (Sex and Danger: 46)



In fact, Amalia rarely ventures out of her house. On one occasion, against her own will, she must attend an important Federalist party. As her cousin Daniel explains, she must do so to protect her home (from Mazorca suspicion) and her lover hiding there within:

[...] es un sacrificio que haces por la seguridad de tu casa, y con ella por la tranquila permanencia de Eduardo. Te lo he dicho diez veces: no asistir a este baile dado a Manuela, en que recibes una invitación de ella, solicitada por Agustina, es exponerte a que lo consideren como un desaire, y estamos mal entonces. Agustina tiene un especial empeño en tratarte, y ha buscado este medio. Entrar al baile y salirte de él antes que ninguna otra, es hacerte notable en mal sentido a los ojos de todos. (Amalia: 287)

Amalia ventures from her home one last time in the final scene of the novel. In this last case, she fled from Buenos Aires to marry Eduardo in her family *quinta* (country home) where both Daniel and Eduardo succumb to federal violence. In one last final act of bravery, Amalia throws herself on Eduardo in an attempt to defend him from further harm:

Un grito horrible, como si en él se arrancasen las fibras del corazón, salió del pecho de la pobre Amalia, y desprendiéndose de las manos casi heladas de Pedro, y de los débiles brazos de su tierna Luisa, corrió a escudar con su cuerpo el cuerpo de su Eduardo, mientras Daniel tomó el sable de Pedro, ya expirando, y corrió también al gabinete. (832)

Eduardo nonetheless, dies in Amalia's arms. This final scene provides an excellent example of what Masiello has suggested in Between Civilization and Barbarism: the writers of the Generation of '37 constructed a version of national history based on female dramas. Amalia would have been the perfect spouse because of her willingness to protect both her home and lover:

A gendered vision of politics, society, and culture often prompted the imagining of a nation, as the writings of Echeverría, Mármol and Sarmiento repeatedly suggest. By enforcing women's duties to the home and by emphasizing her empathic qualities, leading intellectuals molded an image of the Argentina spouse and mother to suit their projects of state. (53)

Yet the failure of this national romance hints at what Masiello suggests was the true position of this generation in terms of women. Most likely, this generation was interested in the

image of women as a form of resistance to Rosas' barbarism more so than any sincere protofeminist principles.<sup>182</sup> Masiello continues:

[...] the generation of 1837 opened the possibility of feminine discourse as a way to structure the space of the imagination. This is not to say that such men defended protofeminist principles. Rather, they were attracted to the *image* of the feminine insofar as it signaled resistance to Rosas. (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 23)

Sarmiento, like Mármol, also developed a similar strategy through fashion. Much like Mármol developed an important link between women, consumption and Unitarist politics in his novel, Sarmiento too showed a marked interest in high fashion and women's consumption precisely because the use of high fashion served to offer symbolic resistance to Rosas' appropriation of national dress.<sup>183</sup> While the early 1840's were pivotal years in Sarmiento's literary production—since he would publish Facundo in the pages of *El Progreso* during his exile in Chile—these were also important years in his approach to the “women's issue” in his plan for the Argentine nation.<sup>184</sup> As one of the principal writers for *El Progreso*, Sarmiento included a

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<sup>182</sup> Garrels also explains that the Generation's approach to feminism was reserved at best. She explains this through a telling comment made by Miguel Cané, an important member of the Generation: “[...] the young Miguel Cané begins one of his essays in *El Iniciador* by insisting of his differences with them [women]: ‘The disciples of Saint-Simon have said man and woman are the social individual; we declare that this opinion does not conform to our own. We do indeed think that woman needs an emancipation lifting her from the lamentable condition in which uses and customs less republican than those necessary for our society have placed her, but we are far from espousing that the female occupy the space that among us the male himself does not know how to fill.’” (“Sarmiento and the Woman Question”: 276)

<sup>183</sup> Sarmiento's comments on fashion here are taken from the following articles: “Nuestro folletín” (10 noviembre de 1842), “Fisiología del Paquete” (14 y 15 de noviembre de 1842), “Cartas de dos amigas” (16 de noviembre de 1842, 18 de noviembre de 1842, 22 de noviembre de 1842, 29 de diciembre de 1842, 2 de enero de 1843) and “Al oído de las lectoras” (16 de diciembre de 1842). All of these articles are found in Obras Completas.

<sup>184</sup> Kirkpatrick and Masiello elaborate on the importance of these years in Sarmiento's writing: “Sarmiento visited Chile numerous times during his life, but his stay there from 1840 to 1852 (with various absences in between) was not only the longest but clearly the most significant. It was in Chile during this period that Sarmiento's most important works were written and published. These include *Facundo* (1845), *De la educación popular* (1849), *Recuerdos de*

fashion page to lure in a possible female reading public and, as Adolfo Prieto explains, he did so in an attempt to model *El Progreso* after European and U.S. newspapers:

It should be noted that the expectations of fast growth declared in the “Prospectus” were justified at least during the paper’s initial months of circulation. Indeed, the regular inclusion of serials translated from the most famous European books, a fashion page, statistics, lithographs—all intensely promoted in the first issues—were used as lures in the manner of the great newspapers of Europe and the United States. (“Sarmiento: Casting the Reader”: 265-266)

Sarmiento first began his journeys in fashion by directly dialoguing with his imagined female readers:

La moda. Este es un asunto tan grave como nuevo. Visitaremos los barnizados y brillantes estantes de Marchan y Lataste, los *fashionables* y confortables efectos de Prieto, las cachemiras de León, los pañuelos de Puelma, las cintas y blondas de Levasseur, los terciopelos de Gandarillas, y recomendaremos a nuestros elegantes lo que el *folletín de la moda* ordena usar de preferencia. (“Nuestro folletín”, Obras completas II: 1)

This quote goes to the heart of the relationship between fashion—clearly understood as an outward manifestation of *civilization*—and the liberal projects represented by the Generation of ’37. For Sarmiento, the clothing and materials described here, *cachemiras*, *pañuelos*, *cintas*, *blondas*, *terciopelos*, were not only the antitheses of the barbarism plaguing the Argentina countryside (and invading the city), but they were also clear symbols of the European elegance that the Americas lacked. This quote also goes to the heart of the relationship between fashion and an imagined female reading public. Sarmiento clearly expressed his need for subscribers to his publication and including a fashion page was one way to increase this public. In this same article, Sarmiento explains how his fashion descriptions (together with descriptions of elite sociability: *tertulias*, public strolls, concerts and reunions) will serve to attract his curious female readers to the publication, much like birds flock to bait:

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*provincia* (1850), *Argirópolis* (1850), and *Campaña en el Ejército Grande* (1852). (“Introducción”: 2)

Las tertulias, los conciertos i reuniones, ambos paseos de la Cañada i Tajamar, la elegante sencillez de los trajes, la coquetería del peinado de la señorita F., es decir, fea, i las gracias de la B., que se nos antoja llamar bella, formarán algunas veces el fondo de un folletín que atraerá nuestras curiosas a su lectura, como jilguerillos que acuden a bandadas a la vista del cebo engañador. (“Nuestro folletín”, Obras completas II: 2)

Sarmiento then implores his readers to subscribe and he explicitly tells them *where* to do so:

Se necesitan, pues, suscritores, suscritores por centenares, por millares, como corresponde a una capital. Se reciben suscripciones en la botica del señor Barrios, en la del señor Castillo, en la casa de don Dionisio Fernandez, se solicitan en las casas particulares, se mendigan por las calles, se piden por la prensa, por carteles, por pregones, en las plazas, en los paseos, en las tertulias, de noche, de dia, despiertos, dormidos, de todos modos i maneras, ¡suscripciones i suscritores! (“Nuestro folletín”, Obras completas II: 4)<sup>185</sup>

In these first fashion narratives, the reader immediately notices Sarmiento’s acquisition of a distinct female voice and his use of an all-inclusive *nosotros*. Unlike Alberdi or Mármol, Sarmiento appears to distance any possible male audience from this section of the newspaper (which may have had the intended purpose of sparking more male interest in this section) and he appears to take on the identity of a female writer in an attempt to attract a possible female reading public. In an ironic twist, Sarmiento’s acquired female voice served to affirm his power as a public and indeed masculine *letrado* since it allowed him to simultaneously penetrate and persuade several audiences, both male and female. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism: 39) Sarmiento would continue to employ this strategy in additional articles on fashion:

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<sup>185</sup> Jaksić explains why Sarmiento so desperately pleaded for subscriptions to his periodical. In Chile, subscription rates were often too low to support the cost of the publication. “Low readership was mainly owing to high illiteracy rates (less than 17 percent of the population was literate in the 1840s), low incomes, and the widespread practice of passing papers from hand to hand. Many read the papers at government offices, which supplied copies to employees. Additionally, the readership was more interested in political debates around election time than in cultural or news articles.” (“Sarmiento and the Chilean Press”: 41)

Nadie que no sea criatura femenina, ponga sus ojos en esta parte del diario. Es un asunto reservado de que tengo que hablar con mis lectoras, i mui pelmazo ha de ser el que se ponga a oir nuestra conversacion sin nuestro consentimiento. [...] Vamos a hablar de nuestras cosas, porque quiero que tengamos una conferencia privada. Aquí en confianza, al oído se trata [...] de dar figurín de modas en el *Progreso*, con su explicación y demás cosas necesarias. [...] Tantas cosas que tengo que decirles de modas, que ya me desvivo por que llegue el momento de hacerlo. (“Al oído de las lectoras”, Obras completas II: 78)

Notice how Sarmiento speaks possessively of “his female readers”, of “their conversation” together and of his emotion and sincere interest in speaking of fashions. Clearly, much like Alberdi and Mármol, Sarmiento was aware of the importance of his female audience as primary consumers. After rather lengthy and almost scientific descriptions of European fashions and female hairstyles—since even in “women’s things”, suggests Sarmiento, there is science—the time comes when Sarmiento makes the real point of his article clear to the reader:

[...] ¿Sabén ustedes lo que acaba de descubrirse en París, y obtener una patente de invención para la que primero observó este hecho? Que los zapatos apretados hacen el pie ancho y el tobillo particularmente prominente. ¡En Francia todo es progreso, descubrimientos, ciencia! (“Al oído de las lectoras”, Obras completas II: 77-79)

Characteristically Sarmentine, France represents progress and science and the article seems to suggest that if “backward America” could only copy the manners and modes of the French it could arrive at an acceptable level of civilization. It’s significant to point out that the shoes described in this section not only cover the foot but they also form and mold it. Thus, they change it from its original form into a different and bettered product. This metaphor is clearly suggestive of Sarmiento’s (and his generation’s) approach to European and North American developments: they saw these societies as the “culmination of a universal historical process” that should be molded in the Latin American context to better the emerging republics. (Katra, “Rereading *Viajes*: 78) In this same article (“Al oído de las lectoras”), Sarmiento continues to take advantage of the chance to *sell* his publication. He argues that even though the most

rational and decent members of Chilean society have subscribed to *El Progreso*, its success still depends on the growth of his audience:

¿Saben lectoras mías lo que nos piden los suscritores? Que se suspenda el folletín. I quién sabe si tendremos que condescender! [...] va a introducirse en el diario una reforma radical que le atraerá un gran número de suscritores, no obstante que ya se ha suscrito toda la jente racional i decente de Santiago, tenemos doscientos i pico de suscritores! (Obras completas II: 81)

Here Sarmiento is working towards creating a market of consumers, and he saw this as an essential step in the *education* of national subjects. Halperín Donghi explains precisely this point: in Sarmiento's particular case, the importance of the written word in the creation of a national market could not be overlooked. Only through written communication, particularly the newspaper, could a unified national market be created, as opposed to semi-isolated local markets:

La importancia de la palabra escrita en una sociedad que se organiza en torno a un mercado nacional—y no a una muchedumbre de semiaislados mercados locales—se la aparece de inmediato como decisiva: ese mercado sólo podría estructurarse mediante la comunicación escrita con un público potencial muy vasto y disperso: el omnipresente aviso comercial pareció a Sarmiento, a la vez que un instrumento indispensable para ese nuevo modo de articulación social, una justificación adicional de su interés en la educación popular. (Proyecto y construcción: 36)

Sarmiento's articles on fashion, however, move a step beyond the others of his generation. For Sarmiento, not only was the figure of the female as a consumer subject to the marketing of real and symbolic goods, but she was also targeted for her role in motherhood. In this way, Sarmiento more explicitly capitalized on the role of mothers as traditional transmitters of ideology to children. (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1989)<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Anthias and Yuval-Davis offer helpful categories of analysis for the consideration of women and the state. As they explain, there are five major ways that women participate in “ethnic and national processes”: “(a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; (b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of culture; (d) as signifiers of

Unlike Amalia, whose protagonist was stripped of motherhood, and unlike Alberdi's commentaries on fashion in *La Moda*, Sarmiento's articles are particularly interesting because of the tremendous emphasis he placed on motherhood and the role of women in creating ideal and civilized conditions for their children. One of the most emblematic articles of such a nature is "Fisiolojia del Paquete". (Obras completas, 9-19). In this article, Sarmiento creates a metaphorical "packet" and he walks his readers through the development of this "packet" from childhood to adulthood. Consequently, this "packet" serves as a metaphor for the emerging Argentine nation. First, as Sarmiento explains, this "packet" is what would be deemed a *dandy* in England or France and in order to thrive, it must breathe the perfumed air of civilization where laziness does not exist:

El paquete, sin embargo, si bien es planta que medra en todos los climas i lugares, requiere para respirar el aire perfumado de la civilizacion; i donde no haya ociosidad, lujo, coquetería, i sobre todo agua de colonia, *point* de paquete. ("Fisiolojia del Paquete", Obras completas II: 10)

That Sarmiento should choose the figure of the dandy as a symbol for the emerging Argentine nation is significant. On the one hand, as Entwistle explains, the dandy offered a *style of masculinity* that was clearly modern in comparison to the somewhat effeminate appearance that 18<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic dress afforded men. (The Fashioned Body: 126) This would certainly seem to contradict Federalist characterizations of the Unitarists as effeminate. On the other, the dandy clearly represented a social climber since his status depended more on his outward appearance than on blood or inheritance. In this sense, he was a "truly modern figure". (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body: 127) It is noteworthy that Sarmiento should choose this

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ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories; (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles." (Woman-Nation-State: 7) In this case of fashion discourses developed by Sarmiento, the female reading audience is targeted in its capacity as ideological reproducers of the collectivity.

prototype to reflect a new sort of male citizenry since the economic and political changes occurring during the period (most notably the fading importance of caste and blood lines after independence) are mirrored in the figure of the dandy.

Sarmiento then continues to describe, in detail, the *types* of parents that are needed for this metaphorical nation/dandy to grow properly: it's helpful if the mother has blond hair and it's important that the father have a proper beard (a clear reference to the Federalist beard forced upon Argentine males). He explains:

Los padres deben reunir calidades así físicas como morales, sin los cuales es tirar escopetazos al aire. La madre, por ejemplo, debe tener constitucion nerviosa i delicada, imperioso carácter i voluntad antojadiza i caprichosa; [...] El pelo rubio es aventajadísimo. El padre debe ser, como es consiguiente, su padre; i a mas de una alcurnia i linaje distinguido, proveerse de una barba completa, con tal de que no sea cerrada hasta los ojos, porque esto lo echaria a perder todo. Imposible cosa seria obtener un paquete ni mediano, hijo de hombre cerrado de barba. (“Fisiolojia del Paquete”, Obras completas II: 10-11)<sup>187</sup>

Sarmiento's descriptions point to his role in promulgating patterns of immigration into Argentina based on European traits: fair or blond hair and distinguished backgrounds were preferable. Moreover, it is clear for Sarmiento that a good “packet”/nation will never be raised by men with improper beards (such as those of the Federalists). As this fragment attests, even more important than a distinguished background is the father's beard: another clear indication of Sarmiento's privileging of appearance over inheritance.

Finally, this child/nation is born, and in allusion to the wars of independence, the early years are the most difficult since this child/nation will cry and be bothersome:

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<sup>187</sup> Later on in this same article, Sarmiento makes further reference to the beard and he clearly attacks its use by Federalists since the growth of a beard interferes with the “secretion” of ideas and the use of judgment. He writes: “En esto de la barba hai mucho en que escoger. El surtido es tan elegante como acomodadito. Se rasuran los ministros, magistrados i jentes dadas a la política; porque el crecimiento de la barba perturba la secrecion de las ideas i puede ofuscar el juicio.” (Obras completas: 15)



Por lo pronto llorará. [...] No hai por qué alarmarse, siendo, por el contrario, indicios ciertos de la existencia del jenio que mas tarde va a desenvolverse. Mamon, molesto, lloron, i baboso, he aquí los signos con que se distingue; bien entendido que ha de ser blanco, rubio i gordito, porque de un niño escuálido i largurucho no se conseguiria sino una mala imitacion, un paquete hechizo, que no valdría al fin el trabajo de criarlo como debe criarse a estos anjelitos. (“Fisiolojia del Paquete”, Obras completas II: 11)

Notice here the detail with which Sarmiento describes the child/nation’s physical appearance: it must be white, blond and pudgy and not skinny or languid since this would only result in a poor imitation, and a bewitched “paquete”. Sarmiento continues his description of this metaphorical growth process with the obligations of the mother in rearing:

Mucho cuidado debe tener la madre, y esto no es más que cumplir con las santas funciones que la naturaleza le ha encomendado, de que el ama no lo contrarie en cosa ninguna. Si llora, hacerle ro-rro-rro al principio, arrumacos después, sonreírle, cantarle sobre todo, a fin de que vaya cogiendo gusto por lo filarmónico. (“Fisiolojia del Paquete” Obras Completas II: 11)

In this case, it is only through the mother’s guidance that the child will acquire a taste for finery.<sup>188</sup> The emphasis that Sarmiento places on motherhood also points to the push-pull situation between gender and the Generation of ’37. Much like many of the writers of the Generation of ’37 promoted a sense of a modern identity for the female through consumption (of course, for their projects of state), the reinforcement of women’s role in childrearing served to strengthen women’s traditional link to the domestic sphere. And, the reinforced symbolic role between the female as the symbolic mother/nurturer of the nation—that is, in this particular article, the nation as an un-socialized infant—serves to isolate the female from very real political actions occurring in the public sphere. It also serves to associate the body of the female with national identity since this metaphorical female comes to represent the “motherly qualities of the

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<sup>188</sup>On another occasion, Sarmiento reiterated this point. As he explains, a woman’s duty lies in her ‘fulfilling the duties of motherhood...these being of such great importance since from the lap of the mother comes the man fully formed, with inclinations, character and habits which his first education molds.’ (Quoted in Garrels, “Sarmiento and the Woman Question”: 277)

nation”. (Mosse, The Image of Man: 8; Felski, The Gender of Modernity; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, “Introduction”)<sup>189</sup> Likewise Mosse points out that using the female as symbol of the nation serves to position the individual female outside of the “dehumanizing structures of the capitalist economy as well as the rigorous demands of public life” so that the female comes to signify a “nonalienated, and hence, nonmodern identity.” (The Image of Man: 18) In this case, Sarmentine nationalism (through the metaphor of the “paquete”) serves as one more strategy of social control, dispossessing the individual female of agency and a sense of time and place. (McClintock *et.al* 1997)<sup>190</sup> Felski explains that the association of the female with tradition was typical in all of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was particularly true of the Romantic movement (of which many of the Generation of ’37 were part):

This Romantic view of woman was to retain a significant purchase throughout the nineteenth century, reiterated not just in literature but in a wide array of scientific, anthropological, and historical texts which sought to demonstrate women’s affinity with a premodern condition. In this context, repeated analogies between the development of civilization and that of the individual (the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic) played a central part in shaping patterns of gender representation in nineteenth-century culture. Woman was identified with a primitive or preindustrial era in the same way as she was linked through her maternal function to the unselfconscious being-in-the-world of the not yet socialized infant. The equation of woman with nature and tradition, already a commonplace of early modern thought, received a new impetus from the popularity of Darwinian models of evolutionary development, resulting in an explicit contrast between a striving restless masculinity and an organic, nondifferentiated femininity. (The Gender of Modernity: 40)

The texts so far considered in this chapter are clearly marked by contradiction then: the figure of the female is caught between a preindustrial or “primitive” identity as either the

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<sup>189</sup> Mosse importantly adds that the female-as-nation represents an emerging nation’s traditions and its history but most importantly the symbolic female figure serves to downplay any role that the individual female has in the public sphere. (Mosse, The Image of Man: 8-9)

<sup>190</sup> In addition, as Gatens argues—considering the work of Lacan, Schilder and the phenomenological considerations of “embodiment” of Merleau-Ponty—a body that is outside of space is a body without meaning. (“Power, Bodies and Difference”: 229)

mistress of the house (Amalia) or mother (of the nation), while at the same time she serves as an important bridge between the modern world of consumption and the domestic sphere.

Sarmiento's nationalist project was also in large part pedagogical—especially with respect to the female and the large education campaigns that Sarmiento promoted for women.<sup>191</sup> This project had the explicit purpose of educating future citizens and reproducing ideologies within the home. The female—and what she could contribute to the peace and well-being of the family unit (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism)—was the fundamental key in this process of inculcating values that would be disseminated from the domestic sphere to collective society.<sup>192</sup> Sarmiento explained this clearly in his *Prospecto de un establecimiento de educación para señoritas* when outlining *why* women should be educated:

[...] to predispose them to be tender and tolerant wives, enlightened and moral mothers, diligent and thrifty heads of households. [...] Nothing is more evident than the way in which a man's character, his habits, likes and inclinations, show signs in adult life of the impressions he has received in his first years, in that age wherein education is confided to the tenderness of mothers. (quoted in Garrels, "Sarmiento and the Woman Question": 272-273)<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> One of the most comprehensive considerations of Sarmiento's educational campaigns for women is Elizabeth Garrels's article "Sarmiento and the Woman Question: From 1839 to *Facundo*". In this article, Garrels addresses five of Sarmiento's most important speeches on women and education as well as his *Prospecto de un establecimiento de educación para señoritas* and his *Constitución del Colegio de Señoritas de la Advocación de Santa Rosa de América*. (272)

<sup>192</sup> Sarmiento even offered class-based solutions to women's education. Garrels explains: "For the women of the popular classes, whom he hoped to see transformed into laborers, he advocates a training that will enable them to produce 'artistic handiwork'. [...] For the upper-class woman, he considers 'reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, grammar, geography, French', and 'exercises in epistolary style and other branches of learning' to be sufficient. To these he adds the 'ornamental arts, which are so important for the gentle sex, and the pretty manual labors that serve to cover with flowers the voids left in her life by comfort and the lack of serious obligations.'" ("Sarmiento and the Woman Question": 285)

<sup>193</sup> Garrels also explains how Sarmiento's speeches to the boarders of all girl schools were aimed at producing the all-important "republican mother": "In short, there is a concerted effort to control thought, body and sexuality; however, prohibitions such as those against "All familiar forms of address" and "The use of nicknames," besides inculcating obedience, aim also at infusing the boarders with the abstract and homogenizing concept of republican citizenship.

Returning to “Fisolojia del paquete”, Sarmiento elaborates the responsibilities of the metaphorical mother and what she should do to assure the development and the ‘obedience’ of her child. Like all good mothers (and nation-states), her responsibilities rest in her vigilance and the ability to make sure that the steps her “child” takes are the appropriate ones:

Cuando esté [el paquete] de buen humor, hacerlo bailar vals sobre la mesa o sobre una silla; pero cuidado con hacer este ejercicio sin precaucion i sin mucho pulso, porque si los saltitos son violentos, corren riesgo las piernecillas de irse encorvando poco a poco, a punto de que el gato pueda colarse libremente entre ellas, i cuando grande hasta los perros. La mamá debe vijilar en persona estos ejercicios. (“Fisiolojia del Paquete”, Obras Completas II: 11)

It’s worth pointing out here that Sarmiento’s use of the “baby” as a metaphor for the nascent stages of government appeared in other writings outside of fashion.<sup>194</sup> Katra explains that the use of such a metaphor was not accidental: Sarmiento cleverly chose to associate ‘underdeveloped’ societies with childhood so as to justify an authoritarian approach to government:

The comparison between the behavior of South American societies and that of a baby is not an accident: Sarmiento was convinced that lack of civilization was a direct result of some deficiency in the educational level of a people. On account of their immaturity, the ‘demonic’ underdeveloped societies required a type of authoritarian government that would have been offensive more developed ones. (“Rereading *Viajes*”: 81)

Sarmiento continues his argument, now with reference to fashion: this baby/package/nation—carefully looked after and properly educated by an appropriate “republican mother”—must also choose which type of clothing to use and he must learn the

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Such a project reverberates throughout the speeches given at the school’s inauguration ceremony, and all concur that the ‘republican mother’ is the desired product of the new establishment.” (“Sarmiento and the Woman Question”: 274)

<sup>194</sup> For example, in *De la educación popular* he wrote on the infancy of governments: “The existence of armies is a great necessity for peoples habituated to coercion as the only stimulus of order; the infancy of governments also requires perhaps the ostentation of force.” (In Katra, “Rereading *Viajes*”: 81)

proper codes of conduct. This time it is through male attire that he projects his ideas on the necessary steps needed to arrive at “civilization” through fashion:

Por los botones que vió una vez se fija en el frac en que estaban enclavados, y de ahí pasa al escrutinio de todos los fracs y botones que se presentan a su vista, llegando al fin a fuerza de observación y de agudeza a distinguir y clasificar todas las maneras y linajes de fracs posibles e imposibles, hasta sacar en limpio los que son del tono, de la moda, de la *dernière*. Eso lo conduce a una nueva serie de raciocinios y comparaciones que ilustran y ensanchan su espíritu. Del frac pasa a la levita, al pantalón, a la corbata, al sombrero, al guante, al lindo guante blanco que había mirado con indiferencia hasta entonces. (“Fisiología del Paquete”, Obras completas II: 14)

Sarmiento’s logic is simple: knowing how to dress and use fashions representative of *good taste* requires a long process of learning the proper vestimentary codes. It begins with the “frac” (the ultimate signifier, in Sarmiento’s mind, of civilization) which inevitably leads to the final product: a “paquete”/ nation that is well dress and prepared for public presentation. Sarmiento goes so far as to describe tie selection as a science:

Despues, la corbata, la ciencia de la corbata, el color, el tamaño, la forma, el nudo, las vueltas. [...] Mas rabias i trabajos ha causado la corbata, mas desastres i derrotas ha traido una mala corbata, o una corbata mal colocada, que una tarasca por cara [...] no saber a los veinte años i despues de haber concluido sus estudios i recibido su grado de bachiller, no saber amarrase la corbata, esto es de una estupidez sin ejemplo. (“Fisiología del Paquete”, Obras completas II: 15)

This linear description of development here fits in line with the major Romantic doctrines adopted by the Generation of ’37: the idea that historical processes are founded in the constant improvement of the human being. (Katra, La Generación de 1837: 87) Through the elaboration of a vestimentary code, as described here in “Fisiología del Paquete”, Sarmiento perceives “progress” as a linear process, beginning with the establishment of a solid base, in this case, an acceptable appearance. Once this metaphorical “packet” is grown, properly educated and well dressed, Sarmiento concludes his article:

Desde entónces las puertas del cielo del buen tono le están abiertas par en par. Las bellas le sonrien, las matronas lo sientan a su lado, se lo disputan las tertulias, I para los paseos

sirce él de núcleo I de piedra angular. La pacotilla francesa viene surcando los mares para que él se adorne de piés a cabeza, i mil flores contribuyen con sus aromas para formarle una atmósfera embalsamada. (“Fisiolojia del Paquete”, Obras completas II: 18)

Sarmiento, as these articles on fashion attest, was keen on establishing a personal contact with his imagined female audience. It is clear that he wrote articles directed towards women not only to win their economic support (through the purchase of periodicals) but also to promulgate his ideas on nation-ness and to maintain his authority as a writer over his ever increasing audience.<sup>195</sup> Through the acquisition of a female voice and by strategically adopting fashion as a topic for several of his articles, Sarmiento was able to cross the boundaries between public and private and he was able to appeal to diverse audiences:

Sarmiento here relies on the feminine to traverse the boundaries of private and public, to initiate a passage into zones of prohibition, and, finally to build a language from a melding of popular and elite traditions. [...] In this way, the feminine voice obliquely provides him a stylistic tool to assist in the building of the state. (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 26)<sup>196</sup>

The last series of articles I will examine offers one of the best examples of this ability to move between metaphorical as well as real geographical distances through the figure of the female. In the pages of *El Progreso* Sarmiento developed a dialogue through a series of letters between “two friends” (*dos amigas*). These two friends, Emilia, a provincial prototype and Rosa, an urban woman—supposedly from Santiago de Chile—are, in all likelihood, Sarmiento

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<sup>195</sup> Prieto also attributes this to Sarmiento’s need to hear his own voice: “Whatever the circumstances surrounding the mapping of the readership, it is clear that these calculations revealed the modus operandi of Sarmiento the writer. They showed his need to insert himself in the context of a tangible and verifiable readership, as well as his need to identify a group on which to test his writings and hear the echo of his own voice.” (“Sarmiento: Casting the Reader”: 261)

<sup>196</sup> Masiello’s comments here are specific to an article Sarmiento published previously in *El Zonda*. However, his strategies toward his female audience remain consistent.

himself.<sup>197</sup> One of the first points of interest in the dialogue that develops between these two women is the geographic relationship that Sarmiento establishes for them: one of the women, being from the provinces, is marked by her inherent “backwardness” (*atraso*) and the other, a city woman, is marked by her “civilization”. In various instances Rosa explains to her country friend “[...] las provincias [...] siempre van diez años atrás! [...] ¡Pobres provincianos! qué atrasados están! ” (“Cuarta Carta de Rosa”, *Obras completas II*: 40). In this way, Sarmiento speaks simultaneously from Santiago de Chile (the city represented by Rosa) and from the provinces using the voices of two distinct women. Also, in this way, Sarmiento acts as a bridge not only between geographical distances but gender distances as well (since Sarmiento, of course, is a male speaking through a fictitious female character). Once again, to assure his identification with the female public, Sarmiento hides behind his female characters and he uses adjectives like “nuestra” and “nos” (the third person plural) to discuss “women’s issues” and the sad state of women’s social position:

¡Cuán violenta es nuestra posición social! [...] Víctimas de nuestra educación, de los hombres, de la sociedad i del qué dirán, vivimos forzadas a combatir o a encubrir nuestros sentimientos, i aun así mismo, todavía se nos echa en cara el rol ficticioso que se nos obliga a desempeñar... (“Emilia a Rosa”, *Obras completas II*: 31)

Once established his bond with his female audience, Sarmiento does not wait long to ask his reading public for help through the voice of Emilia. As Emilia explains, Rosa’s letters have

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<sup>197</sup> These letters are attributed to Sarmiento and they are contained in his *Complete Works*. Yet, there are literary critics, such as Adolfo Prieto, who question their authorship and who emphasize the need to investigate who wrote these letters. Prieto explains: “In the collection of *El Progreso* at the National Library of Santiago de Chile, there is no trace of the actual existence of a “Fashion Page”. In any case, its mere mention, together with the material included in the brief series of “Letters to Rosa” (its attribution to Sarmiento should be carefully examined), is evidence of an effort to recruit female readers, a group whose potential readership probably exceeded that of men.” (“Sarmiento: Casting the Reader”: 270)

been read by the public and they have sparked interest. She insists that Rosa keep writing since it's possible she might be able to add another *suscriptorcillo* to the periodical:

Andando la conversacion se habló del *Progreso*, de este *Progreso* que tanto cacarea por suscripciones, i como el folletin es su parte mas entretenida, naturalmente vinimos a parar aquí. [...] Continúa tus publicaciones, ellas son mui bien recibidas, acojidas con gusto, pero contráete a asuntos puramente nuestros, de nuestro dominio, i encontrarás tu apoyo en tu propio sexo. [...] i quién sabe si no le granjearán tambien algun suscriptorcillo mas. (“Emilia a Rosa”, Obras completas II:33)

Sarmiento's/Emilia's warning is clear: Rosa should keep writing (especially since her letters have sparked interest), but she should only stick to “their” (women's) topics. In these letters, much like the previous articles published especially for women (for example, “Al oído de nuestras lectoras”), fashion also occupies an important space. As Sarmiento explains, fashion serves to justify the purchase of his publication since it is, after all, the most “entertaining” part. (“Emilia a Rosa”, Obras completas II: 32)<sup>198</sup> The conversations on fashion between Rosa and Emilia also serve to attack Argentine barbarism from exile. In Rosa's third letter, she describes to her provincial friend her impressions on the fashions that she saw during a public stroll: “Lo que habia mas hermoso en el paseo era la variedad de vestidos, de cortes, de adornos i de peinados.” (“Tercera carta de Rosa”, Obras completas II: 35) These seemingly trivial commentaries open space to criticism of the Argentines living in Santiago who didn't know how to appreciate the good vestimentary taste of Chilean women. Here Sarmiento elaborates another distance with his own nationality: he uses fashion to speak from another space where his

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<sup>198</sup> Jaksić contends that these series of articles might have also been meant to spark the interest of male readership: “The folletines, in particular, were for Sarmiento legitimate vehicles for capturing the interest of the public, or at least for creating the habit of reading papers. In 1842, he started a folletín consisting of an exchange of letters between two women, complete with references to fashion, spectacles, and gossip that would presumably capture the interest of the predominantly male readership. In one letter, a woman encouraged the other to continue writing so that *El Progreso* might get ‘algún suscriptorcillo más’. (“Sarmiento and the Chilean Press”: 44)



affiliation with *lo argentino* (that which is Argentine) and his own Argentine background disappears:

Unos extranjeros, me parece que eran arjentinos, que venian hablando detrás de nosotras, venian ponderando a las que estaban bien puestas, riéndose de otras i criticándolo todo, como es la costumbre de estos barbones. (“Tercera carta de Rosa”, Obras completas II: 36)

This description echoes what Sarmiento wrote a year earlier from the pages of *El Mercurio*. On this occasion, he denounced the dress habits of the *arjentino* whose thirst for blood was directly reflected in his dress:

El arjentino que sigue a grandes pasos, gracias a su gobierno, la cultura de sus vecinos los pehuenches, usa cueros, caronas de vaca, bolas. En sus espuelas nazarenas, como si dijéramos crucificadotas, con enormes ralas i agudas puas, se descubre de leguas, su gusto favorito de derramar sangre; en sus miniaturas de estribos que no le aprisionan sino un dedo, su amor a la *libertad*; en todo su sencillo aparato, su sencillez republicana i sus hábitos *democráticos*, su odio a la dominacion *francesa*, su nacionalidad *pampera*, su gobierno *federal*; en fin, su admiracion por el ilustre Restaurador de las LL., que es el mejor *jinete* del mundo, en lo que debe hacérsele justicia. (“Avíos y monturas” Obras completas tomo I: 9)

Fashion in the cases presented here offers a space for Sarmiento, himself exiled, to praise the reception that the Chilean government had given him (Sarmiento openly supported the candidacy of Bulnes and the political ambitions of Montt).<sup>199</sup> By openly criticizing his compatriots, who in Sarmiento’s view didn’t recognize the value of political exile, he undermined Juan Manuel de Rosas’ labeling of the Unitarist exiles as troublemakers.<sup>200</sup> Rosa/Sarmiento continues her criticism of the “arjentinos”:

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<sup>199</sup> For a detailed explanation of Chilean politics in the 1840s see Iván Jaksic “Sarmiento and the Chilean Press, 1841-1851”, pages 32-34.

<sup>200</sup> Iván Jaksic explains that it is for precisely this reason that Sarmiento decided to support the Prieto and then later Bulnes administrations: “Sarmiento’s main reasons for joining the incumbent government forces are clearly states in his *Recuerdos de provincia* (1850) and can be summarized as 1) the lack of a credible liberal political alternative and 2) his wish to show that exiled Argentines were not permanent troublemakers, as the regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas would have it.” (“Sarmiento and the Chilean Press, 1841-1851”: 42).

Aquí dimos vuelta nosotras i nos separamos de estos dominguejos; te aseguro que venia quemada de oirlos. ¡Decirnos huasas a nosotras! Así pagan la hospitalidad que les dispensamos. (“Tercera carta de Rosa”, Obras completas II: 36)

Sarmiento provides additional comments on fashion in the fourth article written by Rosa whereby fashion acts as a metaphor for the lack of institutional “domesticity” (in which case “domesticity” could be interpreted as a metaphor for the Chilean or Argentine national space). In this article, Sarmiento refers to a lack of uniformity or institutionalization in the fashion styles used within the home. As he explains, in the domestic sphere there is a complete tolerance for the fusion of dress and subsequently, there is a complete tolerance for the fusion of parties (Sarmiento’s word choice of *partidos* is important since it clearly points to political parties):

Todavía no hemos adoptado modas especiales para dentro de casa, por lo que hai completa tolerancia de vestidos, fusion de todos los partidos, aunque, como en nuestra sociedad en jeneral, dominan las formas retrógradas. (Cuarta carta de Rosa 2 de enero de 1843, Obras completas: 41).

As the author explains, in “their society” retrograde forms of dress are usually the ones that predominate. Sarmiento seems to suggest that fashion and dress habits, both understood as important elements in the identity/cultural development of “Rosa” (as well as the symbolic national body), haven’t been sufficiently established, defined, or made homogeneous. For Sarmiento, there exists in Chilean society (and we could add by extension Latin American society) a tolerance in dress—understood here as a metaphor for the mixture of institutional traditions— which impedes the road to progress. For this author, the ultimate expression of progress must begin in the secure parameters of the domestic space. The “backwardness” of Latin America, this article would seem to suggest, emanates from the domestic sphere where retrograde forms (las formas retrógradas) dominate and where the special fashions of Europe that distinguish an idealized public sphere from the domestic one have still not been adopted. Sarmiento/Rosa sarcastically suggests that the old fashions (understood as metaphors for the

political and cultural institutions of Latin America at that particular time) should be hidden within the confines of the domestic where at least they are not visible. His comments serve simultaneously as a criticism of the reasons why civilization has taken so long to reach the Latin American peripheries. That which is old and ages, even though possible to cover, is always lurking at the bottom (this is reminiscent of Alberdi's metaphorical use of the old chairs lurking in the dark corners of *porteño* homes):

Los vestidos mas *peluconcitos*, mas pasaditos, de todos los tiempos pretéritos, de todas las *administraciones*, hacen causa comun dentro de casa. Lo flamante, lo del gusto del dia, lo nuevo es para ostentarlo en la calle, ni mas ni ménos como en la prensa, en las cámaras, i en los mensajes del ejecutivo; lo descosido, lo averiado, lo añejo está en el fondo de la sociedad, en las costumbres, en la administracion, en las elecciones, i en las ideas del mayor número. Guarda tus mejores prendas de equipaje para los dias de parada, que lo viejo guarda lo nuevo, es decir lo tapa; así es en todo. (Cuarta carta de Rosa 2 enero de 1843, Obras completas: 41).

Sarmiento's use of the term *peluconcitos* in this fragment is important: in this fashion narrative he very clearly and openly criticizes the conservative Chilean *pelucones*.<sup>201</sup> His comments here are also important because they bring us full circle. Because the *unsewn* (*lo descosido*), the *damaged* (*lo averiado*), the *old* (*lo añejo*) are always lurking in the dark recesses of Latin American history, they need to be covered and replaced with the new. This should begin, for Sarmiento (as well as Alberdi and Mármol), in the home since it is here that these old forms find the most resistance.

Sarmiento/Rosa closes this "confidential" female session between the provincial and the city woman with one final call for subscriptions and with a final reference to provincial backwardness. As he suggests, perhaps if provincial women buy issues of the *Progreso* the fashion commentaries contained within would help to civilize them:

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<sup>201</sup> Jaksic explains that the *pelucones* were formed from a split in the conservative camp in the 1840s. The *pelucones* were the most traditional and oligarchic of the two conservative camps. See "Sarmiento and the Chilean Press": 33.

Suscríbete, pues, hija, i haz que todas tus amigas de provincia se suscriban, porque todos los meses habrá figurin de modas, i se civilizarán ustedes un poco mediante este recurso. (Cuarta carta de Rosa 2 enero de 1843 Obras completas: 42)

The *Progreso*, in fact, didn't fail and for many years it was a successful element in Sarmiento's growing political power. The articles aimed at women, with references to fashion became less and less noticeable as the publication became more powerful and as it acquired more readers. To this day, no illustrations on fashion have been found in the entire collection of the *Progreso*—even though Sarmiento promised such illustrations to his supposed female reading public. (Prieto, "Sarmiento: Casting the Reader, 1839-1845": 270) Nonetheless, the references that Sarmiento made in the several articles examined here offer an important space for reflection on the importance that Sarmiento gave to the educated female of the period, as a mother and consumer and as an important symbolic figure in the national imagination. The use of fashion and the female body in Sarmiento's writings here served various purposes, propagandistic and ideological. Fashion and its discourse then can be useful tools in the consideration of larger debates on national identity. A consideration focused on the complexity of the factors in play in the period, one that takes on references and descriptions of fashion as a socio-cultural phenomenon much more complex than mere frivolous descriptions destined for the *fair sex* (*bello sexo*) allow us to consider the works of these 19<sup>th</sup> century authors in a more totalizing and comprehensive fashion.

### ***3.3. The Foundational Parameters of Argentine Nationalism: Fashion, Civilization and Barbarism***

Part of understanding how fashion is useful in understanding the larger context of nation formation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century relies on situating it within the sweeping binaries that most literary critics and historians of 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America agree upon as foundational parameters. Two of these most important binaries, civilization vs. barbarism and Europe vs. the Americas, have

served to schematically chart the development of national literary traditions. Since one of these most important binaries, *civilization vs. barbarism* was most poignantly established by Sarmiento in Facundo, it's fitting that I should start this concluding section in his own words. As he explained in his article "Avíos y monturas", (just before publishing Facundo) it is indeed only through the use of European fashions and the markers of 'civilization' (the newspaper, watches, constitutional governments) that the true measure of a nation's development is visible:

Los pueblos [...] descubren su jenio, su espíritu, sus necesidades i su civilización, en la manera i forma de sus equipajes i vestidos. La civilización ha tomado su forma exterior las misma en todas partes. El hombre culto usa fraque, periódicos, reloj, levita, gobiernos constitucionales *donde puede*, literatura nacional, silla, ciencias, etc., etc. (Obras completas I: 7)

Here, Sarmiento combines several dissimilar items into a unified whole: the European frock and dress coats, like European riding saddles, periodicals, constitutional governments, national literatures and science, all point in the same direction and they all lead to the same end. This, of course, is the idea that the ultimate representation of civilization is found in Europe and in the markers of its ever-developing urban, bourgeois culture. This eurocentrism, as Katra explains, was characteristic of the period since it was the result of the immense commercial and military influence of European powers (especially England and France in the case of Argentina):

It was product of a century when the commercial and military influence of the European countries had spread to every continent. [...] Inherent in this Eurocentric perspective was the notion that non-European beings and societies were inferior. [...] It is not surprising, then, that Sarmiento, as a faithful disciple of the most advanced tendencies of European thought, internalized a similar perspective of discriminations that accepted European or Anglo-Saxon culture as the privileged norm. ("Rereading *Viajes*: 78)

As this chapter has argued, in the hands of the Generation of '37, fashion provided a model for the interpretation of the balance of power between the "civilized" European and Latin America's perceived "backward" other. It's important, however, to note that the use of

appearance and dress as markers of differentiation between Europe and the Americas does not begin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but rather it can be traced to the discovery of the Americas. For example, in the first written documents of the conquest, Columbus expressed his constant preoccupation with the Native Americans he encountered since they were unclothed. In *Diario del primer viaje* (1492) he made several references to the natives' nudity:

Luego vieron gente desnuda [...] Ellos andan todos desnudos como su madre los parió, y también las mujeres, aunque no vi más de una harto moza, y todos los que vi eran todos mancebos, que ninguno vi de edad de más de XXX años, muy bien hechos, de muy hermosos cuerpos y muy buenas caras [...] (Historia real y fantástica del nuevo mundo)<sup>202</sup>

As Jitrik explains, the natives' *lack* of clothing not only marked their radical otherness from the dressed European travelers, but it also made Columbus's classification of the "natives" difficult. (Jitrik, "El asombro": 458) There are literally hundreds of other representations of contact between 'civilized' Europe and 'savage' America whereby this relationship is expressed through dress.<sup>203</sup> Another striking example is Jan van der Straet's *America*. However, *America*, unlike Columbus's commentaries on nudity, points to additional 'problems' in the representation of the Americas compared to the clothed and 'civilized' Europe. In this representation, a naked indigenous woman—in a subservient and sexual position—receives a dressed and ornamented Vespucci. McClintock points to the binaries that the image immediately produces for the viewer: "[...] male-female; clothed-unclothed; active-passive; vertical-horizontal [...]".

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<sup>202</sup> Columbus makes similar references to the natives' nudity in his writings from October 16, 17 and 22 (Historia real, pages 10,12 and 16 respectively) and in "La primera vision de la tierra firme" (Historia real, 16-22). That is to say, the natives' lack of clothing clearly called his attention.

<sup>203</sup> The following texts provide ample evidence of this: Arias and Meléndez (eds.), Mapping Colonial Spanish America; Leonard and Bryant (eds.) Colonial travelers in Latin America; Farmer and Katzew (eds.) New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America; Farago, Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America; Cevallos-Candau (ed), Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America; Sabastián, El barroco iberoamericano: mensaje iconográfico.

(Dangerous Liaisons: 26) We could also add that the Americas, in this case, are portrayed as female which serves to place the region in an imaginary that makes conquest and repression easily justified. America is unclothed thus she lacks the markers of civilization and she is passive and horizontal, therefore in a position to be easily dominated, raped and violated.

This relationship of power expressed through dress did not exist in metaphor or pictorial representation alone. During the colonial period in the Andean region, the use of foreign fashions by those of indigenous descent or from lower castes was strictly prohibited so as to maintain the social hierarchy imposed by the colonial order.<sup>204</sup> Rock describes such a system with respect to what is now the Andean region of Argentina:

In the eighteenth century repeated efforts were made to assign each racial subgroup to a specific occupation and to a fixed rank. To protect the hierarchy, intermarriage among the castes was frequently forbidden. The castes were assigned distinctive modes of dress and, among other restraints, were prohibited from bearing arms and consuming alcohol. (Argentina: 59)

Dress clearly ranked high on the scale of priorities for controlling social order and for maintaining racial/ethnic and continental (i.e. Europe vs. the Americas) hierarchies. This established relationship did not change with the passage of time, for a similar representation is found in a nineteenth century lithograph that served as the initial cover for Andres Bello's *La Biblioteca América*. Cussen describes the image using the same paradigms mentioned previously by McClinock in her description of *America*:

[...] a woman in classical attire [...] is visiting an Indian woman with naked breasts and feathers on her head. Europe, dressed in classical attire, visits America and brings the utensils and objects that mark Western civilization. America's

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<sup>204</sup> More examples of this relationship and a comprehensive overview of race, class and social strata can be found in Villablanca Zurita's Clases y estratos sociales en la hispano américa colonial.

children, in turn, eagerly absorb this culture, as symbolized by their leafing through a printed volume or holding a classical bust. (Bello and Bolívar: 97)<sup>205</sup>

As this chapter has made abundantly clear in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, much like these examples mentioned here, the strategic appropriation of foreign fashions by Unitarist writers was used as a way of symbolically importing idealized European models, progress and “civilization” into nationalist rhetoric in an attempt to shape the new nation. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism: 36) Sarmiento’s lengthy descriptions of European fashions whereby everything produced in France represented “[...] progreso, descubrimientos, ciencia!”, Alberdi’s comments in *La Moda* on the usefulness of European dress and customs in the imagining of the Argentine national space, and Mármol’s incorporation of European “paraphernalia” into the framework of one of Argentina’s most important national romances all attest to this. (Sarmiento, “Al oído de las lectoras”, Obras completas II: 77-79)<sup>206</sup> It’s important to point out that this ‘recentralization’ in political, economic and social focus also coincided with another significant moment in European—especially French—fashion manufacturing. This is so because European manufacturers became increasingly aware of the potential market for consumption outside of

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<sup>205</sup> Interestingly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century ends with a seminal literary work that denounces the dominance of foreign fashions in the Latin American cultural imaginary. The Cuban José Martí’s pivotal Nuestra América—a call to Latin American literary and cultural independence—reflects upon Latin America’s cultural history in terms of dress. In this foundational call-to-arms against the dominance of Europe and North America, Martí describes the need to cast off the clothing of the empires since it only results in a mask that covers Latin America. He explains: “Éramos una máscara, con los calzones de Inglaterra, el chaleco parisiense, el chaquetón de Norte América y la montera de España. [...] Las levitas son todavía de Francias, pero el pensamiento empieza a ser de América. Los jóvenes de América se ponen la camisa al codo, hunden las manos en la masa, y la levantan con la levadura de su sudor. Entienden que se imita demasiado, y que la salvación está en crear.” (Nuestra América: 14-15)

<sup>206</sup> As I will mention below, Echeverría’s El matadero follows a similar line of logic since the well-dressed *Europeanized* Unitarist represents the refinement and style desired by this generation in the face of the barbaric, Federalist *gauchos* lurking on the outskirts of the city.



major European cities and fashion plates/magazines increasingly made their way into the colonial and ex-colonial empires. Perrot explains:

In the nineteenth century the triumph of the bourgeoisie spread its clothing across classes and oceans as the middle class progressively imposed its economic, political, and moral order and, along with it, its system of dress with its commercial and ideological implications. (Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: 7)

Clearly, the periodical was an important tool in this dissemination. Thus, Europe—especially Paris—became not only a center of fashion production but also a center for the dissemination of “modern” models of dress and fashionable behavior destined for peripheral elites. (Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: 73) While several historians have highlighted the increasing abundance of European goods in Buenos Aires throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, travel writings also attest to the presence of foreign merchandise in the city’s markets. (González Bernaldo de Quirós, Civilidad y política; Myers, “Una revolución en las costumbres”; Rock, Argentina; Shumway, The Invention of Argentina) For example “un ingles”—the anonymous author is rumored to have been Thomas George Love, the same man who directed *The British Packet and Argentine News*—traveling through Argentina from 1820 to 1825 commented on the presence of French products:

Hay muchos franceses en Buenos Aires; se asegura que son tan numerosos como los ingleses, pero yo no lo creo. El comercio francés dentro de sus límites debe de ser próspero. Sus importaciones consisten en artículos de tocador: abanicos, medias de seda, perfumes, agua de Colonia, joyas y todas esas fruslerías a que son tan aficionados los franceses. Algunas tiendas tienen una buena provisión de sedas francesas, chales, y toda suerte de artículos de señora. (Cinco años en Buenos Aires: 119-120)<sup>207</sup>

Also, 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion history in Argentina witnessed a marked shift away from the use of Spanish fashion (popular during the Colonial period) and an increased use in French and

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<sup>207</sup> Klaus Gallo’s *estudio preliminar* offers one of the most comprehensive studies on this early travel narrative. See pages 11-14, Cinco años en Buenos Aires (1820-1825)

English models. (Saulquin, La moda en la Argentina; Rossini, La mujer mendocina)<sup>208</sup> Not surprisingly, at the same time, nineteenth century Argentina became a major supplier of primary dress materials (especially wool, cotton and leather) and a major consumer of European manufactured goods.<sup>209</sup> Thus, the unequal balance of trade between the centers of production and the peripheral suppliers of material goods—so often debated among theorists of Latin American economic development—can be linked to the budding fashion industry in Europe and to the budding interest in fashion consumption and the imitation/incorporation of foreign models into Argentina’s growing consumer markets.<sup>210</sup> This relationship points to one of the constant struggles of 19<sup>th</sup> century nation building that this chapter has reiterated: the need to find an “authentic” national identity while following “rational” European models of development resulting from the Enlightenment. (González Stephan, Fundaciones: 54) One of the most telling examples of this struggle is found in Alberdi’s Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina (1852) which would provide the framework for the national constitution drafted after the fall of Rosas. In this foundational text, Alberdi is very clear about

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<sup>208</sup> E.E. Vidal, for example, noticed the predominance of Spanish fashion in 1816. He wrote: “Las mujeres de Buenos Aires, Montevideo y Maldonado, no gustan de hilar ni lana, ni algodón, pero en otras ciudades las mujeres se dedican a ello. Los vestidos y las modas se parecen mucho a los de España, pero en Buenos Aires y Montevideo, que son los lugares más considerables y opulentos, el lujo es mayor y los establecimientos locales están en más grande escala.” (Buenos Aires y Montevideo: 54) However, by the 1820s, as the comments of *un inglés* explain, English and French fashions soon dominated the *porteño* elite modes of dress.

<sup>209</sup> The two most common domestic materials for clothing production were wool and cotton. The majority of the other materials (like silk) were introduced through the increase in official trans-Atlantic trade. For more information on the provincial 19<sup>th</sup> century economies see “El mundo rural en transición” by Jorge Gelman and “El comercio y las finanzas públicas en los Estados provinciales” by Roberto Schmit in Nueva historia argentina: revolución, república, confederación (1806—1852), Vol. 3 ed. Noemí Goldman. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998.

<sup>210</sup> One of the most comprehensive anthologies on ‘development theories’ for Latin America can be found in Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America, Peter F. Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert. (eds), 1986.

the role of Europe in shaping Argentine national identity. Moreover, Alberdi reproduces all of the major binaries that have been used to define the process of nation building in Argentina. As he explains, the South American republics, whether or not the struggling factions of Unitarists and Federalists like it, are the living proof and product of Europe's actions in America:

Las repúblicas de la América del Sur son el producto y el testimonio vivo de la acción de la Europa con América. Lo que llamamos América independiente no es más que la Europa establecida en América; y nuestra revolución no es otra cosa que la desmembración de un poder europeo en dos mitades que hoy se manejan por sí mismas. (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 208)

Problematic though it may be for autonomous national development, he continues to explain that everything civilized on Argentine soil is European. America itself, in Alberdi's words, is a European discovery. By extension, he highlights the importance of the city as the center of all civilization, since all of Argentina's cities have been founded by Europeans. In this way, in one sweeping move, he establishes the binaries Europe vs. America, civilization vs. barbarism, city vs. country:

Todo en la civilización de nuestro suelo es europeo. La América misma es un descubrimiento europeo. La sacó a luz un navegante genovés, y fomentó el descubrimiento una mujer de España. Cortés, Pizarro, Mendoza, Valdivia, que no nacieron en América, la poblaron de la gente que hoy la posee, que ciertamente no es indígena. [...] No tenemos una sola ciudad importante que no haya sido fundada por europeos. Santiago fue fundada por un extranjero, llamado Pedro Valdivia, y Buenos Aires, por otro extranjero, que se llamó don Pedro de Mendoza. Todas nuestras ciudades importantes recibieron nombres europeos, de sus fundadores extranjeros. (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 208)

As Alberdi mentions in this fragment, those Europeans who populated America are those who now possess it, and clearly they are not indigenous. Alberdi more clearly delineates the division between the indigenous and the "Americans", the "Americans" being Europeans born in Argentina of foreign flesh and blood:

Nosotros, los que nos llamamos americanos, no somos otra cosa que europeos nacidos en América. Cráneo, sangre, color, todo es de fuera. [...] No conozco persona distinguida

de nuestra sociedad que lleve apellido pehuenche o araucano. (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 209)

For Alberdi, anything that was not European, anything that belonged to that ominous “other” was barbaric. For him, there was only one clear division in Argentina: it was that which divided the savage from the European “we”, the real “Argentines”:

En América todo lo que no es europeo es bárbaro: no hay más division que ésta: 1—el indígena, es decir el salvaje; 2—el europeo, es decir nosotros, los que hemos nacido en América y hablamos español, los que creemos en Jesucristo y no en Pillan (Dios de los indígenas). (209)

In this case, much like Sarmiento’s use of a “nosotros” to simultaneously identify himself with a strategic market of consumers and readers while leaving out those who don’t belong to said market, Alberdi’s “nosotros” here too is exclusionary: this document that would become the framework for the nation’s constitution is meant to leave Argentina’s ‘others’ out of the nation’s future. If, as Alberdi explains here, the indigenous populations—and we could add by extension, any other inhabitant of the region not of “pure” European descent—didn’t form part of Argentina’s national history and Argentina’s selective memory, they certainly shouldn’t form part of its future.

What’s most striking about this document is Alberdi’s incorporation of dress into his rhetorical strategies. Thus, dress even found its way into one of the most important foundational political documents of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine history:

Reparad en el traje que lleváis, de pie a cabeza, y será raro que la suela de vuestro calzado sea Americana. ¿Que llamamos buen tono sino lo que es europeo? ¿Quién lleva la soberanía de nuestras modas, usos elegantes y cómodos? Cuando decimos *confortable*, conveniente, bien *come il faut*, ¿aludimos a cosas de araucanos? (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 209)

The metaphor here is clearly repetitive of the previous statements we’ve seen: only the European clothing of the civilized man is appropriate in the construction of the national

imaginary. Alberdi highlights these points in *Bases* not necessarily to uncritically praise the domination of the colonial and post-colonial empires, but rather to map out the nature of the region's past. His only solution to this problematic past is to continue it and he explains that Argentina's new constitution should be one that *absorbs* and appropriates outside influences:

[...] por su índole y espíritu, la Nueva constitución argentina debe ser una constitución absorbente, atractiva, dotada de tal fuerza de asimilación, que haga suyo cuanto elemento extraño se acerque al país (In Halperín Donghi, Proyecto y construcción: 223)

As we've seen so far in Alberdi's comments in Bases (and as we've seen in most of the other texts considered in this chapter), fashion and fashion narratives also served to mark the physical and symbolic boundaries between the city of Buenos Aires and the provinces.<sup>211</sup> This should be of no surprise since Buenos Aires' marked shift towards industrialization and urbanization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (together with the political struggles of the period) would situate it at the center of the Unitarist/Federalist divide. (Szuchman, Order, Family and Community; Rock, Argentina; Scobie, From Plaza de Suburb)<sup>212</sup> One of the most obvious results of this ever increasing industrialization and urbanization was that this strategically located port city became progressively important as the center of the region's economic activity. Moreover, it became the

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<sup>211</sup> It goes without saying that Buenos Aires was not the only city in the Southern Cone region that Unitarist intellectuals praised for its civilization. Sarmiento's letters (mentioned above) between Emilia and Rosa attest to this fact since he clearly praised Santiago as an important Chilean center of progress compared to the backward Chilean countryside. Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro would also become important urban centers for other exiled Unitarists. This section will focus primarily on the *porteño* metropolis since clearly in the Argentine case, it is the most important city and the most important socio-cultural center that established the pace and tone of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine nationalism. (One of the initial rifts between Unitarists and Federalists was over the role that this port city would have in the region's economy.)

<sup>212</sup> Bernaldo de Quirós traces the rift between the city of Buenos Aires and the region's provinces to the establishment of the 1821 *Cámara de Representantes* right after independence: "En 1821, el gobierno de la muy joven provincial de Buenos Aires establece una Cámara de Representantes que introduce la representación del campo en el poder provincial, con lo que abre una brecha entre ciudad y campo y alimenta así un nuevo discurso sobre la función urbana; destinado éste, al mismo tiempo, a afirmar la preeminencia de la primera sobre su interior y reconquistar su condición de capital." (Civilidad y política: 45)

region's major point of contact between the interior provinces and European traders. Because of this shift Buenos Aires often set the standard of fashionable dress for the entire region.<sup>213</sup> In this way, a sense of nationhood proposed by Unitarists through dress was imagined from within the city and disseminated outward toward the perceived “backward” and ill-dressed provinces.<sup>214</sup>

Additionally, fashion, in and of itself, is an urban phenomenon (Lipovetsky, The Empire of Fashion; Wilson, Adorned in Dreams) and the large majority of fashion periodicals that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century circulated first in the city of Buenos Aires and later made their way into the provinces. (Saulquin, La Moda en la Argentina) Thus, the image of modernity proposed by *porteño* publications gained increasing importance with respect to the provinces. Not only did images—and in the case of this study the images of fashionable dress—serve as a vehicle for “all types of power”, but they also served to simultaneously situate Buenos Aires (as a city) and its relationship to Europe (because it was a port) within this power structure. (Gruzinski, Images at War: 3) The image of a civilized urban culture made its way into the provincial regions and this was an important part in the process of *imagining* what civilization, in terms of dress at least, would look like in the provinces.<sup>215</sup> As González Stephan suggests, one of the ways to

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<sup>213</sup> An excellent example of the increasingly important role of Buenos Aires in establishing a national image can be found in the changes that occurred in the Mendoza province. Rosinni (Las mujeres mendocinas) highlights the important influence that Peruvian-Spanish fashion had on the Province of Mendoza at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This hybrid mixture of Peruvian and Spanish fashion disappears after independence as Buenos Aires gained more influence over the region. Eventually French and English models would predominate in the provinces. (Cano Rosinni: 80-81)

<sup>214</sup> Assunção affirms the relationship between European fashion and its slow penetration of the provinces through the port of Buenos Aires: “Entre los factores generales, comunes a todas las naciones hispano-americanas, los de mayor transcendencia son: [...] los lentos medios de comunicación entre Europa y América, que harían llegar tardíamente, aún a las ciudades-puertos, los cambios de la moda. Con mucha mayor razón a los medios campesinos.” (1991: 87-88)

<sup>215</sup> Gruzinski's Images at War is fundamental in terms of the theorization of the image. Although this author is particularly concerned with Mexico, the following statement rings true in the case of Argentina: “Because the image—along with written language—constitutes one of the

outwardly manifest the desire to “modernize” Latin America was through the parading of the “paraphernalia” of modernity and through the superficial “covering up” of provincial backwardness. Clearly, as all of the references mentioned in this chapter attest, the Generation of ’37 did just this:

[...] se cubrió el atraso del campo y la miseria de las masas populares con la parafernalia de un progreso epidérmico concentrado en las ciudades; se desarrolló una política económica liberal hacia los mercados europeos y se mantuvieron gobiernos conservadores, que, bajo los lemas de orden, paz y progreso, permitieron el fortalecimiento y modernización de las elites tradicionales. (Fundaciones: 44)

Urban Unitarist intellectuals drew attention to the need to civilize rural Argentina and they repeatedly mentioned the role of fashion in creating an ideal citizen. Fashion, for this generation, clearly marked the distance between “el hombre de la ciudad” and “el hombre de la campaña”, between progress and backwardness, between civilization and barbarism. (Sarmiento, Facundo: 29-30) Sarmiento’s comments in Facundo and Echeverría’s depiction of the rural outskirts of Buenos Aires in El matadero offer two perfect examples.

In Facundo Sarmiento first begins by described the “bad” that plaques Argentine society: it is the *desert*, the large expanses of uninhabited pampas that constantly threaten to devour what civilization does exist in the city. He explains:

El mal que aqueja a la República Argentina es la extensión: el desierto la rodea por todas partes, y se le insinúa en las entrañas; la soledad, el despoblado sin una habitación humana, son, por lo general, los límites incuestionables entre unas y otras provincias. (27)

As he further explains, only Buenos Aires is in contact with European nations, with foreign commerce and only Buenos Aires contains a significant European population. It is only in the city, that luxury and European dress have an appropriate theater in which to act:

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major toos of European culture, the gigantic enterprise of Westernization that swooped down upon the American continent became in part a war of images that perpetuated itself for centuries and—according to all indications—may not even be over today.” (2)

Ella sola, en la vasta extensión argentina, está en contacto con las naciones europeas; ella sola explota las ventajas del comercio extranjero; ella sola tiene poder y rentas. [...] allí están los talleres de las artes, las tiendas del comercio, las escuelas y colegios, los juzgados, todo lo que caracteriza, en fin, a los pueblos cultos. La elegancia en los modales, las comodidades del lujo, los vestidos europeos, el frac y la levita tiene allí su teatro y su lugar conveniente. (29 and 32 respectively)

The provinces, the ultimate representatives of barbarism and backwardness, have fought back against this important center of civilization by sending Rosas to destroy its progress:

En vano le han pedido las provincias que les deje pasar un poco de civilización, de industria y de población europea: una política estúpida y colonial se hizo sorda a estos clamores. Pero las provincias se vengaron mandándole en Rosas, mucho y demasiado de la barbarie que a ellas les sobraba. (Facundo: 29)

The provinces and the city, he continues to explain, are two different worlds, two different civilizations co-existing together and they are distinguishable, in large part, by their dress. For Sarmiento, the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries exist in the same region: the modern is in the city and the medieval resides in the countryside:

El hombre de la ciudad viste el traje europeo, vive de la vida civilizada, tal como la conocemos en todas partes: allí están las leyes, las ideas de progreso, los medios de instrucción, alguna organización municipal, el gobierno regular, etc. Saliendo del recinto de la ciudad, todo cambia de aspecto: el hombre de campo lleva otro traje, que llamaré americano, por ser común a todos los pueblos; sus hábitos de vida son diversos; sus necesidades, peculiares y limitadas; parecen dos sociedades distintas, dos pueblos extraños uno de otro. [...] El siglo XIX y el siglo XII viven juntos: el uno, dentro de las ciudades; el otro, en la campaña. (Facundo: 33 and 48 respectively)

Echeverría's El matadero (also referenced in Chapter 1) establishes a similar relationship between the city and the countryside through dress.<sup>216</sup> This early Argentine *cuadro de costumbres* is especially important since its author chose the city's *suburb*—in this text, the metaphorical space whereby civilization from the city meets the barbarism of the countryside—

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<sup>216</sup> While El matadero was written between 1839 and 1840 in Uruguay, it wasn't published until 1871. It first appeared in the *Revista del Río de la Plata* in Buenos Aires.



as the most important site to bring forth his condemnation of Rosista Argentina.<sup>217</sup> The selection of this space served to juxtapose the ideal *elite* citizenry and the *gente del pueblo*. As Fleming explains, unlike the idealized city described by Sarmiento and Alberdi, Echeverría's bold representation was one of the first to position the *gaucho* and the *unitario* side by side in this peripheral urban area, and this clearly set him apart from his contemporaries:

El primer acierto de Echeverría es la elección de este ambiente marginal que, por muy próximo y desprestigiado, era ignorado por sus contemporáneos.[...] La elección de Echeverría de 'aquel lugar *sui generis* de nuestros suburbios'---como lo califica Gutiérrez en su prólogo---es, para el época, audaz. ("Introducción": 69-70)

The text begins with a vivid description of the corrals where the slaughtering of animals takes place (this sharply contrasts to the luxurious descriptions of the city that Sarmiento and Alberdi both so fervently sought to describe to their readers):

Estos corrales son en tiempo de invierno un verdadero lodazal en el cual los animales apeñuscados se hunden hasta el encuentro y quedan como pegados y casi sin movimiento. (El matadero: 99)

This space, then, compared to the glamorous *paseos* where elites displayed their finery, is emerged in mud and filth. For Echeverría, it is the space inhabited by the gauchos and the slaughterers who, in the time of Rosas, exercised full power over their victims. That Echeverría

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<sup>217</sup> Echeverría, much like Alberdi, was strongly influenced by the Spanish romantic *Larra*. Hence, the strong influence of the *cuadro de costumbres* in El matadero. (See Carilla, El romanticismo en América Latina: 425) Carilla also explains why the physical location of the matadero in Echeverría's text is important: "The actual "space" of the Matadero has many different symbolic meanings: first, it is an actual "matadero", historical fact, with its own name and location that is well known (las orillas); this fact supposes then a "cuadro de costumbres", a "crónica" with an immediate historic past---political journalism. Later, the matadero becomes emblematic of an urban social space and of the locus of violence in the "natural" geography of the city. This discourse responds to fiction, fable. Once the Unitarist arrives on the scene, the matadero immediate becomes a symbolic political arena of violence, in which now the discursive space becomes national allegory. So here we see the ways in which the symbolic spaces represented by the "locus" (el matadero) also intrinsically develop the multi-faceted nature of the text itself as not one genre or the other but as a hybridity." (El romanticismo en América Latina, 425)

should chose to represent his work in this place is also important since it was considered, by the local elites and foreigners alike, as the worst of all places. Emeric Essex Vidal, a British sailor docked in Buenos Aires in 1816, described the corrals as the most disgusting of places on earth for the refined tastes of the European. As he explains, it forced Europeans into Judaism which gave them an excuse to avoid eating pork:

No hay nada tan repugnante como el aspecto de los corrales donde se guardan estas bestias; en efecto, es tan asqueroso, que todos los extranjeros que viven cerca se convierten en judíos, por lo menos en lo que se refiere a su aversión a la carne de cerdo. (Buenos Aires y Montevideo: 80)<sup>218</sup>

Echeverría continues his description of the slaughterhouse by introducing the ultimate signifier of barbarism in Rosista Argentina, the butcher (*carnicero*):

La perspectiva del matadero a la distancia era grotesca, llena de animación. Cuarenta y nueve reses estaban tendidas sobre sus cueros y cerca de doscientas personas hollaban aquel suelo de lodo regado con la sangre de sus arterias. En torno de cada res resaltaba un grupo de figuras humanas de tez y raza distintas. La figura más prominente de cada grupo era el carnicero con el cuchillo en la mano, brazo y pecho desnudos, cabello largo y revuelto, camisa y chiripá y rostro embadurnado de sangre. (El matadero: 100)

In this fragment, Echeverría describes the typical dress of the Federalist butcher (symbolic clearly of Rosas' *Mazorca*) and he highlights the nakedness of his chest (clearly reminiscent of the nakedness of the 'savages' Columbus happened upon). He also highlights the physical markers that distinguish this savage from the civilized Unitarist—his dagger, his long, scruffy hair, his typical gaucho *camisa* and *chiripá*, together with his blood splattered face all serve to emphasize his beastly nature. Echeverría's mention of the ambiguous racial backgrounds of the

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<sup>218</sup> Charles Darwin made similar comments on the corrales where cattle were slaughtered: "When the bullock has been dragged to the spot where it is to be slaughtered, the *matador* with great caution cuts the hamstrings. Then is given the death bellow; a noise more expressive of fierce agony than any I know. I have often distinguished it from a long distance, and have always known that the struggle was then drawing to a close. The whole sight is horrible and revolting: the ground is almost made of bones; and the horses and riders are drenched with gore." (The Voyage of the Beagle: 109)

actors in this scene is also significant since, as mentioned above, the racial ‘inferiority’ of the gaucho served to exclude him from the Unitarist national project.

The author continues to describe the attire of other participants in this bloody symbolic battle between good and evil, civilization and barbarism. At the door of the slaughterhouse, near the corrals, stood a ghastly group of cattle rustlers:

Formaban en la puerta el más grotesco y sobresaliente grupo varios pialadotes y enlazadores de a pie con el brazo desnudo y armados del certero lazo, la cabeza cubierta con un pañuelo punzó y chaleco y chiripá colorado, teniendo a sus espaldas varios jinetes y espectadores de ojo escrutador y anhelante. (El matadero: 103)

Again, Echeverría highlights the color of their dress (the representative red of Rosas’ *Federation*) as well as the *origin* of their clothing: the *pañuelo*, *chaleco* and *chiripá* which were not only the uniforms of Rosas’ Mazorca and his soldiers, but also the typical attire of the rural gaucho.

Echeverría sets this image against the ultimate representative of civilization when a Unitarist victim arrives on scene:

¡Allí viene un unitario! [...] ¿No le ven la patilla en forma de U? No trae divisa en el fraque ni luto en el sombrero. /—Perro unitario. /—Es una cajetilla./ —Monta en silla como los gringos. /La Mazorca con él./ ¡La tijera!/ [...] Trae pistoleras por pintar. / --Todos estos cajetillas unitarios son pintores como el diablo. (El matadero: 110)<sup>219</sup>

The description of the Unitarist here compares drastically to the previous descriptions. As opposed to the *chiripá*, the *chaleco* and the Federalist *pañuelo* this Unitarist boasts all of the markers of civilization: he uses an English saddle, and he has a holster for his gun as opposed to the typical dagger of the gaucho. Most importantly, we know this representative Unitarist is from the city because the Federalists refer to him as a “cajetilla”, which was a pejorative term for the urban dandy or fop. In addition, the Unitarist was heading from the center of the city towards

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<sup>219</sup> This fragment is also referenced in Chapter 1, page 74.

Barracas—a suburban neighborhood. In his symbolic move from the civilized urban center towards the barbaric countryside, the Unitarist meets his end. In the scene that follows, as he stumbles across the bloodbath at the slaughterhouse, he is symbolically thrown from his English saddle to the ground by Matasiete—the supreme representative of barbarism in El matadero:

Era éste un joven como de veinticinco años, de gallarda y bien apuesta persona, que mientras salían en borbotón de aquellas desaforadas bocas las anteriores exclamaciones, trotaba hacia Barracas, muy ajeno de temer peligro alguno. Notando, empero, las significativas miradas de aquel grupo de dogos de matadero, echa maquinalmente la diestra sobre las pistoleras de su silla inglesa, cuando una pechada al sesgo del caballo de Matasiete lo arroja de los lomos del suyo tendiéndolo a la distancia boca arriba y sin movimiento alguno. (El matadero: 109)

In another symbolic gesture, the Unitarist tries to stand and reach for his pistols when Matasiete grabs him by his tie, throws him back to the ground and puts his dagger at the civilized man's throat:

Atolondrado todavía, el joven fue, lanzando una mirada de fuego sobre aquellos hombres feroces, hacia su caballo que permanecía inmóvil no muy distante, a buscar en sus pistolas el desagravio y la venganza. Matasiete, dando un salto le salió al encuentro, y con fornido brazo asiéndolo de la corbata lo tendió en el suelo tirando al mismo tiempo la daga de la cintura y llevándola a su garganta. (El matadero: 109-110)

Ironically, it is the Unitarist's dress that leads to his demise: it is his tie that Matasiete uses to contain him. Interestingly, as the Unitarist is overtaken by Federalist hoards, his last dying wish is that they cut his throat instead of undressing him. The Unitarist prefers to be stripped of his life, rather than stripped of his civilized attire:

--Primero degollarme que desnudarme, infame canalla.—Atáronle un pañuelo por la boca y empezaron a tironear sus vestidos. Encogíase el joven, pateaba, hacía rechinar los dientes. [...] Gotas de sudor fluían por su rostro, grandes como perlas; echaban fuego sus pupilas, su boca espuma, y las venas de su cuello y frente negreaban en relieve sobre su blanco cutis como si estuvieran repletas de sangre. [...] --Primero degollarme que desnudarme, infame canalla. (El matadero: 113)

The Unitarist ultimately succumbs to the brutality of the Federalists just as he is being undressed:

Sus fuerzas se habían agotado; inmediatamente quedó atado en cruz y empezaron la obra de desnudarlo. Entonces un torrente de sangre brotó borbolloneando de la boca y las narices del joven, y extendiéndose empezó a caer a chorros por entrambos lados de la mesa. Los sayones quedaron inmóviles y los espectadores estupefactos. (1993: 114)

As El matadero would seem to suggest, the refinement and style of the Unitarists was no match for the savagery of the Federalists. Echeverría's text also seems to suggest that civilization could only thrive within the city limits since transgressing these boundaries led to its most certain demise.

In addition to these literary depictions, several notable travel writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century commented on the “backward” nature of provincial attire compared to urban fashion.<sup>220</sup> For example, many travel narratives of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century commented on the “savage” nature of the provincial women's dress. Félix de Azara wrote in 1790 that country women were like pigs since they didn't wear shoes and since they rarely varied their dress from the one-piece *tipós*. He also described provincial male attire as extremely simple and he highlighted their similar *lack* of shoes:

Sus mujeres son puerkas y van descalzas sin más vestido que el *tipós* ó camisa que dije de las indias en el capítulo 13 [...] Daban por vestido a los varones un gorro, una camisa, calzones y poncho, todo de lienzo de algodón grueso, claro y ordinario, les hacían cortar raso el cabello, sin permitirle calzado. Tampoco lo permitían a las mujeres, reduciéndose

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<sup>220</sup> There is certainly need for a more detailed analysis of travel writing and the ways in which “foreign eyes” perceived both urban and rural attire in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. However, this type of analysis goes beyond the scope of the current study. While the list is extensive, some of the most influential travel narratives on 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina that have informed this chapter are (in no particular order): Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle, Felix de Azara “Memoria sobre el estado rural del Río de la Plata en 1801”, McCann Viaje a caballo por las provincias argentinas, E.E. Vidal Buenos Aires y Montevideo, Ulrico Schmidl Viaje al Río de la Plata, Alcide d'Orbigny Viaje por América Meridional, Juan y Guillermo Parish Robertson, Andanzas por el Litoral Argentino, Alexander Gillespie Buenos Aires y el interior and Julián Mellet Viajes por el interior de América meridional. One of the best compilations of travel commentaries can be found in La Buenos Aires Ajena: Testimonios de extranjeros de 1536 hasta hoy. This comprehensive text includes fragments from some of the most well-known and influential of European travelers.

todo su vestido al tipós o camisa sin mangas del citado lienzo, ceñido á la cintura. (“Memoria sobre el estado rural...”, in Pilchas Criollas: 89)

Another travel writer, Alexander Gillespie—who formed part of the British invasion of the region in 1806—radically compared the simple, but elegant and industrious women of Buenos Aires (who pleasantly entertained them in their city houses) to the women of the provinces who spent most of their time picking lice from each other’s hair:

Las mujeres de Luján al parecer no tienen ninguna ocupación de industria, pero matan el tiempo en grupos delante de sus respectivas casas, soleándose, donde la única ocupación consiste en espulgarse mutuamente las sabandijas de la cabeza [...]. (Buenos Aires y el interior: 105)

Later, in 1820, Emeric Essex Vidal would write on his impression of provincial women. He too disapproved of their lack of shoes and he too commented that they were very dirty. Only occasionally did they wash their clothes:

Las mujeres van descalzas y son muy sucias. Sus vestiduras consisten comúnmente de una camisa sin mangas, sujeta por un cinturón a la cintura: muy a menudo no tiene más que la puesta. [...] En este caso, van de cuando en cuando hasta la orilla de algún arroyo, se la sacan, la lavan y la tienden al sol; cuando está seca se la ponen nuevamente y regresan a casa. (Buenos Aires y Montevideo: 127)

E.E. Vidal’s description of provincial female attire in this fragment differs drastically from those of elegant urban women who increasingly tended to use French and English fashions. And compared to the barefoot *campesinas*, urban women used delicate silk embroidered shoes. In the same text, he details the fine attire of city women:

Los vestidos comunes de las damas eran de seda liviana y algodón fino, con profusión de puntillas que más bien exhibían que ocultaban el contorno del seno. [...] Los pies los llevaban ocultos en unas zapatillas de seda bordada o brocado de oro, con hebillas de diamantes y tacos muy altos, que algunas veces eran de plata maciza. [...] En estos últimos años, sin embargo, las damas de Buenos Aires han adoptado un estilo de vestir que tiene algo de inglés y francés [...] (Buenos Aires y Montevideo: 95-96)

Alcides D’Orbigny, in 1826, described provincial women in a similar light, again highlighting their lack of shoes or their inability to combine shoes with proper stockings. On one

occasion he described a typical provincial dance scene in which the women were very simply dressed. Although some managed to wear shoes, they had forgotten to wear stockings. The men, on the other hand, wore no shoes and they were clad in the typical country *chiripá*:

Todas (las damas lugareñas) se ubicaron en los bancos y pude notar que si bien algunas se habían puesto zapatos para venir a bailar, otras se habían olvidadas las medias. [...] Los hombres estaban en chiripá y en calzoncillos y casi todos descalzos.... (Viaje a la América Meridional: 200).

In the same text, on a different occasion, he went so far as to compare provincial women to “Amazons”:

Las mujeres estaban vestidas como todas las amazonas, es decir, que llevaban un sombrero de hombre, adornado con hermosas plumas de avestruz, que les sentaba muy bien. (Viaje a la América Meridional: 80) <sup>221</sup>

Here, the idea that these “uncivilized” women acted as “Amazons” is important. First, in this description, these women seem to transgress gendered norms of appropriate dress because they wear men’s hats. And connecting these women to “Amazons” is significant because it reinforces the need to impose a stricter patriarchal order in the countryside—and by extension, the need to impose a stricter form of government to organize the *disorder* of the interior provinces. (The legend of the Amazon women thrives on their complete refusal to succumb to patriarchal norms. As legend has it, they only “used” men for reproduction and then no longer needed them.) In the case of fashion, Alcides D’Orbigny’s comment emphasizes the role of fashion in “feminizing” women who did not fit within the confines of the appropriate patriarchal order.

Other later writers, such as William MacCann, pointed to additional problems associated with provincial dress: in some instances it was difficult to differentiate wealthy ranchers from

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<sup>221</sup> Both of these references are taken from Assunção’s Pilchas criollas page 397 and 92 respectively.

their hired hands. In his travels through the provinces in 1848 (at the height of Rosas' power)

MacCann commented on this *occurrence*:

Como dato muy ilustrativo de lo que acabo de decir, mencionaré el caso de un rico propietario a quien visité. Este hombre vivía,--según una frase que oí de sus propios labios—*en estado natural*. Su indumento era el del gaucho; el cuarto en que dormía no había sido barrido desde seis meses atrás [...] vivió siempre en un estado próximo a la barbarie. (Viaje a caballo: 118)<sup>222</sup>

This *uniformity* in appearance—between the wealthy landowners and the rural poor—clearly would have distressed Unitarist intellectuals since it would have been the *wrong* type of uniformity. As Salvatore explains, MacCann's comments point to the *uniformity* of *national dress* that was enforced by Rosas and readily adapted by his followers. It also points to the period of economic transition that marked most of Argentina's 19<sup>th</sup> century. Salvatore explains:

MacCann's inability to identify ranchers by their personal appearance, diet, or belongings speaks of the undifferentiated character of consumption at the time of the Rosas government. In part, this was the result of the uniformity of appearance demanded by Federalist ideology but, more important, it reveals the hybridity of country styles in a period of market transition. (Wandering Paysanos: 33)

Considering the instability caused by the market transitions of the period, it certainly makes sense that urban intellectuals would have rhetorically imposed a new dress code over the provinces, especially if the dress of the provinces failed to live up to the *modern expectations* of the Unitarist elite. Compared to elite fashion in Buenos Aires in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, provincial dress was much more simplistic and functional.<sup>223</sup> However, comparing early 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> MacCann does mention, however, that other wealthy ranchers sought to better their lot by incorporating the habits of Europeans into their lifestyles. "Cerca de la casa de este hombre, tuve ocasion de visitor a otro que no era más rico, pero aspiraba a llevar una vida más cilizada; allí, vi, complacido, una mayor limpieza, una casa bien amueblada, y la comida se sirvió debidamente, con buenos vinos, frutas y otros lujos." (Viaje a caballo: 118)

<sup>223</sup> It even seems that provincial men were proud of the style and elegance that their *porteño* women represented, especially because of their *peinetones*. Darwin comments on an occasion while stopping at a large provincial *estancia* outside of Buenos Aires: "[...] he had one question to ask me [...] I trembled to think how deeply scientific it would be: it was, "Whether the ladies



century provincial dress to later periods, one can easily notice the influence of European fashion since shoes appear more often and since more elaborate articles of clothing replace the one-piece tipós for women. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, provincial dress was completely transformed since European markets were increasingly looking to expand and since a large number of immigrants were moving into the provinces from Buenos Aires. For the first time the crinoline and the corset made their way into the provinces. (Assunção, Pilchas criollas: 376-377)

Assunção elaborates on the influence of European fashions in the Argentine countryside towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century especially since modes of communication were improved by the telegraph and the railroad:

[... el telégrafo y el ferrocarril, y luego los vehículos automotores, van acortando distancias y dinamizando las comunicaciones, con lo cual el conocimiento de los cambios de las urban llega cada vez más aceleradamente al campo. [...] Se tiende a afinar la cintura, y hasta la campaña llegan los corsés y otros medios ortopédicos o supercherías de la moda creados en los centros más sofisticados del mundo occidental. (Pilchas criollas: 378)

Interestingly, urban journalists would twist fashion's "progress" in the provinces by the end of the century. While rural fashion was increasingly "catching up" to urban standards, idealized provincial dress for journalists would come to represent a *positive differentiation* between urban and rural populations. One journal, El correo del Domingo—to be considered in Chapter 4—affirmed in 1865 that because of such massive immigration into Argentina, fashionable *porteña* women should copy provincial dress since it was less affected by immigrant

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of Buenos Ayres were not the handsomest in the world.' I replied, like a renegade, 'Charmingly so.' He added, 'I have one other question: Do ladies in any other part of the world wear such large combs?' I solemnly assured him that they did not. They were absolutely delighted. The captain exclaimed, 'Look there! a man who has seen half the world says it is the case; we always thought so, but now we know it.' My excellent judgment in combs and beauty procured me a most hospitable reception [...].'" (The Voyage of the Beagle: 132)

“contamination”. An article on pendant use suggests that *porteño* women follow the lead of their provincial counterparts since they don’t change according to Parisian models:

La elegancia consiste ahora en imitar a las hijas del desierto, que a fe que no ciñen a los figurines de París, ellas (las indias pampas) siempre llevan pendientes grandes.” (Jan 8, 1865)

This late century example, while seemingly unrelated, brings us back to the guiding threat of these first two chapters: fashion and dress are easily manipulated for projects of state at important junctures in national history. In the case of these first two chapters, we’ve seen that both Federalists and Unitarists adopted fashion and/or dress as important topics in their discourses for their projects of state (whether they concerned nation building and/or the racial, ethnic, and gender divides contained within the national space). The next chapter will consider the writings of women on fashion after the fall of Rosas. As we will see, many of the women writers of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century used these sweeping binaries to negotiate what Masiello has aptly called a “third space”—somewhere between civilization and barbarism—whereby women now used fashion to enter very public debates on the nation and its construction.

#### 4. After Caseros: Women Write on Fashion, Nation and Politics

El destino de la humanidad es sério;  
no hemos venido al mundo a pasar la  
vida en el ocio, la Moda, en el baile  
en la disipacion.

*Álbum de Señoritas*

Mire V. amigo mio; desconfie  
siempre de las apariencias, y  
recuerde que *ser* es una cosa, y  
*parecer* es otra.

*La flor del aire*

—Juana Manso

In 1876 the only number of José Hernández's *El Bicho Colorado-periodico satírico, político, literario* made its way through porteño streets. While its satirical contents have sparked little or no critical attention, its cover page nevertheless warrants close scrutiny. On the top of the page, together with the title of the periodical, there is a miniature figure of a seated female with her skirt lifted to the knee. She appears to be trying to determine the cause of some sort of irritation. Below this miniature scene, there is a close-up of her leg, and we discover the cause of her suffering. Her leg is infested with *bichos colorados*<sup>224</sup>, and in this particular case the *bichos* are the heads of such national figures as Mitre, Alsina, Avellaneda, Aneiros, Sarmiento and two anonymous indigenous males. In this national allegory, the image of the female as metaphor of the nation is obvious, and as I've discussed in the previous two chapters, it is rather commonplace in 19<sup>th</sup> century journalism and nationalist rhetoric. What is particularly interesting

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<sup>224</sup>“Bichos colorados” (*red beetles*) are small insects that embed themselves under the skin and cause irritation. MacCann's travel memoirs of the late 1840's highlight that women, in particular, suffered from the irritation caused by these *bichos*: “Las mujeres suelen ser víctimas de sus picaduras cuando caminan por el campo.” (*Viaje a caballo* 124) Sabato explains that this publication, *El Bicho Colorado*, forms part of a much larger corpus of satirical periodicals, among them are the following: *La Bruja* (1860), *El Diablo* (1864), *El Látigo* (1865), *El Sombrero de Don Adolfo* (1875), *La Farsa Política* (1875), *El Fraile* (1878), *La Matraca* (1878) and *La Cotorra* (1879-1880). (*The Many and the Few*: 45)

about this representation is the way the female is dressed: her attire and her hairstyle boast of the latest European fashions. Her foot rests upon a footrest in a carpeted room that could belong to Mármol's Amalia, the national icon *par excellence* of beauty, sensibility, good taste and female conciliatory power (Sommer, Foundational Fictions). The implicit satire in the image seems to suggest that the political conflicts of the period (nationalists vs. autonomists)<sup>225</sup> and projects undertaken to “civilize” the Argentine desert (i.e. the genocidal campaigns against the indigenous and Sarmiento's well fought educational reforms)<sup>226</sup> were in vane. None of these strategies—at least for the editor of *El Bicho Colorado*—have been able to impose the necessary order and stability. While the metaphorical nation might be able to cover itself with the elegance and civilization of European clothing, beneath its skirts irritation and corporal malaise continue to bubble to the surface.

Clearly, in the vision offered by this periodical, the nation's actors—its leading political figures and even its ‘problems’—are male. Moreover, the female serves only as a platform from which the political is represented and even debated, but certainly her participation is limited to

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<sup>225</sup> After 1862—the date that marks the consolidation of the Argentine territories into one national unit, including the province of Buenos Aires—a fierce rivalry sprang up between the *autonomistas*, who favored Buenos Aires' separation from the other provinces, led by Adolfo Alsina, and the *nacionalistas*, who favored Buenos Aires' subordination to the national unit, led by Bartolomé Mitre. Even after the fall of Rosas and the demise of the federalist stronghold in politics, the role of the province and city of Buenos Aires in national politics took center stage. For a detailed explanation of the political turmoil of the period see Sabato, The Many and the Few Chapter 1 “Buenos Aires, A World in Transition” and Rock, Argentina, Chapter 4 “The Formation of the Nation-State, 1852-1890”.

<sup>226</sup> Finally, in 1879, the ‘Indian problem’ would be solved by General Julio A. Roca's *conquista del desierto*. Rock explains the campaign that ultimately destroyed any surviving Indigenous peoples: “Under his command five columns departed from Buenos Aires, Córdoba, San Luis, and Mendoza to converge on the Rio Negro. Along the way they subdued, drove out, or exterminated the scattered Tehuelche and Araucanian tribes in the region, stopping at last their depredations against the southern *estancias* and opening land access to Patagonia.” (Argentina: 154) See also Silvestri, “El imaginario paisajístico”: 217-292, for an in-depth consideration of the ‘conquest of the desert’.

the symbolic. As this satirical image concretizes, the figure of the female easily occupies a symbolic role in the construction of the nation. The last two chapters have shown this: she is often an idealized consumer (and chastised if she too willingly participates in consumption), a mother and an ideological transmitter, or an object of public scrutiny if she transgresses her prescriptive role, in which case she becomes the quintessential prostitute and endangers the national project. Dress and fashion, as the last two chapters have also shown, have helped to secure this symbolic role in the national imaginary.

With the rare exception of Petrona Rosende de Sierra's *La Aljaba*, we've heard little or nothing from women writers—largely because Rosas' strict control of the *porteño* press did not foster women's open participation in politics or public life through journalism. However, as we will see in this chapter, after the fall of Rosas at Caseros in 1852, women began taking a very active role in Argentine public and political life and interestingly, fashion played a major part in women's breaking of the symbolic.

This chapter will trace the emergence of female writers and their strategic appropriation of fashion narratives in the context of post-Rosista Argentina. Stemming from Nancy Fraser's critical engagement of Habermas's idealization of the bourgeois public sphere, this chapter will show how early female writers formed *subaltern counterpublics* that effectively dialogued with previous notions of the role of the female in the national imaginary (Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"). Not surprisingly, one of the major components in the formation of these counterpublics in post-Rosista Argentina was fashion journalism since it permitted female writers an acceptable form of public participation without being overtly political. Moreover, fashion writing allowed women to break away from their supposed symbolic role in national development and take an active role in shaping the discourse surrounding women's place in the

public sphere.<sup>227</sup> Through the medium of fashion periodicals, women writers not only tapped into the thriving world of public opinion (since Rosista censorship no longer controlled the media), but they questioned the traditional gender divide between mind (associated with the male) and body (associated with the female), they dialogued with some of the major debates concerning national development (civilization vs. barbarism, Europe vs. Argentina), they explored the freedoms that fashion consumption allowed them (without endangering their honor), and unlike the previous narratives stemming from the Generation of '37, they articulated classed based differences and offered solutions to those women who couldn't "conform" to the national ideal of elegance and good taste because of lower socio-economic status. In effect, this chapter will show how fashion narratives written by women were an important part in the development of an alternative discourse, between the prescriptive dichotomy of civilization and barbarism, whereby, as Masiello has brilliantly pointed out, women were able to "annihilate" the parameters previously established by the mostly male lettered elite (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 10).

#### ***4.1. Public Opinion and Subaltern Counterpublics: City Life after Rosas***

How would our understanding of modernity change if instead of taking male experience as paradigmatic, we were to look instead at texts written

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<sup>227</sup> While most of the theory that has informed my understanding of gender and nation deals with this topic in several different national contexts (including nationalism from the Middle East, Asia and Africa), it does however lend itself to the Latin American case. The basic principles that most theorists on gender and nation have put down reinforce time and again the ways in which the symbolic figure of the female is appropriated for projects of state in times of crisis. See Eisenstein, "Writing bodies on the nation for the globe"; Dubey, "The 'True Lie' of the Nation: Fanon and Feminism"; Heng "A Great Way to Fly"; Yuval-Davis, Nira. Gender and Nation; Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments, especially chapter 7, "Women and the Nation"; and Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation". I am grateful to Susan Andrade for familiarizing me with these texts.

primarily by or about women? And what if feminine phenomena, often seen as having a secondary or marginal status, were given a central importance in the analysis of the culture of modernity?

—Rita Felski, The Gender of Modernity: 10

Felski's questions here serve as an important point of departure for this chapter: what would 19<sup>th</sup> century Buenos Aires look like if instead of considering only the major texts produced by its leading male intellectuals, we were to consider how its women writers understood and experienced the socio-economic and political changes sweeping the city? Until now, we've considered at length how mostly male writers and political leaders manipulated fashion for their political agendas, but to what extent did women writers do just the same?

Until recently, most of Argentina's female writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been largely marginalized in Argentina's literary history.<sup>228</sup> Let me begin with the example of Juana Manso. In the early 1900's, Ricardo Rojas, one of the first Argentine intellectuals to publish a comprehensive history of Argentine literature, mentioned only the following of her:

Otra fué doña Juana Manso (después de Noronha), la amiga de Sarmiento, famosa por sus trabajos y libros de educación. (Historia de la literatura argentina)<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Some of the most influential texts that have sought to recover the valuable writings of 19th century Argentine women (and the texts that have most strongly influenced this study) are: Auza, Néstor Tomás. La literatura porteña and Periodismo y feminismo; Cano Rossini, Lelia. La mujer mendocina de 1800; Carlson, Marifran. ¡Feminismo!; Cavalaro, Diana. Revistas argentinas del siglo XIX; Fletcher, Lea (ed.). Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX and "Patriarchy, Medicine, and Women Writers in Nineteenth-Century Argentina"; Frederick, Bonnie. Wily Modesty; Masiello, Francine. Between Civilization and Barbarism and La mujer y el espacio público; West, Regina Tailoring the Nation and "La moda como metonimia".

<sup>229</sup> Lea Fletcher also comments on this particular reference, and adds that Juana Manuela Gorriti received more attention than Manso, although the mention is still very brief: "It is also no coincidence that Ricardo Rojas, the author of the first literary history of Argentina as well as of the first study of its women writers, summarily dismissed Juana Manso in one brief paragraph: 'She was a friend of Sarmiento, who she resembled in her mannish face and her devotion to

Leaving aside the fact that Rojas validates Manso's work primarily because of her friendship with Sarmiento, what is most striking is the scant mention of Manso's accomplishments. In her lifetime not only did she design textbooks on elementary education—used well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century—but she was also a leading female figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century literary circles. Manso published several novels and literary journals on education for women and on the emancipation of the female, as well as the role of the church, the state and consumer society in women's lives.<sup>230</sup>

Allow me to provide another example. Much later, in 1968, the well-known Argentine intellectual Adolfo Prieto, in his Diccionario básico de la literatura argentina, failed to include any female writer before 1930 thus leaving out numerous prolific female writers from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Clearly anthologies of canonical literature such as Prieto's show how the contributions of women writers have been marginalized in the formation of Argentina's national literary tradition. As Beatriz González-Stephan points out, this was a discursive practice first undertaken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century whereby literary histories fulfilled the important task of

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education'. Juana Manuela Gorriti fared somewhat better, meriting four pages; however, Rojas began by decrying "her bad literary taste", and ended by stating that he believed that Gorriti, "whose work is perishable from a literary point of view, had a rare, intense, and at times fantastic temperament, but she did not have the gift of lasting emotion or of well-worked form, as her prose is generally declamatory and wandering, just like her literary imagination [...]" ("Patriarchy, Medicine, and Women Writers in Nineteenth-Century Argentina": 94-95)

<sup>230</sup> The most important studies on Juana Manso that have informed this chapter are: Lewkowicz, Juana Paula Manso; Frederick, Wily Modesty; Zuccotti, "Juana Manso: entre la pose y la palabra"; Area, "El periódico Álbum de señoritas de Juana Manso (1854): Una voz doméstica en la fundación de una nación"; Fletcher(ed.). Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX and "Patriarchy, Medicine, and Women Writers in Nineteenth-Century-Argentina."; Santomauro, Juana Manso y las luchas por la educación pública en Argentina; Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism and La mujer y el espacio público; Auza, Periodismo y feminismo en la Argentina: 1830-1930; Levy, "Juana Manso: Argentine Feminist".



constructing a selective national literature that served the projects of the dominant—and mostly male—sectors. She explains:

Y en el siglo XIX, las historias literarias, como una de las prácticas discursivas del proyecto liberal, cumplieron una función decisiva en la construcción ideológica de una literatura nacional, que sirvió a los sectores dominantes para fijar y asegurar las representaciones necesarias de la urgente unidad política nacional. (Fundaciones: 37)<sup>231</sup>

It is my contention that several 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine women writers have been slighted in Argentina's literary tradition because the topics on which they wrote—fashion, motherhood, childrearing and housekeeping, even recipes (such as Gorriti's *Cocina ecléctica*)—have not been considered politically relevant to Argentine national development. Much of this is due to the fact that 19<sup>th</sup> century female writers often developed discursive strategies that effectively disguised their interest in politics and national development since women were dissuaded from voicing their opinions in the public arena. Scrutiny of their work however reveals a world in which women writers actively participated in the political, economic and cultural reconstruction of post-Rosista Argentina.

In what follows I intend to show *how* women writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were able to discuss issues of national development by manipulating gender appropriate behavior not only to publish, but also to dialogue with their male contemporaries. That is, I propose that for these women writers, fashion became an important political tool from which they could debate many

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<sup>231</sup> In effect, this is exactly what happened in post-Rosista Argentina. Leading intellectuals, as González Bernaldo de Quirós explains, intended to construct a *memory of the nation* through literary anthologies, collections of the “principal men” of Argentine politics and national histories. After Caseros, Argentina's *men of letters* went to work on this project: “Bartolomé Mitre redacta entonces su *Historia de Belgrano* y participa en el proyecto de las *Galería de Celebridades Argentinas* con Domingo F. Sarmiento, Luis Domínguez, Juan María Gutiérrez y Manuel Moreno. Por otra parte, Domínguez prepara su *Historia argentina* y Alejandro Magariños Cervantes su *Biblioteca americana*, proyecto de publicación de una antología de textos ‘de los principales hombres de Estado de la República Argentina’”. (Civilidad y política: 252)

of the major issues of public concern in the period. In large part, many women writers successfully did this by employing what Josefina Ludmer has aptly named “las tretas del débil” (the tricks of the weak) to move in between the prescriptive gender roles for women of the period and to forge a sense of literary authority.<sup>232</sup> In the particular case of Argentina, Frederick refers to this as *speaking up with lowered eyes* and she claims that women writers often had to strike a balance between finding their literary voice and disguising it through modesty:

The great task of the women writers of the 1800s was to invent a role for the professional woman writer that would balance the demands of feminine modesty in their lives and the need for discursive authority in their work. (*Wily Modesty*: 42)

By using such strategies and through the manipulation of hegemonic discourses, women writers dismantled the metaphors between fashion, nation and woman that had been so strategically employed by earlier nationalist, both Unitarian and Federal discourse. In this introductory section, I will map out the context in which women writers emerged as a small albeit forceful group.

If the post-independence period seemed chaotic to Argentina’s men of letters and caudillo rulers, post-Caseros Argentina certainly did not offer a more organized and stable environment. With the imposed unity of the Rosista regime lifted, the traditional rift between the province and city of Buenos Aires and the rest of the region once again took center stage in political life. In Buenos Aires, the *partido liberal*—made up mostly of urban merchants and functionaries—quickly emerged and rejected General Urquiza’s plan to unite the entire region. (Rock, Argentina: 121) Buenos Aires rejected the *Acuerdo de San Nicolás*<sup>233</sup> in 1853 and the region

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<sup>232</sup> The idea of forging a sense of “literary authority” from positions of marginality stems from a pivotal study on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s rhetorical strategies. See Josefina Ludmer’s article “Las tretas del débil”.

<sup>233</sup> Rock explains the *Acuerdo de San Nicolás* and its most significant tenets: “At the conclusion of the convention, the *Acuerdo de San Nicolás*, as the agreement was called, endorsed the

split between the *Confederación Argentina*—headed by General Urquiza and comprised of all provinces except Buenos Aires—and the province of Buenos Aires which still had the strategic port city of Buenos Aires as a key weapon against the other provinces.<sup>234</sup> The ensuing years were marked by tariff wars and resultant economic chaos as well as military invasions of the city and armed uprisings within the city’s limits. It is not until 1862 that the area was unified under the first president of the *República Argentina*, Bartolomé Mitre.<sup>235</sup> As Hilda Sabato brilliantly explains, post-Caseros Buenos Aires was clearly a *world in transition*: politics, economics and the traditional divisions between *gente del pueblo* and *gente decente* were in constant redefinition and the social fabric of the region was being redefined according to what she calls a “capitalist order in the making”. (The Many and the Few: 21)

Irrespective of the aforementioned political and economic chaos, this *capitalist order in the making* witnessed important and positive changes that would drastically alter the social landscape of the city. First, Buenos Aires experienced a significant population boom: from mid-century to 1895, the city’s population—in large part made up of immigrants—increased five-fold (from 270,000 to more than a million). (Guy Sex and Danger: 38; Sabato and Romero, Los

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preparation of a new constitution that would both erect a strong central government and eradicate internal restraints on trade. Some provinces now openly espoused ideas earlier identified with the Unitarists, among them the old plan to make the city of Buenos Aires a federal district. Like Rivadavia, the provinces saw in this a means to weaken the landed classes of Buenos Aires—the groups that had backed Rosas.” (Argentina: 120)

<sup>234</sup> The *Confederación* also had its own thriving periodical industry. See Auza, El Periodismo de la Confederación: 1852-1861.

<sup>235</sup> For a more in-depth consideration of this period, ranging from political to economic and social studies see: Scobie, Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910; Sabato, Agrarian Capitalism and the World Market: Buenos Aires in the Pastoral Age, 1840-1890; Bonaudo, Marta (ed) Liberalismo, Estado y Orden Burgués (1852-1880); Adelman, Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World; Sabato, The Many and the Few; and Sabato and Romero, Trabajadores de Buenos Aires: La experiencia del mercado, 1850-1880.

trabajadores: 29)<sup>236</sup> Post-Rosista Argentina was also marked by a considerable increase in public works: the construction of a formal port was underway, beginning in 1854 railroad projects were initiated that would eventually connect Buenos Aires with the interior provinces, public health and hygiene campaigns were launched, the city's filthy streets were slowly being paved, and later in the 1870s, sewer systems and running water were put in place. (Sabato and Romero, Los trabajadores; Guy, Sex and Danger; Scobie, Buenos Aires). In terms of Argentina's export industry, sheep farming was radically changing the nature of the countryside and landholding practices. Wool trade became one of the most important industries in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina and this had the important effect of more fully integrating Buenos Aires into an international market determined by the laws of free trade. (Sabato, Agrarian Capitalism).<sup>237</sup> As we'll see later in Chapter 4, this integration would prove essential for the growing *porteño* fashion industry: by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Buenos Aires would boast some 400 small clothing shops, and the first large department-like store "A la Ciudad de Londres" would be established in 1873. (Saulquin, La moda en la Argentina: 60)

Most importantly, this period of political turmoil and drastic socio-economic change witnessed the emergence of public opinion, perhaps for the first time since Rosas consolidated his dominance over the region. Moreover, the vacuum left by the Rosista dictatorship gave

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<sup>236</sup> The city of Buenos Aires was not the only area to increase its population. Gayol offers additional statistics on the population of the entire region: "Si a principios de la década de 1840 la población total que habitaba el territorio argentino era de 1.000.000 de personas, en 1869 había trepado a 1.740.000 habitantes para llegar a los 7.850.000 en 1914. De esta cifra el 12% de la población era extranjera. (Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires: 25)

<sup>237</sup> Sabato explains: "Under the stimulus of an increasing international demand for wool, sheep raising became the most lucrative business and the main source of wealth, while it gave Buenos Aires the opportunity of participating fully in an international market governed by the rules of free trade and comparative advantages." (Agrarian Capitalism: 2)

public opinion a central role in determining the nature of politics.<sup>238</sup> Sabato details the development of a public sphere after Rosas:

Typical of this period of profound social change in Buenos Aires, however, was the formation of a public sphere, which became a space of mediation between civil society and the state, and for the participation of vast sectors of the population in the public life of the city. Within that new and expanding space, different groups and sectors of society voiced their opinions and represented their claims directly, avoiding the specifically political path but translating their demands into the language of local political disputes. At the same time, those in power were attentive to the signals stemming from this public sphere as it became a source of legitimization for political action. (The Many and the Few: 2)

Public opinion and the formation of a strong public sphere would be expressed through a series of forums: mutual aid societies, immigrant societies, organizations based on race—such as mutual aid societies for Argentines ‘of color’—clubs, Masonic lodges, literary and learned societies, and committees specific to public affairs began springing up throughout the city. (Sabato, The Many and the Few: 11 and 32 respectively; Sabato, “La vida pública en Buenos

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<sup>238</sup> In chapter IV “The Bourgeois Public Sphere: Idea and Ideology” of The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society Jürgen Habermas offers a detailed analysis of the development of *public opinion*. While an in-depth discussion of Habermas’s analysis goes beyond the scope of the current study, it is important to point out that the development of *public opinion* within the bourgeois public sphere is a key factor in the emergence of the modern period. In another publication, Habermas explains more succinctly his understanding of *public opinion* and its relationship to the *public sphere*: “The expression ‘public opinion’ refers to the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally—and, in periodic elections, formally as well—practices *vis-à-vis* the ruling structure organized in the form of a state. Regulations demanding that certain proceedings be public (*Publizitätsvorschriften*), for example those providing for open court hearings, are also related to this function of public opinion. The public sphere as a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities.” (“The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”: 50) This study closely follows Habermas’s definition of *public opinion* and *public sphere* while it also recognizes the limitations of Habermas’s model as explained by feminist theorists Nancy Fraser (“What’s Critical about Critical Theory” and “Rethinking the Public Sphere”) and Joan Landes (“The Public and Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration”) both in Feminists Read Habermas.

Aires”: 161-216) Other public places such as theatres, plazas, streets and *paseos* became increasingly popular since they offered spaces where the *porteño* elite could see and be seen and re-affirm their position in the ever-changing public sphere. (Gayol, Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires: 99) Another important public space, the *café* (which included alcoholic beverages), merits attention since its presence in Buenos Aires became increasingly impossible to ignore: in 1870 the city counted 523, in 1878 there were 649 and by 1914 there would be some 1097 of these establishments. (Gayol, Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires: 35)<sup>239</sup> In fact, *café* life became so popular that certain periodicals, for example *El Alba* (1868), contained comic sections on “scenes” and conversations that took place in these establishments. (The section was always titled *En el café*.) This was however, a male dominated space. Females were discouraged from frequenting *café*s and were quickly associated with prostitution if they did patronize these establishments.<sup>240</sup> Interestingly, women writers, in particular Juana Manso, spoke out against the forms of

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<sup>239</sup> Gayol even explains that trips to the *café* required specific *fashionable* dress: “Para los hombres que se encuentran en la calle y que arribarán al *café* es necesario un sombrero (orión o chambergo), alpargatas si bien un par de botines es indispensable, un pantaloón de brin (siendo muy ansiados los de paño y casimir), una camiseta o camisa, un pañuelo de algodón para anudar al cuello, si es de seda mucho mejor, y un saco en la possible cruzado. [...] Este guardarropas fue necesario para pronunciar la frase: ‘viste regularmente’ en oposición a la descalificante ‘viste mal’. Pero tampoco es sólo cuestión de prendas. Inciden los colores y las texturas, el modo de portar cada artículo y la variedad de guardarropas.” (Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires: 107-108)

<sup>240</sup> As Sabato and Romero explain, post-Rosista Buenos Aires was strictly marked by a rigid sexual division of labor. Working women who were not prostitutes were most likely to be concentrated in domestic services. “La división sexual del trabajo era tajante, de manera tal que pocos oficios concentraban casi todo el empleo femenino, mientras que el resto de las ocupaciones eran ejercidas en general por los hombres. A lo largo de todo el período, el servicio doméstico y la confección fueron los bolsones del trabajo de la mujer, tanto en la ciudad como en la campaña, y concentraban más del 80% del empleo femenino. Las cifras sobre participación femenina en la actividad económica muestran una caída sistemática: del 54% al 39% entre 1855 y 1887 en la ciudad y del 40% al 27% entre 1869 y 1881 en la campaña. Estos datos se refieren a la proporción de mujeres con ocupación dentro del universo de las que están en edades activas, pero nada expresan acerca de la participación femenina en el mercado de trabajo.” (Los trabajadores: 100)

sociability that were denied women. Manso claimed that it was illogical for women to be shunned from public participation based on their sex:

Hasta la mas insignificante ventaja le está vedada á la mujer por el egoismo del hombre de estas Americas; el hotel, el café, donde aquel entra a tomar un refrigerio, le está vedado á la mujer: vive en los confines de la ciudad, tiene forzosamente que venir al centro, a una delijencia, á comprar, emplea un dia entero, pues debe ayunar...que escandalo si entrase á almorzar á un hotel ó en un café!...Seá mas débil que el hombre, seá la cosa mas natural del mundo el comer, séan los hoteles y cafés repastos publicos; diga el sentido comun que todo lugar publico es del publico; no es una conclusion lójica que la mujer no forma parte del publico? (*La Siempre-Viva*, No. 4, July 9, 1864)

González Bernaldo de Quirós explains that this separation of activity was due largely to the changing perception of sociability: in her vision of *porteño* life, public sociability, especially in cafés, was becoming increasingly “masculine”, while family reunions fell largely under the realm of female activity:

Las reuniones de familia quedarán cada vez más confinadas a la esfera íntima, asociada ahora con el universo femenino, mientras se desarrollan nuevos hábitos relacionales y nuevos lugares de encuentro público para los hombres decentes de la ciudad. (*Civilidad y política*: 201)<sup>241</sup>

The lengthy list of forms of public participation and public opinion that I have listed here certainly isn't complete without considering, again, the fundamental role of journalism in the *porteño* public sphere. Clearly, the press would provide for one of the most important forums for the voicing of public opinion and as Landes explains, following Habermas's model, in the modern bourgeois public sphere individuals often participate in the public life as “speakers and

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<sup>241</sup> On a similar note, Landes explains that the all-encompassing bourgeois “public sphere” after the French Revolution, became increasingly gendered: “If we think of the public sphere at all, it is difficult to ignore its gendered meanings. [...] Public is that which is open, manifest, common and good. A public man is one who acts in and for the universal good; a public thing is that which is open to, may be used by, or shared by all members of the community (that which is not restricted to private use by any person). On the other hand, a public woman is a prostitute, a commoner, a common woman. A public action is then one authored from or authorized by the masculine position.” (*Women and the Public Sphere*: 2-3)

readers (of novels and the press).” (“The Public and the Private Sphere: 100).<sup>242</sup> In the particular case of Buenos Aires, Hilda Sabato—perhaps one of the most dedicated historians to the *porteño* press—has found this to be true. (The Many and the Few and “La vida pública en Buenos Aires”) Immediately following Rosas, there were more than 50 periodicals published and by 1887 this number reached almost one hundred. (Auza, La literatura periodística porteña: 22 and Sabato and Romero, Los trabajadores: 73)<sup>243</sup> Moreover, the *porteño* public was becoming increasingly literate: in 1869 50% of men and 43% of women were literate, by 1887 the numbers were 64% and 57% respectively—and these numbers were well above the rest of the country. (Sabato, The Many and the Few: 44) It is also during this period that some of the most important *national* newspapers, such as *La Nación* and *La Prensa*, were founded and some of these are still circulating in Argentina today.<sup>244</sup> Most importantly, the press, especially towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was increasingly attempting to separate itself from the state, so as to present itself

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<sup>242</sup> Habermas explains that the press, before it became a commercial project for profit, grew out of the public’s use of reason and was intricately tied to moments of revolution (as would be the case in post-Caseros Buenos Aires): “A press that had evolved out of the public’s use of reason and that had merely been an extension of its debate remained thoroughly an institution of this very public: effective in the mode of a transmitter and amplifier, no longer a mere vehicle for the transportation of information but not yet a medium for culture as an object of consumption. Prototypically this type of press can be observed in times of revolution [...]”. (The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: 183)

<sup>243</sup> While the names, dates, and information concerning the numerous periodicals published after Rosas go well beyond the scope of this study, Cavalaro’s Revistas argentines del siglo XIX (chapters II and III) provides more specific and detailed information.

<sup>244</sup> Sabato provides a useful list of important national periodicals with their respective dates: *La tribuna* (1853-1884); *El Nacional* (1852-1893), *La Nación Argentina* (1862-1870) succeeded by *La Nación* (1870 to present); *La República* (1867-1881) and *La Prensa* (1869 to present); *La Presidencia* (1875-1877 *mitrista*), *La Política* 1872-75 *autonomista*), *El Pueblo* 1864-68 or *La Libertad* 1873-1886, *El Río de la Plata* 1869. (The Many and the Few: 63-65)



as *free press* and as a representative of *independent opinion* no longer under the state's subordination. (The Many and the Few: 44)<sup>245</sup>

It is in this context that women writers emerged after the fall of Rosas. These women writers, however, were not the first women—other than prostitutes and lower-class domestic workers—to make their way into the public sphere. Petrona Rosende de Sierra, as we saw in Chapter 1, published *La Aljaba* to the dismay of many public figures. Wealthy women had also occupied the public sphere for some time through the *Sociedad de Beneficiencia* (Beneficent Society)—an organization strictly allied with Argentine elites—founded by President Rivadavia in 1823.<sup>246</sup> The Beneficent Society's programs together with the leadership of certain

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<sup>245</sup> As Sabato explains, right after the fall of Rosas, politics and the press had an important relationship. This relationship however would eventually decline: “In the 1850s, the expansion of the press was tightly linked to the renovated and vigorous political life of the city. Soon, to have a newspaper became almost a requisite for anyone aspiring to political influence. All leading Argentine politicians had their own papers or recruited the favor of one or more of the periodicals that circulated in Buenos Aires. In the late 1860s and in the 1870s, most papers still had ties with particular political leaders of groups (and with the government), but increasing autonomy became the rule. Also, a new press that did not originate in the political realm took shape.” (The Many and the Few: 44)

<sup>246</sup> In fact, Marifran Carlson's well-known text ¡Feminismo! locates the emergence of the “feminist” movement in the early philanthropic work of these elite Argentine females since their work permitted organization and an acceptable penetration of the public sphere. (However, these programs and values adopted by early philanthropists were traditional and very rarely crossed paths with established gender norms.) See ¡Feminismo! The Woman's Movement in Argentina From Its Beginnings to Eva Perón. Despite the usefulness of Carlson's text as a “map” of the development of the women's movement in Argentina, there are several problems associated with the author's approach to the topic. First, Carlson offers no definition of her understanding of the term “feminismo”—nor does she consider the historical emergence of feminism—although she uses the term in her title and seeks to trace its development. This term did not circulate in Argentina well until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was largely avoided by public female figures once introduced. (Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change in Argentina: 2) Yet Carlson seems to suggest that the actions, publications and early organizations of previous generations corresponded to an effort to develop “feminism” in Argentina. Also, Carlson's location of an emergent feminism in philanthropic work is unsettling. While it may represent a “chartable” or “measurable” point of departure for historians, it also overlooks individual acts of resistance to gender norms. For example, Carlson's text fails to consider some of the most important female writers of the period as central figures in the development of the women's movement. Several of

individuals—María Sánchez de Mendeville, Joaquina Izquierdo, Mercedes Lasala de Riglos, Bernardina Chavarría de Viamonte, among numerous others—provided education and economic assistance to an overwhelming number of poor and illiterate women. (Carlson, *¡Feminismo!*, see especially Chapter 2) The Society also housed female orphans in an attempt to “save” them from prostitution, and later on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it provided limited employment for middle-class women often as teachers and to a lesser extent as nurses. However, as Patricia Varas explains: “[...] these women were probably never in touch with the realities of the political situation in the country because of their many class and ideological divisions.” (*Latin American Perspectives*: 130) While the work of the women of the Beneficent Society was certainly an important step in paving the way for later women workers, these women often represented traditional, upper-class values and they rarely contradicted the gender status-quo.<sup>247</sup> One final way that the *porteña* elite

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these women—such as Juana Manso, Rosa Guerra, and Juana Manuela Gorriti—directly and boldly challenged male politicians and other prominent figures through the publication of journals. Carlson makes only scant reference to periodicals published by women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although as Sabato has clearly pointed out, such publications provided an important forum for the voicing of the female opinion in the public sphere. (“La vida pública”: 25) Also, locating the women’s movement in philanthropic work reflects a certain class bias on Carlson’s behalf since she appears to found the entire movement on the actions of the elite. Again, such writers as Juana Manso and Juana Manuela Gorriti were poor and published as sources of income, and their writings represent perhaps some of the most progressive attitudes on gender for the time period. Finally, Carlson’s analysis describes the development of feminism in Argentina as a linear and progressive movement, rather than one marked by inconsistencies and fluctuating advances and setbacks.

<sup>247</sup> Carlson’s analysis, for example, completely discounts the presence and participation of Buenos Aires’ *Afro-Argentina* population. By comparison, Marta Goldberg’s “Las Afroargentinas” (1750-1880) offers an excellent overview. In this article, Goldberg discusses the marginalization of the female slave that began with the legal restrictions placed against her: she held a unique position in relation to the law because she was equally considered a “thing” and a subject at the same time. (Goldberg, “Las Afro-Argentinas”, 70) The female slave had the right to a baptism and catholic indoctrination, to possess a name, to marry, to live outside her owner’s house with consent, to buy her liberty or that of family members and to a judicial defense. But social reality did not often provide for the maintenance of these rights. Afro-Argentine women also had a unique relationship to the state. During the reign of the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas (1835-1852), the Afro-Argentinas held an especially powerful position.

participated in public life was through the *tertulias*, dances or the *salón literario*. It should be mentioned nonetheless that this form of public interaction was acceptable for women because it took place in the home. (See Gayol, Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires: Hombres, honor y cafés 1862-1910: 23)<sup>248</sup>

Women writers after Rosas were very much *unlike* their elite counterparts in the Beneficent Society or *tertulias*. They more likely represented Fraser's notion of *subaltern counterpublics* especially because they often published to earn an income—due to their lower economic status compared to the elites in the Beneficent Society—and because they published to change public opinion concerning the role of women in society.<sup>249</sup> In large part, through fashion,

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As laundry-women and housekeepers, they formed part of Rosas' "repressive apparatus"—mentioned in Chapter 1—since they often spied on and denounced their owners (especially if the owners were cruel). Afro-Argentinas were also military spies and formed part of Rosas' army in large numbers. (Goldberg, "Las Afro-Argentinas", 75) In addition, Afro-Argentine women played a pivotal role in the development of Afro-Argentine societies and mutual aid groups (*ayuda mutua*) in Buenos Aires. (Goldberg, 78) As the author explains, the Afro-Argentine societies were unique because although female members were not permitted to vote, their participation still remained central not only to the organization of societies but also to the survival of such societies. Additionally, Afro-Argentine women had a larger sphere of movement in Buenos Aires than white women owing to the fact that they worked and that they participated in these *sociedades*. This is not to say of course that Afro-Argentine women did not face discrimination and abuse. While the judicial system was not an option for many Afro-Argentine women (it was arbitrary and unfair), the conditions they lived and worked in helped to decimate the numbers of Afro-Argentines. The infant mortality rate was high (since infanticide was common) and diseases such tuberculosis, cystitis and digestive problems due to diet coupled with war ultimately led to the disappearance of the Afro-Argentine presence in the region. (See Gil Lozano, et. al. Historia de la mujeres en la Argentina)

<sup>248</sup> On a broader scale, Landes explains that this type of interaction (the *tertulia*, the *baile*, or the *salón literario*) is typical of the bourgeois model of the public sphere: "The bourgeois public sphere was for the most part a restricted male preserve, except for salon society that was shaped by women..." ("The Public and the Private Sphere": 96)

<sup>249</sup> Masiello contends that women writers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina were forerunners of Latin American *modernismo*, marked by the "*professionalization*" of the writer whereby financial gain became one of the goals of the writer. Masiello explains the cases of Manso and Gorriti: "At a significant moment of change in the field of writing—from patronage to professionalization—these authors even entered print culture for financial reasons. Especially for Gorriti and Manso, who supported themselves by their writing, money became the object of concern in their fiction

these women, unlike their contemporaries in the Beneficent Society, participated in the political debates of the period and were uninteresting in maintaining the *porteño* status-quo.

Before discussing the work of these women writers, it's important to tackle some of the theoretical considerations concerning the public sphere and its transformation in post-Rosista Argentina. While the model put forth by Habermas's pivotal text The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere has been important for historians, social scientists, philosophers and theorists (among scholars of many other disciplines)<sup>250</sup>, many feminist theorists, such as Fraser, have found that the model is limited and idealized. Even though Habermas recognizes that his idea of the public sphere has never been realized in practice, the general principles he puts forth consist of an idea of the *public sphere* where 'private persons' gather to discuss 'common interest' and 'public concern', and whereby these individuals are not distinguished by their differences. (Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere": 72) However, this model of the public sphere insufficiently accounts for its *others* who ideally should participate on equal ground, but who often find that access to the public sphere is limited. Fraser explains that indeed women and minorities (racial, ethnic, and class) were excluded from the official public sphere:

Of course, we know, both from the revisionist history and from Habermas's account, that the bourgeois public's claim to full accessibility was not in fact realized. Women of all classes and ethnicities were excluded from official political participation precisely on the basis of ascribed gender status, and plebeian men were formally excluded by property

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and cultural journals. The age of the professional writer, often considered to be a phenomenon attendant upon *modernismo*, is traceable in women's writing from the years following the Rosas regime." (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 35)

<sup>250</sup> One of the most important aspects of Habermas' model is that it helps to understand the public sphere as a central feature of the modern period. Peter Hohendahl explains: "His study demonstrates that the public sphere constitutes one of the categories central to an understanding of the modern period, i.e. bourgeois society from 1700 to 1974. With the aid of this category, social as well as political and cultural changes can be explained—changes with the older cultural pessimism perceived only in their outward manifestations as symptoms of decline." ("Jürgen Habermas: 'The Public Sphere'" *New German Critique*: 45)

qualifications. Moreover, in many cases, women and men of racialized ethnicities of all classes were excluded on racial grounds. (“Rethinking the Public Sphere”: 77)

This is not to say, however, that women and men who were ‘ineligible’ to participate in the official, liberal, bourgeois public sphere did not participate in public life or in the formation of public opinion. Fraser contends that rather than one all-encompassing public sphere, public life more realistically consisted (and continues to consist) of *several* diverse and competing spheres of discourse. In effect, there are often *several public spheres* that emerge in the modern bourgeois model. According to Fraser:

[...] in stratified societies, arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public. [...] I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (“Rethinking the Public Sphere”: 81)<sup>251</sup>

This concept is certainly useful when considering women’s writing in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, especially after the fall of Rosas when the public sphere was experiencing sweeping transformations. I propose that the group of women writers discussed in this chapter certainly formed their own *counterpublic*, and they did this in large part through their writings on fashion.<sup>252</sup> Through the topic of fashion and through their own fashion magazines, these women

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<sup>251</sup> Several other feminist theorists have supported Fraser’s claim to *subaltern counterpublics*. See Feminists Read Habermas, especially the articles “The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration” by Joan Landes and “Women and the Public Use of Reason” by Marie Fleming.

<sup>252</sup> Regina West offers a similar analysis though she does not refer specifically to Nancy Fraser’s pivotal texts on this issue. Instead, West points to the work of Rita Felski who also articulated the idea of a *counter-public sphere*. West explains: “By entering a male-dominated public sphere, the *editoras* became public owners of their discourse and thus were able to challenge existing institutional structures that had barred women from the Argentine cultural consciousness. In her appropriation of Habermas’ theory of public and private spheres, Rita Felski formulates a *partial* public sphere, or a counter-public sphere, one made up of those marginalized by society.” (Tailoring the Nation: 154) West stops rather short in her study

not only debated the politics (especially the sexual politics) of the period, but in large part they responded to the previous discourses on fashion established in the Rosista period.<sup>253</sup> What makes Fraser's concept of *counter-publics* particularly useful is that through these groups women writers were able to make "domestic issues" (i.e. issues that are not normally considered of public concern), relevant and debatable in the public arena. Many women writers made these issues debatable in the public sphere because they often developed strategies that downplayed their penetration of the public sphere.<sup>254</sup> For example, aside from appropriating the topic of fashion, women emphasized motherhood in their publications and they consistently confirmed their 'lower' status in relation to men.

One important periodical to surface after the fall of Rosas was Rosa Guerra's *La educación: periódico religioso, poético y literario (dedicado a la honorable Sociedad de*

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however, since she fails to explain exactly *which* institutional structures women writers challenged.

<sup>253</sup> Frederick also explains how 19<sup>th</sup> century women writers formed important literary communities: "Against all odds, these women formed a literary community, Argentina's first genuine female literary generation. They held literary salons, organized an eight-hundred-member women's intellectual society, edited periodicals, helped each other publish their works, debated social and political issues with each other, and even provided funerals for those who died in poverty." (*Wily Modesty*: 5)

<sup>254</sup> It's important to note that this strategy played well into the *ángel del hogar* paradigm that had emerged in the Hispanic world—and that was subsequently spread to 19<sup>th</sup> century audiences through women's magazines. The strategy adopted by women writers worked well with this ideology because said writers were able to maintain the rhetoric that supported the maintenance of the *ideal* of the *ángel del hogar* while doing so in a manner that ultimately contradicted its principles. Jagoe explains what the *ángel del hogar* in literary representations supposed of women: "The *ángel del hogar*, as portrayed with varying degrees of moral and social panic by such writers, was home loving, asexual, pious, selfless, and submissive. She symbolized a life-style which they believed was the only natural source of contentment for their readers. The ideologues of domesticity succeeded in displacing all the traditional Christian virtues of chastity, humility, abnegation, obedience, patience, love, and piety onto the figure of the domestic woman, who fulfilled her natural instincts and desires in the home and for the family." (*Ambiguous Angels*, 30) As Jagoe explains, this paradigm was effectively spread in Spain through the growing numbers of feminine periodicals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (33) For more on the *ángel del hogar* see also Frederick, *Wily Modesty*, pages 45-51.

*Beneficencia y al bello secso argentino*.<sup>255</sup> Guerra's publication is unique from those of her female contemporaries because it is one of the only periodicals to reject fashion entirely for the specific purpose of concentrating on women's education. Auza explains the singularity of Guerra's approach to journalism, especially since the rejection of fashion could have had serious economic consequences for the publication:

En primer lugar se trataba de un periódico dedicado al "bello sexo argentino" y, en segundo término, el servicio lo prestaba bajo la faz de la educación. Este último aspecto ya le daba una notoriedad distinta desde que, abandonando las fruslerías y banalidades de las modas, propósito de tan atrayente motivación para obtener lectoras, se dedicaría a un tema tan serio e inédito entre las porteñas, cual era el de la educación de la mujer. (Periodismo y feminismo: 180)

In effect, with the first number of this publication, Guerra denounced frivolity in women (clearly associated with women through fashion) and she claimed that said frivolity was a sign of a woman's lack of education. This contrasts sharply with some of the publications discussed in Chapter 1. While many previous male editors criticized fashion's ability to 'degrade' women because it put them into dangerous contact with the public sphere and because it tempted them to ignore their domestic responsibilities, Guerra claimed that frivolity and arrogance (shown most explicitly through consumption) was most detrimental to women because it resulted in an "uneducated, uncultivated spirit". She explained this to her possible male readers:

El orgullo, la altanería y frivolidad, solo son patrimonio de espíritus incultos. Educad, enseñad, ilustrad á las mugeres y en ello vosotros sereis lo que ganareis; porque tendreis esposas sabias y virtuosas, hijas dóciles y prudentes; y las madres de vuestros hijos, de los verdaderos patriotas, de los dignos y esclarecidos héroes, de los integros magistrados; seran mugeres solidamente instruidas que les harán mamar con la leche los sagrados deberes de hijos, de esposos y de padres porque no es posible que un hombre que es buen

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<sup>255</sup> It's not surprising that Guerra should stress the importance of education in her periodical, since aside from editor, she was also the principle of a small school for girls in Buenos Aires. In addition, Guerra helped in the publication of *La Camelia* (to be discussed below) and she published children's books, novels and miscellaneous articles for other daily newspapers. (For a more detailed analysis of Guerra's life and work, see Auza, Periodismo y feminismo, chapter III; Carlson, ¡Feminsimo! pages 60-62 and Sosa de Newton, Las argentinas: 190)

hijo, buen esposo y buen padre, sea mal patriota, ni menos mal ciudadano. (Buenos Aires, July 24, 1852)

It's important to note here the confluence of motherhood, citizenship and education: much like the Generation of '37 pushed for female education so as to ensure the proper development of the nation's citizens, Guerra too quickly capitalized on this relationship to push for her own agenda. This clearly was a strategic move: so as not to destabilize the harmony associated with the nuclear family, Guerra pushed for female education so that said harmony could continue to exist. She further explains her point:

Es la Educacion Señores un manantial inagotable de bienes, de placeres, el origen, el principio de todas las delicias sociales—De la buena educacion dimana la union dulce y pacífica de los esposos, las tranquilidad de las familias en la vida domestica, la tierna fraternidad de los hermanos, el respeto y amor de los hijos hacia sus padres, y el cariño paternal de estos para con sus hijos. De estas pequeñas sociedades se forman los pueblos, las repúblicas, reinos e imperios. (No. 1, Buenos Aires, July 24, 1852)

As Guerra suggests here, all of the duties traditionally assigned to women—motherhood, marriage, domestic tranquility—are based on an adequate education for women. As this fragment here also suggests, the topic of maternity and the figure of the female as mother would hold a special place in these periodicals, since it offered a safe place from which to insist on women's education. Guerra continues:

Educad a nuestras hijas como que han de ser las madres de esa generacion que bajo tan nobles y santos auspicios se nos prepara. Dadles una educacion que sin alterar en nada los tiernos y dulces sentimientos del corazon de muger, les haga comprender sin embargo los deberes de ciudadana. (No. 1, Buenos Aires, July 24, 1852)

Once again, Guerra neatly links citizenship to motherhood and pleads her case that women should be educated, if for no other reason than to ensure that they understand their “obligations” as citizens. Masiello explains that this strategy, while seemingly mild, was an effective way to enter public space without radically disturbing the balance of power:



[...] women seized upon legends of domesticity to create a productive space of their own. They represented the home as a site for education and reflection [...] In this way, women of mid-nineteenth-century Argentina utilized the domestic sphere to develop new codes of learning. (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 54)

Other writers would go a step further and use motherhood as a metaphor for their periodicals in an attempt to counteract male disapproval of their public endeavors. One such writer was Juana Manso—probably the most outspoken woman writer of her generation and certainly the most rejected by her male contemporaries—who returned to Buenos Aires in 1854, after years of exile due to her Unitarist background. Manso returned to Buenos Aires with plans of creating a literary journal based on a similar one she directed in Brazil titled *O Journal das Senhoras* (1852-1854). Thus, the Argentine version of this periodical, *Álbum de señoritas*, appeared on January 1 of 1854 as a *periódico de literatura, modas, bellas artes y teatros*. In this initial publication, Manso brilliantly manipulated her position in the public light by emphasizing the obvious stereotypes associated with femininity. She began by evoking the feelings of passion, nostalgia and fear that returning to Buenos Aires provoked in her, so as to *ease* her way into the public sphere and to gain a support base among her imagined female readers. That is, Manso strategically relied on her gender as signifier of domesticity and disinterestedness in politics so as to justify her entrance into the public scene:

Qué es la vida [...] una tempestad constante de las pasiones, que solo unmuerece al borde de la tumba. [...] Que después de una ausencia de *veinte años*, al volver á mi pais natal, encuentre lo que iria á conocer por primera vez. [...] Si en vez de simpatias me volviesen indiferencia, si en vez de hermanos hallase enemigos, ¿qué haria? (No. 1, January 2, 1854)

However, from this base Manso launched several rather ‘political’ topics: the moral emancipation of women, the organization of schools for females, philosophy, popular education, the enlightenment of women, and of course fashion. Through these topics she discussed the scandalous ideas of educating children in daycare, mixed education, the need to professionalize

teacher education, gym classes for females, secular education and equal rights for women. She even bravely took issue with the Catholic Church, “Cómo! Señores católicos, pretendéis resuscitar el fantasma pavoroso de la heregia! Creeis que todos los tiempos son unos? (7/55/1854) and she published her own *folletín* titled *La familia del comendador*—a novel whose content on race, slavery and romance, eventually forced her back into exile.<sup>256</sup>

Manso’s affirmations however were not made public without a justification for having stepped out of the prescribed space for women within the domestic sphere. Through her journal, Manso created a sort of “domestic discourse” in the public sphere and she justified her penetration of the public by emphasizing her role as a single mother who needed to support her family. She explains this to her readers:

Hemos llegado al 5.º y último número del *Album* en este primer mes de su existencia. Ningun sacrificio he ahorrado para darle vida y consistencia... Toda mi ambición era fundar un periódico dedicado enteramente á las señoras, y cuya única misión fuese ilustrar; [...] Como os lo digo, querida suscriptoras, no he ahorrado sacrificios ni buena voluntad; pero antes que escritora yo soy madre de familia, es este un cargo que trae inmensa responsabilidad, y que me impone deberes muy serios!... Escribir para no ganar, bien, eso me era indiferente, si pudiese tener pretensiones, diría como Camoens: ‘Aquella cuja lyra sonora/Será mais afamada que ditosa...’ Y sacrificaría el dinero á la gloria como lo he hecho tantas veces en mi vida! (No. 5, January 29, 1854)

Manso is also quick to explain that her ambitions are financial: as a single mother she is obligated to care for her family. She insists however that her endeavors do not hide any zealous

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<sup>256</sup> To say the least, despite Manso’s attempts to enter the public sphere through domesticity, her reception in Buenos Aires was hostile and many are those that criticized her as a heretic. Zuccotti explains how the public reacted to Manso’s bold style: “Con poco éxito, la escritora será llamada al silencio de diversos modos: unos le recomiendan tomar calmantes, la amenazan con amarrarla o recluirla, ajustarle la horma de sus zapatos; otros, le hacen llegar anónimos a sus conferencias públicas prometiendo acusarla ante el obispo de hereje; el mismo Sarmiento le recomienda con tono didáctico aplicar el método que, entre los niños, emplean los maestros para ser escuchados: *Baje Ud., pues, la voz en sus discursos y en sus escritos.* (“Juana Manso”: 381)

desires to accumulate too much money (since this could possibly associate her with a *public woman*):

Mi ambicion es de plata. No tengo fortuna, pero tampoco abrigo deseos dispendiosos. [...] Con todo, si puedo con conformarme con *no ganar*, y si nunca he considerado la fundacion de este periódico como un medio de especulacion, tampoco he podido nunca entrar en mis cálculos de presupuesto mensual y de economía doméstica, gastar una fuerte suma por mes en imprimir papel, cuyo destino mas próximo será ir para alguna taberna á envolver azúcar y arroz. (No. 5, January 29, 1854)

In this case, Manso breaks out of the symbolic by placing her own role as a real mother in the public light. However, once established her all-important position as mother, Manso extends the mother metaphor to her publication *Álbum de señoritas*. In the last number of the periodical, she speaks of the “death” of her publication as if her own child had died:

Concluyen con este número mis tareas, y con el derecho del amor maternal, labor aquí el epitafio de este mi querido hijo, cuya muerte premature es para su madre una decepcion de mas en la vida, una gota mas de acíbar en el cáliz, una espina de mas en el alma! Vivió y murió desconocido como su madre lo *fue siempre* en la region de la Plata; no bastaron ni cuidados ni sacrificios á robustecerle una vida minada por la *consunción* desde que nació en el desamparo y en el páramo de la indiferencia: ahí quedas hijo mio, página de mi alma, que encierras mas de un misterio de dolor: en tu fosa solitaria, quién depondrá una flor? Nadie!” (No. 8, February 17, 1854)

Lastly, Manso ends her journal with a few sentences on her own behalf, excusing herself if she offended anyone:

Adios pues, lectoras, perdonad si acostumbrada á escribir en otro idioma, no usé un lenguaje puro y castizo; si mi corta inteligencia nada creó que os fuere útil, y si mi estilo no tiene la fluidez y la frescura de otros. No fue la voluntad la que me faltó, pero cada uno *es lo que es y no lo que deberia ser*. (No. 8, February 17, 1854)

Manso’s last words to the public are typical of the rhetorical strategies utilized by her female contemporaries: many of the writers of these initial publications reaffirm their weak and lowly nature as women (even though they certainly did not endorse this attitude in their other articles) so as to downplay any threat their presence in the public world of journalism might present. Essentially, the rhetoric of many writers swings back and forth between these two positions: on

the one hand, they present themselves to the public as *weak and ignorant women*, yet their opinions and their defenses of women's rights were powerful. Rosa Guerra, for example, claimed to be raising her 'weak' voice to the Minister of Public Education only in the interest of educating the nation's female children:

Sí, educadnos, protegednos...ilustrado Ministro de Instrucción Pública, es a ti á quien particularmente elevamos nuestra débil voz. Vos que sabeis cuanto vale, de cuanto precio es una buena y sólida educaron, os la pedimos para nuestras hijas. (No. 1, Buenos Aires, July 24, 1852)

However, in the same article, she claims that women do have the right to demand education for their children since they too suffered under the repression of Rosas' dictatorship and since they too sacrificed to save the victims of the dictator's repression. Guerra reminds her readers that in the absence of their husbands—who had been either killed or exiled—women worked to take care of their families. Also, it's worth pointing out that Guerra ends the article confirming women's weakness—she repeats several times, 'we, the weak women'—while also asserting women's place in the political regeneration of Post-Rosista Argentina:

No era ya el hombre el que tenia que trabajar para alimentar la familia, y aun á ellos mismos que gemian en los calabozos...era la muger, ese sér débil é insignificante a quien siempre se le ha considerado nulo. La muger...ese dechado de valor y de constancia, se disfrazó mas de una vez con el vestido de varon, y campaña en la peligrosa fuga al amado esposo, dándole fuerza y valentia con su ternura y cariño para arrostrar los mayores riesgos! —Mas de una vez burló la vigilancia de los carceleros, é introdujo billetes y dinero en un pan, una fruta, en el fondo de una vianda, para dar un consuelo al objeto de sus amores!—Mas de una vez desbarató la astucia del espionage de Rosas, substrayendo las víctimas, ocultándolas y salvándolas á fuerza de los mayores peligros y compromisos! [...] nosotras las débiles mugeres nos unimos a vosotros de lo íntimo del alma, para ayudarós y llevar a cabo la tan árdua y difícil empresa de nuestra regeneracion política. (No. 1, Buenos Aires, July 24, 1852)

This double-sided discourse was also adopted by the editors of *La Camelia*.<sup>257</sup> On the one hand, the program, tone and even the slogan of the periodical—¡Libertad! No licencia: igualdad entre ambos sexos—was quite combative, and yet, on the other, the *redactoras* reiterated their difficult task at hand due to the “weak nature” their sex. In the first edition of the periodical, the anonymous *redactoras* recognize their tenuous place in the public sphere, they emphasize their weakness and they explain the difficult task of publishing for such an enlightened public as that of Buenos Aires:

Temeraria empresa es por cierto arrojarse á escritoras en un pueblo tan ilustrado, y cuando tantas capacidades dedican sus plumas á la redaccion de periódicos; mas confiadas en la galantería de nuestros cólegas, nos atravesamos á presentarnos entre ellos. [...] La debilidad de nuestro sexo nos autoriza á acogernos á la sombra del *fuerte*, y sin mas preámbulos suplicamos á nuestros cólegas se dignen mirar nuestras producciones con suma indulgencia. (No. 1, April 11, 1852)

In a different article in the first number of the publication, the editors use a similar strategy: they declare their right to defend themselves and the issues relevant to the *weaker sex*, without, however, transgressing the limits that, in their own words, nature has provided for them as women. They are sure to explain to their readers that they are not interested in forming an *army of women*, only in defending certain rights for them:

Nosotras abogaremos con fuego por las franquicias que se nos deben; pero sin trapasar los limites que la misma naturaleza parece habernos prescripto: no caeremos en el desacuerdo de pretender formar batallones, ni escuadrones de mugeres, cuando mas las

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<sup>257</sup> There appears to be a discrepancy on the true identities of the editors of this periodical. Some have claimed that Rosa Guerra was behind its publication (Carlson, *¡Feminismo!*, 1988), however Auza’s reputable study of the period declares that while Guerra may have contributed to its pages, she was not the principle editor of *La Camelia*. (*Periodismo y feminismo*, 1988: 167-168) Auza concludes that the identities of the editors are still unknown and all that remains of the identities of the contributors are hidden in the pseudonyms they used: *Ziola, Eliza, Laura, Ortensia, Lila, Ariana, Adela, Hadalía, Elena, Ernestina, Casiana*. More recently, Frederick’s *Wily Modesty*, perhaps one of the few in-depth investigations on women’s writing after Rosas, also claims to ignore the true identity of the writers. Frederick explains that these women avoided using their names so as to avoid the public’s criticism of their endeavors. (*Wily Modesty*: 18)

impulsaremos á que se enrolen en la *Guardia Nacional*, pero de ningun modo transigiremos con las demasias de los hombres; entramos en una era de Libertad y no hay derecho alguno que nos escluya de ella. *Libertad, no licencia* es nuestro lema; pues bien Libertad para nuestro secso, libertad únicamente limitada por la razon por la equidad. (No. 1, April 11, 1852)

Also, much like Rosa Guerra in *La Educación*, the editors of *La Camelia* claimed their right to participate in the public sphere since they had contributed to the freedom enjoyed after the fall of Rosas by participating in his downfall:

Nosotras como los hombres, hemos participado de las persecuciones de la fe política, en esa época funesta de luto y de sangre: nosotras al lado de nuestros padres, de nuestros hijos; hemos corrido á mendigar la hospitalidad del suelo extranjero: á nosotras tambien, la mano criminal del asesino, se ha dirijido muchas veces, acometiendo nuestra existencia, violando nuestro honor, y vejando nuestra delicadeza; nosotras en fin, hemos contribuido á la alta empresa de libertad, y de derrocar ese poder absoluto y bárbaro, que por veinte años, ha hecho gemir á los pueblo Argentinos. (No. 7, Abril 25, 1852)

The editors would not venture so boldly without assuring their readers that their aspirations were only appropriate to their sex. As they explain to their possible male readers, they are merely trying to fill in the void left by the dictatorship: they only wish to care after the education of their children and their rights so as to provide *useful citizens* to their homeland. The *redactoras* explain:

No se crea que al pedir un nuevo órden de enseñanza, nos animan aspiraciones indebidas á nuestro secso; no tratamos de ocupar con el tiempo, un lugar en las cámaras, ni llenar la mision de un enviado ácerca de una potencia estrangera; no señores, tratamos solamente de llenar el vacio, que el órden social nos prescribe, y qué la misma naturaleza nos imponen; *cuidar de la educacion de nuestros hijos, defender sus derechos y dar ciudadanos útiles á la Patria*. He ahí nuestros granes deseos, que quisieramos llenar sin tener que mendigar los conocimientos estraños, para cumplir con estas sagradas obligaciones. (No. 12, May—*Mes de América*, 6, 1852)

These useful strategies did not however fully shield women writers from attacks. It appears that the editors of *La Camelia* were indeed criticized for their publication. The most direct attack came from the publication *El Padre Castañeta*. As a result of this attack, an on-going, and somewhat humorous, battle between the two publications took place until *La Camelia* finally

stopped its circulation.<sup>258</sup> It is interesting to note that some of the satirical attacks made against the *redactoras* of *La Camelia* were made through dress. Case in point: in response to the *redactoras* claim to their identity that *sin ser niñas ni bonitas, no somos viejas ni feas*, the editors of *El Padre Castañeta* respond with the following poem...

[...]  
Si vosotras sois bonitas  
No os faltarán remitidos,  
Y andarán los literatos  
Deseosos de estar metidos  
En vuestras bellas columnas;

Si feas sois, vuestra empresa  
Se fundirá sin remedio  
¡Desgracias fatal es esa!

Mas no es la desgracia peor  
De meteros a escritoras.  
Hallar pocos suscriptores  
Y los mismo suscriptoras.

Sino que si alguna vez  
Escribís con ciencia suma  
No faltará quien exclame  
Leyéndoos ¡hábil pluma!

Y hasta habrá tal vez alguno  
Que porque sois periodistas  
Os llame mujeres públicas  
Por llamaros publicistas.

[...]

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<sup>258</sup> Auza understands the conflict between the two publications as somewhat trivial or in any case as a playful battle of the sexes between the editors. (*Periodismo y feminismo*, 1988: 169) Frederick, on the other hand, explains that Auza's failure to understand the nature of the satirical attacks undermines the importance of *La Camelia*'s mission: "Auza interprets the barbs aimed at *La Camelia* from the periodical *El Padre Castañeta* as mere mischief on the part of its editors. Even if that is so, he underestimates the impact of such 'playfulness' on women's effectiveness in a public role. By ignoring *La Camelia*'s words and attacking its editors instead, *El Padre Castañeta* weakened the respectability that provided women's only source of public authority at that time." (*Wily Modesty*: 40) I'm inclined to agree with Frederick's assessment.

¿Con que queréis ya largar  
Vuestras modestas polleras,  
Y poner os pantalones  
De alzapón y faltriqueras? (No. 7, Abril 14, 1852)<sup>259</sup>

There are two points worth highlighting in this poem. The most obvious is the author's intention of associating the *redactoras* to public women (prostitutes) since they are *publicists*. But most importantly, what seems worse to the author is that far from possibly being associated with prostitution, these women want to throw away their modest skirts and replace them with the pants of the *letrado*. The author seems to ask them, since this stanza is in question marks, if they are certain they are prepared for the consequences of such an action.

The editors of *La Camilia* were quick to respond to this satirical poem in a similar fashion. First, they defended their right to voice their opinions without running the risk of being associated with prostitution. Also, they clearly stated that in no way were they trying to cast off their skirts so as to assume an identity inappropriate to women. And finally, they also questioned *El Padre's* devotion to religion (as a supposed *Father*) suggesting that if indeed the *skirt* was the modest article of clothing *par excellence*, this should be known to the author of the poem as a supposed man of religion<sup>260</sup>:

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<sup>259</sup> This poem is cited from Auza, *Periodismo y feminismo*: 169-170.

<sup>260</sup> The publication *El Padre Castañeta* could possibly hark back to the real life *Father Francisco de Paula Castañeda*, an important public and literary figure in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Father Castañeda* was a clear opponent of women's rights and of women's participation in the public sphere and he clearly expressed this in his publication *La Matrona comentadora de los cuatro periodistas* (1821-1822). Masiello explains his contempt for the actress Trinidad Guevara in the 1820's: "The Argentine priest Francisco de Paula Castañeda, who in the 1820's was determined to forbid women any part in public activity, vented his wrath in particular against the actress Trinidad Guevara, who audaciously introduced her illegitimate child on stage in a Buenos Aires theater. Denouncing the improprieties of this act, which brought the conduct of private morality to the witness of the public sphere, the priest called for an immediate repudiation of the performer's unbridled arrogance and created a minor scandal in the urban press of the time." (*Between Civilization and Barbarism*: 208)



Sin ser mugeres públicas, ni publicistas, hemos creído en estos momentos de libertad, poder alzar nuestra voz, para reclamar los derechos de igual entre ambos sexos: [...] No tratamos R.P. de cambiar de traje, no señor: pues su Reverencia se digna confesar, con la ingenuidad de un verdadero ministro de nuestra santa Religion, que las polleras es el traje de la modestia, y lo creemos sin vasilar un solo instante desde que S.R. lo lleva como una divisa de su esclarecida virtud. (No. 4, April 18, 1852)

An additional article “Al R. P. Castañeta”, written by *Casiana*, in the same number continues with the defense and with the insinuation that it is the editors of *El Padre Castañeta* who are acting in a manner unbecoming of their position:

Reverendo Padre: --Hemos leído vuestro periódico del Miércoles anterior con toda atención possible.—En gracia de vuestro talento y destreza en la sátira os perdonamos las indirectas dirigidas á la Camelia. Alabamos á Dios al ver en el silencio y obscuridad de los claustros hombres como V.P. y Lima sorda—Metidos en política, intrigas, y asuntos mundanos, mal podreis desempeñar con eficacia el sagrado ministerio que os está encomendado. —Os habeis sin duda olvidado de aquel voto solemne que os prohíbe de tomar ciertas licencias con el bello sexo, por mas que seais poetas—Por lo demas, nos reservamos, el poner formalmente la queja ante el P. Presidente, para que vele sobre vuestra conducta, pues sin duda él no sabe, esas salidas nocturnas, y otras cosillas mas, que cuidaremos de advertirle.(No. 4, April 18, 1852)

Finally, in one of the last exchanges to take place between the editors of *La Camelia* and *El Padre Castañeta*, a contributor to *La Camelia* asks that the editors publish her poem in response to the attacks made against its women writers. In this humorous poem, the writer again assumes the position of being a *poor woman*, who can only offer a needle to sew or knitting instruments to her readers. Yet sarcastically she adds that it would be quite embarrassing for *El Padre Castañeta* to be beaten by a woman in verse and to have its power tied by the hair from a woman’s braid:

[...] Que yo al fin, pobre muger,  
Sin Lira con que cantar,  
A penas puedo ofrecer,  
Una aguja de coser  
O un bastidor de marcar—

[...] Pero será una vergüenza  
Que una infelice muger,

En métrica lid os venza,  
Y amarre vuestro poder  
Con las hebras de su trenza... (No. 6, April 22, 1852)

Surprisingly, even the outspoken Juana Manso explained in the first fashion column of *Álbum de Señoritas* that since she was a woman, and that since she knew nothing of politics, she thought it best to write on fashion. The irony, of course, is that her commentaries on fashion were highly political and critical of the political decisions made by leading public figures. Manso explains all of this through the use of a pseudonym, *Anarda*, perhaps because even she knew that her commentaries would provoke criticism. She begins by introducing her *alto-ego* to her readers: “Nuestra única colaboradora, la señorita Anarda, nos ha enviado su primer artículo sobre la moda...” and then she explains the following:

Mas en fin, salga lo que saliere, alla va! yo amiga, de poco entiendo, así es que me dedicaré á las modas, y por cierto que será mucho mejor que trate de manteletas y moldes de vestidos, y no de libertad de imprenta, de ley de patentes, y de otras mil cosas estupendas de que tratan nuestros diaristas hoy, tirando tajos y reverses, proponiendo enmiendas, mejores &c. y ahora por hablar sobre esto me ocurre a mí pobre mujer, simplona que soy, si se pudiese hacer trocar los papeles por un mes que fuese á nuestros hombres de la época! (No. 1, January 1, 1854)

Manso’s strategy here is striking: she explains that since she is a woman and as such knows nothing, it would be better to talk about dress patterns and articles of clothing rather than freedom of the press, proposing amendments and other issues of public concern. However, in denying her ability to talk about such “important” issues, she is doing just that. She also explains to her readers that a woman’s most important adornment is her intelligence and her goal as editor of *Álbum de señoritas* is to prove this. Much like her contemporaries, Manso pushes education for women as the keystone of domestic happiness:

Todos mis esfuerzos serán consagrados á la ilustracion de mis compatriotas, y tenderán á un único propósito—Emanciparlas de las preocupaciones torpes y añejas que les prohibian hasta hoy hacer uso de su inteligencia, enagenando su libertad y hasta su conciencia, á autoridades artibrarias [...] quiero y he de probar que la inteligencia de la

muger, lejos de ser un absurdo, ó un defecto, un crimen, ó un desatino, es su mejor adorno, es la verdadero fuente de su virtud y de la felicidad doméstica [...]. (No. 1, January 1, 1854)

This focus on education, rather than fashion, points to one of the most significant accomplishments of women writers in terms of their *pro-feminist* agenda. By emphasizing women's intellect over their bodies, these women writers were challenging one of the timeless gender divides: mind/male and body/female. As I will discuss in the following section, this was just one of the ways that women writers strategically appropriated fashion.

#### ***4.2. The Politics of Frivolity: Argentina's Women of Letters Find Fashion***

The gendered division between mind (often associated with the male) and body (often associated with the female), as many feminist critics have pointed out, has served to marginalize women from public activity and from participating in civic 'responsibilities' as citizens.<sup>261</sup>

Gatens further explains this point:

At different times, different kinds of beings have been excluded from the pact, often simply by virtue of their corporeal specificity. Slaves, foreigners, women, the conquered,

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<sup>261</sup> For a brief history of the dualism *mind/body* and *male/female* beginning with Plato see Spelman, "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views". See also McNay "The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience", 1991 for a brief discussion of the Cartesian opposition *mind/body*. However, for an additional, more thorough examination of the development of this system of binaries, see Laqueur's *Making Sex* which charts the shift from a *one-sex system* to a *two-sex system* whereby men and women became differentiated by their biological sex. The author explains: "By around 1800, writers of all sorts were determined to base what they insisted were fundamental differences between the male and female sexes, and thus between man and woman, on discoverable biological distinctions and to express these in a radically different rhetoric. [...] Thus the old model, in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way by the late eighteenth century to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence." (5) As Laqueur explains, this paved the way for grounding sexual difference in nature since from this separation of the sexes the resultant separation of labor and spheres was justifiable: "The dominant, though by no means universal, view since the eighteenth century has been that there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these 'facts'." (6)

children, the working classes, have all been excluded from political participation, at one time or another, by their bodily specificity. [...] That is, those whose corporeal specificity marks them as inappropriate analogs to the political body. (“Corporeal Representation”: 83)<sup>262</sup>

And, as the example of *El Bicho Colorado* at this beginning of this chapter showed in the case of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, using the female body as a metaphor was “an obvious way of describing political life” while isolating the female subject from active participation in this political life.<sup>263</sup> (Gatens, “Corporeal Representation”: 83) So, aside from the ‘real bodies’ of women, following Foucault’s lead<sup>264</sup>, Gatens explains that there is also an “imaginary body” that

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<sup>262</sup> Gatens continues this compelling argument in her consideration of political theory: “In political theory, the metaphor of the unified body politic has functioned to achieve two important effects. First, the artificial man incorporates and so controls and regulates women’s bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy, since her contributions are neither visible nor acknowledged. Second, in so far as he can maintain this apparent unity through incorporation, he is not required to acknowledge difference. The metaphor functions to restrict our political vocabulary to one voice only: a voice that can speak of only *one* body, *one* reason, and *one* ethic.” (*Imaginary Bodies*:23) I think that it’s precisely for these reasons that the study of 19<sup>th</sup> century women’s writing in Argentina is so compelling: in the labyrinth of public debate in the period, these women writers created an alternative to this *one body, one reason, one ethic*.

<sup>263</sup> While the field of “body studies” is diverse, this study will rely on scholarship that understands the body as a product and/or construction of culture. However, the importance of phenomenological studies on the body cannot be ignored since the body cannot be studied primarily as a construct without considering the importance of *bodily experience*. (Entwistle: 28) Here the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*The Phenomenology of Perception*) is central. See also Bigwood, “Renaturalizing the Body (with the Help of Merleau-Ponty). For an in-depth consideration of the major theoretical debates in body studies (particularly the post-structuralist vs. the phenomenological perspectives on the body) see Entwistle, Joanne *The Fashioned Body* Chapter 1 “Dress and the Body”. Other important sources are Conboy, Katie; Medina, Nadie and Stanbury, Sarah (eds.) *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. See also: Price, Janet and Shildrick, Margrit (eds.) *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. Recent scholarship has also highlighted the importance of the studying the construction of the male body in discourse. See Bordo, Susan *The Male Body*; Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man*; Breward, Christopher *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*; and Bourdieu, Pierre *Masculine Domination*.

<sup>264</sup> Foucault’s chapter “Docile Bodies” in *Discipline and Punish* is central to this point since it explores the historical process of the domination of the human body: “What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics

can be “posited as an effect of socially and historically specific practices: an effect, that is, not of genetics but of relations of power.” (“Power, Bodies and Difference”: 229)<sup>265</sup> In this case, clearly, Gatens is referring to how women’s bodies, in the realm of the symbolic, are appropriated for political purposes. (Again, this was the case in the cover-page of *El Bicho Colorado*.) Additional critical theory on the body has explained *how* it can be understood as a cultural configuration, as a “conceptual tool”, as something that can be sculpted in discourse, and as a “medium of culture”. (Schiebinger, “Introduction”; Bakare-Yusuf, “The Economy of Violence”: 312; Bordo, “The Body”: 90) With specific reference to the female body, Susan Bordo has pointed out that “the discipline and normalization of the female body [...] has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control.” (“The Body”: 91)

In Chapter 1, we saw that the case of the *peinetón* brought precisely these issues of social control to the forefront: because the headpiece called so much attention to the female body in the public sphere it was largely criticized by male editors. The major journals of the time period consistently attacked the *peinetón* as the source of all evil: it caused economic problems for

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of power’, was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines.” (138) Also, as McNay explains, Foucault is useful to body studies because he places the body at the center of struggles for power and he shows how bodies have been manipulated to represent these power struggles: “Foucault places the human body at the center of this struggle between different power formations. He sees the forces in history acting upon and through the human body in a manner which resists incorporation into a totalizing historical perspective.” (127) This is important because Foucault helps to situate the body, again clearly associated with women, outside of essentializing norms that have relegated women to positions of powerlessness: “As the center of the struggle for domination, the body is both shaped and reshaped by the different warring forces acting upon it. The body then, is conceived of in radically anti-essentialist terms”. (McNay: 127)

<sup>265</sup> Gatens also explains that the *imaginary body* can be useful in understanding modern conceptions of masculinity and femininity: “An analysis of the imaginary body will show it to be the site of the historical and cultural specificity of masculinity and femininity. It is to the imaginary body that we must look to find the key or the code to the decipherment of the social and personal significance of male and female biologies as lived in culture, that is, masculinity and femininity.” (Imaginary bodies: 12)

husbands and/or fathers and most importantly it made the public sphere a dangerous place for male circulation since it interfered with side-walk traffic and was claimed to have wounded male passersby.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps what most concerned the male authors was the threat of the *imaginary* body that peinetón came to represent: the idea of the female calling attention to herself in the public and the idea of a fashionable article causing the financial ruin of families threatened the gendered organization of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine society.

The case of the *peinetón*—to mention one example among many other possibilities—also calls attention to the intricate relationship between fashion and the body. First, fashion by its very nature is intricately linked to the body, for it is upon the body that fashions are placed and it is the body that is molded by them. (Boynton-Arthur, “Clothing, Control, and Women’s Agency”) Fashion and the body—a body that serves as the *canvas* to be dressed—together become significant tools in the process of identity formation and consolidation. In addition, Craik, a renowned fashion critic explains that the relationship between fashion and the female body can also lead to gender exploitation:

The ways in which bodies are fashioned through clothes, make-up and demeanour constitute identity, sexuality and social position. In other words, clothes bodies are tools of self-management. [...] From this standpoint, fashion constitutes an effective and pervasive means through which women become objects of the gaze and of male sexual desire. If women are confined to the role of display, and ‘measured’ by the standards of achieving desirable ‘looks’, they are caught up in a vicious circle. (The Face of Fashion: 46)

In studying fashion it is also important to emphasize how fashion and dress serve as intermediaries between the private and the public spheres: essentially they become the “meeting place of the private and the public”. Allow me to quote at length to explain this point:

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<sup>266</sup> The reader will remember from Chapter 1 that La Argentina (1830-1831), El Mártir o Libre (1830), The British Packet and Argentine News (1826-1858), La Gaceta Mercantil, El Iris, Diario del Medio Día. Político, Literario y Mercantil, (1833) and El Censor Argentino (1834-) all contained articles and satirical poems condemning the use of the peinetón.

Wearing the right clothes and looking our best, we feel at ease with our bodies, and the opposite is equally true: turning up for a situation inappropriately dressed, we feel awkward, out of place and vulnerable. In this respect, dress is both an intimate experience of the body and a public presentation of it. Operating on the boundary between self and other is the interface between the individual and the social world, the meeting place of the private and the public. (Entwistle, The Fashioned Body: 7)

Clearly, it is for this reason that many critics of female fashions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century disapproved of fashion's growing importance in *porteño* life: because fashion often acted as a bridge between the public and the private (and almost all of the examples we've seen up to this point attest to this), it could serve as a conduit for the introduction of the public into the private, therefore threatening the ordered nature of these two spheres. It is also pertinent to study the body when considering how women writers used fashion to break down the association of the female with the body, because, as McNay explains, a key role in gender difference is established through biology:

On a fundamental level, a notion of the body is central to the feminist analysis of the oppression of women because it is upon the biological difference between the male and female bodies that the edifice of gender inequality is built and legitimated. The idea that women are inferior to men is naturalized and thus legitimated by reference to biology. ("The Foucauldian Body": 128)

Other theorists have pointed to how important the body—and what it is wearing—becomes in moments of national crisis where *every body* now counts. Hunt explains this in the context of revolutionary France:

All bodies had to be examined closely because all bodies now made up the body politic; every body literally embodied a piece of sovereignty, or at least some connection to it. As a consequence the whole subject of appearance was valorized in new and particularly significant ways. ("Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France": 188)<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Hunt further relates this point to the fact that after the King no longer represented the *body politic*, individual bodies within the body politic came to have different meanings. "A body was no longer defined by its place in a cosmic order cemented by hierarchy, deference, and readily readable dress; each individual body now carried with itself all the social and political meanings of the new political order, and these meanings proved very difficult to discern. With sovereignty diffused from the king's body out into the multiple bodies of the nation, the old codes of

Nineteenth-century women writers didn't need this theory to understand the importance of the female body in the public sphere: they understood it through their own experiences and fashion narratives provided an excellent outlet of expression for their disapproval of the representation of women's bodies in public. However, women's disapproval of fashion was based *not* on the perceived danger it posed to the harmony of the domestic. Rather, many women writers spoke out against the physical constraints of high fashion and they criticized the whimsical nature of fashions that very often limited their role in public life. That is, 19<sup>th</sup> century women writers were concerned about the *representation* of the female body in the public sphere, and fashion was intricately related to this representation. Masiello explains that this preoccupation with the representation of the female in the public light was one of the central features of 19<sup>th</sup> century women's writing:

Rather than serve as surrogates of men in the struggle for national identity [...] women organized a platform of their own to demand direct participation in national life and culture. Three areas of discussion emerged from women's journalism: the position of women in the political space and the representation of their bodies within the public sphere; the home as a safe haven from tyranny; and women's right to engage in creative activities. (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 55)

La Camelia (1852) offers an excellent example of women writers' preoccupation with the representation of the female body in public since it stressed the importance of female intellect over beauty. Also because the publication placed more emphasis on intellectualism over fashion know-how, La Camelia represents one of the first instances where questions and debates on the body and fashion emerge in Argentine journalism. (Masiello, La mujer y el espacio público: 14)

The first number of the publication begins by explaining that its contributors will *not* fall into the

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readability broke down and new ones had to be elaborated. The uncertainty of this situation was reflected in the seesaw of regulatory practice concerning dress." (Freedom of Dress": 187) To a certain extent, the same was true of post-colonial Argentina until Rosas assumed power and re-instated, in a sense, the body of the King.



trap of detailing trivialities related to fashion. As the *redactoras* contend, they are far too wise for that:

No vaya á creerse que bajo este epígrafe pensamos en detallar todas las puerilidades que se llaman *Modas*, de ningun modo. Aunque mugeres y por tanto amantes de las modas, somos bastante sensatas para pasar por alto esas pequeñeses, mucho mas cuando abundan figurines. Nuestro artículo tiene una tendencia moral, por que estoma en la inteligencia que esta Señora Da. *Moral*, es hermana y muy querida de la *Libertad*, y antipática con la señorita *Licencia*. (No. 1, April 11, 1852)

The authors do note that fashion is an important and necessary part in fomenting *commerce* and *industry*—much as Sarmiento and his contemporaries had claimed. However, they urge their readers to use good judgment when purchasing their clothing. As they explain, it is better to adopt a fashion suitable to a woman’s physical characteristics, rather than follow fashion whims explicitly. Above all, fashions should not point towards *indecenty* (which, in the minds of the editors represents the Rosista period where *morality* had been replaced with *prostitution*), rather they should be modest:

[...] Durante el largo período que felizmente concluyó, la *Moral* fue reemplazada por la *Prostitucion* y es muy justo que una vez arrojada ésta al mutador de donde jamas debiera haber salido, vuelva aquella de su destierro y estienda su benéfica influencia á toda la sociedad. [...] Las modas alimentan al comercio, fomentan la industria y aun cuando se las quisiera culpar de perjudiciales, serian necesarias. [...] La moda por ridícula que sea (las hay ridiculísimas) llega a parecer bien, sea por que nuestra vista se habitúe ó por su uniformidad; mas siempre aconsejaremos a ambos secos no sean tan extremosos en las modas que lleguen á singularizarse: que traten ante todo de adoptar lo que mas les siente, tanto en el vestuario como en el peinado, y suplicamos á las jóvenes tengan siempre presente que el último debe estar en consonancia con el rostro...Hay modas que son indecentes, y denotan en quien las sigue falta de pudor—Este es uno de los puntos con que nuestra moral no transije. (No. 1, April 11, 1852)

The authors’ insistence on decency here is significant: rather than associating popular fashions directly with prostitution and “female weakness” because of its public nature and its capacity to threaten the domestic sphere—like previous critics of fashion had done—the authors associate popular fashions with dictatorship and repression. In this way, they seem to suggest

that fashions and dress codes used, and/or forced upon women under the *Rosista* dictatorship did not properly represent the female body in the public light. That is, the dictatorship unleashed a wave of indecency that indirectly affected fashion and women's morality. Here the blame falls upon Argentina's heads of state for fashion's indiscretions, and not upon the *weak nature* of women as had been often assumed by many male writers on fashion.

The second number of *La Camelia* begins its next fashion column with an important rhetorical strategy: the authors establish a *genealogy* of western fashion and they insert Argentine fashion into this genealogy. Interestingly, it is the *peinetón* that served to insert Argentine fashion into the western tradition. However, rather than praise this fashion phenomenon, the authors were rather sarcastic in their commentaries. (The reader will however note that they were not critical of it because it threatened the home but rather because it held women "hostage" to fashion whims.) The authors also speak of the tyrannical power of fashion in reference to the *peinetón*. The political reference to the tyranny of Rosas couldn't be more obvious:

En tiempo de Luis XV (á mediados del siglo pasado) fué la rigurosa enclavar en el peinado, ya un Molino, con su correspondiente molinero y su asno [...] El año 1802 estaba en todo vigor el uso del peluquien llamado á la *cáraculla*; era un simil de lo que conocemos por *peinado á la Romana* [...] Entre nosotras hemos visto, no ha muchos años, convertirse en furor la moda de los peinetones: á cuantas caricaturas han dado lugar, y con cuanta justicia! –Puede inventarse cosa mas ridícula, mas incomoda, mas extravagante que los tales peinetones? [...] Triste consecuencia del poder tiránico de la moda!!! (No. 2, April 13, 1852)<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> West also analyzes this fragment from *La Camelia* although she fails to see the importance of the *genealogy* that the writers established by inserting the Argentine *peinetón* into Western fashion history. West mistakenly asserts that the writers make no reference to the *peinetón*, although they clearly do. She writes: "One article described the hair styles worn by women during the reign of Louis XV, criticizing the women of the time for having forced artificial structures into their hair and displayed ridiculous thematic scenes. Strangely, the Argentine *peinetón* went unmentioned." (*Tailoring the Nation*: 159)

Juana Manso was more outspoken in her critique of women's fashion. She began by attacking males since, as she explains, they robbed women of their intelligence and replaced this lost intelligence by inciting a love for luxury and vanity and by placing women under the "yoke" of marital or paternal care:

Le robais su inteligencia, y como no tiene un fin noble y grandioso en que alimentar la actividad que la consume, revierte en daño vuestro, porque degenera en malicia infernal, en astucia y en intriga. Oprimis su voluntad, encadenais su libre albedrío ó al yugo paternal ó á la férrea coyunda marital, y entonces la obligais á que para cumplir los actos espontáneos de *su querer*, os engañe, os mienta, os traiciones [...] Todo le quitais á la muger! todo lo que puede caber en la mision grandiosa de la inteligencia, donde toman parte la sensibilidad y la voluntad libre. Pero le halagais su vanidad, le escitais el amor al lujo, á los díges, á los tocados, ciegos idólatras de su belleza sois el incentivo funesto de la corrupción, porque si no sabe lo que es su alma, qué le importa á la muger venderla por un puñado de alfileres de oro? (*Álbum de Señoritas* No. 8, February 17, 1854)

Manso then continues her argument by explaining that Argentine women have a false sense of liberty. In her words, they are free to dress up, which in the end only makes them slaves to their mirrors, corsets, shoes and by extension they become slaves of their families and husbands:

Libertad? sí, la de vestirse, la de engalanarse; aquella que le dió Dios escrita en la propia organizacion de su alma, no. La muger es esclava de su espejo, de su corsé, de sus zapatos, de su familia, de su marido, de los errores, de las preocupaciones; sus movimientos se cuentan, sus pasos se miden, un ápice fuera de la línea prescripta, ya no es muger, es el qué? ...un ser mixto sin nombre, un monstruo, un fenómeno!! Decís, la muger es vanidosa, voluble, falsa, ama los trapos, los brillantes, no hay que pensar en casarse porque es la ruina del hombre! Y vosotros, ricos, por qué no la educais ilustrada, en vez de criarla para el goce brutal? Y vosotros, pobres, por qué le cerrais torpemente la vereda de la industria y del trabajo, y la colocais entre la alternativa de la prostitución ó la miseria?... (*Álbum de Señoritas* No. 8, February 17, 1854)

In this case, again the blame falls not upon the *weak nature* of women and their perceived *desire* for luxury, but upon men who incite women to enjoy its "brutal" pleasures. Instead of educating women properly, Manso claims that men give them little choice: often by prohibiting

the types of work that are acceptable to women, men condemn them to a life of prostitution and misery.

Also, much like Rosa Guerra had done previously in *La Educación* and like the editors of *La Camelia*, Juana Manso strove to dissociate the female with the body while strengthening her association with intellect. Like her female contemporaries, Manso suggested that a woman's most important *beauty compliment* was her intelligence and not the clothes she chose to wear. She explained that since women were not encouraged to cultivate their intelligence, they remained at the rear of civilization:

La ilustracion lejos de ser incompatible con la modestia, es el complemento de la belleza, porque es la perfeccion intelectual y moral de toda criatura. En nuestro pais, como por todas partes el hombre cultiva su inteligencia, mientras que la mujer queda á retaguardia de la civilizacion; (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 1, June 1864)

Interestingly, Manso chose to use metaphors that were reflected in the public discourse of the period: the paradigm civilization vs. barbarism, as Chapter 2 discussed, was an important feature in the organization of the national imaginary. By strategically speaking of fashion in these terms, she was not only able to dismantle the relationship between women and fashion that had been established by previous intellectuals, but she was also able to create a space to debate the need to educate women for the sake of *civilization*. Manso continued her argument contending that while men spoke of literature, science and progress, women knew only to speak of fashion, fashion, and more fashion:

Efectivamente, el hombre habla ciencias, literatura, progreso, mientras que la muger habla modas, modas, modas; cuando no recurre al triste expediente de la murmuracion, y al mas reprobado del chisme y de la intriga. En este estado de cosas, la civilizacion viene falseada por su base, porque ella no consiste en el lujo sino en las costumbres consiste en la moral, en el progreso exterior de la sociedad como en su desarrollo intelectual. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 1, June 1864)

Again, Manso resorts to the all-important binary *civilization vs. barbarism*: if women only speak of fashions while men ponder “important” issues, civilization in Argentina will always be founded on a falsified base. Manso calls on her contemporaries to educate themselves, however, so as not to attract too much criticism, she calls on them to do so to be better wives and mothers:

Ylustremonos pues; la mujer del cristianismo, la muger de la civilizacion, no ha nacido para vivir entre una crinoliina y una cresta, con un espejo por delante: su verdadero destino, su destino de muger, es amar, sufrir y perdonar, pero tambien es adquirir por medio de la educacion, virtudes con que desempeñar los serios deberes de esposa y madre. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 1, June 1864)

Manso ends her article by reminding her readers that only intelligence can withstand the test of time. Beauty and fashions fade, only a woman’s mind and her heart continue on to the next life:

Para quien sabe pensar la ropa vale tanto en la vidriera del mercader como sobre los hombros de una estatua, sea ella de carne y hueso; la juventud vuela, la ropa se usa, la hermosura se marchita como la lozania de la flor, y muere: solo queda el corazon y la mente y ambos son la siempre viva de la humanidad: que despues de esta vida de pruebas continua su ser en la esfera de la inmortalidad. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 1, June 1864)

The editors of *La Camelia* used a similar strategy. They too claimed that Argentina’s female youth was wasted on learning useless frivolities. Because the difference between a civilized and a barbaric man was based on education, they claimed that likewise an uneducated female will always remain uncivilized. The anonymous *Redactoras* called for an end to the idea that women needed nothing more than the sewing needle to be happy:

Nuestras jóvenes vejetan en el apredisaje del piano, del dibujo y de otras fruslerías, que aunque son un adorno en la niñez, de nada la son útiles, cuando pasan á llenar la mision de madres y de esposas; [...] La diferencia que se haya entre el hombre civilizado y el salvage, es sin duda la misma que se nota, en la muger culta y civilizada con la que no lo és—Finalice entre nosotras ese fanatismo ridículo y perjudicial, de que no precisamos otros conocimientos que los de la aguja para ser felices. (No. 12, May 6, 1852)

It's important here to highlight the rebellious nature of this statement. Needlework, as Frederick explains, was a very important symbol of female passivity and immobility:

Sewing, hemming, embroidery, knitting, lace-making, darning—sewing in all its myriad manifestations was far more than simple necessity; it became a resonant symbol of traditional roles for women and the cult of ultradomesticity. [...] For women across all classes, needlework was the physical expression of an ideology that prized female silence, passivity, and immobility. Like the violet, the picture of a woman seated in chair, eyes lowered, and hands busy with a needle rather than a book was an ideological image that did not need explanation to a nineteenth-century audience. (*Wily Modesty*: 67-68)

Thus, that these writers would chose to emphasize the need to move beyond needlework to an adequate education for females beyond “fruslerías” (unnecessary things) is an outright attack against the patriarchal values in place at the time. Juana Manso even claimed that women were often nothing more than living *sewing machines* (*maquina viviente de costura*) and that women were not born for the immobility that sewing imposed upon them:

La muger no ha nacido precisamente para el trabajo pesado manual, pero tampoco para la inmovilidad como le sucede en la costura. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 3, July 1, 1864)

In a later number of *La Siempre Viva*, Manso spoke out again against the gender conditioning of young females. Rather than educating young females properly, she claims that Argentine society teaches young girls to play with dolls and dress them accordingly. Then, they are taught to look in the mirror and become fixated on their own dress and luxury. Dissimilar to Sarmiento's *paquete*—who through fashion and proper grooming became an icon of good taste and *civilization*—Manso suggested that females who were taught nothing but proper dress and adornment were drained of their intelligence. Unfortunately, for many young girls, their first loves were their charms, their decorations and their clothes:

Ay! triste, ya véo el infantil atavio que te prepara tu cariñosa madre; luego asi tiernicita. Ya te veo tomar la forma de la muñeca: la nena, llena de encajes, de chiches, de zahumerios, es la muñeca de la casa. [...] Crece, empieza á caminar, ahí tienes el espejo, los vestidos de colores vivos, el calzoncito con randas, todos los incentivos de la vanidad,

esperandote en las puertas de la vida, para agotar la sávia de tu inteligencia en flor, y envolverte el corazon en una pulida y fria corteza de helado cristal! (No. 4, July 9, 1864)

Manso continues with an explanation of how young girls are conditioned to become *automatas del salon* (*salon puppets or robots!*):

Pequeñuela, mientras su hermano juega y rie, ella cose, ó borda, ó aprende su oficio de automata del salon! No seria bien mirado que el ejercicio violento desarrollase su musculatura, y le diese un poco de fuerza, á ella que tanto la necesitará cuando llegue á ser madre! (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 4, July 9, 1864)

Another interesting feature of female writing after the fall of Rosas is the emphasis placed on dissociating high fashion with a *passive* female body. In the context of the U.S. 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mattingly explains that women writers easily reversed the association of the female body with *docility* because through their fashion writing they effectively broke the silence they had previously been forced to live with:

[...] scholars often describe nineteenth-century women in relation to power, especially in terms of Foucault's "docile bodies," disciplined into a passive existence, specifically with regards to dress. Not unlike Foucault's ideal soldier, women could be readily recognized by dress. Similarly, their postures, defined both by clothing—corsets, tight lacing, numerous petticoats—and convention—a reticent and humble demeanor—further created an easily discernable image. But if dress became a means of control, a way of disciplining women, it also provided an effective means of resistance as many women used clothing and 'feminine' style to escape the silence to which they had been relegated. In their efforts to project a positive ethos, women made dress speak for them. (Appropriate[ing] Dress: 7)

In the case of Argentina, women writers employed a similar strategy. These women indeed made their clothing speak for them. For example, many of these women writers criticized the immobility forced upon them by explaining how clothing inappropriate to *porteño* life complicated public circulation. In the fragment that follows, the editors of *La Camelia* inserted a "letter" from an anonymous subscriber claiming that fashion needed to change since long dresses and skirts only served as brooms to the friezes of Buenos Aires' buildings, especially because city streets were so narrow. The author of this letter also claimed that such skirts required so

many petticoats that they were difficult to put on. Women often needed additional help in dressing (*un armador*), thus even in this they were relegated to inactivity:

La ilusion tan alagüeña en nuestro secso, como amiga inseparable del capricho, nos hace cometer mil errores que nos desfavorecen las mas de las veces: hoy es sumamente general en nuestras jóvenes, el uso de una multitud de enaguas con la ayuda de costa de un armador; esta moda tan perniciosa, á la vez de ser ridícula no favorece en nada á la niña que la lleva, pues las mas presentan un desmentido, ya en la cara, ya en el descote, ya en la cintura; este singular modo de vestir trae la incomodidad en nuestras veredas estrechas, de ir azotando los postes, y borrando los frisos de los edificios. (No. 6, April 22, 1852)

The “subscriber” continues to explain how the latest fashions interrupted female participation in public life. The skirts were so large and cumbersome that they made shopping (an important activity endorsed by leading intellectuals as Chapter 2 explained) impossible since women literally could not fit in the stores. Also, *tertulias*—a very important part of elite sociability—became farcical since there was rarely room for ladies to sit on the couches or to waltz:

[...] en las tiendas acaese, que por espaciosos que sean los mostradores, con cuatro ó cinco juvenes que estén á su frente, llevan el espacio de siete ú ocho varas de longitud; en las casas acontece que por hermoso que sea el sofá, no pueden estar mas de dos; asi es que vienen á ser confidentes y no sofá: en una tertulia con tres ó cuatro parejas que estén paradas para un Valz, llenan todo el ámbito de la sala. (No. 6, April 22, 1852)

Another writer, with the pseudonym of *Ariana*, echoed this same concern. In a letter to the editors she relates the case of a woman whose dress was so outrageously large that it inhibited her movement and caused her to fall at the end of a *tertulia*. Ariana concludes her letter with the following comment:

Debemos anatematizar toda moda, que contribuya á desfigurar ‘la natural figura de muger’ convirtiéndonos en unos colchones sin embastar, y á mas, dándonos á la mofa y burla de las personas que saben juzgar el mérito, ó desmérito de la moda. (*La Camelia*, No. 10, May 2, 1852)



As she explains, this fashion disfigures women's natural figure and it reduces them to useless *cushions* (*colchones*), not to mention that it also makes them the target of endless mockery. Still even other writers, such as *Nisefora*, claimed that this fashion was a “veneno al viviente” and that while perhaps appropriate in Europe, it had no place in Argentina:

El traje largo tan propio para ciertas partes de Europa, con el objeto de encubrir algunos defectos naturales, son solamente aparente para aquellos lugares; pero las Argentinas se privan de la perfeccion de sus formas, y de las gracias con que están embellecidas. [...] Trae tambien, el poco aseo que desfavorece tanto á nuestra salud, y á nuestro seco.— Una niña ó señora que vista tan ridicula moda, no es otra cosa, que una escoba pública, que barre las veredas que transita, llevando en el ruedo de su traje, y ropa interior la escencia de los albañales y de algunas rinconadas; este perfume lo trasmiten á la casa que visitan, y van después á depositar esta aroma, á sus cómodas ó roperos. --¿No es señoras Editoras, una moda que la debemos desechar de nosotras? (*La Camelia*, No. 8, April 27, 1852)

Notice here how the author takes her argument in a completely different direction than male editors who criticized fashion because it threatened the harmony of the domestic sphere: literally, in this author's opinions, the high fashion of the day was inappropriate for Buenos Aires because it introduced sewer products into the homes women visited and even into their own closets and dressers. As she claimed, this fashion turned young ladies into nothing more than brooms for filthy *porteño* streets. In this case, it is the real health and well-being of the domestic—and not a symbolic threat to its order—that most concerns this writer. Rather than concern of the symbolic disruption that certain fashions—such as the previous *peinetón*—had caused in the male public, this writer was more concerned about the real effects of high fashion on women's lives. *Nisefora* ends her letter by reminding her audience that *sensible* women would condemn this fashion to only a memory:

[...] en fin, toda moda que no favorezca á nuestro seco, la debemos condenar al olvido; no debemos convenir con lo perjudicial, sino con lo benéfico, pues asi lo impone la buena razon; esta es SS. Editoras, una opinión solamente de S.S. (No. 8, April 27, 1852)

Juana Manso took these arguments to another level by criticizing not only fashion, but the very the nature of *porteño* streets. She compared their limiting nature to the freedom that U.S. streets permitted its female population. She insisted that *porteño* women did not have the same freedom of movement—because of the streets—that women in Boston, New York or Philadelphia had:

[...] hay otro inconveniente aun y es que del modo porque está organizada nuestra vida diurna, y los usos establecidos en la sociedad, y el modo por que están empedradas las calles, sin contar otra multitud de pequeños incidentes, no permiten á una señora que haga en Buenos Aires, lo que hace en Boston, New York y Philadelphia, que toma su sombrero y su manteleta y pasa al dia entero en la calle si así fuese necesario a sus intereses ó quehaceres. (No.1, January 1, 1854)

It's important to point out that these issues are not only related to the fashions of the period, but also they directly dialogued with perhaps two of the most important issues concerning leading intellectuals and politicians of post-Rosista Buenos Aires: the re-structuring of *porteño* streets and modes of transit as well as public health campaigns. Consequently, both of these issues involved women. The spatial restructuring of the streets concerned women because their presence in *porteño* streets always threatened association with prostitution and the dissolution of domestic stability. Likewise, public health campaigns revolved around women largely because of their possible association with prostitution (hence disease) and because the health and well-being of the family unit was centered on women's health.<sup>269</sup> (Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires)

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<sup>269</sup> As Guy explains, female prostitutes were always associated with disease and public health campaigns were almost always directed towards them, rather than the men who frequented bordels. Venereal disease was perceived a huge threat to public order at the time and the municipal council and police forces struggled against prostitution and they were soon joined by the public health physicians *higienistas*. Guy explains that the basis of the campaigns rested upon class and gender discrimination, since females were most targeted: "The nature of their dispute revealed the political and social tensions that were manifest in Buenos Aires during this period,

The city streets and sidewalks of Buenos Aires, since the city's founding, had always been too narrow and in very poor condition, not to mention the fact that the city's lack of a sewer system made the narrow, crowded streets even more unpleasant as well as filled with disease.

Scobie explains:

The accumulation of refuse, the lack of any sewer system, and the occasional overflowing of privies turned a number of streets into little more than open sewers. [...] There had been several 'scars' in the 1860s which, momentarily, had focused public attention on the city's lack of sanitation; however, most porteños still dumped waste and garbage in the public thoroughfare, and some streets that ran down toward the river served as little more than open sewers. (Buenos Aires: Plaza de Suburb: 50 and 122 respectively)

Many early 19<sup>th</sup> century writers commented on the state of the city's streets, and the most common complaint (as Chapter 2 also explained) was the filth they contained and the amount of water they accumulated:

Entre las incomodidades principales que padecemos en la ciudad se cuentan los pantanos que se forman en las cuatro esquinas de las calles no empedradas, el acopio de agua en las empedradas... (El Centinela, September 28, 1823 in Verdevoye, Costumbres y costumbrismo: 210)<sup>270</sup>

Later travelers also had unpleasant experiences in the city's streets. For example, the French doctor Henri Armaignac, who arrived in Buenos Aires in 1869 noticed the following:

Cuando desembarqué, me afectó de manera desagradable un contraste chocante: mientras que en todas partes se veían casas soberbias, construidas con mucho gasto, las calles estaban en un estado penoso. [...] Por entonces, en Buenos Aires no había ni cloacas ni agua corriente, de manera tal que la limpieza de las calles era bastante difícil y, a menudo, a pesar de todo el cuidado que se tuviera, dejaba mucho que desear. ("Calles, veredas, agua, cloacas y alumbrado", from Voyages dans les Pampas de la République Argentine in Fondebrider (comp.), La Buenos Aires Ajena: 157)

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as well as showing how illness and crime were identified and constructed in terms of class, gender, and morality." (Sex and Danger: 77)

<sup>270</sup> For more articles on the deplorable nature of early 19<sup>th</sup> century *porteño* streets, see Verdevoye, Costumbres y costumbrismo, pages 197-210. This section contains various articles on the "delirium" (*Delirio*) of the city's organization, as well as articles on the lack of proper illumination and sanitary conditions.

Other writers commented on the fact that Buenos Aires' streets were insufficient in protecting the city from possible attacks since they were too narrow to shield the city's troops:

Como la poca anchura de las calles no permite hacer obras que proporcionen fuegos para la defensa de los fosos, y que por otra parte es trabajo revestir el terraplen, lo cual espone á las baterias á ser mas fácilmente asaltada, es preciso para remediar este inconveniente, formar una estacada volante, cuasi horizontal, á la parte exterior, en frente del pié del parapeto, con estacas de ocho o nueve varas de longitud...(Anonymous contributor, *La Revista de Buenos Aires*, No. 22, February, 1865)

The city's public officials were, however, dedicated to fixing the problem. As González Bernaldo details, between 1858 and 1862, respectively 16% and 11.4% of the city's budget was spent on illuminating and also repairing streets while only 2.8% of the budget was spent on public education. (*Civilidad y política*: 324) As González Bernaldo further explains, the period witnessed a marked interest in bettering the appearance and safety of the city. Not only were large scale public works undertaken (such as the railroad and the formal port), but also the rudimentary and deteriorated streets were being repaired and illuminated:

Durante los años de la secesión se realizan trabajos de gran envergadura. [...] También se encara el ordenamiento del sitio urbano en función de esa reactivación de los intercambios. En particular, se instala un gasómetro para la iluminación de la ciudad y se repara una red de vías públicas rudimentaria y deteriorada. La renovación de las instalaciones urbanas está acompañada por un crecimiento considerable de la construcción, que en poco tiempo extiende la ciudad hacia la zona suburbana. (González Bernaldo de Quirós *Civilidad y política*: 324)

The concern for sanitary conditions in *porteño* streets was also linked to the growing public health movement of the period. Hygienists, for example, became increasingly incorporated in the city's municipal councils and they began exercising great influence on city planning and public health campaigns. (Guy, *Sex and Danger*: 77) Women were especially targeted as politics and public health became increasingly linked:

Higienistas targeted women more frequently than men as objects of reform because they were most responsible for child rearing. After national unification in 1852 [...] politics became inseparable from issues of public health. (Guy, *Sex and Danger*: 78)

Essentially, women writers who were expressing their concerns over their health and well-being, both affected by the restrictive fashions they wore and the “filth” these fashions brought into the home, were discussing two major political issues of the period. They were also re-directing public discourse from the symbolic consideration of women’s bodies in the national project to the very real concerns faced by women of the time period, particularly the circumstances surrounding their active participation in the public sphere. As Masiello contends, women writers used fashion to create a “lexicon” to speak to their contemporaries:

Contributors [...] spared the female body its habitual assignments in the ambience of leisure or performance by creating a female lexicon to foster a dialogue among women. [...] Clothing thus became a cover-up for the political body, a way to engage in discussion of ambience, social order, and the law. (Between Civilization and Barbarism: 62)

As the following section will further explore, clothing did indeed serve to create a lexicon whereby women writers were able to discuss not only their new place in the national project, but also the effects of the encroaching modernity that was making its way into the *porteño* way of life.

#### ***4.3. Fashion as Modernity: The Face behind the Mask of the Domestic Angel***

La sociedad es el hombre: él solo ha escrito las leyes de los pueblos, sus códigos; por consiguiente ha reservado toda la supremacía para sí.

—Juana Manso *Álbum de Señoritas*

In her pivotal text Wily Modesty, Frederick discusses what the *angel del hogar* (domestic angel) ideal meant for many women writers:

The antipathy of the domestic angel [...] to a female writer is obvious. Hidden away in her house, entirely involved with domestic matters, and discouraged from expressing

anything but happy thoughts that would please her husband, a genuine domestic angel could never hope to be a literary scientist, a worldly gentlewoman, a Romantic hero, or indeed much of anything beyond a columnist on household hints, published in a woman's newspaper, of course. (48)

While Frederick's assessment is correct, she does however downplay just *how* important a column on "household hints" could be for an aspiring writer as well as how important women's newspapers were in creating a community of readers responsive to women's issues. Nor does Frederick locate such a column within a network of competing discourses, many of which were at the heart of Argentina's budding modernity.

As I have reiterated throughout this chapter, women writers often sought to appropriate such topics as household hints—recipes, cleaning tips, organizational advice—for their agendas of positioning women within the national imaginary. Fashion, as I have also explained, fell into this category. Very often it served to discuss highly political issues (maternity, women's role in modern society, women's corporeal representation in public, city restructuring, and public health) in a non-threatening manner. In this way, women writers were able to maintain a balance between the *domestic angel* and the intimidating *public woman*. Carol Mattingly, who has studied the use of fashion in 19<sup>th</sup> century United States women's rhetoric, explains that women writers clearly understood how dress and appearance were powerful tools in this process of negotiation:

Because nineteenth-century women were so fully defined according to gender, and because gender was based largely upon dress and appearance, women understood the importance of clothing in negotiating the rigid power structure that permitted them little access to public attention. (Appropriate[ing] Dress: 5)

This section will further Mattingly's analysis in the Argentine case: it will explore *how* Argentina's women writers understood and experienced the effects that the budding modernity of the period had on their lives and how they debated this through fashion and their own fashion

magazines. Hence, this section will consider how women writers in large part responded to the same topics brought forth by many members of the Generation of '37: the modern project of nation-building (which brought with it the sweeping binaries *civilization vs. barbarism*, *Europe vs. Argentina* among others) as well as the effect of consumption—as related to fashion—on women's lives.

At this point, a brief review of how this study has understood *modernity* in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina is important. While the period 1830-1880 is not typically considered Argentina's most *modern* period (in terms of industrial growth, immigration, incorporation into a trans-Atlantic economy based on export-led growth), it is none-the-less the period that witnesses the foundational moments for this late-century transformation. The scholarship that has informed this study—throughout this chapter and the last two—has shown that *modernity* in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina was marked by a series of characteristics: the emergence of the nation-state and civil society and its exclusive nature in terms of race, class, and gender; the boom in export-led growth and the subsequent integration of regional markets into a global economy; urbanization; fundamental changes in the family structure which often resulted in changing roles for women; the increasing *professionalization* of the writer that would eventually culminate in Latin American *modernismo*; the emergence of a culture industry whereby journalism and budding editorials provided perhaps some of the best examples in the case of Argentina; and finally the increasing importance placed upon public works and transportation, the formation of an educational system and public health campaigns.<sup>271</sup> This study has understood many of these

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<sup>271</sup> Marshall echoes these categories by explaining how *modernity*—in a very broad sense—has been understood by theorists: “Against the backdrop of the Enlightenment, modernity is associated with the release of the individual from the bonds of tradition, with the progressive differentiation of society, with the emergence of civil society, with political equality, with

transformations from the perspective of fashion writing. That is, thus far it has considered how fashion and fashion writing from the *pre* and *post* Rosista period reflected, dialogued with, or served to resist these changes.

This study has also chosen the formation of the nation-state as one of the fundamental arenas from which Argentina's men—and later women—launched their political and intellectual projects. And, as perhaps one of the most significant manifestations of *modernity* in Argentina, the nation's emergence in one way or another involved almost all of the aforementioned changes. Therefore, much attention has been focused on the emergence of the nation-state and *how* fashion formed part of the bustling dialogue concerning its inception, since fashion was often inherently linked to many of the changes occurring in the region. Moreover, this study has paid particular attention to the impact of the emergence of the nation-state on women's lives and the family unit. It has sought to show *how* fashion articulated some of the concerns regarding women's new role in *porteño* life: in some cases, it manifested fears of the family unit's dissolution; in some cases it offered the solution to Argentina's political and social ills, in some cases it represented women's new-found freedom in public; while in others it came to symbolize women's immobility—real and symbolic—in public life.

When discussing some of the most important rhetoric surrounding the discursive construction of the Argentine nation, clearly the binary *civilization vs. barbarism* was one of the guiding threads that the country's *men of letters*—particularly the Generation of '37—used to manifest their visions, and concerns, for the region. We've already seen in this chapter how women writers from *La Camelia* as well as Juana Manso appropriated the *civilization vs. barbarism* paradigm in their fashion magazines. In the cases we've seen thus far, they did so to

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innovation and change. All of these accomplishments are associated with capitalism, industrialism, secularization, urbanization and rationalization.” (Engendering Modernity: 7)



make the case for female education. These writers smartly incorporated this recognizable binary so as to locate their demands within a framework that had been largely accepted by the intellectual elite (especially since it had been first articulated in the Argentine case in Sarmiento's all-important Facundo).

However, women writers also employed this paradigm to discuss the project of building a national identity after the fall of Rosas whereby the female occupied an important role other than the *domestic angel*. For example, Rosa Guerra first used this strategy in *La Educación* to explain to her readers that Europe boasted a rather lengthy list of educated females. As such, Europe was much more civilized than the cruel Argentina—whose previous dictator had maintained its female population in the savage state of ignorance. She writes:

La Europa en el catálogo de sus mugeres célebres nos da una prueba convicente de esta verdad, pues muchas señoras han sobresalido en todo género de ciencias, y muchas obras de literatura: tales son M. Stael, M. Genlis, M. Cotlin, Ma. Dacier, la Sra. De Avellaneda y muchas otras que fuera fastidioso el nombrarlas. [...] He querido Señores demostraros el cruel destino de la muger y cuanto se la tiranizaba y oprimia por hombres fieros y naciones salvages en aquellos tiempos de barbarie. (No. 1, July 24, 1852)

Guerra claims—as she reminds her readers in raising her *weak voice*—that Argentina's leaders now had the chance to justify the new nation before the civilized world's eyes through educating its females and producing a similar list of illustrious Argentine *litteratas*:

Pueblo de Buenos Aires á quien he elevado mi débil voz en estos momentos supremos, y á quien he querido demostrar á lo que estaba reducida la muger en otros tiempos, y en naciones salvages, para haceros mas palpables los privilegios que disfrutamos hoy en nuestro ilustrado pais y una prueba de ello es, la marcha brillante y progresiva que sigue por la senda del honor, de la patria y de la libertad. Justificadnos ante el mundo civilizado! lavad la afrenta que el tirano ha dejado impresa en nuestro sexo! en desagravio de este ultrage no os pedimos mas que una sola cosa, Educacion. (No. 1, July 24, 1852)

Writers from *La Camelia* employed a similar strategy. They sought to appeal to their male readers who were very sympathetic to the cry for a civilized nation. The *Redactoras* go so far as to use the Rosista dictatorship—and the horrors with which it was associated—to push for

their educational campaign since criticism of *La Camelia*'s cause could easily be equated with support of a dying federalist order:

Tendremos que lamentar siempre la tirania de veinte años que hemos sufrido, la que nos ha legado como único patrimonio, los vicios, la licencia, la impiedad...Hemos visto á nuestro pesar, el pudor de las vírgenes, la delicadeza de las matronas, la casa de oracion, el Templo de Dios...Violarlo una juventud desenfrenada, sin educacion, sin moral, sin religion...[...] los hombres que no respetan la Religión, que no tiene moral, no pueden jamas llamarse civilizados. –Esos criminales que han vejado nuestro secso, nuestra religion, y hasta el mismo Dios, no son otra cosa que una tribu de salvages, acampados en nuestras calles, y á las puertas de nuestros Templos. (No. 5, April 20, 1852)

The *Redactoras* later returned to this same topic: they claimed that in the most civilized and cultured cities of Europe, women's education wasn't ephemeral or superficial, rather it was much more "scientific" in its approach. Interestingly, they also explained that Argentine women were made of the same *material* as their European counterparts; therefore their education should be similar. Note again the strategic use of the binaries *civilization/barbarism* for the good of their educational campaign:

En las ciudades mas cultas y civilizadas de Europa, la educacion de las mugeres, no es una enseñanza efimera ni superficial; no, es sumamente esmerada y científica; no diré que sea general á todas, pero sí, aquella primera clase de la sociedad, tiene este goce, tan hermoso con la vida social. [...] No somos las americanas de inferior clase que las europeas, no somos formadas de distinta materia que aquellas. Nuestro benigno clima, nos ha favorecido con un don particular de la naturaleza que nos ha concedido predisponiendo nuestras facultades intelectuales á una inteligencia mucho mas perspicaz que la de ellas. (No. 10, May 2, 1852)

The writers also used this strategy to move into their discussions of fashion. In this same number (No. 10, May 2, 1852), the anonymous writer of the fashion column begins by declaring that the *savage* times of the Rosista dictatorship are over and that women's desires and passions (for clothes?) will not be buried in the darkness of *incivilización*, rather, they will be brought out into the light. And for this, women will need something to wear, for which reason the author details the latest fashions used in Paris:

La época malhadada ha pasado para siempre; nuestro destino es otro en el día, nuestras pasiones, nuestros deseos, no serán sepultados en las tinieblas de la incivilización, no: el Sol de Mayo derrama sobre nosotros su luz celestial y divina, convidándonos á las festividades que se harán en su obsequio; para lo que, detallaré los trajes mas usados recientemente en París, en épocas tan memorables como las nuestras— (No. 10, May 2, 1852)

After a very long description of fashions used in certain social situations in Paris, the author does however conclude that *La Camelia* will only publish those fashions that are *most adaptable* to Argentine customs:

Despues de la llegada de cada Paquete nos complaceremos en entreteneros un momento de las modas parisienses que hemos deseado seguir, y publicaremos todas aquellas que consideremos de mayor gusto, y que sean mas adoptables con nuestras costumbres. (No. 10, May 2, 1852)

This, as West clarifies, was significant since it pointed to the *need to alter* European fashions so as to more appropriately suit Argentine reality:

Through fashion writing, women criticized the dysfunctional aspects of elite fashions, while at the same time identifying the potentially contradictory desire for sartorial pleasures. [...] these writers also reminded readers of the need to alter European fashion so as to comfortably wear them in a Latin American climate. (Tailoring the Nation: 160)<sup>272</sup>

Juana Manso, in several of her publications<sup>273</sup>, echoed the concerns first brought forth by Rosa Guerra and the editors of *La Camelia*. It is significant to note *how* these writers

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<sup>272</sup> I will return to this point below. While West (Tailoring the Nation) correctly points to this very important issue, she does not develop its importance, although other writers, such as Juana Manso, took the topic of European fashion's inappropriateness in the Argentine context to significant levels. (West's comment here is, in fact, one of only a few scant references to this topic.) Nor does West explore the theoretical aspects of this problem—Europe vs. Argentina—in terms of what has often been deemed *peripheral modernity* (*modernidad periférica*), even though these fashion commentaries clearly point in this direction.

<sup>273</sup> Aside from *Álbum de Señoritas*, Manso was later active in other publications, although she has not been attributed due credit. Probably due to the hostile reception her original *Álbum de Señoritas* received, it appears, due to the tone and content of the articles, that Manso assumed the pseudonym *Dolores* in the fashion column published in *La Flor del Aire: Periodico literario ilustrado dedicado al bello sexo / Literatura –Satira decorosa –Teatros –Modas –Variedades* originally directed by Lope del Río. However, it is not clear if this publication was truly directed

incorporated the dichotomy *civilization/barbarism* into their writings. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Generation of '37 articulated this relationship in large part through dress whereby Europe represented civilization through high fashion and consumption of fashionable goods while Argentina, and especially the Rosista dictatorship, remained the ultimate symbol of barbarism through its *gaucho* attire. However, what we notice in these articles written by women is that they continue to dissociate the female body with fashion by focusing on education as the major form of *civilization* for the Argentine *pueblo*. Rather than focusing on fashionable appearance as the major signifier of elegance and civilization, these writers used their fashion columns to push for education and gender reform as the more appropriate and true signifiers of Argentina's march towards a "civilized" society. In *Album de Señoritas* Manso went so far as to suggest that *civilization* could never be expressed only by men's exterior appearances—which was something that almost all of the members of the Generation of '37 seemed to suggest in their writings on dress. In the following fragment, she addresses the new Argentine government:

Y por qué vais con tanta lentitud en lo que respecta *la educacion* popular? Creis que la Religión y la moral se debe escribir solo en el exterior de los hombres? Sino formais el corazon de la juventud, sino educais el alma de los niños, no con preceptos, ni con reglas confusas, con la enseñanza práctica, con la teoria reducida á accion, quereis hacer un pueblo moral y religioso? Nunca lo conseguiréis. Nunca habrá orden estable en el pais.

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by *Lope del Río* since the first article written to the public announcing the periodical appears to be written by a female (and again the tone is reminiscent of Manso's previous publications: "Ya sabes público lo que soy yo, como yo sé lo que eres tu, veremos cual de los dos se cansa antes, tú de la sátira ó ella de ti. [...] En el interin te saludo con la máxima del filósofo griego *noscete ipsum*, pidiéndote que no olvides que soy argentina y que mi gloria ó mi vituperio te pertenecerán cada uno en la proporcion que me las concedas. No estrañes si soy á veces fogosa y dolorida, el soplo de la desgracia ha marchitado las alegrías y las esperanzas de mi corazon para muchos años, imprimiendole la causticidad y la amargura que nacen de la observación y del estudio de los vicios y extravagancias de la sociedad y qué se nutren con la misantropía que no traiciona la verdad y la justicia...". (No 1, March 3, 1864). *La Flor del Aire* would later change into *La Siempre Viva*, expressly edited by Manso.

El pueblo será siempre una fuerza bruta, cuyo brazo estará á las órdenes del primer caudillo que lo quiera armar. (No. 4, January 22, 1854)<sup>274</sup>

Manso then continues her argument stating that the superficial layer of civilization is only glitter: one can speak well, dress well and possess ‘civilized’ abilities, but sooner or later one’s “bastardly” nature will show through if not properly educated:

El barniz de la civilizacion es solo oropel; cuando un hombre no ha bebido en la fuente pura de una educacion sólidamente moral, dejadlo que hable, que diga, que se vista bien, que posea habilidades, que tenga talento, que tenga modales al parecer finos, su bastardia ha de traslucirse siempre en alguna accion. (*Álbum de Señoritas*, No. 4, January 22, 1854)

Here, Manso dismantles the metaphors surrounding dress and civilization that her male predecessors worked diligently to construct: without a proper education, without a proper base, even a community that appears to be civilized by its luxury and commodities can be crushed by a dictator and have its liberties taken away. Similar to Hernandez’s biting sarcasm in *El Bicho Colorado*, she suggests that when this happens, what once appeared to be the markers of civilization expose a cancer hidden at the center:

Que se levante un pueblo á la mayor altura de civilizacion aparente, de lujo y comodidades, si su educacion no es sólida, vendrá un Luis Napoleon y pondrá el pié en la garganta de ese pueblo; que derrocará las garantias del derecho, que encadenará la libertad de imprenta, que proscibirá la virtud y la inteligencia como crímenes de lesa nacion, y vereis en ese dia el cáncer descubierto que velaba el oropel! (*Álbum de Señoritas*, No. 4, January 22, 1854)

In a much later publication, *La Siempre Viva*, Manso once again returns to this topic. She begins by explaining two central points: first, she justifies her decision in changing the

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<sup>274</sup> Manso even accuses the new government of being backward because of its Spanish heritage. In *Álbum de Señoritas* she creates a dialogue between two women discussing politics: “–Sí, pero si no hay peor sordo que el que no quiere oír. –Pero válgame Dios! Qué apatía es esa. ¿El Gobierno qué hace? –Oh! hace muchas cosas, hace el presupuesto y...vá á las funciones de San Fernando, á Palermo, piensa, pide planos, recibe proyectos y los guarda &a. &a.&a. –Ah! Que no podemos desmentir nuestro origen español! –Hijo de gato señora, dicen que casa raton; y quien lo hereda no lo hurta como decia Sancho Panza. (No. 4, January 22, 1854)

periodical's name (from the previous *La Flor del Aire*) and second, she claims that she will not concentrate heavily on fashion—what she claimed to be only *exterior culture*—rather she will focus on creating a publication of *moral and intellectual interests* for women:

Al tomar a mi cargo la Redaccion de la Flor del Aire, crei que debir mudar nombre y formato al Periodico. El Periodico constará siempre de páginas impresas, un figurin por mes, musicas, bordadas y moldes de vestidos, pero aun hay mas. No vengo solo á contraerme á sostener el organo de la Moda que es la cultura exterior; sino á crear un organo de lós intereses morales, é intelectuales de la mujer, que la instruya en su verdadero destino, la consuele en sus secretos pesares, y amenice sus tareas domesticas. (No. 1, June 1864)<sup>275</sup>

Finally, in this same publication, Manso goes on to speak more specifically of women and her vision of the female in a truly *civilized* society. In this case, women would no longer be considered “things” and they would not longer have to depend on vice (prostitution) for survival:

La muger de la civilizacion, perfectamente redimida de todos los vicios, como de todas las miserias que la han martirizado y degradado, es una persona nueva [...] se emancipación moral, es la condicional espresa de un estado social nuevo tambien, en la historia del progreso humano. La muger tiene forzosamente que dejar de ser considerada como: cosa. (No. 3, July 1, 1864)

Through their articles on fashion, Argentina's women writers also articulated the struggles for finding a national identity in the face of cultural imperialism and models of modernization not suitable to Argentine reality. This topic, even today, has not been abandoned in academic circles. For example, early dependency theorists on Latin American modernity—emerging in the 1960s—pointed out that the historical relationship between Europe and its “peripheries”—dating from the colonial period—resulted in an unequal balance in terms of trade so that the modernizing process in Latin America acquired distinctive features compared to the colonial centers. (Gunder Frank, The Development of Underdevelopment and Furtado,

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<sup>275</sup> It's also important to point out that Manso signs her name *Juana Manzo* for the first time without using her husband's last name *Noronha*. In all of her previous publications, as if to cause less of a public scandal, she continued to use her married name although she had long been separated from her husband before returning from exile.

Economic Development of Latin America)<sup>276</sup> Likewise, several contemporary cultural theorists have highlighted that Latin American modernity has always represented a crisis of sorts. This crisis has called upon the theorist to think of Latin American modernity not from the point of view of a colonialist *center*—which would try to derive a definition of an all-encompassing *Latin American subject*—but rather from the margins. Herlinghaus and Moraña explain:

La modernidad ha sido siempre, en el caso de América Latina, una modernidad en crisis, y ha provisto una base discursiva *pro domo* desde la cual pudieron formularse tanto anhelos de identidad y legitimidad como estrategias de diferencia cultural. [...] ‘Ser moderno’ significa hoy, para el pensamiento cultural latinoamericano, actuar desde ámbitos concretos que se describen con las metáforas de *frontera* y *margen*. (“Fronteras de la modernidad”: 11-12)

Much of this crisis, most critics would agree, is largely due to the “imperfect” entrance of modernity into Latin America: many theorists have thus opted for understanding Latin American modernity in terms of a *modernidad periférica* or a *modernidad otra* to describe the particular nature of Latin American modernity. (Sarlo, Una modernidad periférica) One compelling aspect that recent theory has been keen on pointing out in the particular case of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is that Latin America’s ruling oligarchy in most emerging nations opted for development models that lacked an autochthonous dynamic or the ability to account for the *heterogeneous* nature of Latin America’s racial and ethnic backgrounds. (Ramos, Divergent Modernities; Herlinghaus, Modernidad heterogénea; Canclini, Culturas híbridas)<sup>277</sup> Canclini explains that a Latin American

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<sup>276</sup> For a compelling analysis of the *pitfalls* of the Development Theory, with particular emphasis on Gunder Frank, see Ernesto Laclau’s article “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America”, 1986: 168-193.

<sup>277</sup> Laclau explains this process in more detail, especially with respect to the inability of the paradigm *civilization vs. barbarism* to negotiate any “space” in between these two realms: “The idea of a society with dual structures has a long tradition in Latin America. It was initially formulated in the nineteenth century by the liberal elites which integrated their countries into the world market as primary producers, thus accommodating them to an international division of labour dictated by the metropolitan imperialist countries. The formula ‘civilization or barbarism’, coined by Sarmiento, became the watchword of this process. [...] For this purpose

oligarchy promoted uneven and inconsistent development when compared to the process of modernization that occurred in Western Europe so that modernity, in the Latin American case, was often seen as a superficial mask only covering the surface of the region's hybrid nature:

La modernidad es vista entonces como una mascara. Un simulacro urdido por las élites y los aparatos estatales [...] Las oligarquías habían hecho como que constituían Estados, pero sólo ordenaron algunas áreas de la sociedad para promover un desarrollo subordinado e inconsistente; hicieron como que formaban culturas nacionales, y apenas construyeron culturas de élites dejando fuera a enormes poblaciones indígenas y campesinas que evidencian su exclusión en mil revueltas y en la migración que “trastorna” las ciudades. (*Culturas híbridas*: 21)<sup>278</sup>

Xavier Albó, another recognized cultural critic, speaks of this same situation in terms of a “corset effect”:

Too often, our theoretical frames, copied from other climates and times, have become a rigid conceptual corset that has distorted our reality instead of helping us to interpret it. Concretely, this principle of the union of the state and the nation, which has been, since the time of Sarmiento, the apple of the eye of those who, in fact, control our states, certainly produces the corset effect, especially with regard to our continental identity and future. (“Our Identity”, 1995: 24)

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liberal spokesmen created a mythology according to which everything colonial was identified with stagnation and all things European with progress: in this Manichean image of the historical dialectic, coexistence between both segments of society became impossible”. (“Feudalism and Capitalism”: 171)

<sup>278</sup> Canclini calls for a sort of *nomadic social science* that could work with and in between disciplines, which would essential help to understand the “*other*” nature of Latin American modernity more appropriately: “la segunda hipótesis es que el trabajo conjunto de estas disciplinas puede generar otro modo de concebir la modernización latinoamericana: más que como una fuerza ajena y dominante, que operaría por sustitución de lo tradicional y lo propio, como los intentos de renovación con que diversos sectores se hacen cargo de la *heterogeneidad multitemporal* de cada nación.” (*Culturas híbridas*: 15) While Canclini's assessment of *how* modernity “entered” and has been understood in the Latin American context has been largely accepted in the academic community, his approach to the problems facing modern Latin America has been largely criticized as idealist. In his “new way” of conceiving modernization, the individual may choose—through the consumption of material goods—the way in which s/he wants to participate in the commercial market without the abandonment of “traditional” way of life for a “modernized” system. Therefore, in this way, cultures can live in hybrid situations at the same time in many different nations and parts of the world.



Hence, many theorists have pointed out that the parameters for understanding Latin American *modernity* should be specific to the Latin American case, rather than relying on Europe as a primary example or model. Albó calls on critics to understand Latin American identity from *the base* since such an understanding would question the idea of the nation that was established by hegemonic groups—particularly the ruling elite:

Taking the step of defining our identity from the base questions the possibility or convenience or considering as representative of the nation hegemonic groups within our countries whose fundamental role has been, or is, to be the transmission belt of foreign interests. (“Our Identity”: 19)

Canclini’s metaphor of the *mask* and Albó’s metaphorical appropriation of the corset, are both certainly compelling examples easily applied to the case of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina especially since the region’s modernization projects—particularly the construction of railroads—were largely undertaken and financed by foreign investors. The 1880s in Argentina witnessed almost a complete reliance on foreign capital, which afforded the British control of the railroad system. This imposition however began much earlier: in 1862 British citizens financed and founded the Southern Railroad that served the growing sheep and cattle industry. (Scobie, Plaza to Suburb: 92) Eventually, four major British companies—Buenos Aires Pacific, the Central Argentine, the Western, the Southern—dominated Argentina’s entire railroad system, which also resulted in the region’s almost complete reliance upon their services for domestic industries, such as wool and sheep. Scobie explains the scope of Britain’s stake in the region:

The degree to which the “Big Four” dominated the nationwide system cannot be read solely from the statistical record, even though that record is impressive: they held 51 per cent of the track; 61 per cent of the locomotives; 84 per cent of the passengers; 62 per cent of the freight by tonnage; 61 per cent of capital invested; 69 per cent of gross revenues; and 76 per cent of net revenues. Even more significant was the fact that all freight and passengers, in order to move anywhere in the most productive agricultural zones, or to reach or leave the port of Buenos Aires as well as the next largest ports at

Rosario and Bahía Blanca, had to be carried by one of these four companies. (Plaza to Suburb: 99)<sup>279</sup>

This had a major impact on Argentine industry: it was completely dependent upon foreign sources to generate its own wealth. Any irregularities in railroad service could adversely affect Argentine industry. Foreign investors also played an important part in Buenos Aires's *Puerto Madero*, so that even transatlantic maritime trade, upon which Argentina's wool, beef and hide industry relied, was under the influence of foreign investment. (Scobie, Plaza to Suburb: 73)<sup>280</sup>

In terms of Europe's post-colonial cultural invasion of Latin America, fashion was also an important player. I've already mentioned that the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an impressive expansion of European fashion—especially French fashion—to international markets.<sup>281</sup> It is

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<sup>279</sup> For an in-depth consideration of the impact of British investment in the River Plate region see also Miguez, Las tierras de los ingleses en la Argentina (1870-1914). For an in-depth consideration of the importance of British merchants in Buenos Aires's economy see Reber, British Mercantile Houses in Buenos Aires 1810-1880. Furtado also explains the extent to which British manufactures controlled the world market, especially in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "It should be recalled that in the first few decades of the second half of the nineteenth century, two-thirds of the manufactures circulating in the world market were made in England." (Economic Development of Latin America, in Promise of Development: 126)

<sup>280</sup> This left Argentina in a precarious situation if foreign investors withdrew money, which is exactly what happened later on in the century. The first wave of economic crisis hit Argentina after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) whereby French and British investments in Argentina rapidly declined. Rock explains: "France's defeat and heavy reparations debt left the French market in disarray. From there came a decline in British exports and a payments deficit in Britain that the Bank of England sought to correct by increasing its discount rate. Simultaneously, a railroad boom in the United States collapsed. The outcome was financial panic, a universal flight of British funds back to London. [...] The Argentine government soon found itself enmeshed in a severe debt crisis. [...] Both the depression and the government's attempts to cope with it immediately sent severe shock waves through the economy and the political system. Unemployment rose, incomes and consumption fell, and land prices collapsed." (Argentina: 147-148) This wave of crisis would culminate in 1889 when the Baring Brothers of London failed to secure a loan causing a severe economic depression throughout the region.

<sup>281</sup> Entwistle closely links this the emergence of a capitalist order and to its resultant industrialization and urbanization: "Capitalism emerged out of revolutions which shook western Europe in the first few decades of the nineteenth century: [...] Industrialization changed the

also during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that international exhibitions, held in Paris, proudly displayed French fashions. This had the obvious effect of making French fashions some of the most desirable in the world, not to mention that they set the stage for the importance of the department store window. Steele elaborates:

It has been suggested that the international exhibitions so popular in the nineteenth century may have influenced the department store displays. [...] All of the international exhibitions—in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900—prominently displayed Parisian fashions and accessories, which attracted large and enthusiastic crowds. (Paris Fashion: 149)

Similarly, many fashion critics have been quick to point out fashion's relationship to cultural imperialism. Wilson—perhaps one of the most important fashion theorists of all time—explains that it often goes hand-in-hand with capitalism and that it can come to represent the threat of *neocolonialism*:

Imperialism, however, is cultural as well as economic, and fashion, enmeshed as it is in mass-consumption, has been implicated in this as well. Western fashions have overrun large parts of the so-called third world. [...] western fashion may represent both the lure and the threat of neocolonialism. [...] Fashion may appear relativistic, a senseless production of style 'meanings'. Nevertheless, fashion *is* coherent in its ambiguity. Fashion *speaks* capitalism. (Adorned in Dreams: 14)

On a similar note, Entwistle explains that the development of the fashion industry cannot be separated from colonial exploitation:

The history of industrialization within the clothing and textile industry is a history inextricably linked to colonial exploitation abroad as well as the exploitation of labor at home. (The Fashioned Body: 212)<sup>282</sup>

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nature of fashion: the development of new technologies for producing clothes, such as the sewing machine, was spurred on by new demands for cheap mass-produced clothing, particularly for men. [...] Increasing urbanization also helped stimulate fashion, providing an expanded stage for the display and transmission of clothing [...]" (The Fashioned Body: 106-108)

<sup>282</sup> Entwistle explains the particular case of Great Britain's exploitation of its colonies once cotton became an important commodity in the fashion industry: "Britain was the first nation to industrialize and textile production, in particular cotton production, was the motor behind this development. Cotton had become fashionable from the eighteenth century as a versatile fabric for household linens and later, as a dress fabric. The British cotton industry grew exponentially

Argentina's women writers willingly pointed to the problems of using European fashions in Argentina, especially since these fashions had been metaphorically appropriated by an eager intellectual elite set on pushing an image of modernity in the national imaginary. Women writer's counteracted the metaphorical imposition of fashion by pointing to a very real concern for women: the latest European fashions were usually climatically inappropriate to Argentina due to the seasonal differences between Europe and Argentina. This harks back to the criticism made by early dependency theorists as well as Latin American cultural critics: these writers recognized that European fashions—like other socio-cultural impositions—were only a mask that could be superficially applied to the Argentine case. Masiello explains the specific case of 19th century women writers:

Así, protestan por la incomodidad de los trajes, se oponen a los dictámenes del estilo que impiden la libertad femenina y, al mismo tiempo, cuestionan la función de la máscara americana, el disfraz como manera de ser en el momento modernizador de América. (La mujer y el espacio público, 1994: 12)

The *Redactoras* of *La Camelia* were the first of their colleagues to point out that French imperialism was making its way into fashion:

En la Francia el *imperialismo* principia á introducirse en los dominios de la moda, cuyo imperio sigue el influjo de las modas del imperio. Ya se habla con toda seriedad de la resurrección del *Vitchoura*, y para celebrar su vuelta al mundo, se pretende darle cierto aire juvenil adornándolo con plumas. (No. 9, April 29, 1852)

In a different number, the fashion column continues with an explanation of the inappropriateness of European fashion in Argentine women's lives. They explain that the use of so many petticoats (as demanded by the rigors of French fashion) was impractical especially

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in the nineteenth century and Britain became a vast consumer of the natural resources of their colonies in the Indian subcontinent, thereby destroying the indigenous market.” (The Fashioned Body, 2000: 211) As I've explained in the previous chapters, Great Britain had a not so different relationship with the Argentine wool industry: the famous Argentine *ponchos* were often produced in England and shipped back to Argentina as finished products!

since the seasonal differences between France and Argentina made French winter fashions intolerable in Argentina's summer heat:

Todo esto debido á esa provision de abrigo aunque estemos en el rigor del verano, lo llevan nuestras compatriotas, sin mas razon que ser moda: pero moda perjudicial!...moda que se debia modificar por mil razones!...En fin, esperamos de las bellas argentinas mas prudencia, mas economia, y menos emision de enaguas. –Asi lo esperan. (No.6, April 22, 1852)

A different fashion writer for *La Camelia* would later claim that European women used this fashion to hide their flaws, and that Argentine women, in following European models, were covering up the *natural perfection of their forms*:

El traje largo tan propio para ciertas partes de Europa, con el objeto de encubrir algunos defectos naturales, son solamente aparente para aquellos lugares; pero las Argentinas se privan de la perfeccion de sus formas, y de las gracias con que están embellecidas. (*Nisefora*, No. 8, April 27, 1852)

Manso, to provide another example, suggested that perhaps it hadn't *occurred* to Argentina's women that the hemispheric differences between European and Argentina would also be an insuperable obstacle to using foreign fashions:

Creo que todavía no ha ocurrido á nuestras elegantes que la oposicion de estaciones de los hemisferios es un obstáculo insuperable á las modas europeas, y que siempre nos vestiremos aquí en Diciembre por los figurines de Agosto; en fin con tal de andar á la francesa, aunque sea un remiendo, allá vá! (*Album de Señoritas* No. 1, January 1, 1854)

She further suggested that French fashions were *invading* Argentina and that in the name of *fashion*, many women often ignored their own realities: they suffered extreme heat all in the name of imitation! She explains:

En nuestra América meridional, tan lejos de Europa, tan opuestas las costumbres, los usos, y hasta las estaciones, no deberiamos sujetarnos al rigorismo de la moda francesa que nos invade hoy. [...] Ahora ya sabeis, lectoras, que para andar á la rigorosa moda de Paris, hagamos de cuenta que no hay calor y vistamos nuestros vestidos de merino, nuestras manteletas de terciopelo y hagamos mas ese sacrificio á la imitación. Si algun importuno se nos vien con aquello de—Jesus señorita con tanto calor! Nosotras responderemos: —No lo crea vd. Caballero, es la última moda en Paris. Y estamos al otro lado. (*Album de Señoritas*, January 5, 1854)

Moreover, the terms Manso uses to describe the inappropriate nature of French fashion in Argentina—*invade, sacrifice, imitation, on the other side*—are all terms widely used in debates on Latin America’s post-colonial struggles for national definition. (Albó, “Our Identity Starting from Pluralism in the Base”, 1995) Manso went so far as to propose that in the face of French fashion domination, the Spanish based *mantilla*, representative of Argentina’s Hispanic heritage, was preferable to French cultural imperialism. Above all, however, she preferred freedom and invention to the imitation of fashion figurines which essentially turned people into mannequins:

Es una aberración, lo conozco, pero me gusta mas la mantilla á la española, y mas que todo la libertad, la invencion, esto de imitar un figurin, parece una cosa, así como la de hacer una muñeca á imitación de la gente, aquí es al reves, es la gente que se torna muñeca. (*Album de Señoritas* No. 1, January 1, 1854)

Fashion, for Manso, provided a perfect space for the interpretation of the balance of power between the forces of European colonialism and Latin America’s not too distant colonial past. Unlike her male predecessors, Manso saw little use in the imitation of inappropriate models. As she would metaphorically suggest, Argentina should be in hands of domestic designers:

El figurin que acompaña este número de la *Flor del Aire*, es copiado del *Monitor* de la moda, el que nos dice que el sombrero es hecho por Mme. Bernard, el vestido por Mme. Sle-Ilorain, que las guarniciones son de la *Ville de Lyon*; tienda de la Chaussée d’Antin, el corsé es de Mme Simon y las valencianas de J. Violard, en la calle de Choiseul, núm. 5. Todo eso está muy bien, pero es muy lejos y nosotros que vivmos en Buenos Ayres debemos sujetarnos á las modistas del pais y ponerlas en voga; por que no dejan de ser artistas laboriosas que hasta cierto punto merecen ayuda y protección. (*La Flor del Aire*, No. 3, March 17 1864)

Manso also preferred to highlight the *American* element in her publications, since even from the start of the *Álbum de Señoritas*, she claimed that she would leave behind Europe and its secular traditions in favor of exploring the *robust* nature and imponderable wealth of “our continent”:

El elemento americano dominará exclusivamente los artículos literarios. Dejaremos la Europa y sus tradiciones seculares, y cuando viáemos, será para admirar la robusta naturaleza, los gérmenes imponderables de la riqueza de nuestro continente: y no perderemos nada. Allá el pensamiento del hombre y el polvo de mil generaciones! aquí el pensamiento de Dios, puro, grandioso y primitivo, que no es posible contemplar sin sentirse conmovido. (No. 1, January 1, 1854)

Juana Manso would not abandon this point: in later fashion articles, instead of praising European fashions, she published articles on very specific *American dress* (such as the Peruvian jacket). In her article *Chaqueta Peruana* (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 1, June 1864) Manso not only praises this article of clothing, but she includes very detailed and lengthy instructions as to *how* to make this clothing at home. Unlike other fashion articles that merely listed proper attire for certain social situations, this one intended to make its model accessible to its readers. This truly was a sign of the times since previously this exaltation of American dress would have more likely come from the federalist ranks. But, in the face of increasing immigration, fashion writers—as Chapter 4 will consider at more length—became concerned with propagating an “American identity” through dress in the face of European cultural—and economic—imperialism.

Women writers after Rosas found other productive uses for fashion: on several occasions they effectively used their columns to discuss the new-found sense of liberty they experienced once the dictator left the region. Through the metaphor of fashion, they argued that since dictatorship no longer controlled their lives, there was no reason to be subjected to continued tyranny through uncomfortable dress:

Las épocas pasadas sometían de tal modo el gusto al capricho que éramos esclavas de ciertos trajes exagerados é incómodos. Y es esta la razón porque hemos encontrado siempre ridiculeces en las modas, luego que el periodo de su tiranía acababa de terminar, y cuando la influencia de otra quizá mas pernicioso, nos volvía á someter á su capricho.—Hoy Señoras *suscriptoras* no existen ese despotismo del buen gusto—Lo que llamaba *moda* ha desaparecido—viniendo a sustituirla la verdadera libertad en los trajes; la verdadera regularidad artística aplicada individualmente á las comodidades

personales—Esta es la verdadera *moda*—Esta es la que campéa— (*La Camelia* No. 8, April 27, 1852)

This was yet another strategic move: by stressing liberty through dress, women writers could safely *locate* the female in the imaginary of the public sphere. This is significant especially because the female counterparts to the ‘man of the crowd, the dandy, or the *flâneur*’ simply did not exist in the public imaginary. This lack of a female counterpart certainly created an obstacle for women writers to overcome because, as Felski has explained in a similar context, it “[...] was largely responsible for the belief that women were situated outside processes of history and social change.” (*The Gender of Modernity*, 1995: 16) Since the modern period often stressed the female’s exclusion from activity in the public sphere, women’s participation in it was always a point of contention for male political leaders (and certainly for many traditional females). However, rather than associate the public aspect of fashion with prostitution, women writers chose to associate it with the liberty afforded by the new Republic of Argentina whereby women too could participate. By associating the public phenomenon of fashion with liberty, women writers could essentially reverse the relationship established between the public sphere, women and “immoral” behavior. And by incorporating the rhetoric of *liberty*, associated in large part with the debates surrounding the establishment of the Argentine nation, women writers once again located their “feminine interests” in fashion within the larger political issues of the period.<sup>283</sup> The writers of this just mentioned column (*Hernestina* and *Luisa*) continue by

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<sup>283</sup> Masiello also explains how women writers strategically used the “home” in their writings to forge a sense of independence: “Through their tasks as homemakers and mothers, Argentine writers claimed a role for themselves within the projects of the nation. At the same time, the home allowed new concepts of female independence, providing a space for female authorship and an emerging dialogue about letters and politics.” (*Between Civilization and Barbarism*, 1992, 68)



explaining that post-Caseros Argentina had reached the highest level of *perfection*, so that women no longer had to subject themselves to the slavery imposed upon them by fashion:

Hoy menos que nunca tenemos derecho á quejarnos de las ridiculeces á que pudiera sujetarnos la moda, porque nuestra sociedad ha llegado, sin duda, á la escala de perfectibilidad, respecto del buen gusto. [...] La necesidad de sujetar nuestra voluntad al rigorismo caprichoso de la moda, ya no existe.[...] —Hoy podemos decir positivamente que existe la libertad de vestir bien.— (*La Camelia*, No. 8, April 27, 1852)

Juana Manso was more pessimistic than her colleagues at *La Camelia*. In *La Siempre Viva*, published in 1864, many years after Rosas had left the region, she claimed that Argentina still did not have enough liberty in dress—and this was clearly in reference to her understanding of women’s lack of liberty in the public sphere. To explain this point, Manso recounts a previous trip she took to Philadelphia while in exile. She explains to her readers how women in Philadelphia felt that Argentine society was very backward, to which Manso replied that such backwardness was the fault of the dictatorship, its tyranny and the years of civil war. She then, in her article, asks rhetorically how she could explain this remaining backwardness twenty years later after Rosas had long deserted the country? She explains to her readers, that in large part, Argentina was still backward because of its desire for luxury (*lujo*). Rather than being truly free in dress, women had remained slaves to fashion, *automatas del salon*. She reminds her readers that where customs were still subjected to the rigors of fashion, liberty was just a word:

Y que contestaria yo hoy a los veinte años de distancia? Hay mas lujo, esclavitud la misma. Sin embargo, nuestra sociedad se dice ilustrada, marchamos al frente de la civilizacion...Donde las costumbres son esclavas, la libertad es una palabra. La mujer se mueve en estos paises dentro de un aro de hierro; hay una confusion de ideas respecto á lo que la modestia aconseja y á la ciencia á que la mujer está destinada: esa ciencia podria denominarse Economia domestica; y precisamente es la menos conocida de la mujer entre nosotros, donde no abundan las buenas caseras; donde se hace de la mujer una muñeca vaporosa un automata del salon: una esclava de la preocupacion. Tal es la mujer, tal la hace la Sociedad. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 4, July 9, 1864)

Women writers also took advantage of the opportunity to stress *simplicity* in dress, again seeking to dissociate women's taste for clothing with luxury, desire and excess. Manso, for example, used her fashion column to explain that it was time women imposed their own laws of good taste:

Es esencial que el traje sea un distintivo del estado, la moda debe tener sus gradaciones como la luz y como los colores; la igualdad es muy nociva respecto á modas, y es ya tiempo de que nosotras impongamos una ley, la de las costumbres. Por ejemplo, la sencillez conviene á las solteras, una vírgen es una flor, su mejor adorno es el aroma de su juventud, su lujo incomparable, el tesoro de su gracia inmaculada. (*La flor del aire*, No. 1, March 3, 1864)

Through her publication, Manso declared war on luxury since, in her opinion, only the old and the ugly needed to adorn themselves with fashion's excesses:

Nos declaramos desde nuestra aparicion como cronista de la moda, opositoras del lujo; queridas lectoras, si hay un ser á quien Dios haya dotado de riqueza ingénita es la muger, nuestros dotes naturales á poco costa se realzan, la ostentación es el aparsagio de las viejas y de las feas, las niñas, las mugeres lindas no necesitan empobrecer á sus padres, á sus maridos y lo que es peor todavía, asustar á sus pretendientes. (*La flor del aire*, No. 1, March 3, 1864)

In the same article, Manso reminds her readers that while fashion may very well be women's "empire", it needn't be costly and tyrannical. Rather, she claims that women had the freedom to make their dress light and graceful, so as to better lure possible husbands, instead of scaring them away:

El imperio de la muger es la moda; pero no tiránica y costosa, sino fácil, lijera y graciosa; no ruina que oprime, si anzuelo, harpon, lazo, con que pescar corazones y sobre todo....maridos! Ser franca y marchar resueltamente, es el medio de alcanzar el objeto propuesto. (*La flor del aire*, No. 1, March 3, 1864)

Manso's mention here of cost moves us into another direction: that of consumption. While a large part of the public discourse was becoming increasingly concerned with the *cost* of fashion and luxury (and this of course, from the time of the *peinetón* had been a concern), it's important to note that many of these women writers didn't enter into the "consumption game"

eagerly and without skepticism. While many fashion periodicals directed by men portrayed the female as a consumptive *coquette*, women writers sought to defy this characterization by avoiding a “fixed” identity for females. Masiello explains this clearly:

The distinguishing factor separating the editorial positions of men and women was the perceived use of the body, cloaked as it was by fashion. The male-authored journals presented the image of a coquette; the women’s publications avoided fixed definitions for females, creating a private identity for women to assure their self-insulation and safety. (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 1992: 61)<sup>284</sup>

Manso, again, provides perhaps one of the best examples of this tendency. While most of her articles vehemently refuse to enter into the game of fashion, on occasion she jokingly praises fashion and acquires a distinct, rather *hysterical* voice. In one sarcastic article she exalts fashion to such an extent, that, as she explains to her readers, she almost passes out over her enthusiasm—which was quite unlike the public *persona* she had theretofore created for herself:

Qué vestido de gasa chinesca! qué vestidos de brocado, y otros bordados, y de guardas de colores! Ay qué tentación Dios mío! qué manteletas blancas, con blondas y flores de colores!...qué espumillas de la China!...cuanta clase de manteletas, de géneros nobles, de atavíos para las novias...Salí de casa del señor Iturriaga con toda la sangre en la cabeza!...soy muy propensa á los arrebatos! Hice mi visita á las señoritas Juvin. Sabe vd. mi querida redactora, que es muy elegante y de mucho tono ese salón! [...] Es un templo en miniatura, templo del paganismo cuya diosa es la moda sobre su pedestal de oro. Las propietarias me dijeron que esperan de París otros dos espejos magníficos, de dimensiones colosales, mas muebles á la Voltaire, y cortinas de terciopelo y de seda. [...] Nuestra sociedad *fashionable* frecuentará sin duda el salón de modas, el mas elegante que se ha ya abierto en Buenos Aires. (*Álbum de Señoritas*, No.2, January 6, 1854)

In this light, fashion narratives provided for perhaps one of the best forums to discuss the class issues related to consumption and national belonging. Previously many of Argentina’s male intellectual elite located the consumption of fashionable goods as the *site* from which

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<sup>284</sup> Manso elaborates on this point in a different publication: “Sin embargo, las escritoras no se entregan con facilidad al juego coqueto de ser consumidoras. Por el contrario, evalúan el discurso mimético argentino con respecto a la moda europea, cuestionan el valor de la copia, repiensan el estilo como pastiche. (La mujer y el espacio público, 1994: 12)

Argentina's barbarism could be covered-up and essentially eradicated—Sarmiento's articles, Alberdi's *La Moda* and Mármol's *Amalia* all attest to this. Women came to occupy an important position in this consumptive behavior: as the liaison between public and private worlds, she could introduce "modernity" and transmit 'modern' values—of course, only those that were approved—into the home in ways far different from the male.<sup>285</sup> This did however, create a problem. On the one hand, the female-as-consumer became intricately linked to modernity through her "exposure" to the market, which had the negative effect of associated the female with *impulsiveness* and *irrationality* (not to mention possible prostitution), compared to the model rational identity that the modern period sought to establish for the male. Felski explains:

My discussion has explored some of the reasons why the image of the woman-as-consumer has been such a powerful presence in this dystopian vision of modernity. As a result of the gender division of labor, it was primarily women who were exposed to the 'imperatives of the market' as exemplified in the selling techniques of advertisers and retailers. At the same time, women's long-standing association with nature and primordial desire helped to promote an identification of consumerism with feminine impulsiveness and irrationality. Given a prevalent equation of bourgeois masculinity with reason and self-restraint, it was above all through the representation of the consuming woman that writers criticized the vulgar materialism brought about by capitalist development. (*The Gender of Modernity*, 1995: 88)

This model of a "rational" identity, of course, is unmistakably related to fashion. Due to the rise of capitalism and the Protestant work ethic—often associated with the Industrial Revolution—male dress became much more somber in its attempt to reflect a more "rational", controlled identity for the male:

"Accordingly, men's dress became the primary visual medium for intoning the rejection of "corrupt" aristocratic claims to elegance, opulence, leisure and amatory adventure that

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<sup>285</sup> The figure of the female can also represent the complete opposite of this. In other contexts in the struggle for national definition, for example in post-colonial India, the female was located within the home for exactly the opposite purpose. She came to signify resistance to the "modern" world imposed by English colonialism. (Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 1993) Thus women's symbolic importance within and outside of the domestic is often determined by the particular needs and projects of the state.

had been so elaborately encoded into pre-nineteenth century dress [...] Men's dress became more simple, coarse, unchangeable, and somber... (Davis, Fashion, Culture and Identity, 1992: 38).

However, for the female population the opposite is true: as wives—or future wives, or desired/desiring wives—of these newly wealthy bourgeois men and as consumers, their attire maintained to a large extent the 18<sup>th</sup> century opulent dress code.<sup>286</sup> Bell explains how this affected women's relationship to a growing consumer society:

The differentiation between the dress of men and that of women which begins through a variation in development throughout the eighteenth century and culminates in the schism of the nineteenth century arises from the fact that the exhibition of wealth in men no longer depended upon a demonstration of futility; this change was made possible by the emergence of a wealthy manufacturing class. On the other hand, the women of this class, having no employment and being entrusted with the business of vicarious consumption, continued to follow the sartorial laws already in existence. (quoted in Davis, Fashion, Culture and Identity, 1992: 39)<sup>287</sup>

Through their fashion writing, some women writers were able to break out of this consumption pattern: without being associated with luxury, “primordial” desire and above all

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<sup>286</sup> Purdy, following Flügel's lead, explains how the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided for the marked gender split between dress for men—which was just considered modern—and dress for women, which was associated with *fashion*. “The bourgeois world no longer had the aristocracy to blame for bright colors and tacky knickknacks; therefore, it turned on itself, assigning to women's clothes the function of eye-catching ornamentation. Women's wear became synonymous with ‘fashion’. Well-dressed men, particularly those who followed the dandy's preference for black, were simply modern. Modernity and fashion were split almost completely in the nineteenth century by the gendered assignment of social roles, yet they were also implicitly interdependent as only their combination could produce the bourgeois family.” (“Introduction”, The Rise of Fashion, 2004: 6)

<sup>287</sup> This tendency in consumption, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was first articulated in 1930 by the fashion theorist J.D. Flügel in The Psychology of Clothes as “the Great Masculine Renunciation”. However, while recent scholarship does accept the basic points of Flügel's assessment, it has shown that male consumption of fashionable clothing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not altogether disappear. Breward's The Hidden Consumer offers the most detailed analysis of masculine consumption. He explains the limited scope of Flügel's “Renunciation”, above all in terms of class, since male clothing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century still served to distinguish class differences: “Appearances played a central role in establishing social hierarchies in late Victorian London, and, while Flügel's masculine renunciation seems to hold for all men, the nineteenth-century commentator would have defined clearer distinctions between the visual identity of classes.” (The Hidden Consumer, 1999: 26)

*irrationality*, they could show their women readers *how* to compete with modern fashion without destroying the economic stability of the home or without falling prey to fashion's excesses. Juana Manso was the most outspoken of her contemporaries, likely because she was among the poorest of female writers.<sup>288</sup> Manso appealed to her readers in large part by trying to identify with an economically diverse readership. As she claimed, her publication was intent upon creating a *large revolution* that would put elegance and good taste at everyone's reach, regardless of income:

Asi es que al hacernos el órgano de la moda en Buenos Aires, no venimos a contribuir al descarrío de las que no saben conformarse con los desdenes de la fortuna, sino por el contrario, venimos á poner en voga los géneros al alcance de todos, realizados por la elegancia y el buen gusto; venimos á hacer una gran revolucion, lo prevenimos. (*La flor del aire*, No. 1, March 3, 1864)

She continues by explaining that fashion wasn't just the class of fabrics in use, the form of a particular hat or the craftsmanship of a coat. Above all, fashion, for Manso, represented a society's pragmatic nature, not its excesses. Through fashion, she contends, one could teach a great deal to the viewing public:

La moda no es solo la clase de los tejidos en uso, el talle de los vestidos, la hechura de los tapados; la forma de las gorras y sombreros; la moda es algo mas que todo eso, es la pragmática de una sociedad, la constitucion de la muger, el código de la cultura de un pais; un diario de modas es el órgano de la elegancia, el bazar del comercio y de los

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<sup>288</sup> Manso knew first-hand the financial difficulties associated with "proper" dress since she was barely able to support her two children on her meager wages. On one occasion, she was particularly affected when, after a public reading of her play *Rosas* was cancelled due to protesters, some disgruntled members of the crowd threw fetid juice on a newly purchased dress. Zuccotti describes the scene: "El éxito de los dos primeros viajes deviene en escándalo en el último: varias veces debe recomenzar la lectura de su pieza teatral, *Rosas*, porque una docena de intrusos que se escabulló sin entrada la silba; cuando echan a los revoltosos, éstos comienzan a apedrear el edificio de chapas a cascotazos y la lectura se suspende; pero la violencia se desata aun más y cuando sale le echan asa fétida sobre su traje—una traje nuevo—, se lamenta esta escritora pobre que no se da el lujo de comprar vestidos con frecuencia." ("Juana Manso", 1998: 381) To this attack, Manso replied, that had she money, she would have been standing on a pedestal of gold, but since she was alone and poor, it was easy to be attacked. ("¡Si yo tuviese pedestal de oro! Pero pobre como soy y sola, es fácil...". (Zuccotti, 1998: 381)

artículos de fantasía; á su sombra mucho se puede decir y mucho de puede enseñar. (*La flor del aire*, No. 1, March 3, 1864)

Manso calls on her less fortunate readers to use their ingenuity to compete with Buenos Aires' wealthy inhabitants. For this reason she decides to include patterns in her descriptions on fashion, something she thinks will be very “useful” for those hard-working women that make their clothes:

Una sociedad como la nuestra, cuyo circulo elegante es vasto, pero cuyo numero de ricos es limitado; tiene que suplir la escasez de la fortuna por el ingenio y la elegancia. Las ricas que gasten—pero las pobres que se ingenien. [...] Pronto verémos de dar los patrones de moldes, cosa muy util para las niñas laboriosas que se hacen sus vestidos y que mostrará las ventajas de nuestro periódico, hoy indispensable yá por el grado de cultura que hemos llegado en Buenos Aires, habiendonos prestado gran ánimo la proteccion que se nos dispensa por el público y la galanteria de la prensa. (*La flor del aire*, No. 3, March 17, 1864)

Manso was one of the first to include such detailed information in her fashion articles. Before this, most fashion articles merely consisted of very lengthy descriptions of certain fashion trends with information on where to purchase the desired items, however they lacked any information on how to prepare these fashions within the home.

In her final publications on fashion, Manso became more aggressive in her tone. She explained to her readers that lower-income women had better prepare themselves for a life of martyrdom and jealousy and she explained that there were often only two solutions for these women. After elementary education, the “torture chair”—that is, the sewing chair—was one possibility awaiting un-wed women and, unfortunately, prostitution was always the other option:

[...] Eres pobre? ve aprendiendo á envidiar las sedas y los trajes de tus compañeras; aprende á trabajar para que luzca otra mas feliz que tu! prepárate al salir de la escuela á sentarte en la silla de la tortura, y coser día y noche, y ay! de ti si pretendes exsimirte de la ley austera del trabajo! entonces, la miseria te arrojará en el infierno de la prostitucion? Vestirás aquellas sedas y encajes que exsitaban tus zelos infantiles, aprenderas á comprar dijés con tu pudor y á olvidarte que eres mujer entre el estrepito de la orgia!...Pobre mujer! De todos modos, pobre ó rica nace al martirio. (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 4, July 9, 1864)

In the end, Manso was sure that women suffered because of their enslavement to clothing, and she was the only member of her generation to use such terms:

Mi conviccion es, que la muger de nuestro pais sufre bajo sus sedas y su lujo; la naturaleza de su organizacion es altamente sensitiva, el vacio de las afecciones para que la ha destinado el creador, esa falta de lealtad que la espera desde los primeros pasos de la vida, debe herirla profundamente; (*La Siempre Viva*, No. 4, July 9, 1864)

These final fashion commentaries serve a fitting end: they point us once again in the direction first mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. This is so since time and again women writers used fashion to move from the realm of the symbolic into what they perceived to be the real issues their female readership confronted on a daily basis. As we've seen throughout this chapter, women writers did this in many ways: in terms of the representation of the female body in the public sphere they sought to break away from the symbolic representation that the figure of the female had theretofore held in the public imaginary by highlighting the physical limitations placed upon women by their dress; in terms of the metaphorical 'filth' that many male writers had associated with female fashions, they sought to show how many unsuitable fashions introduced very *real* filth into the domestic sphere which often endangered the *real* health and wellbeing of the domestic; in terms of European fashion, women writers sought to show the temporal inappropriateness of dress not suited to Argentine reality; and certainly, in terms of class, women writers—particularly Juana Manso—sought to show that not all women within the nation's boundaries could easily conform to the models put forth by the idealized high fashions of the times. Women writers' insistence on deemphasizing the symbolic was not casual: at a time when the consumption (and advertisement) of fashionable goods was increasingly present in journalism and when it was becoming increasingly important for the publishing industry, women writers of the period consistently returned to the very real issues



concerning their female readership. This is especially important when considered against the backdrop of male edited periodicals for women: since exile and censorship were no longer reasons to hide political discourse in fashion writing (as the Generation of '37 had done) male writers—as the following chapter will consider at length—published periodicals dedicated to the increasing numbers of literate women for the explicit purposes of economic profit. In what follows, we'll consider the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps the most significant time period in Argentina's industrial growth, and we'll consider both female and male fashion commentaries to see how both sides of this gendered divide responded to the overwhelming changes sweeping the region.

## 5. Fashionable Desires: Consumption and Gender in Post Caseros Argentina

This final chapter begins with a section of a poem titled *Las Mamás* (1855). Reminiscent of those that criticized the *peinetón*, this poem once again bespeaks of the *problems* women continued to cause their husbands and fathers:

[...]

Luego si en lujo malgasta,  
lo que escatima en el pan,  
ó si andar debe por loca  
con mordaza ó con bozal.

Y si al fin llega á ser madre  
¡desventurados papás!  
siempre con aquella duda  
¿si será? ¿si no será?

[...]

La carrera de muger  
no es de estudio ni de afán,  
es carrera de *casaca*  
sin traje de militar.

El figurin es su libro,  
su escuela el balcon fatal,  
su dómine la modista  
y el tocador lo demás.

[...]

Lo cierto es que de las hijas  
solo tiene que pensar  
el autor (álias el padre)  
en vender la propiedad.

(*El Pica-Flor*, No. 2, January 11, 1855)

I chose to open with this poem because, already in 1855, its anonymous author foreshadows the *chaos* that consumption would cast upon the general public. According to this author (and many others as we'll see below), women in particular—especially through

consumption and fashion desires—became an increasing *threat* to public order: they wasted their money on luxury items rather than purchase food for their families; they had no other careers than those of finding husbands; their honor and their sexuality was dubious; the famous fashion *figurin* was their only educational reference; their only schools were opera balconies and their only schoolmasters, of course, were fashion designers. To this, the author concludes that fathers should only think of one thing when it comes to their daughters: selling them as nothing more than the property they really were.

In previous chapters, we've seen both sides of the consumption debate in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. On the one hand, authors such as Sarmiento (as well as several other members of the Generation of '37) praised consumption for its *civilizing* powers. Because of this, they desperately sought to create a *discourse* of consumption in the national imaginary since, after all, it was a matter of national concern that the nation at least *appear* to be civilized. On the other hand, post-Caseros women writers sought to *de-emphasize* the role of consumption in women's lives, particularly fashion consumption, because of its capacity to relegate the female to a symbolic sphere of activity.

However, as this final chapter will examine, consumption could no longer be contained within lettered discourses on or about the nation's future. Nor was this discourse of consumption any longer contained within the realm of the symbolic construction of the nation and its inhabitants. It was now affecting, in very real ways, many aspects of *porteño* society. First, department stores were increasing in numbers and consequently “stealing” women from their homes and families. Second, due to large transformations in trade and commerce, lower-class women and immigrants were able to access popular consumer goods—so much so that, to the horror of the upper classes, proper *porteños* could no longer differentiate by dress alone,

especially in the case of immigrants.<sup>289</sup> Finally the booming *porteño* middle-classes<sup>290</sup> were easily falling prey to the excesses of consumption such that the real health and well-being of the national body was threatened. In many cases, it was thought that consumption was responsible for creating an uncontrollable and unhealthy *desire* for goods. Consequently, according to many critics, the increasing desire for fashionable objects was leading women down the path of prostitution and disease.

This final chapter will discuss the effects of this budding consumer society on *porteño* life from 1855 to 1880. Through a consideration of the most popular fashion magazines mostly directed by men, but geared toward a female public<sup>291</sup>, this chapter will analyze how fashion

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<sup>289</sup> Increasing access to consumer goods was due, in part, to the changing nature of advertising and journalism. As Cavalaro explains, during this period, roughly from the end of the 1850's, journalism, literary pieces and advertising contained within were no longer destined for the *porteño* elites, particularly because the city's population was becoming evermore literate: "Ya no se llegaba sólo a una aristocracia cultural. El gran crecimiento poblacional—resultado de una política inmigratoria indiscriminada—amplió el horizonte de lectores que, por pertenecer a niveles socio-culturales heterogéneos, influían con sus necesidades y gustos en la definición de proyectos diferentes. [...] A su vez, la política de alfabetización, emprendida especialmente por Sarmiento, también contribuyó al diseño de un nuevo lector." (*Revistas Argentinas*, 85)

<sup>290</sup> While Rock contends that the middle sectors in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina grew very slowly (*Argentina*, 141), more recent and in-depth investigations on this topic have shown that, quite to the contrary, the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a booming middle-class founded largely on small family businesses and banking endeavors. As Fernández, Pons and Videla point out, the period 1852-1880 was central in consolidating a strong middle class: "El período que va desde 1850 a 1880 fue más que un prolegómeno de un proceso de fortalecimiento de un orden burgués posterior. Fue vital en sí mismo ya que construyó la tendencia, ratificó el rumbo y consolidó la dirección. El proceso que se abre en la transición a los ochenta será así el producto de una nueva alquimia sobre la base de una estructura previa, sostén indiscutido de un modelo social, económico y político. ("Las burguesías regionales", 426)

<sup>291</sup> This chapter will consider the following periodicals—the reader will note, again, that they were edited almost entirely by men though they often contained lengthy submissions from some of the leading female writers of the period: *El Pica-Flor: Semanario de literatura, de un aprendiz de literato* (1855); *El Museo Literario, Periódico semanal de literatura en general, teatro y modas*, under the direction of Carlos L. Paz and Lisandro Paganini (1859); *La Primavera: Periódico mensual de literatura*, under the direction of Tomas Giradles (1865); *El Correo del Domingo, Periódico literario ilustrado* under the direction of José María Cantilo (1864); *El Alba: Revista semanal de literatura, modas y teatros dedicada a las hijas de Eva*,

narratives continued to map out a gendered vision of women's role in the Argentine nation, particularly at a time when the traditional divisions between public and private (as previous chapters have explained) were contested. That exile and censorship were no longer reasons to hide political discourse in fashion writing did not mean that male authors/editors abandoned the fashion narrative or the fashion periodical. Quite to the contrary, in astounding quantities, male writers continued to publish periodicals and articles on fashion that were now dedicated to the increasing numbers of literate women for the purpose of economic profit. For these editors, fashion magazines also became useful tools for debating *how* consumption was changing the city's landscape particularly in negative ways. First, I will begin with a consideration of the magnitude with which consumption was *taking over* the city as represented by the boom in department store consumption. I will then consider the following: how consumption was related to immigration and the increased blurring of gender roles—that is, how the consumption of fashionable goods was, according to many writers, turning *men* into *women* and *women* into *men*; how fashion dangerously “empowered” women with a form of desire (expressed especially through the consumption of luxury items), which could ultimately lead to prostitution; and finally how fashion and consumption formed part of an entire discourse surrounding public health, prostitution and the “scientific” resolution of Argentina's ills.

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under the direction of Prieto de Valdes and Eduardo Vila de Stulz (1868); *El Plata Ilustrado Semanario de Literatura, Artes, Modas y Ciencias*, under the direction of Gustavo Kordgien and Carlos Cansen (1871-1873); *El Correo de las Porteñas: Periódico literario, dedicado al bello sexo*. (1876); *La Ondina del Plata* under the direction of Luis Telmo Pintos (1875-1879); *El Álbum del Hogar*, under the direction of G. Méndez (1878); *La Alborada del Plata*, first under the direction of Juana Manuela Gorriti, then later Josefina P. de Sagasta (1877-1878). See Auza, *Periodismo y feminismo* and Cavalaro *Revistas Argentinas del siglo XIX* for in-depth information on each particular periodical.

## 5.1. *Las Grandes Tiendas: Department Stores and Consumption*

Once society is defined exclusively in terms of consumption, those who are not consumers become invisible.<sup>292</sup> Neil Lazarus

This quote, in many ways, goes to the heart of the importance of consumption in post-Caseros Buenos Aires. Because the strict political order, and dress-code, of the Rosista period had been lifted, and because of the drastic socio-economic changes affecting the city's landscape—increasing industrializing, urbanization, modernization, technological advances in transportation, the increasing presence of women and immigrants in the public sphere among others factors<sup>293</sup>—consumption, for the middle and upper classes, easily became a cherished, and for some a detested, site for identity negotiation. Through consumption many *porteños* sought to restore or re-invent a sense of identity that had theretofore been threatened and that was increasingly challenged by the changing socio-economic situation of post-Rosista Buenos Aires.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> This quote is taken from Merish, Sentimental Materialism, “Introduction”, 10.

<sup>293</sup> Jitrik even suggests that, after Rosas, *porteños* stressed the importance of forming a sense of identity based on civilization and urbanization, something the provinces lacked. Clearly, consumption would play a large part in this identity formation, and as Jitrik explains, a large part of creating this mentality was found in customs—which would incorporate dress: “Después de caído Rosas...Buenos Aires, aprovechando la concentración política y económica de que gozó por la reapertura del puerto, se presentó a sí misma como cumpliendo ya con dicho papel, se sacralizó y se mostró como siendo a la vez un ámbito engendrador de civilización y como si la civilización fuera un objetivo a cumplir por la ciudad. Esta doble dimensión fue interiorizada por sus habitantes que empezaron por sentirse orgullosos de ella, continuaron por vivir persiguiendo una urbanización que debía cubrir todos los planos, desde el urbanístico hasta el cultural y el de las costumbres, y terminaron por hacer sentir a los provincianos que eran unos desheredados por el hecho de no estar investidos de ese carisma.” (El 80 y su mundo, 34)

<sup>294</sup> There are several texts on the history of consumption that have informed this section. Landcaster's The Department Store: A Social History offers an important survey of the major theoretical texts that have shaped current debates on consumer society, ranging from Marx, to Veblen, to Gramsci. See Chapter 9, “Theories on Consumer Society”, 159-170. Also, Stearns' Consumerism in World History offers an important analysis of consumerism, not only in the

The development of large stores that would later become the all-important department store is perhaps the best place to begin since they progressively made their way into the pages of fashion magazines, thus marking an increasing preoccupation with consumption in the social imaginary. Two of the first stores to exist in Buenos Aires were “La Porteña” and “Aux armes de Paris”, although the streets of the city, especially Florida, Rivadavia, Maipú and Paseo de Julio, would eventually become flooded with hundreds of shops. (Saulquin, La Moda en la Argentina, 60) There were also additional shops located in other less-known streets. An anonymous author from *El Correo del Domingo* mentioned, rather complained, that women congregated in Buenos Aires streets. Clearly, this author disapproved of the sociability that these stores offered for women as he refers to them as groups of whales (urcas) slowly swimming through a sea of consumer goods:

Las calles de Espoz y Mina, Carmen de la Montera y contiguas, son los mares mas frecuentados por las urcas femeninas; mares que efecto de sus innumerables bancos, sirte y remolinos que hacen sudar la gota tan gorda á los desdichados timoneros, tardan é veces en surcar mas tiempo del que necesitó el pobre Cook para atravesar las heladas corrientes del polo. (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 5, January, 1864)

Eventually, entire pages of fashion magazines would be dedicated to public exhibitions—similar to European exhibitions of the 1850’s and 1860’s—thus showing to the world that Argentina, too, had entered the modern era.<sup>295</sup>

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West, but in Russia, East Asia, Africa and the Islamic Middle East. Finally, several others texts, concerned mostly with gender, include significant analyses of consumerism in the West, particularly France, England and the United States. See Merish, Sentimental Materialism; Kidd and Nicholls, Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism; Richards, The Commodity Culture of Victorian England; Leach, “Strategists of Display and the Production of Desire”; Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women; and Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France. The reader will note that a history of consumption in Argentina, while needed, is noticeable absent.

<sup>295</sup> For example, *el Plata Ilustrado* dedicated an entire article, complete with illustrations, to the Palacio de la Esposición of 1871 in Córdoba. The illustration depicts Argentina’s best dressed citizens shuffling through galleries and admiring the symbols of progress and civilization. The

Scobie, one of few social historians to mention the development of department stores in 19<sup>th</sup> century Buenos Aires, explains how important these shops, many of which were foreign owned, became for porteño commerce, especially after national unification in 1862:

Commerce went hand in hand with elite residency along Florida and the adjacent streets. [...] Here stores selling French fashions, furniture, and perfumes had invaded the south end of Florida close to the Plaza de Mayo, indicating a trend in which Florida would soon replace Victoria as the center of shopping elegance. Parallel to Florida and one block to the left, Maipú had emerged as the location for several English commercial houses [...]. With political consolidation and national unity after 1862, these newly wealthy—including a number of British, French, Italian, and Spanish merchants and entrepreneurs—became increasingly linked to European commerce, capital, and culture. (From Plaza to Suburb, 61)

Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, industry was booming, and this would have a favorable effect on the fashion industry. After 1860, as Sabato and Romero explain, there were more than 400 shops in the city, most of which were dedicated to the clothing industry. In fact, these historians locate the store as a main pillar of the changing nature of commerce in the city. They further explain that the emergence of the large store, as opposed to the traditional *pulpería* o *almacén*, represented a clear sign of modernity since bargaining was no longer a standard practice and since clients could use credit to make their purchases<sup>296</sup>:

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article describes the progress that still awaits Argentina and it stresses the importance of populating the interior provinces to facilitate Atlantic trade: “Llegando el día en que haya los brazos necesarios para esplotar estas riquezas y la comunicacion por medio de ferro-carriles y vapores, veremos en otra Esposicion Nacional venidera el concurso de los comerciantes é industrials de todos los paises del mundo, para llevar los ricos y abundantes productos de las Provincias de la República Argentina á los mercados de las capitales del continente antiguo. (No. 12, December 31, 1871)

<sup>296</sup> Adelman even suggests that the re-establishment of the economy after Rosas was in large part based on trust: “Vendors had to trust that purchasers would honor obligations; creditors stored faith in debtors’ ability and willingness to make future payments. In the merchandising world of the River Plate, where money was in chronic short supply, these two types of transactions often fused into one hybrid deal.” (Republic of Capital, 229) This clearly applies to the growing fashion industry in Argentina, and it was a major worry for many writers since it could easily lead to the destruction of a family’s income.



Signo de modernidad, se había acabado el regateo [...] Más peculiar aún de los nuevos tiempos eran las grandes tiendas, como “A la Ciudad de Londres” establecida en 1873. Ciento doce empleados y más de cien modistas y bordadoras externas, de distintas nacionalidades aunque predominantemente francesas, atendían a ‘lo más aristocrático de la población’, una clientela que podía comprar sin pagar de inmediato y para la cual se había organizado un sistema de distribución domiciliaria. (Los trabajadores de Buenos Aries, 59)<sup>297</sup>

More importantly, these commercial developments and the growing clothing industry served to fold Argentina into an Atlantic economy, clearly a very important aspect for economic development according to Argentina’s liberal elite. Since the Rosista era, these intellectuals had fought for free trade, and now it was in full swing:

The moment to shape a new legal order came in the 1850’s. Guided now by the principles and reality of free trade, the River Plate folded back into the Atlantic system, commerce flourished, local and foreign merchant-financiers saw Buenos Aires as a magnet for enterprise, and trade and investment began enriching landholders. (Adelman, Republic of Capital, 281)

This incorporation into a global system of trade, had far reaching, and for some, disagreeable consequences in Argentina. This type of trade changed the legal system within Argentina, such that the old colonial order—which often determined to whom certain materials could be sold, and who could buy them, as we saw earlier in the case of the Afro-Argentines forbidden certain dress—no longer held sway in terms of the social classes. That is, now consumption and not *tradition* determined who participated in market activities:<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin American development, Sabato and Romero also remind us that the clothing industry, much like the rest of Argentine industry, was dependent upon foreign commerce: “Pero además de sufrir las oscilaciones estacionales, la economía del Río de la Plata era muy vulnerable a las crisis cíclicas, y su estrecha relación con el mercado mundial la convertía en caja de resonancia de la situación internacional, tanto en los momentos de alza como los de baja.” (Los trabajadores, 85)

<sup>298</sup> Bronner, in the case of the United States, establishes the rise of consumer society in this relationship: wealth and possessions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century soon superseded heredity or family name. Much like the Argentine case, wealth and accumulation was thought to *civilize* American savagery: “Wealth was power, and to show this intangible relationship, wealth was made tangible. The accumulation and display of goods expressed the power to manage people by

Legal formalism—the commitment to deducing legal solutions from abstract and apparently neutral principles—freed the business of making choices over individual and collective rights from ideological concerns. In this fashion, markets for goods, labor, and especially capital could function according to their own laws of motion, beyond social classes. Now, to arbitrate disputes, legal agents appealed to doctrinal principals supposedly outside the control of any class, sector or region. This was an important material, political, and ideological triumph: no longer would social class determine which citizens engaged in market activity (as the colonial model implied); market activity would begin to contour emerging social classes. (Adelman, Republic of Capital, 281)

On a more global scale, Loeb suggests that consumption usually goes hand-in-hand with the rise of democracy, which, in the case of Argentina, was taking hold:

The lure of material things that could define class was most profitable in an open social and political structure; the product with snobbish appeal that connoted the taste and affluence of its purchaser could find a market much broader than the aristocracy once democracy assumed a material as well as a political dimension. [...] Luxury goods were not so much a reflection of hardened class lines as the ultimate, even if illusory, pleasure of an increasingly democratized society. (Consuming Angels, 5)

In Argentina, this swing towards democracy and the opening up of consumer markets was not accepted without some degree of scorn. For example, *Cármén*, an unidentified writer of the fashion column in *El Álbum del Hogar* complained of the *bestias negras* who frequented the most important department store *A la Ciudad de Londres* (founded in 1873 by the Brun Brothers). In a “conversation” (clearly directed to members of the upper classes), she reminds her readers that the high society balls were quickly approaching and that they must begin preparing themselves. She then describes the “scene” at the store since there were many distinguished articles of European clothing to buy for the balls (most importantly, notice the use of *our society* when addressing her readers):

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directing production through consumption. It also provided something that the absence of family name and breeding could not—taste. Following an evolutionary model, preachers for wealth argued that affluence lifted culture above ungodly states of barbarism and savagery.” (“Reading Consumer Culture”, 13)

Como los bailes que se anuncian prometen estar interesantes, es bueno que vamos preparando ya nuestros trajes. Son muchas las que piensan concurrir á los salones del Plata para renovar las inefables emociones de los bailes de Carnaval.

—Anoche fuí á dar unas vueltas por la calle de la Florida, á la que frecuenta hoy muy poco nuestra sociedad con motivo de la temperatura nada agradable y llegué hasta la Ciudad de Londres.

—¿Que hay de nuevo?

—Especialidades que llegan de Europa por cada paquete. Allí podemos acudir, bien provistas, se entiende, las que tengamos deseos de darnos un corte en los próximos bailes. (No. 1, July 7, 1878)

*Cármén* strategically changes from discussing the affairs of *her* society to mention an unpleasant occurrence at the department store: women of lower classes, particularly some working-class *bestias negras*, were there also, rummaging through materials and goods without purchasing anything. She explains:

—¿Viste á alguien?

—En la tienda había algunas compradoras y un regular número de esas *bestias negras*<sup>299</sup> de los dependientes que piden y rechazan y vuelven y revuelven y se agitan y charlan hasta por los codos y concluyen por tomar el portante sin comprar nada [...]. (No. 1, July 7, 1878)

*Cármén's* mention here seems to imply that this was a regular occurrence at the department store especially since she insists there was a *regular number of these black beasts* in the store. And indeed it was: the very nature of the department store was to entice all socio-

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<sup>299</sup> This reference to the *bestias negras*, or what were probably salaried lower-class workers points to the diversification of the Argentine economy, especially with regards to commerce since they probably worked, in one way or another, for this sector. Falcón elaborates on the diversification of the market: “Otro sector de crecimiento relevante fue el del comercio. Este rubro incluía actividades muy variadas, que iban desde el comercio ‘instalado’, pasando por los pequeños comerciantes independientes que abastecían zonas restringidas—‘barriales’—del consumo interno, hasta vendedores ambulantes. Amén de que crecientemente irá comprendiendo a lo que se llamaba ‘dependientes’, en realidad asalariados en distintas formas y grados. Al mismo tiempo se verificará una mayor diversificación del comercio, con la aparición de ‘especializaciones’ tales como boticas, mercerías, pinturerías, etc.” (“Los trabajadores y el mundo del trabajo”, 499)

economic levels into the store to as to increase sales and so as to “dazzle” the lower-classes with the possibility of temporarily belonging to a higher social order. (Lancaster, The Department Store, 31)<sup>300</sup>

Thus, consumption within the city was not whole-heartedly embraced; rather it was met with understandable reservation, especially by the literate upper-classes. Going back to the 1860s, as early as two years after national consolidation, some newspapers articles emerged that criticized the *tiendamania* (literally, the “storemania”) and the destructive consumption sweeping through the city. The blame, of course, was to fall upon the female. One anonymous author begins by explaining how Satan’s true web was found in the lure of clothing: had the gluttonous Eve lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Satan would have tempted her with magnificent dresses instead of an apple:

Si nuestra glotona madre Eva hubiera vivido en el siglo XIX, apuesto tres contra uno á que la serpiente, en vez de tratar de seducirla induciéndola á que comiera una manzana, que por hermosa y madura que estuviera; al fin y al postre es una fruta de que en los tiempos presentes podria atracarse á costa de muy poco dinero, hubiera desplegado antes sus ojos un magnífico corte de vestido chiné o algun pañolón de chinos de Manila, segura de conseguir el mas satisfactorio resultado. ¡Felices tiempos aquellos en que toda la ambición de la mujer se cifraba en una manzana! ¡Feliz mil veces, Adan, que nunca supo lo que eran volantes, ni talmas, ni terciopelos! (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 5, January, 1864)

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<sup>300</sup> Lancaster refers to this change in commerce as *democratized luxury*. The development of the department store in Paris (particularly the *Bon Marché*) changed the way in which shoppers interacted with commodity goods. Now the common wife could rub elbows with the high echelons of society. He explains the particular case of a French inspired department store in England: “A pitman’s wife could now enter the same premises used by the Percys. Whether she bought anything was another matter. But the [...] message was extremely subtle and loaded with economic and social implications. [...] The better-off could be seen being better off by the things they purchased. Poorer fold could enter a new world of material fantasy, they could see it and even touch it and expect its glamour to rub off on their own small purchases.” (The Department Store, 31)

The author continues his description by offering a comparison of consumption to illness. It formed part of the many *manias* plaguing the region and it was one that most threatened the future of the region:

La *tiendamania*, hermana de la *dineromania* y tia carnal de la *vaporimania*, y *polquimania* y de mas jentecilla menuda que ha venido en el siglo actual á sustituir á las *conventomania* y *oscurimania* de nuestros abuelos, es una de las enfermedades que ofrecen síntomas mas alarmantes para el porvenir. (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 5, January, 1864)

More importantly, the author warns his audience that stores threatened the destruction of all the progress made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Morals, political and domestic economies, even *public order* was threatened by the *tienda*:

La sociedad, la moral, las luces del siglo, la economia política y doméstica, y hasta el órden público á voz en grito que desaparezcan esos focos de perdicion y de lujo; que se destruyan los cimientos, sin que quede ladrillo sobre ladrillo, cuantas tiendas encierra en su recinto la coronada villa; que se pase el arado sobre sus ruinas; que se siembre de sal el terreno que ocupaban; que...pero ¿adónde voy á parar? [...] ¡Ir de tiendas! frase mágica que las mujeres traducen por ir á la gloria, y los papás y maridos por ir via recta á San Bernardino. La mujer va de tiendas con el mismo placer con que el estudiante va de vacaciones, el militar de capitán general á la Habana, el celoso cofrade de porta estandarte en las procesiones, y el enamorado de faccion hacia la casa de su amada. (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 5, January, 1864)

Department store consumption became so popular, that some periodicals, such as *El Álbum del Hogar* and its anonymous writer *Cármén*, contained sections with regular “department store news” to keep readers informed of the latest. One article speaks of the growing competition between stores, such that smaller businesses were likely to be swallowed up:

—La tienda del Progreso, cuyo magnífico edificio acaba de concluirse en la calle de la Victoria esquina á la de Perú, recibirá en esta semana sus encargos de Europa á propósito de la nueva estacion. La Ciudad de Londres se prepara tambien á toda prisa y la competencia es indudable, como de costumbre.

—No ha de faltar quien sostenga á las dos, porque mas probable es que cierren sus puertas los establecimientos de primera necesidad, que las tiendas de lujo. Es muy

doloroso morir de hambre, pero no lo es tanto cuando se tiene la esperanza de morir con vestido de terciopelo. (No. 10 setiembre 8 de 1878)<sup>301</sup>

Still other articles, pointing towards a growing trend in public female sociability, comment on how department stores, especially *la Ciudad de Londres*, were becoming regular gathering places for women:

—Han de saber ustedes y las lectoras todas de esta seccion, que la Ciudad de Londres se ha convertido en una verdadera romeria, con motivo de haberse recibido los géneros y trajes hechos para la estacion de verano. Hay crisis para todo, ménos para vestirse bien. (No. 23, diciembre 8 de 1878)

In fact, this same publication alerts its readers to the fact that many stores were opening that now contained *salones* whereby women, shunned from participation in the male café, could meet, drink coffee and eat after a hard day's work of shopping:

En la confiteria del gas, cuyo local no tengo necesidad de recordar, acaban de abrirse unos confortables y elegantes salones, especialmente destinados á las damas. Allí se sirve café con todos los demás accesorios delicados que se adaptan á la finura proverbial del paladar femenino. (No.2, July 14, 1878)

This was a very important step in terms of female public association: department store consumption offered an alternative space for female socialization outside of the home, beyond the accepted domestic *tertulia*, and this association, as we'll see below, was quite contested. While many women had long been active in the work force—mostly through sewing, knitting or

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<sup>301</sup> This, however, was not the case in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. Contrary to common belief, large companies didn't replace smaller owned companies, but rather the increased consumption opened new markets for small business owners. This clearly points to the diversity of the Argentine economy and its ability to adapt to the economic changes of the period. What larger companies/stores didn't produce or offer to their clientele was picked up by these small owners: "Así, por diversos motivos, ciertas empresas grandes no cubrían totalmente el mercado y una parte de él quedaba reservada a la pequeña producción. [...] en este y otros casos, la división pasó por la existencia de un sector del mercado estandarizado, para el que fue posible montar este tipo de producción y otro de viejas características, satisfecho por los productores tradicionales." (Sabato and Romero, *Los trabajadores*, 76)

housekeeping<sup>302</sup>—this new form of public participation was threatening because it “exposed” women to many of the social ills the region faced (particularly prostitution).<sup>303</sup> In addition, many of the articles concerning department store consumption often brought to light the increasing presence of women in public life. Much like articles published in *La Camelia* or *El Album de Señoritas* some articles explain how women’s fashion was increasingly incompatible with women’s participation in the public. For example, in the following fragment the writer *Cármén*

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<sup>302</sup> Torrado offers important statistics concerning women’s active participation in Argentina’s economy. Interestingly, women’s paid work in all of Argentina (not just Buenos Aires) decreased, rather than increased, from 1869 to 1914. “[...] en 1869, 59% de las mujeres de 10 años y más residentes en el total del país eran activas, es decir, tenían un trabajo remunerado; esta cifra habría disminuido a 42% en 1895 y a 27% en 1914.” (*Historia de la familia*, 204) This reduction in participation, as Torrado explains, is due primarily to the disappearance of hand-knitting, brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Sabato and Romero, however, offer a different explanation in the decline of women’s work: at the end of the century the decrease in women’s participation in the labour market was probable due to a change in *how* women’s work was understood and recorded in national censuses: “La explicación de la caída de la actividad quizá no deba buscarse único o principalmente en los cambios habidos en la estructura productiva, sino en las formas de concebir el trabajo femenino. Así, parte de la declinación registrada puede haber resultado de una subestimación de la participación, resultado de una tendencia creciente por parte tanto de los censistas como de los censados en el sentido de privilegiar el papel de ama de casa de las mujeres frente al de trabajadoras.” (*Los trabajadores*, 39)

<sup>303</sup> Part of the concern of the local authorities over prostitution certainly had to do with Argentina’s perceived reputation for prostitution in the international arena. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Buenos Aires was internationally considered the “Sin City” of the Southern Cone and Argentina formed a major part of the traffic of European prostitutes. Guy explains: “At the end of the nineteenth century Buenos Aires had a terrible international reputation as the port of missing women, where kidnapped European virgins unwillingly sold their bodies and danced the tango. [...] The very name Buenos Aires caused many a European to shudder. Young girls, even those with no intention of migrating abroad, were advised not to walk unescorted at night in England or in European countries. They were discouraged from traveling by train to cities in search of work, lest they be kidnapped and sent abroad to end up in an Argentine bordello.” (*Sex and Danger*, 5) Guy further explains, however, that these fears were often exaggerated: “Contemporary European impressions of Buenos Aires were based partly on true incidents whose frequency was highly exaggerated. Although many European women ended up as prostitutes in foreign cities, few fit the stereotype of the middle-class virgin who had been seduced, drugged, or beaten into submission. Most had engaged in prostitution before arriving in the New World and were fully cognizant of what awaited them there.” (*Sex and Danger*, 7)

described her *viajes* through porteño streets and how these *viajes* were made difficult because of fashion trends that made skirts increasingly tight around the legs:

Hé paseado ayer por la calle de la Florida, desde las tres hasta las cinco de la tarde, pues el frío se opone á las correrías nocturnas que tantos encantos nos ofrecen durante las bellísimas noches de verano. Ahora tenemos que caminar ligero y movernos con agilidad de ardillas, á fin de disminuir en algo los efectos de esta inexorable estacion; pero desgraciadamente se oponen á esta medida extrema, los trajes que cada día son mas ajustados. Creo que si continuamos doblegándonos con tanta mansedumbre á las veleidosas exigencias de la moda, llegará un momento en que nos veremos embargadas hasta nuestros movimientos. Por Dios! se pretende sofocarnos á pretexto de elegancia! (*El Álbum del Hogar*, No. 2, July 14, 1878)

There is, however, another side to the debate over the department store. Other writers were concerned with commerce and the large store, not because they placed women at risk for unacceptable association, but rather because women were ultimately empowering men through their purchases. One writer in particular, *Leila*, took a much different stance on the critique of fashion. S(he)<sup>304</sup> begins by trying to dismantle the great “mystery” surrounding the power of fashion and its ability to change: fashion forms one of the foundations that maintains many nations’ economies and it closely ties European trade houses to the Americas. For this reason, and not due to some mysterious power it has over women, fashion was a formidable force:

Anonada y destroza hoy, lo que ayer fue su mas caro encanto, y así sucesivamente todos los días destruye lo que todos los días crea. Por que es así? os pregunto lectoras. “Quién sabe!—misterio, misterio,” es lo que me contestais. Nó, no es un misterio, no existe tal; la

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<sup>304</sup> I have been unable to locate a definitive identity for this writer, therefore I refer to *Leila* as s(he). Because *La Ondina del Plata* favored women writers—many of Argentina’s most famous women writers, such as Juana Manuela Gorriti, participated regularly in this publication—and because the tone of *Leila*’s articles appears to be consistent with that of her female contemporaries, I’m assuming that *Leila* was indeed a female writer although I cannot verify this assumption. The same is true of the writer *Cármen* from *El Álbum del Hogar*. I have not been able to verify her true identity, but because *El Álbum del Hogar* included many contributions by other female writers, and because of the nature of her statements, it appears that she was indeed a female. For an important study of some of the most commonly used pseudonyms of other more prolific female writers of the late 1870’s and 1880’s, see Frederick’s *Wily Modesty* pages 158-165.



consecuencia simple y llana que saco yo de la volubilidad de la moda, es que, gracias á esos caprichosos y veleidades de la diosa, se mantiene la mas grande porcion del comercio de casi todas las naciones y por ella se ligan y anudan fuertemente las grandes casas de comercio de Europa y América. (*La Ondina del Plata*, no. 46, November 16,1879)

From this base, Leila concludes that, rather than scorn women for their consumption and fashion desires, men should thank them, because after all, this “recklessness” maintained businesses and an industry owned almost entirely by men:

Partiendo de este punto, pues, debemos exigir á los hombres que no nos calumnien, que no repitan mas que la moda obedece solo á los caprichos de la mujer; nó, que sean sinceros, si quiera una vez, y digan: ‘la moda con su infinita escala de variantes la *ordena* una *necesidad* del comercio, la mujer no hace mas que acatarla y mantenerla; el comercio, que lo componemos en su casi totalidad los hombres, por su *propia vida* decreta esas leyes. (*La Ondina del Plata*, no. 46, November 16,1879)

In a sort of call-to-arms to her readership, she concluded that because men essentially owned the fashion industry, fashion was therefore promoted by men. Thus, males had no reason to criticize women for their spending:

¿Verdad, lectoras, que la mayoría de negocios existentes en Buenos Aires son tiendas y mercerías? Verdad, tambien, que son muy pocas las que se cierran? –en consecuencia ¿qué significa esto? Quiere decir que *la moda* es la que mantiene esos establecimientos, muchos de los cuales tienen grandísimos capitales y sostienen infinidad de dependientes y costureras. [...] Al profundizar, pues, á la moda, venimos á sacar en claro que *ella* es una cosa muy buena á pesar de las diatribas que se le dirigen; y que el hombre es el *verdadero* promotor de ella. (*La Ondina del Plata*, no. 46, November 16,1879)

The strategy employed here by Lelia is one of the first in its kind: like her predecessors from previous generations, she moves the desire for fashion out of the realm of being based solely on women’s insatiable appetite for luxury. But, unlike them she cements the entire debate surrounding fashion in purely economic terms and she places blame exclusively on the merchant’s desire for financial gain. In her own words, if men didn’t profit from fashion, it would no longer be an issue of public concern.

There is, however, another strategy at work here. Luis Telmo Pintos, the director of *La Ondina del Plata*, most likely incorporated these sections into the publication to promote its consumption among women readers. Much like Sarmiento previously sought to incorporate a larger reading audience for his publications in Chile more than 40 years earlier, many of the directors of these later publications included appetizing sections for their female readers.<sup>305</sup> This, as Beetham explains, was central to constructing consumption as an almost entirely *feminine* activity:

For the woman purchaser, one commodity—the magazine—gave entry into a world of commodities. In the nineteenth century, the feminine role of providing for the household became increasingly defined as shopping, as well as—or instead of—making. [...] Commodities were increasingly represented as essential to the work of being feminine. (*A Magazine of Her Own?*, 8)

In Argentine periodicals of the era, it was not at all uncommon to stumble upon weekly columns like, *anécdotas*, *la semana*, *secretos del tocador*, *maravillas del tocador*, *correrías y modas*, *crónicas y cuentos*, *cuadro de costumbres*, *modas y actualidades*, *correo de damas* and more, all of which included scenes of domestic and public life, happenings, dances, and the latest news on *porteño* social life. Thus, Lelia's comments in the aforementioned fragment, while clearly innovative, are also embedded within a larger discourse surrounding consumption often

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<sup>305</sup> Take for example, a column in *El Correo del Domingo* where its author Bruno claims that these sections were essential for women readers. In this particular weekly section, Bruno replies to some criticism he has received from his male audience because he spent too much time describing dances and women's dress: "¡Hola! con que sois de opinion de que la mujer no debe *brillar!* Dios mio, qué escentricidad! Y si así fuese, ¿qué seria de nosotros privados de las crónicas de bailes; donde tanto campea el espíritu del cronista, y tanto se hace *brillar* á la mujer *por su traje?* ¡Nada leerian ya las niñas ni las casadas sobre su tocado, las telas de su traje, los brillantes valiosos de sus adornos! Eso seria insoportable, amigo mio (me agrada dar este título al jóven que me impugna, aunque me impugne). Seria insoportable sobre todo para las que han dedicado algunas horas—horas?—algunos dias á sus atavios de baile, y que despues no se ven mencionadas ni con una triste inicial siquiera." (No. 40, October 2, 1864)

at odds with itself: while many periodicals scorned the excesses of consumption, they relied upon it for continued life.

As these articles have shown, the negative aspects of fashion consumption—for male and female writers alike—were irrefutable. Irrefutable too was the fact that consumption was clearly occupying an important part of public debate. These debates, however, would go well beyond consumption in and of itself. As the next section will explore, some of the most concerning effects of consumption, particularly for elites, were the blurring of gender it often lead to and the sense of identity and higher social standing it could offer to Argentina’s growing population.

## ***5.2. Identity Crises: Men Dressing like Women, Women Dressing like Men and the Rise of the Immigrant***

We’ve already seen in previous chapters how dress served to blur and worry many writers about the not-so-fixed nature of gender and gender relations in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. However, with the Rosista period far over, there was an even more noticeable sense of concern over *how* fashion was radically changing the gendered landscape of the city. No longer did dress only serve to cast doubt on the nature of *masculinity*, but now it was threatening the very idea of *femininity* since some fashionable women began adopting masculine dress.<sup>306</sup> Fashion narratives once again became useful tools in delineating the boundaries of what, for many writers, was considered “appropriate” dress for both sexes. Time and again, these writers would make clear

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<sup>306</sup> A similar “crisis” occurred in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century United States with regard to the bloomer costume. What most shocked its male opponents was the use of pantaloons since, as Mattingly suggests, their use undermined male authority: “Even those [men] who had supported greater rights and equality for women found themselves unable to accept radical change in dress, the sign that so markedly delineated ‘femininity’ and the separation of the sexes. [...] controversy and opposition focused primarily on the new dress’s pantaloons, symbol of men’s authority and women’s changing ideas about freedom and place.” (Appropriate[ing] Dress, 67)

to their audiences, especially in light of the “encroachment” of the lower-classes, that only those who knew how to follow the “general rules” (leyes generales) could be “gente de sociedad”. (El Alba Oct 18, 1868) This argument was also made in the *Correo del Domingo* in response to the growing number of women and men both using clothing inappropriate to their sex:

La mujer con corbata, chaleco, gaban y pantalones, y un hombre con sortijas, pulseras, bermellón y rizos, tienen mucho que entender. Esto es, tienen que entender que no entienden las leyes del buen gusto. [...] La moda y el buen gusto no son palabras sinónimas. El buen gusto es siempre uno, y la moda varia y se disfraz, y se contradice, y se copia. La moda es la negacion del gusto y el ideal del capricho: es, al decir de Balzac, un ridículo sin objeción. Si las mujeres se convencieran de esta verdad, cesaria pronto, ó por lo menos se debilitaria mucho, el imperio de la moda. (N0. 20, May 15, 1864)

Thus, merely having access to certain clothing did not pave the way to acceptance. In the particular case of women, “Casimiro Prieto”, the major fashion writer for *La Alba* made sure his audience was clear about women’s place in porteño society: “Desde hoy en adelante las mujeres se despojarán de las calzas, pues en una casa no debe haber mas *pantalones* que los del marido.” (No. 3, November 15, 1868) This mention, as others below will also exemplify, clearly points to the fact that gendered norms were quickly reinforced when both men and women stepped out of their “traditional” boundaries. Using pants, for example, was too radical a change for many and permitted women to freely circulate in the public sphere with few encumbrances, something that was already concerning many. It seems that it was high time men began wearing the proverbial “pants in the family”.

Before discussing the case of women’s fashion, it’s significant to point out that the dandy once again became a central feature of concern for many writers. Much like the early 1830’s poems seen in Chapter 1, satirical poems about the feminine nature of men too concerned with

their appearances reemerge in the pages of later porteño publications.<sup>307</sup> There is one poem that is particularly comical. In a section titled “Avisos” (the equivalent of the *classifieds* section), there is an announcement about some new types of French *bonnets* made especially for men. This announcement clearly points out that only the feminized dandies would be interested (“real men”, of course, would find this bonnet appalling!):

De Paris recién llegados,  
efectos de última moda  
se han recibido en la tienda  
de madama *Cacerola*.

Entre otras curiosidades,  
á cual de ellas más preciosas,  
ha venido para hombres  
una colección de cófias  
con mil flores, y con cintas,  
con encajes, y otras cosas  
que son para la elegancia  
de precision rigurosa.  
[...]

Of course, the first thing the reader notices is the author’s intent to describe the outright *girly* nature of the bonnets: decorated with flowers, bows, lace and other elegant items, these appear to be made expressly for the *porteña* since these materials were most often associated with female dress. However, the writer explains that these bonnets were made for *those* types of men—perhaps of an ambiguous gender?—who wore their hair like the *señoras*:

Son hechas espresamente  
estas riquísimas cófias  
para aquellos que el peinado  
lo llevan cual las señoras,

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<sup>307</sup> In fact, I uncovered too many poems about the dandy and/or the *feminization* of the male to describe here. Two of the most significant (and lengthy) are found in an early publication, *El Pica-Flor* (1855) “Los elegantes del día” (No. 3, January 18, 1855) and Baratillo (No. 6, February 8, 1855). Other later publications, such as *El Correo del Domingo* contain articles on the dandy. (See for example, No. 6, February 7, 1864)

que al medio parten el pelo  
como una cosa forzosa,  
dando al semblante sus tintes  
de una mezcla que no ignora  
quien haya visto semi-hombres  
de la cabeza á la cola.

Del género neutro algunos  
los llaman, porque acomodan  
de la gramática un caso en aquesta mazamorra.

Tambien para estos señores  
se han recibido preciosas  
y riquísimas orquillas  
con la forma de una argolla.

Hay alfileres y cintas,  
agujas y muchas cosas  
para el *toilette* de los *leones*  
que hoy se visten á la moda.

Calle del Perú, de nuestra  
hay un títere con cófia  
en la tienda con dos puertas  
de madama *Cacerola*.

In this poem, the reader immediately notices how the writer dispossesses the figure of the dandy of his masculinity by claiming that his dress places him in a category that defines typical grammatical definition necessary to the Spanish language (that is, the distinction between masculine and feminine). The writer also sarcastically refers to the many other *feminine* luxury items available in Madam *Cacerola*'s store for the "lion's" *toilette*.

There are, however, other less sarcastic references to the role that fashion was beginning to have in men's lives. For example, this same number of *El Pica-Flor*, contains an entire section titled *Modas de Caballeros*. Not since Alberdi's *La Moda* had male fashions made their way into an actual weekly column. Much like recipes, these sections, written by the anonymous *El Aprendiz*, contained general rules about how to dress in certain social situations. Most

noticeable is the predominance of the European *frac* since the Rosista garb of the previous era no longer appeared to have a place in *porteño* high society:

*Para calle...* Levita negra ó de color oscuro, corta de talle y large de faldon. Chaleco de *moiré* de color. Pantalón de color algo ajustado y con tiros. Guantes de color oscuro.

*Para Sociedad...* Frac azul ó verde con botones dorados, talle corto y foldones anchosl. Pantalón negro ó do color, ajustado con tiros del mismo género. Chaleco blanco con una carrera de botones y vuelta estrecha. Guantes de color claro.

*Para Baile.* Frac negro corto de talle, ...

*Para Montar.* Frac redondo... *El Aprendiz* (El *Pica-Flor* No. 6, February 8, 1855)

Despite the growing consumer demand for fashionable clothing for men<sup>308</sup>, some later publications nonetheless equated male preoccupation with vanity to sterility and an inability to love. A section in *La Ondina del Plata*, titled “Ecos de la Ondina”, described all of the steps that the modern male took to prepare himself and it chastised his infatuation with the mirror. The supposed female writer *Adelfa* concludes that this infatuation ultimately results in a sterile man, or in her words “an empty suit”, only capable of loving himself, his beauty and his clothing:

Este jovén distinguido, de brillante posición social, de hermosa y simpática figura, es por lo visto, un saco vacío, inflamado por el viento de la vanidad...su corazón en un campo estéril, no conoce el amor: ¿y para que amar? si el con su hermosura tiene bastante: se ama así mismo!

[...]

Por mucho que me pese el desagrado que cause la lectura de estas líneas á esta clase de hombres, no puedo menos que decirles: Caballeros, menos vanidad, un poco más de solidez en vuestro juicio, en vez de admirar por vosotros mismos vuestras prendas, dejad que otros las admiren. En esto consiste el arte de agradar. (Year II, No. 27, July 2, 1876)

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<sup>308</sup> For an excellent and in-depth consideration of the complexities of consumer culture for men, with particular emphasis on fashion consumption, see Breward’s *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*. Despite the common opinion that the “Great Renunciation” obliterated men’s consumption of fashion, Breward’s account shows just how intricate the nature of male consumption in England was as well as how significant the market proved to be for producers. See especially Chapter 4, “The spectacle of the shop: provision for the male consumer” pages 100-151.

Even other later writers complained that men were taking over what had once been of interest only to women. Fashionable men were beginning to dominate the world of jewelry:

Las pedrerías mas estimadas desde estos últimos tiempos son las estrellas de zafiros y de rubíes. Los hombres nos ganan en este lujo ahora, porque esta pasión por los dijes de joyería que caracteriza á las hijas de Eva se encuentra hoy mas desarrollada en ellos: llevan anillos, botones de pecheras y de puños, y multitud de dijes en la cadena del reloj: son un joyería ambulante. *Leila* (El Album del Hogar, No. 4, January 26, 1879)

What also concerned writers was that not only did fashion now have male slaves, but it was beginning—at least in appearance—to turn women into men.<sup>309</sup>

En otros tiempos la moda era una reina despótica, que solo tenia esclavas. Hoy esa reina despótica tiene tambien esclavos. Mientras mas se esfuerzan los hombres en demostrar á las mujeres, parece que ponen mas empeño en asemejarse á ellas. Mientras mayores agravios reciben de los hombres las mujeres, parece que ponen mas empeño en asemejarse á ellos. Los dos empeños son esencialmente ridículos. (El Correo del Domingo, No. 47, November 13, 1864)

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<sup>309</sup> This didn't happen in Argentina alone. Nancy Armstrong, a pioneer critic who charts the rise of the novel on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century England, noticed a similar tendency in English novels of the same period. Much *unlike* Argentina where the concern over this sort of *gender bending* was related to the fashionable elites, Armstrong's case focuses upon the lower classes. She explains that the *feminization* of the male and the *emasculatation* of the female in literary representations was part of a need to root these considered *deficiencies* in gender and not economics or politics: "In analyzing the condition of the working classes, authors commonly portrayed women as masculine and men as effeminate and childlike. By representing the working class in terms of these personal deficiencies, middle-class intellectuals effectively translated the overwhelming political problem caused by rapid industrialization into a sexual scandal brought about by the worker's lack of personal development and self-restraint. Reformers could then step forward and offer themselves, their technology, their supervisory skills, and their institutions of education and social welfare as the appropriate remedy for growing political resistance." (*Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 20) While seemingly unrelated because of class differences, both the examples of Argentina and England point to the fact that gender—and the anxiety it produced due to its often ambiguous nature—was largely intertwined with the projects of state, particularly industrialization. The concern in Argentina over the cross-gendering allowed by clothing could be understood as a reflection and perhaps inability of lettered elites to comprehend the socio-economic and political changes experienced in the period. And much like the case of England, Argentina's leading public officials, as we'll see below, soon used these "gender problems" to push for their social welfare and public health campaigns.



This fear was expressed often throughout the time period, and interestingly women appeared to be most concerned over the issue. As early as 1864, an undisclosed source (appearing to be a female) claimed that European fashions for women were copying male dress, and that soon this tendency could spread to Buenos Aires (much like an illness):

Si continua reinando el capricho tal cual, pronto nos vestiremos como hombres. En Compiègne donde está la corte las mas elegantes llevan paletó, sombrero de copa y botas, cuello derecho, corbatín y baston en la mano. Esta es la suprema elegancia. Las señoras del gran mundo poseen una coleccion de chalecos, bastones, corbatas y botas, ni mas ni menos que un dandy.' *Por estravagante que esto sea, nadie puede asegurar que en Buenos Aires no se verá imitado.* (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 5, January 1, 1864)

Towards the 1880's some writers even coined a new term for this "problem": it was deemed the *empantalonización* of women. *Cármen*, the fashion writer for *El Álbum del Hogar* used this term most often. In a section titled "Correrias y Modas" she first referred to the *empantalonización* of women when discussing her weekly *tertulias* on fashion. She began by describing to her reading public how, in their desperate need for information on the latest fashions, she and her *compañeras* would sweep the city and meet to discuss their findings. She then described how she tried to make their meetings on fashion appear more important by using a bell to call to order the session, to which she explained that in doing so, she was working towards the *empantalonización* of women. In other words, she was looking to make 'women's work' on fashion, and women's discussions of fashion, comparable to the importance given to male work and gatherings:

Mis amiguitas tomaron asiento: como hé oído decir que en todas las Cámaras del mundo se acostumbra á declarar abierta la session con una solemnidad imponente, traté de revestirme de un continente grave y conseguí hacerlo de una manera monumental, en medio de las mas alegres carcajadas de la concurencia. Dia llegará en que se tengan en cuenta estas condiciones que trato de perfeccionar constantemente: el dia en que se declare prácticamente la *empantalonizacion* de la mujer! (*El Album del Hogar*, No. 3, July 21, 1878)

In a subsequent number of this same publication, *Cármen* explained, however, that it was precisely the fear of being associated with the *empantalonización* of women that she chose a pseudonym. She most feared her father's reaction if he were to find out about her *public* contributions:

Pero tengo miedo que mi papé llegue á saber que yo escribo para el público y crea sorprenderme en flagrante delito de propaganda por la causa sacrílega de la *empantalonización* de la mujer. Tiemblo á la sola idea del *tableau* que este descubrimiento ocasionaria en mi casa, de ordinario pacífica y tranquila. (*Álbum del Hogar*, Year II, No. 12, September 21, 1879)

*La Ondina del Plata*, another publication of the late 1870's would also echo the worry over women's sartorial transformations. Again, Lélia, the fashion commentator, explains her opinions on the French fashions that influenced Argentine dress:

Los trajes que se llevan en estos momentos en aquella nueva Babilonia son de un pronunciado estilo masculino; las damas visten chaquetas, chalecos y paletós; corbatas, cuellos, medias-botas y sombreros semejantes á los de los hombres. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V. No. 3, January 19, 1879)

[...]

Es indudable que esa *tiranuela* llamada moda hace inmensos esfuerzos para transformarnos en hombres. [...] no nos va hacer falta mas que un baston, para poder penetrar desenvueltamente á un club político ó á un café, á departir sobre cuestiones locales ó financieras; dicha moda vá á venir de *perilla* para hacer efectivos los *derechos* que reclaman algunas mujeres que en vez de sesos tienen viento, nada mas que viento en sus cabezas. (*La Ondina del Plata*, No. 4, January 26 1879)

Other writers complained that the *manly* nature of the latest fashions in shoes drew too much attention to women in the public sphere. Now, even the most delicate and graceful of women could actually be heard (!):

[...] ese ruido que producen los endemoniados tacos de sus zapatos...comprendeis ahora, lectoras, porqué llamo ridícula esa moda:--no es una contradicción el que nuestras jóvenes usen ese calzado? La mujer que á todos sus movimientos imprime una delicadeza y misterio encantador viene á usar ahora una clase de calzado que anuncia su presencia á dos cuardas de distancia? Las pisadas de una mujer se han comparado con el susurro de las hojas; ahora nos queda el compararlas con el *suave murmullo* de...los suecos que usan los campesinos vascongados:--gritad, lectoras, gritad:--abajo los tacos con...herraduras! (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V. No. 3, January 19, 1879)

Comments such as these three here reflect a growing tendency in journalism directed towards women in the late 1870s: while their journalistic predecessors—such as *La Educación*, *La Camelia*, *Álbum de Señoritas*, etc.—struggled to create a discourse on dress that permitted freedom of movement, especially in the public, many later observations seem to reject such freedoms in dress, and such freedoms in the public sphere. Rather than celebrate the freedom that *masculine* dress could afford women compared to the restrictions of the corset and the petticoat, many later women writers—particularly for *La Ondina del Plata*—appear to regress by claiming that they preferred, above all, to be *feminine*. As one writer, *Azucena*, put it, she preferred to recognize the superiority of men over women. She would rather triumph in the home than in the public sphere:

Se me dice está en *moda* hoy la cuestion sobre la emancipación de la mujer; yo no puedo, lectoras mias, hablaros de ese asunto, pues francamente, no lo entiendo, soy una mujer enteramente femenina (perdonéseme el pleonasma); no sé si tenemos algunos derechos que no los hayamos ya tomado, y desde ahora me uno á vosotras para reclamar el derecho de agradar siempre á los hombres con nuestros modestos encantos, y nuestra sumisión á su reconocida superioridad. Si, que se emancipe la mujer, pero que sea de las preocupaciones sociales, y no para dar su voto en los comicios ni emitir á las Blumeristas en su traje corto y pantalón; que se liberte de las extravagancias de la moda y de las costumbres adquiridas en la molicia y el lujo, y que la mujer sensata se contente con gustar, por sus encantos naturales, sin querer arruinar á sus padres ó esposos para someterse á ese tirano, que sus triunfos sean en el hogar, y consistan en haber sido hija sumisa y obediente, afectuosa y resignada esposa, cuidadosa y tierna madre, y esa mujer modelo, que solo puede serlo debido a una esmerada educacion moral y religiosa, será verdaderamente emancipada, porque estará libre de los errores y preocupaciones de la ignorancia y será siempre superior á las mujeres superficiales. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 31, July 30, 1876)

There are some important points made in this fragment. First, clearly the issue of women wearing pants was a sore spot in the national imaginary: *Azucena* rapidly distances herself—and the group of conservative women she sought to represent—from the growing *Bloomer* movement in the United States which was closely related to the increasing presence of women in the public.

As Mattingly states, this type of dress, which included the use of pants, “created a public place for women”. (Appropriate[ing] Dress, 47).<sup>310</sup> Second, her use of *femininity* is central to her argument: because she recognized the very slippery nature of this term and because the very idea of *femininity* was challenged by the ever-increasing international feminist movements—not to mention the use of *masculine* dress by women—*Azucena* strategically locates *femininity* within more traditional parameters. Yes, women should free themselves, she claims, but from the same malevolent forces that concerned early 19<sup>th</sup> century public figures: social worries—i.e. participation in the social problems facing the era—the excesses of fashion, and of course the excesses of international women’s movements. The ideal sense of *femininity* for this writer certainly wasn’t revolutionary: one could return to pre-independence modes of conduct and find a similar logic. *Azucena* goes so far as to suggest that it would be a punishment for women to work alongside men in the public sphere:

No, no nos quejemos: *resignémonos* á que dure esta *esclavitud* y que por Dios no llegue el día en que se habituen los hombres á vernos correr por la calle á la par de ellos, y que nos pidan al fin del mes el fruto de nuestro trabajo; que sea este siempre para nosotras el órden y la economía, el cuidado del hogar, y la educacion de los hijos: *á los condores las altas montañas, á los pajaritos y á la mujer el nido.* (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 31, July 30, 1876)

Even the very famous Lola Larrosa<sup>311</sup>, known for her conservative views on female emancipation (Frederick, Wily Modesty), spoke out about women’s dress. Women, in her view, should only dress well enough to be pleasant to their husbands. That is, they should be feminine enough to be *coquettish* without transgressing into ‘disgrace’—an clear reference to prostitution:

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<sup>310</sup> Mattingly explains more: “Conventional negative associations between women and petticoats gave way to a new image permitting an alignment of women with public spaces and civic speaking. The costume itself, already represented in print and daguerreotype throughout the nation’s newspapers, provided a public (ad)dress.” (Appropriate[ing] Dress, 47)

<sup>311</sup> For an in-depth study of Lola Larrosa’s life and work see Frederick’s Wily Modesty.

[...] los deberes de una buena casada se reducen á uno solo: *ser agradable á su marido*. Para serlo, debe la mujer vestir bien, es decir, lo mejor que pueda, y demostrar cierto aire de coquetería, presentarse á los ojos de su esposo con igual encanto y los mismos atractivos que cuando le cautivó, no quejarse por lo que vale poco ó no vale nada: aparecer siempre buena, alegre, elegante y sencilla, á la vez que franca, astuta para ganar su corazón, debe brindarle el gusto en todo...En mi humilde modo de pensar creo que no habria mujer desgraciada si todas hiciesen esto, procedieran de esta manera. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II. No. 37, September 10, 1876)

From where does this discourse against female emancipation emerge? Why did a previous generation of women writers fight for a space to circulate in the public sphere only to be faced with later articles from other women writers who sought to turn back, at least discursively, these advances?

Part of this conservative bent has to do with the large scale popularity of many of these magazines. *La Ondina del Plata*, *El Album del Hogar*, *La Alborada del Plata* and *El Correo del Domingo*—unlike previous publications for women—comprised a large readership and most likely did not want to alienate their public with discourses on women’s liberation that were too radical. (Early writers, especially Juana Manso, quickly saw that such “radical” ideas meant the certain death of their periodicals.)<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Consider the statistics: *La Ondina del Plata* published 5 volumes (one per year) and a total of 255 editions. Manso’s *Album de Señoritas* (1854) contained only 8 numbers and even her later publications, such as *La Siempre-Viva* (1864) were short-lived. Of course, part of the boom in later 19th century women’s magazines was due to an increase in literacy and the increased accessibility of journals. Frederick offers some important statistics on literacy: “In 1857, when Domingo f. Sarmiento began his literacy campaigns, only about 8,000 children were enrolled in the public schools, but by the end of the century more than ninety percent of Argentines were literate, a skill they did not hesitate to use in writing everything from poetry to anarchist manifestos.” (*Wily Modesty*, 23)(For additional statistics on literacy after 1852 see Eujanián, “La cultura: public, autores y editores”, 550.) However, the marked difference in tone between early publications and these later ones seems to suggest that a conservative approach to women’s liberation was more successful with the reading public.

Frederick, on a different note, charges the women writers themselves with this conservative turn. In her words, they were simultaneously *fit* and *unfit* to tackle the challenges of the period:

In their writing, the women writers of the Generation of 1880 both *fit* and are *unfit*; that is, they frequently adhere to the dominant cultural patterns, but they also reserve a space for their own patterns. (Wily Modesty, 7)

For this reason, Frederick also suggests that women writers, particularly those—such as Lola Larrosa—who depended upon their writing to support their families, adopted a more conventional tone to avoid criticism of their work. In fact, the threatening female who adopted male dress—embodied by writers such as George Sand—became figures from which these writers could effectively distance themselves, simultaneously winning over their readership who disapproved of such behavior:

In the case of the Argentine women of the 1880s, their inherited gender identity was antithetical to the status they desired as writers. Their outside authority was the patriarchal culture that mandated their silence, and the threatening Other was a “masculinized,” brash woman who became a target for patriarchal displeasure—George Sand, for instance, with her men’s clothing, cigars, and unhidden lovers. Finally, in their narrative strategies of wily modesty, women writers often defended and collaborated with the very authority of modest silence that they struggled against. [...] This was the dream of the women of the 1880s: to be ideal wives and mothers without sacrificing their right to write. (Wily Modesty, 72-73)

It’s impossible to ignore, however, the importance of late 19<sup>th</sup> century social movements in shaping the tone of women’s writing. Part of the fear, for many later 19<sup>th</sup> century female writers, was that of being associated with the growing international feminist movement that was slowly making its way into Argentina. While “feminism” proper didn’t emerge in Argentina until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Argentina’s inhabitants, as many of the fragments from periodicals mentioned here evidence, weren’t entirely unaware of international women’s

movements, particularly in the U.S. (Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change, 16)<sup>313</sup> Later on, well after the 1880s, many of writers also sought to distance themselves from the radical anarchist movement that had its own female branch and outlet in the periodical *La Voz de la Mujer*.<sup>314</sup> Not surprisingly, this radical and highly politically charged publication was met with resistance and was published quite haphazardly. (Frederick, Wily Modesty, 180)<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Lavrin's Women, Feminism and Social Change offers one of the most in-depth studies of feminism in Argentina. She explains when feminism emerged in Argentina: "Feminism began to be discussed and defined between 1898 and 1905, and by 1920 it was part of the political vocabulary of socialists, liberal middle-class women, social reformers, national deputies, and even conservative and Roman Catholic writers." (16) However, Lavrin importantly resists the temptation to consider a single, unified "feminism" and tends to regard the movement as a series of inter-connected discourses and actions. She considers, for example, socialist feminism, liberal feminism, compensatory feminism and how feminism was considered in terms of political activity and moral and social reform. See Chapter 1 "Feminism in the Southern Cone: Definitions and Objectives" pages 15-52.

<sup>314</sup> This is not to say that all writers of the periodical distanced themselves from such movements. I found only one early mention of socialism in the journalism of the period, and interestingly it appeared in a fashion column in *La Ondina del Plata*. The writer *Emma*, motions for a revolution in fashion, and she suggests that her readers should adopt the slogan of European socialism in their fight against fashion. Clearly, as the following quote evidences, women writers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were aware of international social movements: "Pero me desvío, me desvío, amables lectoras, no es este mi terreno: modas y nada mas que modas debes ser el campo de mi lid. [...] Por convenir á los intereses del reinado de la elegancia, debemos, gordas y flacas, altas y bajas, reunirnos, hacer una especie de *socialismo* para arrojar de su trono, siempre que alcance á sentarse en él, á ese nuevo ministro: sí, *revolucionémonos*, amigas mías, y á al primer miriñaque que encontremos por esas calles de Dios prendámosle...una gruesa de cohetes...la divisa del *Socialismo* europeo es: fuego y acero—acero y fuego (es decir *tijeras* y tiroteos de risas) será con lo que escarmentará á ese aborrecido ministro, *el socialismo femenino*. Já! já! já! Y qué belicosas nos vamos á mostrar." (Year V, No. 3, January 19, 1879)

<sup>315</sup> Francine Masiello's Between Civilization and Barbarism offers the most detailed analysis of this unique publication that relied on the importance of science—a field of study that, as we'll see below, became increasingly important at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—to explain its views. Masiello explains how these women anarchists were very different from more "mainstream" women writers of the time, particularly because they recognized their place as subalterns in Argentine society: "From the authority identified with scientificity, *La Voz de la Mujer* speculates on the formation of self and home, lamenting the subaltern's exclusion from privileged centers of learning and culture. [...] Aware of their subaltern status, they reevaluate the Argentine household, describing it less as an arm of the state than as an enclase of resistance to oppression. Nor do they ever envision the home as a refuge from exploitation; it is not a 'haven in the hearless world' [...]. Rather, they depict it as being on the brink of destruction."

This time period, the late 1800's, also coincided with a marked increase in immigration, particularly Italian immigration<sup>316</sup>, into the emerging nation. Fueled in large part by government campaigns to attract laborers—and by promises of high wages and the possibility for a better social standing—this influx of immigration wasn't limited to just the city of Buenos Aires and its province. Rather, the entire country increased its population from 1.1 million in 1857 to over 3 million by 1890. (Rock, Argentina, 132) Rock provides some compelling statistics:

Between the provincial census of 1854 and the second national census in 1895 the population of the city and province of Buenos Aires almost sextupled; Santa Fe's population increased tenfold, and in Córdoba, Entre Rios and Corrientes fourfold. (Argentina, 132)

This large scale increase of the city's population, once heralded as the solution to Argentina's "civilization problem", would eventually be controlled, as public figures—even those like Sarmiento who once blindly welcomed large scale immigration—would enact laws to curb the numbers of incoming immigrants.<sup>317</sup> And while this immigration may have helped stimulate Argentina's economy, especially in terms of its growing exports, it did have unfavorable consequences for native *porteño* elites. One consequence was that, especially for

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(106) With this type of discourse, it's easy to imagine why this publication was met with much resistance.

<sup>316</sup> Falcón describes the massive amounts of Italian immigrants that entered Argentina: "El ritmo de ingreso de los inmigrantes italianos va aumentando sin pausa. Entre 1857 y 1862 es de un promedio anual de 4.600 que casi se duplica en los cinco años siguientes hasta llegar entre 1868 y 1870 a 21.000 anuales. En la década posterior a los volúmenes de inmigrantes italianos sufren las mismas oscilaciones que el movimiento migratorio general, pero se mantienen en promedios cercanos a 25.000 ingresados anuales." ("Los trabajadores y el mundo del trabajo", 490)

<sup>317</sup> Scobie explains that one way in which elites (*gente decente*) were able to control the massive numbers of immigrants entering the country was to effectively exclude them from political participation. "The *gente decente* thus advocated immigration while at the same time carefully protecting the political structure from immigrant interference. The overwhelming preponderance of foreign-born over Argentine males in Buenos Aires in 1869—52,000 to 13,000 between the ages of fifteen and fifty-nine—did not challenge the political system and resulted in only an occasional demonstration by the largest and most recently established immigrant group, the Italians." (Plaza to Suburb, 235)



the female population, it was limiting the number of jobs for native Argentines. As one writer for *La Ondina del Plata* explained to her readership, it was unfortunate that, due to the influx of male immigrant workers, so many Argentine women should suffer hunger and poverty even though they were perfectly industrious and willing to work:

Asi vemos que cada dia se trata de fomentar mas la emigración por que no tenemos hombres en la República suficientes para la explotación de las vastas riquezas con que nos ha favorecido la naturaleza, mientras la mujer arjentina parece de hambre por no tener en que trabajar: se pondera la escasas de brazos y se desprecia ó descuida el contingente de fuerzas que ofreceria esta con solo algunos cambios y reformas que se hiciesen en el sistema administrativo y comercial. [...] La mujer argentina, por otra parte, es por carácter y naturaleza trabajadora é industriosa y haria grandes adelantos en esta plaza si se le fomentase y se le protegiese. (Year II, No. 3, January 16, 1876)

Another important negative consequence of immigration, particularly for elites and the growing middle-class, was that as the immigrant population folded into *porteño* society it became increasingly difficult to identify them by appearance alone.<sup>318</sup> As Scobie explains, by 1870, immigrants had successfully blended into the milieu:

It was even more difficult to identify ethnic or nationality clusters than it was to determine uniform occupational or social status within barrios. Except for the groupings of immigrants from a certain country that sometimes emerged in downtown conventillos, most barrios contained varying mixtures of the largest nationality groups—Argentine, Italian, Spanish, and French. (Buenos Aires, 205)

And as Saulquin further explains, this massive influx made it increasingly difficult for the native population to put a “stamp” on the newcomers since their mere numbers alone overwhelmed the city:

Bajo el impacto de esta inmigración, le resultó prácticamente imposible a la población criolla, numéricamente muy inferior, aglutinar y poner su sello cultural a los extranjeros que, en oleadas sucesivas, llegaban a Buenos Aires. (La moda en la Argentina, 55)

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<sup>318</sup> Masiello explains that immigration in Argentina certainly exposed serious social problems in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentina: “The appearance of these social groups exposed deep fissures in what had appeared to be a national discourse solidified by elites.” (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 166) However, as the sources I have consulted explain, this “problem” clearly emerged well before the early 1900s despite elite attempts to cover them up.

Not surprisingly, dress and the consumption of fashionable items would form part of the public discourse surrounding immigration. On the one hand, it could prove useful to categorize immigrants according to their native dress. On the other hand, however, dress could be dangerous, in some cases, because it could allow for a superficial sense of social mobility in a period marked by profound disruptions of the traditional order of things.<sup>319</sup> That is, the immigrant population could quickly shed the markers of their foreign identity. Gayol's important study Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires explains that immigrants indeed were anxious to do just this: "Los documentos muestran la preocupación de los inmigrantes de despojarse, al menos para mostrarse en el espacio público, de sus atuendos de origen." (105)<sup>320</sup> Already in 1864, *El Correo del Domingo* explained that this "fever" for appearing wealthy, particularly through dress, could lead to infinite torments, dishonorable acts and humiliation:

Ya hemos adquirido una de las ventajas mas codiciadas por los pueblos modernos. La fiebre de las apariencias deslumbradoras nos hace vivir siempre agradablemente escitados. Si todo el mundo no es rico, todo el mundo lo parece, ó se afana por parecerlo. [...] Ahí se verian las huellas profundas de tormentos infinitos, de vergüenzas, de deshonras, de humillaciones, de amarguras, de envidias, de anhelar sin fin—todo en aras de las apariencias. A esto llámase progreso por mucha jente. (No. 48, November 20, 1864)

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<sup>319</sup> This is not only true in the case of Argentina. The United States, another country known for its massive influx of immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, also witnessed a similar pattern in terms of consumption. As Merish explains, immigrants in the U.S. often considered consumption as a port of entry to citizenship: "Numerous immigrant narratives from the early twentieth century register this conflation of consumption and citizenship, figuring the purchase and ownership of goods as a definitive means of Americanization." (Sentimental Materialism, 12)

<sup>320</sup> Saulquin offers additional evidence of the impact that immigration had on Argentina's *criollos* (native population) since it led to their virtual disappearance: "[...] una escasa población debió asimilar a 6,5 millones de inmigrantes lo que llevó, según señala Gino Germani coincidiendo con el viajero James Bryce, a 'la virtual desaparición del tipo social nativo preexistente, a la vez que la destrucción de parte de la estructura social que le correspondía.'" (La Moda en la Argentina, 55)

And as Gayol further explains, the immigrant population was able to participate superficially in this wealth only because of the technical, industrial and commercial innovations occurring at the time:

Las innovaciones técnicas, industriales y comerciales profundizadas en las últimas décadas del siglo pasado y a principios de este siglo colocaron a la ropa—junto con los otros bienes de consumo—a disposición de todos tendiendo por ello a la homogeneización. Esta aparente uniformidad disparó la profundización de las diferencias secundarias y sutiles, ahondó el refinamiento y la búsqueda de la elegancia por parte de aquellos que sentían la amenaza por esta nivelación. Cuando la vestimenta se convirtió en un envite en las luchas por la apariencia, cuando las confusiones y las imitaciones parecían tomar fuerza, las elites sumaron a su consumo imposible de imitar un discurso que criticaba la simulación y que se inspiraba en el temor a los efectos de la mezcla, del enredo social y de la usurpación de los valores. La ciudad se prestaba cada vez más a las diferencias, pero también a los deslices y parecía poder cobijar a más de un Monsieur Jourdain. La ropa fue tanto un signo de civilidad como un problema; un objeto de dominación como un blanco de burla e inquietud. (*Sociabilidad en Buenos Aires*, 106)

Gayol's points here are very important: in the face of this trend towards a homogeneous social composition, at least in terms of appearance, the *porteño* elites did two things: on the one hand—probably to the dismay of Sarmiento—there was a revival of *countryside* dress whereby authors suggested that urban women should begin imitating their sisters in the backlands, and on the other, elites created a discourse that criticized the simulation of upper-class consumption patterns.<sup>321</sup> For example, in 1865, *El Correo del Domingo* affirmed that due to such massive

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<sup>321</sup> By the end of the period, there were even articles that exalted the countryside (a complete reversal of the Generation of '37's discourse on the countryside) as an escape from the evils and disease of the city: "[...] en el campo, do reina siempre esa tristeza, bella, alegre, todo tiene otro atractivo sublime, que en la metropolis de la ciudad, porque en las grandes ciudades, reina siempre una enfermedad endémica, la amnesia del Corazon. Las pasiones, el odio, la invidia, los superficiales halagos de esa que se llama sociedad, todo se olvida, en presencia de esa naturaleza, monótono—para algunos—pero para mi, la mas sublime. [...] ¡Cuánta diferencia existe, de la naturaleza de los campos á la ciudad! El campesino es el cantor de las selvas. Sus cantos sencillos, para llenos de sentimiento, conmueven profundamente el alma. [...] Vosotros, los que sois incapaces de sentir emociones patéticas, vosotros, repito, los que pasais el verano en la ciudad [...] en menos de veinte y cuatro horas, salid al campo, y alli al respirar esa atmósfera pura, sana, habreis recuperado vuestras facultades morales." *Raimunda Torres y Quiroga (La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 8, February 20, 1876)

immigration into Argentina, fashionable *porteña* women should copy provincial dress since it was less contaminated by foreigners. An article on pendant use suggests the following:

La elegancia consiste ahora en imitar a las hijas del desierto, que a fe que no ciñen a los figurines de París, ellas (las indias pampas) siempre llevan pendientes grandes. (Jan 8, 1865)<sup>322</sup>

More prevalent, however, was the disapproval of immigrants who used dress to cover up their humble origins. Thus, while immigrants began blending into *porteño* life, it was clear that native, wealthy Argentines wouldn't allow this without a fight. Case in point: *El Correo del Domingo* published an article on the immigration problem in a weekly column written by Bruno (this article was briefly mentioned above).<sup>323</sup> This article explains the case of a woman who unknowingly invited an immigrant into her home. Because he was well dressed in the latest Buenos Aires fashion, she considered him a gentlemen and not a foreigner:

El extranjero que sabe ya de qué pié se cojea por acá, arregla su exterior al efecto. El otro día llegó á una casa de familia un hombre vestido según la última moda. No le faltaba el lente, ni el guante claro, ni los cuellos rígidos. Llevaba en la mano una pequeña cartera. Dio dos fuertes aldabazos en la puerta de calle para anunciarse.

—Mamá, dijo la niñita que veía de atrás de una cortinita al que llamaba; ahí está un señor.

La señora no quiso hacer esperar al caballero, y mandó á la niñita que saliese á ver lo que se le ofrecía.

—¿Está la señora? preguntó el visitante.

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<sup>322</sup> This revival of the countryside was also due, in part, to the epidemics that were beginning to affect the region. As Silvestri explains, where once the city was considered the center of civilization that would eventually civilize the countryside, now it was the purity of the countryside that needed to clean up the city's waste: "En pocos años, la imagen sarmientina de la ciudad civilizando el campo se invierte, y el mundo natural deberá subsumir, tanto en el análisis como en la acción el artificio urbano." ("El imaginario paisajístico", 279)

<sup>323</sup> Bruno was none other than José María Cantilo, the director of *El Correo del Domingo* and he used this weekly section explicitly for political commentary. (Cavalario, *Revistas Argentinas*, 106) Interestingly, this "political" section is riddled with fashion commentaries, clearly connecting fashion to the politics of the period.

—Sí señor, pero ahora está ocupada, dijo la niña, cumpliendo el encargo de la madre.

—Esperaré, repuso el hombre. ¿Puedo pasar á la sala? Añadió.

La niña transmitió á la mamá la pretensión, y ella mandó abrir al caballero, no poco picada de curiosidad, pues tambien le habia visto desde su cuarto y no le conocia.

Arreglóse como para recibir una visita de *etiqueta*, y en seguida pasó á la sala.

El visitante hízole un saludo en el cual mostraba que era un hombre acostumbrado.

—Caballero, dijo la dueña de casa con bondad, ¿qué se le ofrece á usted?

—Perdon, madama, le contestó, si he incomodado.

—No hay por qué, señor.

—Perdon, madama, dijo el extranjero; y se puso á abrir la cartera que habia puesto en la mesa del centro.

La señora le miraba sin saber qué pensar.

—Madama, aquí hay una preciosidad. Un riquísimo cosmético que dá color de rosa, unos polvos maravillosos....

—Ah! no, no, dijo la señora con impaciencia por el chasco; no necesito estas cosas. [...] puede usted retirarse. (No. 48, November 20, 1864)

The article then continues with yet another similar story whereby another well dress foreigner entered wealthy homes to sell beauty secrets. To this, the author replies: “El discreto lector calculará hasta donde pueden ir estas pequeñas industrias que penetran atrevidas hasta el hogar envueltas en perfumes y en papeles dorados.” (No. 48, November 20, 1864) Perhaps the key word in this entire story is *penetration*. The ultimate negative deciding factor in this foreigner’s behavior is the fact that his dress allowed him to *penetrate* the sacred space of the domestic sphere. Notice also how the author constructs a narrative based entirely on a female space: this ominous foreigner penetrated the domestic space of a young female child and her mother. The lack of a male figure in the house left these women vulnerable to perceived

increasing attacks on the domestic. It certainly isn't casual that the writer would construct his narrative in this way: by charging immigration—and the increasing rate at which immigrants were blending into the landscape, such that a dignified woman didn't even recognize his *difference*—with attacks on the domestic, the writer would certainly gain support for his cause among an increasingly weary and diminished *criollo* population.

There are later mentions of this same problem. An article from 1885 explains the process by which immigrants who arrive to Buenos Aires—and who are clearly noticeable by their dress—abandon their foreign dress for something more fashionable to Buenos Aires. Ironically, the author explains that in the case of French immigrants, they'll eventually become so rich that they'll start using French fashions previously unavailable to them while living in France!

Ayer he visto—dice el cronista—por las calles, muchos hombres vestidos de pana y boina azul, inmigrantes recién llegados por supuesto! Andaban los huéspedes mal seguros del terreno que pisaban. Con los hombres y muchachos de boinas iban las correspondientes mujeres y mujeres de vestidos cortos de colores y su pañuelo de moño en la cabeza. Antes de un año los hombres habrán tirado la boina, la ropa de pana y las alpargatas, y las mujeres habrán cambiado su traje corto y su pañuelo por vestidos más o menos a la moda. Un poco más y ellos serán ricos, y ellas tal vez busquen en los figurines de París, que no conocían en Francia. (In Saulquin, La moda en la Argentina, 57)<sup>324</sup>

There were, perhaps, even more troubling consequences of fashion consumption than immigration or the flexibility it permitted in terms of gender. As this consumer society is born, so too is born an entire discourse surrounding the relationship between consumption, luxury, desire and women that for some was the ultimate evil and that for others offered a wonderful new world of possibilities.

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<sup>324</sup> The “immigrant problem” wasn't only limited to fashion magazines. It would find its way into many of the most important novels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly Cambaceres' *En la sange* and Argerich's *Inocentes o culpables*, to mentioned just a few.

### 5.3. Fashionable Desires: Fashion, Luxury and Women

Women's periodicals in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina manifested an important relationship between consumption and desire. Through descriptions of women's desire for fashions and luxury, they located the consuming female subject within an entire national discourse surrounding the excesses of modernization (particularly through articles on luxury) and they served to articulate appropriate (as well as inappropriate) manifestations of desire in women.<sup>325</sup>

Merish's study of late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century consumer culture explains that this relationship wasn't unintentional: discourses on consumption were always about female desire. The author elaborates this point:

[...] discourses about consumer culture are *always* discourses about female desire: since at least the late eighteenth century, consumerism has constituted a principal arena in which forms of female subjectivity and desire have been mapped out, articulated and contested [...] consumerism is a primary site in which femininity is imposed and enforced, and forms of femininity produced [...]. (Sentimental Materialism, 8)

This section will argue that the same is true of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. For many women writers, fashion consumption became an arena from which they could safely express their desires for fashionable goods (and in some cases by extension their sexual desires) without transgressing norms of appropriate behavior for 'decent women'. That is, they could avoid an outright association with 'public women' (prostitutes) while still exploring the newfound freedoms open to them through consumption. Fashion magazines written explicitly for women

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<sup>325</sup> The department store was also an important element in the creation of this *desire* for consumer goods. Felski, in her study of Zola's *Au bonheur des dames*, explains just how important the modern department store was in this creation: "In Zola's depiction of the department store as an ambiguous symbol of progress, the relationship between sex and capital is shown to lie at the very heart of modern social relations. The economic struggle for power is intertwined with and mediated by erotic relations between women and men and between women and commodities. [...] The department store, then, was a paradigm of a new kind of urban public space linked not to an ideal of political community and rational debate but to the experience of sensuality and the commercialization of desire." (The Gender of Modernity, 67-68)

were central in this process since through fashion consumption the desiring/desirable subject and housewife could co-exist in the same person. Beetham explains just how the woman's magazine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was able to negotiate this seeming contradiction. These magazines, she contends:

[...] provided patterns for her to follow as she negotiated the complexities of an identity which encompassed sexual woman, frugal housekeeper and mother. The glamorous nightdress she bought through the magazine enabled her to become a desirable woman without abandoning her role as good housekeeper. For the magazine has historically offered not only to pattern the reader's gendered identity but to address her desire. (A Magazine of Her Own?, 1)

But, for many male writers and the more conservative public they wished to represent, fashion consumption and luxury items were in large part responsible for the ultimate downfall of Argentine society and its morals. This is so especially since the female body—intricately linked to fashion—became increasingly politicized as modernization took root in Argentina. As Masiello explains, women in Argentina became ever more associated with uncontrolled desire and sexuality against the “restraint” and superb morality of men. Conservative male intellectuals sought to establish precisely this relationship in the national imaginary to serve their projects of state (projects that often focused on the exclusion of the female in the public arena and in political life):

In their discussions of gender conservative intellectuals in Argentina were supported by an idea of ‘manliness’ and, with it, a vision of the appropriately subordinate place of women in society. Respectability was thus created to serve the needs of the state, while sexual fantasies were projected onto women, subalterns, and racial ‘others’. [...] Both enemy and object of domination, the female body represents a society at odds with itself, a site for the hybrid impulses that eluded control by those in power.<sup>326</sup> (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 142)

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<sup>326</sup> An excellent example of the sexualized racial ‘other’ can be found in a poem I uncovered in *El Pica-Flor* titled *Las ligas é mi morena*. While Masiello speaks of this tendency in terms of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, I would argue that this sexualized discourse began much earlier, although it is not ‘consolidated’ until the period studied by Masiello. Notice how this poem is written in imitation of Afro-Argentine speech: “No te puedo yo ecir/ Colasa lo que



Masiello here is referring to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, however, this construction of the sexualized female in the national imaginary began well before this, since it is already noticeable in the journalism of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>327</sup> It's not surprising that women's magazines would provide a particularly important arena in this construction, and given that fashion and its paraphernalia are so intricately linked to the body it's also not surprising that fashion and the consumption of luxury items would be an important space for male writers to construct an image of the desiring and destructive female. Indeed, as Beetham explains, fashion

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me gusta/ sobre una pierna robusta/ una liga colorá.// Levanta los faralares/ y luce la pantorrilla:/ que vales mas, Colasilla,/ que toitica una torá.// ¡Vaya un aquel retrechero!// me tienes como alma en pena./ ¡jui salero!// las ligas é mi morena.// Cuando te veo las ligas/ se me blandean las patas,/ y me quiero echas á gatas/ por ver algo mas allá./ Esa refajo, Colasa,/ remángalo, que me estorba:/ si no me enseñas la corca/ me pronuncia, puñalá!/ Valen mas que el Trocaero,/ Jerez y la Macarena,/ ¡jui salero! //las ligas é mi morena./ Crudo es tu talle, tu cara,/ y tu castillo de popa;/ pero si te alzas la ropa.../ no te enfaes: no digo ná./ Que al ver, morena, tus ligas,/ el cuerpo se me estremece, la lengüetita enmudece,/ y se me va...la toná./ Bendició al ataero/ que sujeto cual caena/ ¡jui salero!// las ligas é mi morena. (*Maraver, El Pica-Flor*, No. 1, January 4, 1855)

<sup>327</sup> This “sexualization” of the female was/is commonplace in many other political contexts and struggles for national identity. Two important studies, while unrelated to the Latin American case, that have informed my understanding are Espín’s Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transformations of Sexuality, 1999 and Yegenoglu’s Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism, 1998. Of course, Rita Felski’s text The Gender of Modernity, 1995, is central in my understanding of the sexualized female in modernity. See especially Chapter 3 “Imagined Pleasures: The Erotics and Aesthetics of Consumption”. Merish’s Sentimental Materialism is also an important text when considering this topic. Merish explains her understanding of the relationship between the sexualized female body, consumption and the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is central in my understanding of the Argentina context: “Discourses of sentimental consumption encode the complexities of consumer culture’s configurations of sex, gender, race, nationality, and power, and produced the female body as a central site of political struggle and contestation. In particular, sentimental consumption contributed to what Foucault calls the ‘hysterization of the female body’”: it produced an increasingly sexualized female body—one riddled with desires—while simultaneously promoting norms of taste, ‘proper’ affect, and political and economic discipline. In the nineteenth century, consumerism and its discourses established forms of political mediation through which feminine political subjectivities were defined, constituted, and contested.” (Sentimental Materialism, 13)

magazines often occupied a central role in creating a discourse of desire and in eroticizing the female body:

Unlike the discourses which had defined woman as emotional ('all heart') or domestic ('hands and brain') fashion produced the female body as the subject/object of desire. Desire and the eroticized body were thus simultaneously represented and concealed in the magazine's discourse of fashion. (A Magazine of Her Own?, 79)

First and foremost, it's important to establish that *a discourse of desire* had emerged in the journalism of the time period. From as early as 1855, the terms *seductora*, *encantos*, *coquetería*, and *fantasía*, began circulating in fashion articles. Consider the following simple description from 1855:

Muchas han sido las seductoras creaciones de la moda adoptadas últimamente; pero nosotros señalaremos solo aquellos que, á nuestro modo de ver, llenan las condiciones de esa elegancia ideal, sueño feliz de nuestra fantasía. [...] El esquisito gusto de este bellissimo traje de *negligé* no revela todos sus encantos hasta que la bella que lo viste sabe, cual la que nos ocupa, darle, con sus modales distinguidos, esas tintas de voluptuosa y simpática coquetería que distinguen á las seductoras hijas de la capital del Estado de Buenos Aires. (*El Pica-Flor*, No. 1, January 4, 1855)

The incorporation of words like *seduction* and *seductive* into the rhetoric surrounding consumption serves an additional important purpose. As Felski explains, this rhetoric essentially renders an image of the consuming subject as helpless against desires thus highlighting the moral weaknesses associated with it:

*Seduction* is a recurring term used in the writings of male intellectuals to describe the manipulation of the individual by marketing techniques, eloquently evoking the mixture of passivity, complicity, and pleasure seen to characterize the standpoint of the modern consumer. The subject is decentered, no longer in control of his or her desires, but prey to the beguiling forces of publicity and the image industry. (The Gender of Modernity, 62)

In the case of the fashion articles considered here, that the consuming subject is constructed almost entirely as a seductive and desiring female is significant: her passivity and pleasure derived from consumption serve as the backdrop to the austere and domineering male in

control of his desires. As we'll see below, many male writers who campaigned against the dangers of fashion consumption would use this relationship to their benefit.

Other articles tried to *rationalize* women's perceived irrational and weak impulses toward fashion and consumption: they sought to ground female consumption of fashion in nature. The author of the following article explained that fashion was nothing more than the expression of a natural desire to please others and that this form of desire was especially prevalent in women. And by 'naturalizing' women's consumption, advertisers were essentially reinforcing the idea that, as Loeb contends, "Acquiring the goods for consumption, it seems, was socially perceived as a feminine task". (*Consuming Angels*, 12)<sup>328</sup> Therefore, according to this logic, fashion should be applauded (as long as it fell within just and appropriate limits!):

La moda puede reputarse como la expresion del deseo de agradar. Es este deseo tan natural en las mujeres, que, lejos de censurarlo, debiéramos aplaudirlo, siempre que se contenga en los justos límites y no invada el terreno de la afectacion. (*El Correo del Domingo*, No. 47, November 13, 1864)

Later articles echo a similar line of thought: since creation, the desire to please man and the passion for fashionable objects have dominated women's minds and spirits. Eve surely dressed herself, not out of modesty, but to impress Adam!

Desde que existe la mujer la pasion de engalanarse ha sido en ella el primer pensamiento y el primer cuidado. [...] No falta profano que asegure que, Eva se vistió de las hojas de parra no por pudor, sinó por parecer mas bella á los ojos de Adan y por un instinto de

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<sup>328</sup> Loeb explains how Victorian women were constantly bombarded with images and advertisements that urged them to consume: "In the periodical press women, the clear audience for most nineteenth-century advertisements, encountered all the puffery and paraphernalia that a Victorian consumer society could supply. They found advertisements for the latest fashions, for companies that could furnish a house 'of any magnitude' in less than a week, for cocoas, beef extracts, and lemonades. They read advertisements that promised to lessen household labor with sewing machines, mangles, and knife cleaners. [...] They were tempted by advertisements for lavender colognes, almond skin creams, and walnut hair dyes; by Swiss clocks, Brussels carpets, and Venetian blinds. [...] The print advertisement reflected the diversity of the Victorian material world. But it also inspired Victorian material fantasies." (*Consuming Angels*, 6)

coquetería. [...] La pasión de la moda, en nuestro concepto, doma completamente el corazón y el espíritu de la mujer. (*El Plata Ilustrado*, No. 2, October 22, 1871)

This sort of language permeated many other types of articles concerning clothing. In one article from *El Plata Ilustrado*, *Alvár* (Eduarda Mansilla de García, a popular woman writer of the time) playfully warns her readers that they might find pleasure in the descriptions that followed (and therefore adopt this style of dress). It's important to pay special attention to the wording of her article because it suggests that this pleasure was acceptable since only 'respectable' women would be reading the article and consequently purchasing the clothing described within:

Daremos una descripción de como se compone uno de ellos (los últimos figurines), por conceptuarlo muy distinguido y que no estará demás que alguna de nuestras respetables matronas se digne leerla pues en ello encontraría placer y estamos ciertos que lo adoptarían. (No. 4, November 5, 1871)

Additional articles continue to incorporate this language of desire into their fashion articles. For example, in an article on horseback riding, the same writer, *Álvar*, paints a colorful picture of Buenos Aires' seductive and fashionable women while riding through the forests of Palermo. She even compares them to the fabled and sensuous Amazons in their agility and ability to handle the horses! It goes without saying that the imagery associated with the Amazon is strategic, considering that these *savage women* "devoured" men for the explicit purpose of reproduction. Mansilla seems to be celebrating and capitalizing upon the seductive attributes assigned to women. She writes:

Los bosques de Palermo. Las calles poéticas y perfumadas del aristocrático Belgrano, ofrecen golpes de vista espléndidos, con la concurrencia de mil carrozas sobre las cuales van ostentando su belleza y la distinción de sus trajes elegantes, las hermosas y graciosas damas argentinas. [...] Otras panoramas no menos interesantes presentan las arrojadas amazonas; ya luciendo un elegante y esbelto cuerpo, ya mostrando su agilidad y destreza en manejar al brioso corcel, que ufano de llevar tan preciosa carga, vá irguiendo inclinada cabeza y sacando chispas de fuego con sus lucientes herraduras. (*El Plata Ilustrado*, No. 11, December 24, 1871)

As Mansilla explains, these elegant women on horseback in Palermo exuded a sort of *seductive grace* no doubt due to their love of fashion figurines, for which reason the author includes some descriptions and images of the latest riding fashions from the French *La Mode Illustree*:

Es por eso, que vemos que, cuando una muger está sentada sobre un brioso caballo al que domina; la mirada de esa muger irradia de orgullo y hay en todo su continente un aire de marcialidad y gracia seductora. Sabiendo lo apasionadas que son las señoritas al bello y saludable arte de equitación, nos apresuramos á darles algunos figurines, recibidos en el último paquete tomados de “La Mode Illustree”. (*El Plata Ilustrado*, No. 11, December 24, 1871)

As a later female writer (Lélia) would explain, it was too difficult to criticize fashion when it allowed for such freedom in women: through it their fantasies and imaginations (sexual?) could run free and through fashion they could truly express themselves and allow the public to understand their intentions. She explained to her readers:

Es verdaderamente difícil el criticar la moda cuando ella deja campo libre á nuestra fantasía y á nuestro gusto personal. El carácter, los gustos é inclinaciones de la persona se adivinan por el traje que viste; fijaos lectoras en una mujer de grandes pasiones, caprichosa y provocativa y vereis que siempre, hasta en invierno, lleva la pechera escotada y domina en sus adornos el punzó; por el contrario otra tímida, amorosa y modesta solo lleva un pequeño peto en verano y siempre el vestido cerrado en invierno y se adorna con celeste, blanco, rosa ó negro. *La Ondina del Plata*, Year V, No. 12, March 23, 1879)

Finally, in a subsequent number, Lélia concluded that it was almost impossible not to succumb to fashion: it was becoming more and more seductive. None of her readers, she contents, could resist feeling certain *temptations* when it came to dress:

No entraré yo á escudriñar cual de las dos partes tiene razon y me limitaré tan solo á constatar que la moda, indiferente é insensible tanto á las críticas como á los elogios, se hace mas y mas seductora: --tal seducción se percibe en sus menores detalles que es sumamente difícil el oponer resistencia. [...] Quién de vosotras, lectoras, no sentirá *tentaciones* al ver un primoroso objeto relativo á nuestro traje? (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V, No. 42, October 19, 1879)

Both of these fragments written by Lélia allude to sexual desire in the female: the first speaks of their *fantasies*, of provocative women of *great passion* and how this passion could be read through dress. In the second fragment, even more clearly, Lélia paints a picture reminiscent of a Romantic protagonist unable to deny the advances of her lover, i.e. *tal seducción se percibe en sus menores detalles que es sumamente difícil de oponer resistencia*. Clearly, fashion magazines and descriptions of fashion became important tools for female writers in constructing a form of appropriate desire without running the risk of association with immorality. If censured, they were, after all, talking about clothes, weren't they?

On a different note, some articles, such as the following from *La Alba* (apparently written by a woman although the identity of the writer is unclear) specifically linked desire to fashion, but explained that this desire was the result of repression. Using a pre-Foucauldian line of reasoning, according to this writer women were innocently attracted to fashion consumption only because such an expression of desire was discouraged in the first place. Essentially, the author concludes, moralists' attempts to dissuade women from consumption were useless and ultimately the male was at fault for tempting the female:

Nosotras que pertenecemos al sexo llamado bello, sabemos por experiencia propia que cuanto mas los moralistas hablen contra el lujo, mas en auge estará entre nosotras, pues la prohibición aumenta el deseo. La muger que se enamora de un hombre, con toda el alma, y vé obstruida la senda de sus propósitos por poderosos obstáculos, aquella muger procura vencerlos, pues su amor vá creciendo á medida que crecen esos mismos obstáculos. [...] Ahora bien, ese deseo férvido hácia lo prohibido, no se circunscribe el amor tan solo, sino á todo en general. Y como la moda forma parte integrante de ese todo, es así que se experimentan los mismos deseos hácia ella, cuanto mas es atacada por los filósofos. (*El Alba*, No. 13 domingo 10 de enero 1869)

While this argument serves to reinforce female weakness and inability to resist fashion desires, it does however place part of the responsibility upon the male moralist intent upon stopping consumption. But this argument also points in another direction: many times these

expressions of *fashion desires* were acceptable as long as the ultimate goal in fulfilling this desire was aimed at pleasing a male. As many of the articles we have seen in this chapter evidence, as long as women pursued their fashion desires—within reasonable limits—to please their husbands, suitors or fathers there was no harm done. (Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, 79) And this previous fragment from *El Alba* is no exception: the author equates women's desire for clothing to women's desire for love from men.

Consider, as another example, the following short story written by the anonymous *María Amalia* for *El Album del Hogar* (Year II, No. 3, July 20, 1879). Titled *Historia de un vestido*, it's difficult to distinguish between the love/desire that *María* feels for her dress from the love/desire a woman would feel for her lover/husband. In fact, this short story is written almost as if it were an intimate journal. Upon touching the dress she uses words like *extasiada*, and, as if reaching for a forbidden fruit, she barely dares to touch its delicate material. As she recalls, she only felt this sort of *pleasure* once before: it wasn't produced by a male, rather it happened when she first tried on a long dress. At this, she recalls the heat it brought to her cheeks. (Notice how the figure of the male lover is conspicuously absent):

Qué lindo era!

Vírgen aun, cuando apenas salia de las manos cuidadosas que lo confeccionaron con toda prolijidad, atendiendo á los menores detalles de sus adornos, cual madre cariñosa que contempla una por una las formas armónicas que constituyen la belleza de su hijo idolatrado, yo lo miraba extasiada, y apenas me atrevia á tocarlo, por temor de ajar los graciosos pliegues que iban á morir sobre su coqueta falda.

Lo confieso sin rubor. Me acuerdo que el entusiasmo arrancó una lágrima como una nuez á mis pupilas; tan cierto es que en esta miserable vida, se llora de dolor como de alegría.

En mi memoria no existe sinó el recuerdo de un placer semejante. Fue cuando me puse el primer vestido largo, y aun siento sobre mis mejillas el calor que me causaba tal estreno, y pesan todavía sobre mis párpados las miradas incendiarias que me lanzaban mis novios.

María's letter becomes even *more* intimate. Now she addresses her dress as a dear lover (Querido vestido!) who would protect her from her male callers since while dressed in it, she belonged entirely to its violet color folds. Essentially, "María" replaces the protection a suitor could afford her with this dress and she is fulfilling a perceived *feminine* need for love through her acquisition of a fashionable object:

Querido vestido! [...] Mil relámpagos abrazadores cruzaron por mi mente; la fiebre del entusiasmo desplegó ante mis ojos un extraño miraje; me figuré verme rodeada de mil jóvenes elegantes que venían á depositar á mis piés su adoración y sus amorosos suspiros, los cuales se perdían entre las fajas de mi vestido color violeta sin lograr herir mi corazón, el cual, en esos momentos supremos, pertenecía por completo á mi traje nuevo.

María then describes an almost frenetic attack the dress produced in her when she wore it. (It's a good thing, she claims, she had her corset to keep her from exploding!). She remembers that she couldn't find enough mirrors in which to gaze upon herself and that she had to leave her house to get some air:

En fin, por un heroico esfuerzo de voluntad conseguí arrancarme de tan dulces ensueños y toda trémula me puse mi inolvidable vestido violeta; mi corazón palpitaba violentamente y, ¡Dios me perdone! pero creo que si no hubiese sido por el muro salvador que le ofrecía el corsé, mi vestido, que en esos momentos constituía toda mi alegría, habría estallado ruidosamente.

No me bastaban espejos para mirarme. La habitación en que me encontraba me parecía estrecha y mezquina; ansiosa de aire, de luz y de alabanzas, salí al patio, donde estaba mi familia, la que me acogió entre un murmullo de entusiasta admiración. [...]

Esa tarde fui de paseo á la calle Florida. Jamás mujer alguna fue mas feliz que yó en aquellos momentos. Hombres y mujeres me miraban absortos; las mujeres, con rabiosa envidia; los hombres con muda adoración.

María ends the story of her love affair with this dress by explaining its death: it was so old and used that she finally had to sell it. To this she exclaims, as if mourning the death of a loved one: "Ah, pobre y hermoso vestido color violeta, descanza en paz!" This short story could have been quite problematic for its author: the images and actions she describes (particularly that



the dress produced so much emotion in her that she had to leave the confines of the domestic), could have warranted much criticism. However, what made this short love affair with and passion for a dress acceptable for publication was the fact that, time and again, María converts her own narcissism into what many considered a natural quality of femininity. Her dress served to attract attention from male observers and *María* was well aware of this fact. And, by using the dress as a substitute for male love/protection, she was essentially still recurring to a standard pattern of conduct.

On a different note, fashion narrative writers could use this ambiguous sexualized discourse to create a sense of feminine desire and sensuality that their audiences did not necessarily possess. In short, these fashion articles, like any consumer product, served to create demand and to increase the desire for this commodity. Beetham further explains this point:

The discourse of fashion, both visual and verbal, had a further function....It defined a femininity which the woman reader did not yet possess, and which was therefore to be desired. The desire of the reader for the person she was not yet (but might be) was itself complicated by the fact that fashionable woman was presumed to be the object of *male* desire. Women's fashion was designed to 'attract and please'. (*A Magazine of Her Own?*, 79)<sup>329</sup>

Consider the article titled *Necesidades de la mujer argentina* written by María Eugenia Echenique, a prominent writer of the era. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No.3, January 1, 1876) In this article, not only does Echenique describe *why* women desire luxury items, but she also

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<sup>329</sup> Felski also adds that this creation of "need" goes hand in hand with the 19<sup>th</sup> century logic of desire, created in large part through consumption: "The inevitable disjuncture between anticipated and experienced pleasure in turn generates a yearning for a new fantasy object and a rapid decaethesis from the old. Within such a logic of desire, things in themselves are interchangeable and expendable; what is at issue is not the discrete particularity of the object, but the symbolic meanings and generalized aura of desirability with which the object-as-commodity is invested. Satisfaction is thus by definition impossible because there is no objective need that is being addressed; rather, the commodity comes to stand for an imaginary fulfillment that remains necessarily unattainable." (*The Gender of Modernity*, 78)

explains that more than a matter of desire, it is a matter of necessity that women acquire them. By creating a situation whereby *wants* became *needs*, Echenique is effectively dismantling the anxieties surrounding female consumption of luxury while at the same time promoting consumption in her female readers. In fact, in this writer's words, it is a matter of national progress that women have access to luxury items. It's only natural, she claims, that once women are exposed to "progress" they will want to acquire its markers, and the more obstacles placed before women in this acquisition, the more the desire to have them. And, she explains, once women become aware of the *obstacles* they face, it's all the more important they have more of these *necessities*:

Mientras mas se ilustra y cuando va adquiriendo el conocimiento de si misma y de su verdadera posicion en la sociedad, mas son los obstáculos que se presentan á su paso, mas fuerte la lucha, mayor el número de esas *necesidades*. Esto que al primer golpe de vista parece una contradicción es, no obstante, muy lógico y natural. Quien no ha conocido ciertos objetos no puede tener aspiraciones sobre ellos, no siente la necesidad de poseerlos como aquel que los ha vislumbrado y los ha sentido. En el orden moral como el en físico, el género humano está sujeto á ciertas condiciones que no le permiten dar un paso adelante en el camino del progreso sin que á este paso se anteponga, ó le preceda, algun sacrificio, el sacrificio de alguna idea, de alguna aspiracion, de alguna exigencia social, etc., y los deseos que en esta escala quedan sin satisfacerse se tornan en otras tantas necesidades. [...] ¡Cuántas necesidades físicas en la mujer argentina, cuántas!

However, Echenique also explains that the conflict over the desire for goods and the inability to achieve them often falls into women's laps. In essence, women shouldn't be blamed for their *desires* for consumer goods, nor should they be marked as frivolous or greedy, because this problem, in and of itself, was first created by a state greedy to mock the great nations of the world:

No es extraño, pueblos amantes del progreso, entusiastas admiradores de todo aquello que constituye grandes á las naciones y las distinguen en el mundo, que aman el génio y la industria sin que posean ellos los recursos que se precisan para su completo desarrollo, pueblos nacientes que estan aun en la primavera de la vida, fecundos en aconteciemitos y llenos de fé en el porvenir y de ilusiones que iluminan un mundo en lotanza, se precipitan continuamente en sus aspiraciones hasta mas alla de donde alcanzan sus

fuerzas produciendo luego grandes conflictos cuyas amargas consecuencias vienen a recaer, como es natural, en la parte menos sólida, por la falta de instrucción, de la sociedad, de la mujer.

In a defense reminiscent of Leila's stance on fashion and the fashion industry previously mentioned (from *La Ondina del Plata*, no. 46, November 16, 1879), Echenique turns the tables on critics of female consumption. If the lettered elite and policy makers hadn't been so intent upon creating the *image* of a civilized Argentina, women would not have been lead down this consumptive path.

Essentially, through articles such as this, women writers could promote consumption and turn it into a matter of necessity as well as hope to mold an image that they felt acceptable for the female in the public. For example, while Echenique here defends the place of women in consumer society, in other articles she defended a more traditional role for women in the domestic. Clearly, writers of this generation were aware of the fine line between defending women's newfound freedoms through consumption and enforcing more traditional roles for them. In a later number of *La Ondina del Plata* she explains why women should always remain modest despite the increasing luxury surrounding them:

La modestia, es el atractivo mas poderoso que puede poseer la mujer para conquistar al hombre, infundiéndole en su favor respeto y simpatia; porque esta preciosa virtud es el emblema de la pureza, y leeva consigo el encanto de la inocencia que en todos tiempos ha recomendado la sociedad representada en la sencillez de costumbres y cierta naturalidad en el trato;

[...]

El amor al lujo de algunas mujeres choca al sentido comun y ofende á la espiritualidad del sexo que ha nacido para amar; es una profanacion de la mision de la mujer, mision de caridad y de sacerdocio en la sociedad. (*La modestia en la mujer*, Year III, No. 22, June 3, 1877)<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Other writers for *La Ondina del Plata* would echo Echenique's concerns regarding women's role in consumption. Some, such as the anonymous writer *Adelfa*, declared war on luxury, especially because it threatened the home: "Lectoras, en mi anterior Revista me despedí de vosotras diciéndoos ¡guerra al lujo; pues bien aunque me llamis fastidiosa continuo con mi idea hasta tanto vea realizadas mis esperanzas. Decidme por amor de Dios? no os conduele el alma el

This fragment here leads us into one of the main arguments of many male writers *against* the excesses of fashion brought about through modernization: luxury was a *profanation of the mission of women*. Felski explains why consumerism was problematic, especially for men:

The culture of consumerism reaches into and disrupts the sanctity of the private sphere, encouraging women to indulge their own desires in defiance of their husbands and of traditional forms of moral and religious authority. [...] Consumption is presented as an act of tacit female aggression; women's economic exploitation of their husbands and lovers not only allows them to indulge in hedonistic self-pleasure but becomes their primary form of retaliation against male authority and their own lack of power in the public domain. (*The Gender of Modernity*, 74 -77)

Many fashion articles of the period express precisely these fears. In some cases, female consumption was an act of defiance: and as a result it often created *devouring* females. An article appearing in *El Correo del Domingo* recalls the story of one woman who took consumption to the extreme because she ended by literally devouring/ingesting her most precious laces:

Cuéntase que una señora de Puyieux, en reinado de Luis XIV, gustaba tanto de los encajes que despues de haber hecho con ellos todo cuanto una mujer puede razonablemente hacer, y aun un poco mas, habia acabado llevando su mania á un estremo singular: hacia buscar y comprar á cualquier precio los mas hermosos encajes, y se los comia pisados y sazoados. (No. 11, March 13, 1864)<sup>331</sup>

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ver á vuestros padres ó esposos, trabajando sin descanso; ya sea en un escritorio quemándose las pestañas con los papeles que tiene ante si, ó ya en el taller agotando sus fuerzas? Capitalista ó jornalero, todos trabajan, ¿para qué? ¿para que se emplee tan mal el beneficio que les reporta? Para desgracias de la humanidad esto es así: mujeres hay, que lo sacrifican todo, hasta la tranquilidad de su conciencia, por rendirle culto! [...] Por ostentar un costoso traje, un valioso aderezo, una espléndida carretela ¡qué privaciones tendrá que sufrir el interior del hogar! Todos los dias tienen disgustos con sus maridos por que estos no pueden satisfacer sus exigencias, esa inagotable *sed de lujo*: de hay provienen casi siempre, esas terrible tempestades en el seno de la familia.” (Year II, No 13, March 26, 1876)

<sup>331</sup> This fragment, from a section titled “Los encajes, las jóvenes, la devoción”, is part of a lengthy translation from a book by Alfonso Karr on luxury titled *Las Mujeres*. Even though it's not Argentine in origin, it's significant that the editors would choose to translate and include this text as a major part of this publication. Because of its content and its consistency with arguments surrounding fashion, I've decided to include some references from this translation since the message and intended audience is the same as those articles penned by Argentine writers.

Meant as a warning to both its male and female readership (and perhaps as a critique of the French penchant for high fashion), this article associates the “señora’s” love of fashion to mania. Left uncontrolled, women’s desires for fashion could easily escape men’s control and turn into illnesses. The author continues by bringing attention to another negative effect of the increasingly luxury in women’s dress and women’s increasing desire. Before, when dress was simple and elegant, women conducted themselves properly in public. Now, with extreme luxury came extreme behavior since young women exchanged hands with unknown men and they talked to and laughed with men secretly:

A mas de esta revolucion en los trajes, he visto otra en las maneras. Algunas niñas sacuden la mano a los jóvenes no conocidos, les hablan en alta voz, forman entre ellas en un rincón del salon, grupos en los cuales se mezclan hombres, y donde se rie á carcajadas. (*El Correo del Domingo*, “Los encajes”, No. 11, March 13, 1864)

In other articles, the image of the devouring female is more closely related to her desire to consume (but not necessarily ingest!) fashionable items:

La coquetería es un alarde de belleza.  
Un lujo de gracias,  
Una ostentación de encantos.  
El deseo de fascinar es innato en el hombre.  
El temperamento impresionable de la muger convierte ese deseo en una sed devoradora é insaciable. (*El Alba*, No. 3, November 1, 1868)

This fragment is clearly gendered: this time, while the desire to fascinate public audiences may be innate (and certainly acceptable as well as applauded) in the male, in females it becomes uncontrollable. It ultimately leads to a devouring and insatiable thirst for luxury, clearly in defiance of male control. Thus, this mention seems to be a call-to-arms for men to better control the desires of those females under their authority and it seems to refute those arguments in favor of female consumption as an expression of women’s innate desire to please

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men. In continuance of his sermon, the author claims that women themselves should learn to struggle with their natures, especially because they were often excessively passionate:

La mujer debe discurrir de un modo acertado sobre su conducta. Debe apreciar lo que vale la virtud. Debe esforzarse para distinguir y valorar los actos honrados y los que son viciosos. [...] Pero la mujer es apasionada con exceso y las pasiones la precipitan en los abismos mas profundos. El coquetismo es una de las pasiones que mas se señorea del corazon de la mujer. [...] Y no obstante, el coquetismo no se presenta con el carácter deforme con que se presentan otros vicios mas repugnantes en la apariencia, aunque menos graves en la realidad. Es un lodazal cubito con un tapiz de terciopelo y oro. [...] Es preciso que el terciopelo y el oro no se hagan á fuerza de pisarlos, tan hediondos como el lodazal que encubren. (*El Alba*, No. 3, November 1, 1868)

Perhaps what was most concerning regarding women's passion for luxury and her coquettish behavior was that this social evil wasn't always discernable, rather it could easily hide behind the façade of velvet and gold (reminiscent of the evil lurking in the apple that tempted Adam!) The author ends his harangue with a final bit of advice against fashion (because it engenders all of society's calamities) and, most ironically, with a sales pitch. He explains that his article will end with the presentation of some fashions, although, he warns, women shouldn't necessarily follow them. Once again showing the two-faced nature of many of these fashion articles, he comments that it was indeed very fashionable to purchase *El Alba*, since it was rude to ignore the latest news on fashion!

¡Modas! Palabras mágica, á cuyo acento palpita el corazon de la muger y se estremecen de horror los maridos. La moda es la madre del lujo y el lujo engendra todas las calamidades sociales que pesan como una maldición sobre los pueblos. El lujo es la sutil red en la cual queda aprisionada mas de una vez la honra de las familias.

[...]

Vamos a presentar algunas *modas* á nuestras lectoras...Desde hoy en adelante será moda no seguir la moda y exhibirse cada cual con sus dotes naturales. [...] Debe desterrarse asimismo la coquetería como artículo de lujo; un corazon sensillo, ingénuo, es preferible á todas las pompas del engaño. El oropel de la vanidad está, desgraciadamente, en auge; prefiero yo la *tela* de la modestia, por que es mas púdica; aquel es diáfano como el azul del cielo y trasparente las miserias humanas, como se trasparente el fango á través de la superficie de cristal de los lagos.

[...]

Tambien es moda suscribirse á nuestro semanario, ¿serian Uds., señoritas, tan crueles que permanecieran sordas á los clamores de la moda? (*El Alba*, No. 3, November 1, 1868)

Other publications continue with their disapproval of women's desire for fashion. An article in *El Correo del Domingo* written by *Bruno* (José María Cantilo), begins by describing women's innate passion for fashion:

Las mujeres tienen un gusto muy natural por todo lo que es hermoso, elegante, brillante, rico gusto al cual es preciso atribuir los mayores progresos de la industria y de las artes. [...] A mas del gusto muy natural por las pedrerías, las telas preciosas, los aderezos de toda clase, las mujeres ligan á sus adornos ideas que aumentan singularmente este gusto, haciendo de él una pasión. (No. 19, May 8, 1864)

Because of this women tended, he claimed, to live their lives in strict terms of their dress. They remember actions through what they were wearing and their entire lives, their friendships, their weddings, revolved around their dresses:

Los vestidos dividen la vida de las mujeres en una multitud de eras y hejiras: 'Tal suceso aconteció en la época en que yo tenía el vestido de terciopelo violeta; tal otro cuando compré ni traje de raso bordado.' [...] Lo mismo que todo acontecimiento, toda alianza, toda amistad sirve de pretexto á un vestido. Una amiga da un baile, traje; se casa, traje; muere, traje; traje, traje siempre traje. (No. 19, May 8, 1864)

Bruno offers a solution to this problem: men needed to impose (or force) their 'women' to change their ideas regarding dress. Essentially, men needed to re-instate a social order that regarded simplicity as morally superior to luxury:

Seria pues necesario, en buena moral, [...] que imponemos á nuestras mujeres, ó bien esforzarnos seriamente por modificar las ideas de las mujeres á este respecto, y desenvolver por medio de la educación, hasta hacer de él una religión, el proverbio: 'buena fama es mejor que cintura dorada', es decir, ligar á la sencillez de los vestidos ideas de honestidad y de consideración tan estrechamente unidas, que sea vergonzoso para la mujer el estar adornada de cierto modo. (Número 19 mayo 8 de 1864)

In other articles, male writers sought to describe women and their desire for luxury as heavy burdens to men. Women were, after all, the *expensive* half of the human race and now they needed to be saved from themselves by men:

¿Qué son las mujeres? Todo el mundo lo sabe, porque es imposible ignorarlo. Las mujeres son la *cara mitad* del género humano. ¡Que bien dicho está esto!

[...] Yo pregunto ¿hay algo que valga mas que una muger? O de otra manera: ¿hay algo que cueste mas? Para amar á un hombre, ellas no necesitan mas que contar con su corazon: para amar á una muger, el hombre necesita contar ante todo, con su bolsillo.

¡Pobres mujeres! Las hemos prohibido todos nuestros defectos, y ademas los suyos. ¿Cuántas veces la mano del hombre salva á la mujer de la perdicion y de la ignominia? (*Selgas, La Primavera*, No. 2, November 15, 1865)

Because of their perceived weaknesses to the excesses of consumption, this mention suggests that women ultimately needed men to save them from perdition—again, from sexual perdition?—and ignominy related to public humiliation associated with improper activity. All of these expressions against female consumption hark to a clear need to reinforce the dominant role of the male as head-of-household. They also clearly point to the fact that many male authors on fashion felt threatened by the ambiguous freedoms that fashion consumption permitted women—even if it was only in the fashion narrative.

Some articles offered a way for women to save themselves from the excesses of luxury. Not surprisingly salvation could be found in motherhood. Eduardo Vila, a popular writer for *El Alba*, explained that maternity could calm women's desires since it required sacrifice and imposed all sorts of *privations*:

!Madre,! Primera y santa palabra que balbuceamos apenas pesamos el vacilante pié en los umbrales de la vida! [...] Una madre renuncia á todos los placeres, arrostra todos los peligros por su hijo. [...] La madre une al padre y al hijo y trasmite á su descendencia las virtudes y los dulces vinculos a la familia. [...] El amor materno impone toda clase de privaciones, modera los deseos, trastorna las costumbres, muda los caracteres. (*El Alba*, No. 1, October 18, 1868)

The same writer, in a subsequent number of *El Alba*, would once again return to the role of maternity in curbing consumption and in controlling what he deemed women's prostitution to materialism:



Pero apartemos la vista de este cuadro de humanas miserias, y vengamos al fin de nuestro propósito, que es al mismo tiempo el de nuestro artículo, recomendando á las madres de familia, verdaderas directoras de la educacion pública y reformadoras de las costumbres de las naciones, que impriman en el corazon de sus hijas las máximas de la moral y la justicia, que hermanadas con una verdadera despreocupación y una encantadora modestia, han de lanzar de este suelo ese gusano roedor de la moralidad, que si no se acude con tiempo á destruirle, acabará por arrojarnos en el camino de la prostitucion de la materia, despues de esterilizar las mas bellas manifestaciones del espíritu. (No. 11, December 27, 1868)

In light of these articles here, it's not surprising that prostitution should emerge as a concern in many of the fashion narratives of the period, especially since fashion was becoming increasingly associated with desire and the growing freedom of the female in the public world of consumption. As the section below will explore, fashion narratives served to reflect yet one more change sweeping the nation: the preoccupation with public health and hygiene and more scientific approach to the nation's problems.

#### ***5.4. Disease and Immorality: Scientific Approaches to the Problem of Dress***

En vez del aroma del las flores y de las emanaciones frescas y dulces de la vegetación rica y variada, tenemos a la ciudad de Buenos Aires perfumada una vez por semana con el nauseabundo olor de la corrupción animal...

—Domingo F. Sarmiento 332

Sarmiento's mention of the noxious odor of rotting flesh (evidently from the slaughterhouses limiting the city) clearly points to a shift in his opinion regarding urban civilization. No longer was Buenos Aires the ultimate center of civilization and progress, rather, it was quite filthy and disease-ridden. Accordingly, as Argentina moved from the excesses of the

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<sup>332</sup> This quote is found in Silvestri, "El imaginario paisajístico", 284.

Rosista regime to the perceived excesses of modernization, an entire discourse surrounding disease, public health and the role of the social sciences<sup>333</sup> in shaping Argentine society began to emerge. Fashion narratives too, began reflecting this discourse. It isn't coincidental that this discourse emerged in the late 1860s: the increase in immigration (which ultimately produced overcrowding and unsanitary conditions), the insufficient nature of Buenos Aires' sewer systems, together with a major cholera epidemic soon to be followed by a yellow fever epidemic, certainly cast doubt on the ability of the Argentine state to handle the challenges of urbanization and modernization.<sup>334</sup> Many times, these concerns spilled over into a perceived need to *organize*

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<sup>333</sup> Enrique Pupo-Walker, in studying 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish American narrative, explains how important the social sciences, particularly those heavily influenced by the doctrines of positivism, were for 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals: "Of all the scientific modes of inquiry that reached Spanish America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Positivism met with the most enthusiastic reception.[...] What Comte proposed was essentially the systematic study of values and norms which, once established, could be used to understand patterns of change within a given social context. The lure that such a possibility held for Spanish America cannot be underestimated [...] if nothing else, Comte's theories seemed the most effective way to formulate a critical evaluation of our traditional institutions." (The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature) With more specific detail to the case of Argentina, Svampa's El dilema argentino explains how positivism was central in creating studies that tried to root the "evils" facing modern Argentina in biological terms (clearly in response to immigration): "Dicho positivismo finisecular se plasmó también en obras de corte histórico-sociológico que trataron el tema de 'los males latinoamericanos' dentro de un marco biologicista. En efecto, la certidumbre de que la humanidad se dividía en razas inferiores y superiores era una idea difundida en el cientificismo de la época." (116) The scientific study of prostitution would also fall under the scope of this wave. See Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires, 1991. Masiello too offers important insight into this late 19<sup>th</sup> century obsession with science. See Chapter 3, "Science and Sentimentality: The Female Subject in Modernity" pages 83-110.

<sup>334</sup> The epidemics began in 1867 when Argentine soldiers returning from the Paraguayan War brought cholera along with them. This initial epidemic affected 5,000 people leaving 1,500 dead. Again in 1868 there was another cholera epidemic that was more effectively controlled. In 1869 typhoid grew to become epidemic as 500 died. However, it was an epidemic of yellow fever that hit in 1871 that most radically altered the urban landscape. Between 50,000 and 100,000 porteños left the city, at one point 300 people a day died, and by its end it had claimed almost 14,000 victims. (Scobie, Plaza to Suburb, 124). Scobie describes the climate: "[...] The city appeared deserted, especially in the usually busy plaza area. [...] A few courageous doctors and priests remained at their posts, but church services were suspended. All government offices were closed. Garbage collection, police patrols—indeed, all normal services—ceased, and for a

and *control* the chaos that modernization had introduced. These concerns were often manifested in an entire scientific discourse bent on *sterilizing* the real as well as the symbolic filth and disease that the period faced.<sup>335</sup> Fernandez, Pons, and Videla further explain that these problems with sanitation created an obsession with hygiene:

La obsesión por la higiene, planteada especialmente a partir de las grandes epidemias de cólera de la década del sesenta y ratificada por la de fiebre amarilla de 1871, tuvo su expresión en las medidas encaminadas a la salubridad del agua, la inspección de alimentos, la desinfección, etc. Ahora bien, detrás de todo esto había un problema político y económico: el deterioro social y la instalación progresiva y cada vez más abundante de población (migrante y/o inmigrantes) en las ciudades (singularmente en las pampeanas) iba a tener su correlato escrito en la necesidad de ejercer un control más efectivo sobre una sociedad que comenzaba a desbordarse. (“Las burguesías regionales”, 451)

Now however, unlike earlier programs directed only towards the sanitation of public places (and many programs of this nature had been initiated—if only haphazardly—since the establishment of the Viceroyalty in 1776), the private domain came under close scrutiny particularly since many times the spread of disease was perceived to have begun there. Silvestri explains that doctors, together with policy makers who would help enforce their views on health and hygiene, would now have a central role in determining the nature of the struggle against disease:

Las diferencias más claras en el cambio de sensibilidad no aparecen en el control del espacio público urbano [...] sino en el control del espacio privado. [...] Son los médicos

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while thieves and burglars who were foolhardy enough to brave the epidemic had a free hand with hastily abandoned houses.” (Plaza to Suburb, 124)

<sup>335</sup> The “moral infection” of the general population was just as much a concern to public officials as was the real threat of disease. Gutiérrez and Suriano explain how much of this fear over morality was linked to the situation of immigrant housing—which had the ultimate effect of enforcing the nuclear family unit as the solution to Argentina’s health issue: “Overcrowding, the lack of family privacy and the consequent collectivization of daily life appeared as subversive and uncontrollable in the eyes of the authorities. As a result, the model of the single-family dwelling for popular sectors offered a clear political meaning as a form of integrating individuals into the system.” (“Workers’ Housing and Living Conditions in Buenos Aires 1880-1930”, 46)

quienes toman la iniciativa en la redefinición de los espacios de control. (Nueva historia argentina 278 Silvestri “El imaginario paisajístico”, 278)

Since the private domain became a major focus of this newfound obsession, women’s magazines were not immune from this growing anxiety over hygiene and health and certainly they would have been the perfect tool in diffusing not only concern over these problems but solutions to it. Fashion would play a central role in expressing this new sensibility concerning health: one of the first tendencies to appear in fashion narratives is the increasing association of fashion and luxury to disease and moral corruption. Thus fashion writers, many times hoping to use science as a weapon in their fight against fashion’s excesses, would incorporate this preoccupation into their articles. This would occur as early as 1868, perhaps in response to the cholera outbreak from the year before<sup>336</sup>, when Eduardo Vila would begin what could be considered a personal campaign against the immorality induced by fashion. In an early article on virtue, he explains that by criticizing fashion, he is trying to kill the germs of gross passions:

Nadie podrá negar la necesidad de entronizar la virtud en este siglo que de tanta carece. Nadie desconocerá la precision de desterrar el vicio de la haz de la tierra. Por eso escribo, por eso quiero hacerme oír de todos, por eso quiero hacerme leer. [...] Por lo menos, habré cumplido una de las mas santas misiones del escritor, que no es otra que la de tratar de destruir los gérmenes de las pasiones groseras y de cultivar los sentimientos puros que brotan en el corazon humano. (*El Alba*, No. 3, November 1, 1868)

Vila would later extend his campaign to luxury and he would incorporate an important element in his rhetoric: disease now formed part of the language used to describe fashion. As he understood, luxury and consumption were becoming *cancers* that were gangrening the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> In fact, No. 2 of *El Alba* contains an article and an lengthy poem (under the title of “Receta contra el Cólera) describing the disastrous effects of the disease on Argentina: “Cansado de pasear/ Por la viejísima Europa,/ Me vine aquí, viento en popa, / Y con ánsia de matar. [...] Yo á los medicos burlé/ Por do quier me dirigí;/ Yo impasible morir vi,/ Yo el cementerio llené. [...] Yo no tuve campasion/ Ni del niño desvalido,/ Ni su doliente vagido/ Conmovió mi corazon./ Yo con fiereza robe/ El hijo á la tierna madre,/ Y el llanto amargo del padre/ Indiferente mire./ Pues es mi vida la muerte/ Y mi placer el horror;/ En fin, amigo el terror/ Es lo que mas me divierte.” (*El Alba*, No. 2, October 25, 1868)

century. Because of this, he claims, many families had been ruined and all-important domestic peace had been threatened:

El lujo es [...] un cáncer que mina y gangrena nuestro siglo y por consiguiente la sociedad en que vivimos.

Palabras son, y á nuestra vista se presentan con una reproducción inusitada, los males que ocasiona ese anhelo constante de la impotencia material de las fortunas, cuyo amargo fruto es tan nocivo para la paz doméstica, como perjudicial para la comunidad, y que sin embargo saboreamos como un manjar divino, no obstante los resultados inmediatos que nos ofrece su digestión difícil é interrumpida [...]. ¡Cuántas ruinas de familias honradas hemos presenciado, cuyo caudal ha desaparecido en la honda sima de la ostentación y del lujo á cuyos miembros hemos visto mendigar las migajas que en otro tiempo arrojaron en áridos terrenos! (*El Alba*, No. 11, December 27, 1868)

Like the epidemics afflicting the city, fashion was a contagious fever leading women to commit crimes (perhaps prostitution?) and expose their naked souls just to dress their bodies:

El afán de lucir, el deseo de la ostentación, es una fiebre contagiosa que se apodera del espíritu de la muger y le encamina muchas veces al crimen. [...] ¡Cuántas desnudan el alma para vestir el cuerpo! (*El Alba*, No. 13, January 10, 1869)

Other women's periodicals, like the very popular *el Correo de las Porteñas* explained to their readership from the very beginning that their mission was to attack vice and immorality regardless of class or social background since their slogan was: *Atacarémos el vicio y la inmoralidad en cualquier Escalon de la sociedad que se anide, bien sea en el suntuoso palacio del magnate, bien sean en la humilde mansion del proletario*. Even *La Ondina del Plata* chimed in with a similar approach to the excesses of fashion. One article explained that fashion was an epidemic that was almost as terrible as yellow fever, because much like the real epidemic fashion affected all classes of porteño society:

Estoy segura, lectoras mías, que os han de tener cansadas tantos sermones ¿pero que quereis? es preciso que nos ayudemos mutuamente para cortar de raíz esta *epidemia* casi

tan terrible como la fiebre amarilla, y que ha contagiado á todas las clases de nuestra sociedad. *Adelfa* (Year II, No. 13, March 26, 1876)<sup>337</sup>

Additional writers would extend the allusions to fashion's symbolic hold over society to real physical illnesses that were perceived to be caused by fashion. For example, *Alvár* (Eduarda Mansilla de García) suggested that if women would wear more sensible fashions, they wouldn't be exposed to frequent pulmonary ailments:

Si las jóvenes tuvieran un poco de cuidado en el modo de vestir para tales ó cuales parajes á donde las lleva sus diversiones estarían menos espuestas á esas frecuentes pulmonías que aunque las cure la ciencia, dejan en el fisico huellas terribles y que poco á poco van destruyendo la naturaleza de las mas fuertes. (Year II, No. 6, November 24, 1872)

Yet another article—similar to *La Camelia's* or *El Álbum de Señoritas'* reasoning—criticizes fashion's tendency to deform the female body. However, more than true concern over women's health or mobility in the public sphere, the author claims that female fashions—particularly in the case of the corset—deceived men because they offered an image of the female body different from its true form. Consider the following description:

[...] Yo ví por mi mal á esa Juana, y la creí un semi-Dios, yo la idolatré, yo (y esta es la mas negra) me casé con ella!...Una noche, no: un dia, dia para mí fatal, dia desgraciado, dia de decientos mil demonios! Un dia, digo, hallándome en la plenitud de mis derechos maritales, quise considerar en ropas menores á mi consorte, para alabar en sus perfecciones la sabiduría y omnipotencia divina. Pero ah! se habia despojado del malhadado corsé, y sus espaldas semejábanse al dorso de un dromedario. Quedaron invisibles sus caderas apareciendo en los demas *tanquam tabula rasa in qua nihil est depictum*. En aquel instante mi ilusion se desvaneció juntamente con mi dicha. Lloré y

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<sup>337</sup> An additional writer for *La Ondina*, Ramon Mato, would use similar terms to describe fashion. However, he claimed that there was no imaginable solution to the problem. One had only to tip his hat to its power: “La moda dije? Preciso es quitarse el sombrero, y hacer una reverente inclinación ante aquella caprichosa reina que avasalla todas las clases y condiciones sociales. Despótica deidad cuyo imperio es tan vasto, que muy pocos puntos de nuestro planeta se susraen aun de su tiránico gobierno. [...] Contagiosa fiebre epidémica, contra la cual no hay tampoco cordon sanitario imaginable.” (Year II, No. 19, May 7, 1876)

maldije mi estrella; y abismado por el recuerdo del *ego vos conjungo*, faltó poco para volverme loco. “Una tunda a los modistas” (*El Pica-Flor*, No. 6, February 8, 1855)

What was worse for the author, this *plague* in corset use resulted in the birth of sickly children<sup>338</sup> for which reason the supposed male writer addresses fashion designers:

Cuento á esta fecha diez años de martirio, y en ellos me ha regalado Juana tres hijas raquíticas y cuatro zambas.—Ved ahí los perniciosos efectos de vuestra obra. Mas si creis continuar siendo el azate del género humano, si pensais que se ha de consentir mas la plaga de vuestros corsés, os engañais ¡voto á brios! Pasaron ya los tiempos del oscurantismo, y vino el siglo de las luces y un *Pica-flor* para que os largue cada picotazo que os haga tanto daño como el que me habeis hecho con vuestra diabólica invencion. C.F. (*El Pica-Flor*, No. 6, February 8, 1855)

There was, perhaps, one even more significant evil associated with fashion. It was perceived to lure honorable women into prostitution: if it did not lead to actual prostitution, it certainly did lead to the prostitution of morals. Of course, this too, was intricately linked to disease since prostitution became a central target in the State’s campaign to control the outbreak of venereal diseases. The female prostitute, in particular, became a fundamental feature in this campaign. Donna Guy, a renowned historian of Argentine prostitution, explains in more detail how illness was constructed in terms of gender, especially since male prostitution, while existent, seemed of little concern to public figures. Hygienists, she contends, were more concerned about controlling female prostitution especially through its legalization (to better control disease):

Clearly what was taking place was more than the implementation of a public health program. Higienistas had their own conceptions of illness and deviant behavior, both of which were developed to instill class- and gender-directed norms through legalized

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<sup>338</sup> In effect, women of this period did use the corset during pregnancy. However, by the end of the 19th century, the medical community began a large-scale campaign against the use of the corset in pregnancy because it was thought to produce malformations of the fetus. Correa’s fascinating study on 19th century pregnancy and birth in Argentina explains the situation: “Asistidas por el corset, muchas mujeres escondieron a través de la historia su ‘condición’ de embarazadas. A fines del siglo pasado, en Buenos Aires las voces médicas emprendieron una campaña feroz contra su uso por ser el culpable de ‘malformaciones intrauterinas’. Con el nuevo siglo, las damas ya paseaban por la ciudad sin acomplejarse por su ancha cintura.” (“Parir es morir un poco”, 194)

female prostitution. They saw no medical or moral threat in male prostitutes and thus never contemplated the medical examination or legal registration of men. (Sex and Danger, 89)

It isn't at all surprising that the female, particularly the lower-class female, would be targeted in this campaign especially since her participation in the public sphere through paid work had always been suspect. What is interesting, however, is the link that the prostitute's presence in the public sphere has to the criticism of fashion consumption. Consider again, Guy's explanation of a police report on prostitution:

It also portrayed the women accused of clandestine prostitution as independent of males, as devoid of principles, and as threats to the community. There, in essence, were the same descriptions of working-class women who dared to work in a public place where their lack of virtue could not be restrained. It was these women, rather than passive white slaves, who corrupted their children and lured men into trouble, infecting them with diseases and encouraging them to commit crimes. (Sex and Danger, 101)

Women independent of males, women devoid of principles, women as threats to the community: all of these point to the same reasons used by several writers to discourage fashion consumption. And many fashion writers appropriated this preoccupation with disease and prostitution to make their criticisms of fashion consumption of utmost importance. While we've seen numerous examples of how writers associated fashion to prostitution throughout the previous chapters, there are two publications in particular, *El Alba* and *La Ondina del Plata* that stand out. Again, Eduardo Vila was an outspoken writer against prostitution. In one article, he distresses over how the richest laces only served to cover up a total lack of morals. He seems unable to comprehend just how much mud and physical and moral prostitution the rich layers of women's velvet dresses cover up:

¡Cuanta desmoralización contemplamos al traves de los mas ricos encajes! ¡Cuantos ayes de desesperación oimos confundidos con el ruido que producen las sedas al barrer las calles de nuestra ciudad! ¡Cuánto lodo, cuanta prostitucion física y moral, envuelve muchas veces un rico tapado de terciopelo! (*El Alba*, No. 11, December 27, 1868)



Amparo Velez, another writer for *El Alba* would develop a similar logic in his critique of fashion: women sacrificed their honor to it and it was ultimately responsible for their perdition:

La moda es el sueño dorado de la muger, á la que sacrifica muchas veces hasta su honra. El lujo es la serpiente tentadora que seduce á las hijas de Eva y labra muchas veces su perdicion. El lujo lo invade todo; lo mismo la opulenta señora que la humilde menestrala, le rinden culto idólatra...! [...] Y ténganse presente que hablamos indistintamente de la moda y del lujo, porque el uno es la inmediata consecuencia de la otra. (*El Alba*, No. 13, January 10, 1869)

But even magazines such as *La Ondina del Plata*, bent more on educating their female readers than criticizing them, suggested that fashion was indeed dangerous to women's morality. However, what differentiates these articles from previous ones is that they stress the need to educate women, especially those from society's lower ranks, and train them for work so that they need not resort to prostitution to support themselves. Thus, women writers used concerns over prostitution to push for an agenda that supported women's work in the public. Raimunda Torres y Quiroga, another prominent writer of the period, explained that women indeed wanted luxury and for this reason they were often "lost" as they lowered themselves (to real prostitution if not symbolic). Argentine society, she insisted, was not far from what she deemed "social bankruptcy" (clearly inciting terms that would appeal to policy makers):

Pero la mujer—hablo sin pasion y haciendo honrosas excepciones—quiere lujo, fasto, oropel y por ello se pierde, se rebaja, cada dia mas. La bancarrota social no está lejos si continuamos asi. El retroceso, el cataclismo, no se hará esperar.

Educadla, instruidla, y ....quizá aun sea tiempo de salvarla. El amor al lujo, impera en nuestras bellas. Todas quieren ser, figurar, y para figurar, es necesario tener dinero. ¡Sin dinero no se es nada!

Una mujer educada, verdaderamente educada—pues hay muchas que no tienen mas que un barniz, una capa, y...que cuando ésta desaparece, cae la mujer vulgar...perdonad el termino ordinario. (Year II, No. 13, March 26, 1876)

Maria Eugenia Echenique also expressed a similar point of view in her article "La emancipación de la mujer". Because women of *humble conditions* couldn't satisfy their

*aspirations* by honorable means, they often broke off ties to their families and went down the path of what she considered “error”. Interestingly, she equates Argentina to a growing body that lacks the necessary organs to process all of the changes—especially those caused by the excesses of luxury—circulating through its veins:

El lujo y las crecientes aspiraciones que precipitadamente van desenvolviéndose en toda sociedad naciente que abre los ojos a la luz, sintiendo ya circular en sus vigorosas venas toda la sávia de vida de los pueblos adelantos y antiguos, mientras que carece de los órganos necesarios en que se elabore su desarrollo, ha arrastrado de la clase proletaria, en todos los siglos, muchas víctimas á la inmoralidad y al abandono de los deberes.

[...]

Una jóven de condicion humilde aspira, y no teniendo como satisfacer sus aspiraciones lícita y honrosamente, se lanza en el camino ilícito, rompe las ligaduras que le sujetan á la familia y á la sociedad, y no hay ya freno que la contenga en la senda del error. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 42, October 15, 1876)

It’s important to note here that rather than blaming this moral and physical prostitution on women’s innate weakness to fashion (as many writers had done), both of these writers locate the problem of prostitution in the state and its inability to address the growing needs of a population experiencing rapid modernization. In the case of Echenique, she implores policy makers to educate young women because far from inciting immorality through contact with the public sphere, a proper education would build a wall between them and the corruption they faced in the public sphere:

Emancípese á la joven, esto es, dejesele, de una vez, como el hombre la libertad absoluta de trabajar y de labrar por sí misma su posición en la sociedad, y lejos de desmoralizarse, se constituirá en un muro contra la corrupción. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 42, October 15, 1876)

Even anonymous writers would express this tendency towards education as a weapon against prostitution. In the following case, an “Argentine subscriber”, suggests that it was the government’s duty to reserve certain jobs for women of humble means so that poor women needn’t sacrifice their most precious jewels (their hearts and their honor):

Preciso es pensar y poner en práctica los medios de constituir profesiones á la mujer, con la cual se formen una posición las jóvenes de cierta condicion, sustrayéndoles las puertas para que vivan digna y honradamente. ¿Cómo elevar á la mujger?: educándola, instruyéndola, y reservandole los gobiernos ciertos empleados apropiados á su naturaleza y modo de ser: de otro modo es pedir que la mujer nacida en la pobreza tenga que recurrir á veces al sacrificio de sus joyas mas preciosas: su corazon y su honor.

*Una Argentina Suscritora (La Ondina del Plata, Year II, No. 1, January 2, 1876)*

Because of this strong association between prostitution and the excesses of fashion, many fashion writers took a more scientific approach in their descriptions of fashion in an attempt to dissociate it from the excesses of luxury and to set it within the framework of a scientific discourse. This way, articles on fashion could serve a useful purpose: they could educate on hygiene while still conveying the latest news on high fashion and luxury. Again, *La Ondina del Plata* was the most outspoken of its contemporaries (probably due to its popularity and its vast readership). As Masiello explains, *La Ondina del Plata* made an extreme effort to teach women how to incorporate ‘scientific methods’ in all aspects of their domestic lives:

The editors thereby elevated housework to a science: more important, they showed the scientific method to be available to women in all aspects of domestic concern, from home economics and cooking to early childhood instruction and discipline. (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 95)<sup>339</sup>

Fashion was a perfect tool used in this incorporation of science into the everyday. In one article titled “Los hombres contra nosotras”, the supposed female anonymous writer *Violeta*, describes in detail the steps that women take to prepare themselves for public presentation. In an

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<sup>339</sup> Masiello does note, however, that not all women writers or women’s periodicals of the period believed in the importance of a scientific approach to all aspects of Argentine life: “The premises of science continued to be hotly contested in essays and fiction by women. Not only was the scientific method seen as a suspicious adversary of feelings; equally important it complicated one’s approach to the study of literature and art. [...] Contributors to feminine journalism urgently remind us as well of the shortcomings of empirical science, which refused to admit concepts of genius and talent, ambition and greed, or resounding honor and virtue. Women writers defended a heterogeneity of values to move society forward, arguing for an ethical inquiry that respected a multiplicity of individual merits.” (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 97-99)

attempt to show how complicated and calculated dress was, *Violeta* offers quite a contrast to previous writers who dismissed fashionable dress as whimsical and mindless. This is so especially since she emphasizes that dressing first requires careful mental planning. She even goes so far as to suggest that this process forms part of a prolonged study:

Ensayáanse primero en la mente, luego ante el espejo, donde son objeto de prolongadísimos estudios; consultáanse con la almohada, y no pocas veces son causa ú origin de largos aunque no penosos insomnios, que dejan su azulada huella en el semblante, dando mas profundidad y melancholia a la espresion de unos ojos negros y pensativos que parecen vagar por el espacio de una pasion infinita, ó mas suavidad y ternura al alma de una encantadora rubia que á juzgar por el color de sus ojos debe ser el color de los cielos. (Year II, No. 16, April 16, 1876)

Even more importantly, the author turns to the relationship between politics and dress. She contends that many of the great events that have changed the face of nations have their origins, not in politics, but in the way that women's intelligence in dress has provoked and perhaps captivated audiences:

Un escote bien meditado, un oportuno recogimiento de falda, un lazo, una flor, un adorno, jamás dejará de producir el maravilloso resultado que se propuso la autora. Muchos de los grandes acontecimientos que cambian la faz de las naciones y que suelen atribuirse á combinaciones politicas no han tenido otro origen que la entendida provocación que sabiamente se le presentan. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 16, April 16, 1876)

Again, *Violeta* provides a justification for women's infatuation with fashion. Since it requires careful study and planning, it shouldn't be dismissed merely as a frivolous pastime and since it has the power to determine the nature of politics, it is a worthy topic of female study.

The popular writer *Lélia* expressed a similar point since, in her own words, "El arte en el vestir requiere un prolijo estudio". (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year III, No. 10, March 9, 1879) Perhaps in an attempt to justify her lengthy meditations on fashion, she explained to her readership that much like doctors study ill patients, lawyers their legal documents, writers politics and financial issues, she too studied and analyzed everything that had to do with fashion.

In essence, not only was she comparing herself to many of the most esteemed professions of the period but she was also affirming her own professional status as a writer—thus simultaneously validating the space from which she spoke—while at the same time legitimating fashion as a topic of study. She also hinted at the changing nature of journalism that would culminate in Hispanic American *Modernismo*: the increased professional role of the journalist. (Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism, 35)<sup>340</sup> *Lélia* explains:

Si seguimos con atencion las exigencias y evoluciones de la moda, imposible será el impedir q'nos seduzca con las encantadoras innovaciones que vá derramando en el mundo elegante. ...Cuántas galas nuevas y caprichosas he visto en los pasados dias de Carnaval!—tanta gracia y elegancia seducía mis miradas, llamaba toda mi atencion. Alguien, tal vez, me llame superficial porque dedico tan minuciosa atencion á todo lo que se refiere á modas, pero yo les observaré, que, así como el médico se dedica á estudiar all enfermo, el abogado sus espedientes, el escritor las variantes de la política y las cuestiones financieras, así tambien yo *estudio*, profundizo, todo lo que se refiere á modas. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year III, No. 10, March 9, 1879)

In their considerations of a more scientific and serious approach to fashion, many of these later fashion articles also discuss the role of dress in maintaining proper hygiene for women. One writer, *Azucena*, begins, again, by explaining that speaking on fashion was difficult and it required *serious reflection*. She also suggests that the fashions of the day were detrimental to women's overall health, particularly because they limited movement:

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<sup>340</sup> Masiello contends that women writers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina were forerunners of Latin American *modernismo*, marked by the “*professionalization*” of the writer. One of the aspects that brought about this professionalization was the need for financial gain since many women writers needed to financial support themselves and their families through their publications. Masiello explains the earlier cases of Manso and Gorriti, although several of the later writers of the 1880's wrote under similar conditions: “At a significant moment of change in the field of writing—from patronage to professionalization—these authors even entered print culture for financial reasons. Especially for Gorriti and Manso, who supported themselves by their writing, money became the object of concern in their fiction and cultural journals. The age of the professional writer, often considered to be a phenomenon attendant upon *modernismo*, is traceable in women's writing from the years following the Rosas regime.” (Between Civilization and Barbarism, 1992: 35)

Hablar de la moda y hablar bien de ella sobre todo, es cosa difícil, y si después de *serias reflexiones* la crónica solo habla de modas oírse decir: ‘una crónica de la moda que habla de todo menos de modas ¡qué aberración!’ y otras cosas por el estilo. Ya veis lectoras que no es en vano que digo que *profundas medicaciones* deben preceder mi crónica, todo esto sin contar con las decepciones. [...] Hoy hay casi una regla general para vestirse, ha de ajustarse lo que antes se esponjaba. Con los vestidos á la moda es muy difícil sentarse un poco más y ya no se podrá caminar. Si esta moda durase mucho perdería la mujer el modo de andar y se acostumbraría á esos pasitos acompasados distintivo de las mujeres del Chaco y que se me ha explicado lo tienen por la costumbre de fajarse desde la niñez. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 37, September 10, 1876)

*Azucena* then extends her article to discuss some teachings of the famous hygienist Dr. Eduardo Wilde<sup>341</sup>—clearly showing her knowledge of the political climate of the day because at this point politics and hygiene were closely aligned (Guy, *Sex and Danger*, 78)—since he suggested that women’s illnesses were many times related to lack of physical activity. More importantly, *Azucena* uses this advice on hygiene to push for an increase in women’s participation in the public sphere *without* needing to have an excuse. That is, she criticizes the fact that virtue was almost synonymous with rarely going into the street. And by using the voice of Wilde’s reason as a front, *Azucena* could push for more participation in the public sphere while simultaneously alleviating fears of women falling into prostitution:

Leía no hace mucho un interesante artículo sobre higiene, del Dr. Wilde, donde dice que la mayor parte de las enfermedades de señoras en estos países son debidas á la falta absoluta de ejercicio. Es muy cierto que es raro ver una damas salir á hacer ejercicio, solo se sale a hacer visitas, á las tiendas—á caminar jamás—si se viera una señoras pasearse por el Parque ó el Retiro, no habiendo música, y siendo día de trabajo todos se preguntarian el *porqué*. Entre nosotros los hábitos sedentarios son una virtud, pues mil

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<sup>341</sup> It’s also significant that *Azucena* chose Wilde as an authority figure in hygiene because he was one of the fervent supporters of turning attention to the domestic sphere, and, in terms of health and hygiene, breaking down the barriers between public and private. Silvestri explains Wilde’s take on public health: “Más práctica que teórica, la higiene de Wilde evita definir sus límites de competencia, difusos y expansivos como la luz de la razón. Si la luz de la higiene debe penetrar en la penumbra de la casa, es porque la ciudad es una casa grande—según la interpretación clásica de Aristóteles—, y la población ‘no es más que un individuo visto con enorme lente, un individuo generalizado.’ Las diferencias entre lo público, el ámbito en que se mantenía el pensamiento higiénico ilustrado, y lo privado, tienden a sí a ser eliminadas.” (“El imaginario paisajístico, 279)

veces he oído decir hablando de una señoritas, ‘es muy virtuosa, *jamás sale á la calle.*’  
(*La Ondina del Plata*, Year II, No. 37, September 10, 1876)

Lélia’s lengthy fashion columns would also discuss the topic of hygiene through dress extensively. She too explained to her readers how the clothing of the day affected health, and she warned her readers that her further fashion articles would continue to consider clothes from a hygienic point of view:

Es fuera de duda que el traje ejerce influencia sobre nuestro físico y esta influencia depende de la facultad, mas ó menos grande, que posea el traje, de mantener el cuerpo resguardado, relativamente, del frío, del calor ó de la humedad. [...] Yo tengo la idea, lectoras mías, que nunca está demas el aprender; que cuanto mas se sabe mejor es; así pues, creo que no os desagradará el que, en mi Revista de la próxima semana continúe demostrándoos las ventajas de nuestros trajes bajo el punto de vista higiénico. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V, No. 28, July 13, 1879)

She concludes that the study of the *toilette* shouldn’t be based solely on “investigations” of adornments and the newest styles, but it should also include considerations on hygiene. In the following article, she discusses the negative effects of cosmetics on the skin. Again, she reminds her readers that her comments here come from serious reflection on the topic:

Pero he reflexionado y me he dicho: el estudio sobre la *toilette* no debe reducirse solamente á los cuidados é investigaciones de los adornos y novedades, sinó que debemos hacerlo extensivo á la higiene que es tan necesaria á la salud; y respecto á esta higiene es preciso hacer conocer el mal que acarrea el físico cuando se olvidan sus prescripciones.

[...] las consecuencias que provienen á causa de la falta de respiración de la piel son terribles, pues, á semejanza de una planta en la cual la sávia que la nutre no alcanza á extenderse hasta sus ramas, y estas comienzan á marchitarse hasta que se desgajan secas; así la piel que se vé diariamente privada del aire libre concluye por ajarse y ponerse amarillosa, y es por esto que vemos tantas mujeres jóvenes con el rostro lleno de arrugas. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V, No. 23, June 8, 1879)

Finally, in one of the last fashion articles to appear in *La Ondina del Plata*, Lélia offers a rather lengthy description to her readers. However, far from describing fashions, she describes different types of materials and their effects on health. This article clearly reflects the mentality of the period. There appears to be such concern over health that the once lengthy descriptions of

fabrics, laces, styles and uses for such clothing seem to have little importance in comparison to the negative effects they might possibly have on the body:

Las telas de seda, al contrario de las de algodón, retienen con suma dificultad la humedad, también la seda puesta sobre la piel es muy mal sana porque mantiene el cuerpo en una especie de baño a vapor y por consiguiente, no tarda en volver difícil la transpiración. El uso de camisas de seda, que felizmente fue moda de corta duración, es malísimo a la salud.

Los vestidos, sombreros y calzado llamados *impermeables* como también los *waterproofs* y los tapados excesivamente largos, angostos y cerrados, son nocivos.

Estas ropas son excelentes para impedir que la lluvia humedezca el cuerpo, pero se oponen a la evaporación de la humedad de la cual el cuerpo está continuamente impregnado por efecto de la transpiración. No pudiéndose evaporar, esta humedad persiste sobre el cuerpo, y si en este estado se le expone en una corriente de aire, del enfriamiento que viene en seguida puede provenir ya una indisposición ligera, o ya una enfermedad peligrosa.

Cuando la garganta está muy encerrada por los cuellos, corbatas, etc., la circulación de la sangre; es esta parte está interceptada, es molestada, la cara se enrojece, los ojos aparecen salientes y más brillantes que de ordinario, y si la compresión dura mucho tiempo se siente pesadez y dolores a la cabeza y nada tiene de extraño que provenga inmediatamente una apoplejía. (*La Ondina del Plata*, Year V, No. 29, July 20, 1879)

Essentially, most of the articles seen here prove that fashion was an important link between the public debates of the period on health and women's sartorial practices. And these articles serve to reinforce Masiello's point that this was one of the main purposes of women's magazines of the period:

Women's periodicals in these years extended a bridge between the scientific investigations performed by men and the domestic practices sustained by women. Since the barriers separating theory from practice were upheld by conventional role assignments at work and at home, the essayists tried to join these seemingly autonomous spheres of interest by redefining the province of science within a field accessible to women. (*Between Civilization and Barbarism*, 94)

Masiello's concept of the bridge here is fitting. However, much more than acting as a bridge for the discussion of scientific investigations, these women's periodicals served as bridges between the public and private for many topics relevant to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular,



they were very helpful in determining the nature of the debate concerning consumption in women's (and men's) lives and just how consumption was re-defining gender relations in post-Caseros Argentina. Once again, much like we've seen throughout this study, the fashion narratives contained within these periodicals served as invaluable tools and they provided for an important discursive space in articulating the vast changes that ultimately culminated in the federalization of Buenos Aires in 1880 and the ultimate establishment of the Argentine nation.

## **6. Conclusion: The Appropriation of Fashion**

The intention of this study was to show that for many writers, male and female alike, fashion in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentine nation formation was a useful and readily appropriated topic. Depending upon each fashion writer's political persuasion and intent, gender and class background, fashion served as an important medium. First and foremost, fashion served to expose the very flexible nature of gender. As gender was no longer strictly contained within the prescriptive public, male / private, female divide (largely due to the drastic changes brought about by independence and the ensuing civil war), fashion narratives exposed the difficulties of attributing fixed definitions to the changing nature of gender roles for both men and women in Buenos Aires. We first saw this in Chapter 1 through the example of the *peinetón* whereby this headpiece's large size served to not only draw attention to the increasing presence of the female in the public sphere, but whereby it was also thought to put the public sphere at risk for *feminization* particularly since it inspired fear in men. It also humiliated men publicly by forcing them to perform manual labor to open doorways, by forcing them off sidewalks and even by lifting off their own hairpieces (clearly exposing male vulnerabilities). This perceived threat of the *feminization* of the traditionally male public sphere, as the additional chapters 2 and 4 discussed, would remain a constant theme throughout the time period considered in the study. The figure of the dandy—embraced by the Generation of '37 and ridiculed by those from the Federalist ranks—would play a central role in this: thought either to embody the modern or to accentuate the effeminate tastes of the male elite, his dress and customs certainly found their way into the periodicals of the period. The concern of the *feminization* of the public sphere would also acquire clear political overtones. On the one hand, federalists created a rhetoric that criticized fashion's ability to increasingly *feminize* the male population interested in fine attire

and meticulous preparation. Unitarists, on the other hand, sought to target the female as a primary consumer of *modern products*, while still maintaining the sanctity of the home and women's role in it as educated wives and mothers. In this way, Unitarists appropriated fashion since it served to highlight women's symbolic role in the nation building process. Finally, Unitarists praised the likes of female fashions since they came to represent resistance as well as refinement in the face of Rosas' barbarism. Rather than succumbing to the *feminine* likes of fashion because of any true *effeminate* nature (as Federalist rhetoric suggested), the Generation of '37 incorporated the elegance and style of high fashion into their writings to combat the harsh realities of their political situation.

Fashion, as this last example demonstrates, was therefore often appropriated for political reasons and to construct a national image according to certain political affiliations. We saw in Chapter 1 that Federalist rhetoric and practice, with Rosas at the lead, strategically appropriated local dress (while rejecting high fashion) to put forth a *traditionalist* national project in the face of foreign cultural and economic impositions. By implementing a Federalist dress code—through numerous strategies such as enforcing the use of the Federalist ribbon to the stamping of Rosas' image on even the most seemingly trivial objects—Rosas was able to symbolically harness the “barbarism” of the period and establish order, at least in terms of appearance, since through dress it became easy to clearly identify one's political and class affiliations. On the other hand, as we saw in Chapter 2, the Unitarist urban elite appropriated high fashion to *counteract* the effects of the Federalist appropriation of traditional dress so as to construct an image of an Argentine nation based on the perceived *civilized* European and North American centers of modernity. Unitarist writings equated European clothing, habits and tastes to liberal politics and

a superior national image compared to the perceived barbaric Federalists who opted for the Argentine poncho and chiripá.

For Argentina's women writers, as Chapter 3 explained, fashion was also an important topic since through it they were able to not only tap into the world of public opinion and discuss the politics of the period, but they were able to develop effective strategies for dismantling some of the traditional stereotypes associated with women (particularly the mind/body dichotomy). Also, through the appropriation of fashion women writers were able to criticize the whimsical nature of European high fashions that often limited their role in public life and that were inappropriate to the realities of Argentine life. As we saw, unlike the previous Unitarist and Federalist writings on dress and fashion, these women writers took a particularly innovative position with regard to fashion: they were truly critical of the previous discourses on fashion that were ignorant to climate, need, and practicality in the Argentine context. Additionally, Chapter 3 explored how some women writers, particularly Juana Manso, instead of rejecting the importance of fashion altogether, effectively wrote fashion narratives as a way to create an opening in the press for the consideration of other topics related to women and how the politics of the period affected their lives. However, going beyond gender issues, this study also showed how fashion was a useful medium through which many writers put forth their views on race—particularly during the Rosista period as Chapter 1 discussed whereby dress and fashion in political rhetoric and practice served to either embrace the *gente de pueblo* and to engage the large Afro-Argentine population (in the case of the Federalists) or to discursively disavow the lettered city's others (in the case of the Unitarists)—and late 19<sup>th</sup> century immigration. Thus, when either Argentina's racial or ethnic *others* appropriated high fashions they were strictly criticized in the press and in the literature of the period.

Finally fashion was a useful medium through which both male and female writers contemplated the consolidation of capitalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina. As each chapter of this study showed, journalism played a major role in this consolidation: Federalists and Unitarists alike used journalism to push for the political, economic and social agendas that eventually moved Argentina towards modernization and later post-Caseros writers used the press in their campaigns both for and against modernization, consumption and the large-scale socio-economic and political changes that swept the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fashion was an especially fitting topic of appropriation because the fashion industry itself reflected the changing nature of international economics: the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of European trade to international markets (in particular the expansion of Atlantic trade in Argentina after Rosas) gave new dimensions to European fashions. This, at the local level, coupled with the growing strength of the Argentine bourgeoisie and the expansion of the market to diverse socio-economic levels (as Chapter 4 examined in detail in the case of department store consumption) set the stage for the boom in fashion narratives witnessed towards the end of the period examined in this study. From female empowerment through dress—the feared *empantalonizacion* of women—to female desire to prostitution to science and public health, these narratives once again served to reflect the ongoing debates surrounding gender as the official period of Argentine national consolidation drew to an end.

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