

Between Resistance and Repression: New Writing on Argentine Political Radicalism, 1955-1976

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The two decades between 1955 and 1976, bookended by the beginning of a military coup that ousted populist President Juan Perón in 1955 and the dictatorship that replaced a democratically elected government in 1976, was a period of tremendous political radicalism that would leave a permanent impression on Argentina's political history. During this period, left wing parties in Argentina, already "extensive, prolific, [with] countless complexities and contradictions,"² gradually transformed from traditional orthodox parties of the left and the labor movement into a 'new left,' introducing a wide range of ideological influences. The *nueva izquierda* drew from crowds of intellectuals, university students, defectors from traditional parties, guerrillas, and social movements, raising a challenge to the legitimacy of traditional leftist parties in representing the spectrum of political concerns and ambitions of the left.

Scholars of this period, who were frequently distraught at the multiplicity of sub-factions and splinter groups within the left and the ever-shifting set of ideological forces at play, have tended to focus their attention on the state and the broader context of the Cold War in order to frame their understandings of Argentina's political landscape of the late 60s and early 70s.³ A typical problem of this literature is the difficulty of reconciling the Peronist left with other lefts, given its relationship to Perón's three administrations, ideological inconsistency, and developments within the *Partido Justicialista* (PJ), the party that usurped the Labor Party in 1947 under Perón. Another challenge faced by scholars of

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the period is in making arguments that can account for the plurivocality of the left, as the many divisions between leftists often stand in opposition to an intelligible picture of the political culture and experience of radicalism itself and its responses to state oppression and other external forces such as neo-imperialism or global capital.⁴ This essay examines recent expansions within the political history of leftist radicalism during this period that have benefited from the perspective of new sources, new framings, and advances in theoretical approaches to understanding the left. It is certainly not a comprehensive picture of everything written on the left in the past decades, which would require a substantially lengthier discussion; its aim is rather to signal new developments and trends within the most recent literature.

Until very recently, historians of Argentina frequently isolated the period from the late 1960s to 1976 in order to understand the dictatorship that emerged in 1976, examining the left's experience as a marker of the advance of state terrorism. In the mid-1990s, increasing interest in the 'global 1960s' reinforced this periodization by underlining the influence of transnational social movements, like that of anti-imperialism or Third Worldism, and the connection of national struggles for civil and labor rights as a significant turning point in the Cold War. The Cold War and the Process of National Reorganization, which was the military's name for its prolonged intervention in national political life which lasted from 1976 to 1983, have maintained a hegemonic presence in studies of these earlier decades until very recently, with the "transition to democracy" in 1983 as a troubled re-encounter with the political formations of this earlier period of increased social unrest and radicalism.⁵ Certainly, the foundational shift in thinking about radicalism and the Argentine left came in 1994, when Harvard-trained historian James Brennan published *The Labor Wars in Córdoba*, a ground-breaking work on the labor movement in the industrial city of Córdoba that explained the strikes of the late 1960s and 1970s within the context of traditional leftist politics, Peronist working-class notions of struggle, the student movement, and radicalism on the shop floor. Arguing that union politics in Córdoba "made the concept of ideological and political pluralism within the Argentine labor movement respectable once again,"⁶ this work explored how notions of class created a common discourse able to connect a variety of political movements under a common banner. Unsettling former accounts of the labor movement and its relationship to broader political concerns of the left, Brennan's work provoked a profusion of scholarly interest in revisiting the history of the left in the 1960s and in revising studies to connect the events of the 1960s to earlier periods of labor organizing and leftist activism. The consequence of Brennan's study, however, was often the imposition of artificial divisions between work that was

considered labor history and other work that examined parties and populism as political institutions.

Resituating Peronism's Relationship to the Left

While most work on Peronism prior to Brennan, with the notable exception of Daniel James,⁷ focused on the relationship of labor to the state, of union bosses to leaders within the administration, and of soft- versus hard-line Peronists within the ranks of the unions,⁸ the recent turn in this literature has been toward finding a more nuanced perspective on how the labor movement evolved in the wake of Perón's exile and alongside other developments within the changing landscape of radical politics. Alejandro Schneider's work *Los Compañeros: Trabajadores, izquierda y peronismo, 1955-1973*, studies the greater Buenos Aires manufacturing sector to reveal how workers evolved as political actors through the "ungovernable" political climate that followed in the wake of Perón's physical absence. Schneider makes the argument that gradually workers became more autonomous in the 1960s as a result of both the outlawing of Peronism and the economic crisis that undermined the model of domestic consumption industrialization.⁹ While earlier studies found fault with the divisive nature of Peronist politics in the aftermath of the 1955 coup, this work explores in intimate detail the political opportunities that Perón's exile permitted for exploration of different possible futures for the labor movement. Instead of looking at labor hierarchy and bureaucracy to understand the movement, Schneider looks at the daily activities of the rank-and-file, as a collective subject, to understand the shifting force of the movement from the various units of its production. He argues that while some laborers looked at the populist's fall as an opening to reject Peronist political identification with the rise of consumer culture, others sought to channel the "permanent conflictivity" following Perón's exile to new political ends.¹⁰

Schneider's work illuminates the way in which Peronist unionists reacted to notions of struggle and social engagement coming from outside the loyalist sector or the Peronist resistance, such as competing political parties, the student movement, and even from Trotskyist guerrilla groups. Previous studies focused on Perón's labor and economic policies, as part of the pact between labor and the ruling party, mainly articulated through the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT), thus Schneider's focus on the post-1955 and on the individual industries, rather than the CGT, also breaks new ground in understanding the nuances of workers' and unions' experiences of emergent radicalism outside the traditional zone of compromise. Exploring testimony, survey data, labor

documents and periodicals of various neighborhoods on the outskirts of Greater Buenos Aires, or the Bonaerense, Schneider is also able to demonstrate from the vantage point of key industrial actors mobilized by Peronism how economic politics of the 1960s were lived, understood, and in many cases, resisted by unions and organizations within the barrios where Peronist leftists lived and labored. Critically, Schneider underlines the importance of working class barrio culture in creating a working class consciousness, based on a sense of *compañerismo* and solidarity,¹¹ directed against an assault perceived to be led by the business elite in league with various regimes, which helped to order a communal response to repression of the labor movement in its many forms.

Alicia Servetto – whose earlier work *De la Córdoba combativa a la Córdoba militarizada, 1973-1976* carefully illustrated the reorganization of Peronism in the wake of the Cordobazo and the gradual pacification of the labor movement that she argues partially allowed the party, and the Peróns, to return from exile and come back into power – more recently has turned her attention to how these same dynamics played themselves out in the provinces.¹² This study, *73/76, el gobierno peronista contra las ‘provincias montoneras’* is a thoroughly researched account of “militarized regions,” specifically Formosa, Córdoba, Mendoza, Santa Cruz and Salta, which provided the mainstay of Peronist Resistance leading up to 1973 and provided challenges to the return of Peronism thereafter.¹³ Considering each province individually and in concert, this methodological approach allows for crucial distinctions to emerge which challenge reductionist narratives of what Peronist resistance meant in different localities. It also provides a useful account of how Peronism situated itself as part of a new left, despite facing disappointment with the returning regime and party “machine politics.” Servetto gives example Formosa, as a province whose elected Peronist governor, Atenor Gauna, in 1973, faced difficulty in finding a political equilibrium into which the PJ and local unions could successfully participate without crowding out agrarian reform interests or allowing national conflicts to dominate the local legislature.¹⁴ This dynamic was quite distinct from the situation in Córdoba, where intense ideological radicalization was reinforced by the legacy of the 62 Unions, the student movement, and guerrilla groups, leading to a highly polarized local experience of democracy in 1973.¹⁵ Servetto argues that the lack of satisfaction with revolution undermined the creation of a stable center in the political sphere, set in high relief by the 1974 crisis of leadership experienced by Governor Obregón Cano, who was unable to harness a stable moderate political base in the face of the tremendous charisma of Perón and the force of deeply polarized sectors. After a close examination of each of the “militarized regions” case studies, the work continues to examine from a comparative frame the way that national political moves under the PJ undermined the “montonero”

governors collectively and outlines a series of state interventions that debilitated the small gains made by radicalized leftist politicians leading up to 1976. This work illustrates the tremendous value of regional studies of Argentine political history and gives voice to the local struggles against a calculating political system that invaded every space of resistance.

New work on Peronism and the left is characterized by lingering uncertainty about the relationship of Peronist radicalism to nationalism and religion. Richard Gillespie's *Soldiers of Perón*, two decades earlier, had addressed the close relationship between nationalism and religion that would be foundational for many Peronist Montonero leaders and members,¹⁶ opening a conversation that has been taken up again recently by several scholars who aim to disentangle the religious from the nationalist influence in Peronist radicalism. Julio César Melon Pirro begins his study *El Peronismo después del Peronismo* immediately after the exile of Perón by describing ideological shifts within the Peronist Resistance as "messianic militarism." Drawing on Perón's activities while in exile, this book is a critical contribution to understanding how Peronists, in the absence of Perón, conjured their own reality and reorganized themselves. They did so both in concert with Perón's directives, but more frequently in benefit of his absence, as that of an absent and anticipated messiah.¹⁷ Looking closely at the elections of 1957, the work pays particular attention to the role of Perón himself in crafting the very relationships that would eventually displace him and the PJ from the left. The chief methodological advance of this work is in the close reading of election data against broadcast understandings of Peronism's appeal to various sectors. It stands not only as a corrective of earlier misunderstandings of cultural Peronist resistance, but also as a more traditional study of Peronism's political capital in the post-1955 period.

Despite the outpouring of work on Catholic Action and Liberation Theology in the radicalization of the late 1960s¹⁸ and the relationship of Peronism to the church,¹⁹ few works have investigated the importance of the "secular religion" of Peronism in reshaping the political landscape of the *nueva izquierda*, the new left. Humberto Cucchetti, in his work *Combatientes de Perón, herederos de Cristo*, focuses on the *Organización Unica del Trasvasamiento Generacional* (OUTG), which later became the National Student Front and the *Guardia de Hierro*, and studies its role in professionalizing the institutions and politics of Peronist militants and ex-militants, and in proposing Catholicism as a legitimate form of politicization.²⁰ This work draws special attention to the way in which political and ethical values are expressed in loyalties, aspirations, the sacralization of "combative heroism," and ritualized devotion to political leaders and causes. Cucchetti claims that in Peronist *social-cristianismo* – which he argues is characterized by a form of proto-liberationism – political and religious commit-

ment mutually reinforced a set of ethics that guided political action, reinforced an idea of an “authentic Argentina” which rejected the impulses of liberalism, and also criticized militarization. Vera Carnovale has argued similarly that within the ERP-PRT, a turn to religious values reinforced the notion of the hero-martyr and inclined participants to work in the industries they sought to change, to live in the barrios they hoped to save, and to engage in revolutionary practice alongside the masses.²¹ Sharing similar methodologies, Cucchetti and Carnovale both attempt to reconstruct the intimate experiences of militants in order to illuminate the tensions between religious and secular ethical principles. Of the two, Cucchetti pushes this analysis somewhat further by proposing that a form of secular religion tied to Peronist radicalism by the end of the 1970s became the basis of a “Catholic community” that was disenchanted with political work and was more profoundly engaged with religious values, which would serve as one of the key underpinnings of the new left.²²

James Brennan, joining forces with Marcelo Rougier, also accompanies these scholars in revisiting understandings of Peronism’s relationship to the left. His most recent work turns attention to the vibrant re-emerging field of the history of capitalism.²³ Illuminating subjects ranging from the relationship of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) to the suppression of labor organizing, this work highlights the increase of state involvement in the economy, primarily through partnerships with private businesses and public-sector companies that Brennan and Rougier describe as “state capitalism.”²⁴ In the 1960s, the CGT, which had become a stronghold of Peronism beginning in the 1940s, divided into two main blocs, one of which rejected the advance of the business-state through increasingly combative positions, while the other voiced its criticism in calls for reform. Brennan and Rougier argue that in the “Peronist restoration” of 1973-76, the national-capitalist model reached its apex, as Perón gave in to the economic elite’s powerful lobby for a developmentalist model for the economy, favoring international capital over national industry.²⁵ The work argues that ultimately the failure of the Pacto Social, the cornerstone of economic policy of the third Peronism, calling for the “flexibilization” of labor in the wake of decreased foreign investment due to social unrest, laid the groundwork for the military regime that came to power in 1976 to usurp both national industry and the labor movement. This study demonstrates the parallel developments of the Peronist and other lefts, examining them less as separate objects, and more as fellow travelers confronting a national neo-liberal economic expedition.

This study brings to the fore something that earlier works had not entirely missed but frequently under-explored in their attention to the meta-narrative of the Cold War and to leftist resistance to dictatorship and state terrorism. It underlines the continuities of the struggles against capital of both labor and leftist

parties from earlier periods up to the social movements of the *nueva izquierda*. In doing so, it draws attention to the organic forces in Argentina that shaped the new left and goes a long way to explaining why Argentina does not fit the typical model of “new lefts” that scholars, predominantly in political science, have studied as part of ‘Latin America’s Left Turn.’²⁶ This interest in the nuances of Argentina’s new left is the second most significant new turn of the last decade in scholarship on radicalism.

Evolution of the ‘*nueva izquierda*’

The earliest and truly groundbreaking work on Argentina’s new left is that of Claudia Hilb and Daniel Lutzky, *La nueva izquierda argentina, 1960-1980*, written in 1984. Like Schneider, Hilb and Lutzky argue that the period of 1955 to 1966 was a time of constant political crisis, from which neither the state nor the left were able to emerge until roughly the coup of 1966, with its aftermath in events such as the Cordobazo. They argue that finally the rising conflict forced a polarization that eventually became instrumental in allowing the new left to solidify.²⁷ Hilb and Lutzky further argue that the ability of the left to begin to stake new collective territory was partly premised on the widespread belief among most radicals and leftists that fair elections would *not* be held, and thus that no party would directly benefit from competition at the polling booths. However, when in 1973 elections were finally called, the political contest began to drive further wedges between these already ideologically divided groups.²⁸ María Matilde Ollier, in *De la revolución a la democracia*, takes up this critique of the left of the early 1970s and argues in contrast that the fragmentation of the left during this period is rather the beginning of a crucial political subjectivity, one that would open the left to new forms of thinking about democracy and representation and allow it to reconcile its past on its own terms. She examines the way in which the social construction of the militant experience, across a variety of parties opposed to both liberalism and populism, allowed the new left to break away from the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide which characterized the political struggle of the left from the 1940s to the 1960s.²⁹

Building on her earlier work *La creencia y la pasión*, Ollier goes on to ask fundamental questions about how the cultural habits, both public and private, of militant leftists,³⁰ particularly focusing on the PRT/ERP and the Montoneros, evolved under repression and achieved an opening of democracy. Ollier argues that facing oppression and incarceration, the revolutionary left encountered conditions that blurred the boundaries between public and private lives, one that dictated new conditions for living as a couple, for raising children, for working,

and for relating to material conditions, such as income and consumer goods.³¹ She argues that these changed living circumstances had a tremendous impact on the way leftists perceived the value of social movements as an alternative to party structures. Perhaps the most significant work on the subject of the cultural life of the new left in Argentina written to date, Ollier's treatment also examines the role of cultural instruction and the coming of age of young militants, probing the role of confrontation, persecution, and exile in shaping political identity and in mediating a hostile and shifting political environment for a generation. Illuminating the private life of political subjectivity, Ollier investigates moments of intimate reaction to the coup, personal exchanges in 'zones of detention,' and reception to the release of important cultural works such as Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* and the magazine *Humor*. Relating the relationality of ideological changes experienced by former combatants, she also grapples with the way that the Armed Forces' campaign for individualism and democracy also made significant inroads in undermining the promise of collectivism for many.³² Even pointing to the rising popularity of psychoanalysis and 'libertad interior' as intimate ways in which the left moved from a revolutionary family to more loosely affiliated individuals with new political subjectivity.³³ She recounts how individuals' participation in demonstrations towards the end of the dictatorship, far from feeling like acts of collectivism, were experienced in the safety of anonymity with personal freedom from burdensome political affiliations to unions or to parties.³⁴ Ollier's work argues that the plurality of political subjectivities in transformation from the coup made it difficult for the new left to consolidate under the same banner in democracy.

María Cristina Tortti's work, *El 'viejo' partido socialista y los orígenes de la 'nueva' izquierda, 1955-1965*, also represents an important new direction in understanding the new left in Argentina. It takes issue with the notion that the Cordobazo was the most crucial turning point for the new left and instead looks to an earlier period to explain why radicalism became so important in the 1960s.³⁵ Offering a revision of the delegitimizing narratives of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party during the previous two decades, Tortti carefully examines the way that socialism in Argentina experienced national political strife outside the typical framing of international socialism of Cold War narratives.³⁶ The traditional left, Tortti argues, had its own renovators and fronts of radicalization which were relevant not only to the militancy of the 1960s, but also to the moderate sectors of leftism which emerged in the new left. In particular, her study pays attention to the *Partido Socialista de Argentina de Vanguardia* (PSAV), which Tortti asserts provided a valuable bridge between nationalist leftists, Peronism and revolutionaries. Having much more in common with the Third-World impulses of the Cuban Revolution, though not led by them, the

PSAV was positioned favorably towards armed struggle, but did not maintain momentum after 1963 due in part to its proximal relationship with Peronism.³⁷ While the work combines a more traditional focus on party structures, its primary advance is in illuminating the relationships between vanguardist leftist culture and more mainstream party politics.

The work of Pablo Pozzi also forms a critical new direction in understanding the formation of the new left. Uncovering the existence of an autonomous culture of leftism, Pozzi examines the deep connections between pre-revolutionary leftist ideas and notions of struggle and those embraced by the radicalizing left of the late 1960s. In *Los setentistas*, Pozzi, with his co-author Alejandro Schneider, argue using a broad set of 134 oral histories that the “structure of sentiments” of leftists prior to the Cordobazo was organized almost as if it were folklore, transmitted by various formal and informal means, that articulated a variety of visions of socialism in dialogue with past and future articulations of Argentine political realities.³⁸ This work, which takes as its focus the PRT-ERP and the PST, underlines the distinct revolutionary ideas that managed to make headway within the labor movement, despite the strength of Peronist loyalties in the sector. Pozzi and Schneider give a cultural explanation for the appeal of Guevarism, Trotskyism, Maoism, and revolutionary Peronism, in the rich borrowing of stories, both fact and fiction, between groups of adherents, and argue that in this process of creating a folklore of leftist struggle, leftists of a variety of stripes together concretized a socialist consciousness that would form the foundation of the new left after the 1976-1983 dictatorship.

Pozzi followed this methodologically innovative work with *Oposición obrera a la dictadura*,³⁹ which further sparked a number of studies that took up the question of the valorization and cultural understandings of revolutionary experience. Some of these are written from the perspective of new readings of the writings, correspondence, testimonies, and bibliographies of leaders and combatants; others aim to revisit texts that were crucial to the left in their entirety to provide a source base for revisiting revolutionary consciousness. And a third stream includes those works that sought to explore the political-historical debates that preoccupied different parties and groups of leftists. Of these, the most notable is the work of Ruth Werner and Facundo Aguirre, *Insurgencia obrera en la Argentina*, which shifted focus to the vanguardist political cultures of the working classes in the Capital Federal and Gran Buenos Aires, though a study of political coordinators that organized between factories and struggled to capture the loyalty and activism of this important sector of the Argentine working class under their own banner of resistance.⁴⁰ Examining internal commissions, delegations, and strategies of appeal, the authors eventually conclude that this flourishing of

revolutionary vanguardism among the working class destabilized and limited the possibility of a more promising political alternative for the labor movement.

Each of these new studies brought to life the field of history of the *nueva izquierda* Argentina, many through methodological innovation and attention to new sources, but all concerned broadly with understanding the complexities of Argentina's experience. All benefited from breaking with the traditional approaches to understanding the left as oppositional politics or in relation to developments of the state. They also each avoid the pitfalls of 'heroics of resistance' narratives by turning to subjects as individuals within a collective, privileging the notion of collective politics over that of the agency of individual leaders within parties or movements. All these works also reflect the third development within the field of history of radicalism, which is attention to the cultural.

New Perspectives on the Cultural Life of Radicalism

While it could be argued that Daniel James' study of the everyday working-class politics of Peronists, *Resistance and Integration*,⁴¹ may have introduced the questions and techniques of the Birmingham School of cultural history to the study of the Argentine left, it is far more likely that the outpouring of new and exciting scholarship within Argentine studies of culture and art of the 1960s has led to greater attention to the culture of leftism in recent developments in political histories of radicalism. The role of media and cultural production and its relationship to the left is perhaps the richest in new developments over the past decades. Oscar Terán's *Nuestros años sesentas*, recently re-issued to celebrate two decades of the work's powerful influence on the field, provides an analysis of a "nueva izquierda cultural" that broke new ground when it was first printed in 1991.⁴² The political left of the late 1960s and early 1970s was heavily influenced by communication through mass media and by radical cultural practices that coincided with the political activism of specific groups and movements.⁴³ New research has just begun to connect the political history of the period with the radicalization of culture in communication, the arts, and media. New works have taken a critical view of how images, such as that of the Cordobazo or the military regime, circulated and became part of the ideological positioning of the *nueva izquierda*. Political images of popular rebellion were channeled to promote utopian visions and aspirations of the new left, while other representations of violence, disappearance, and unequal power relations crafted an imagined state against which the left could react. Intellectuals, university students, labor activists, and leftist parties were eager to participate in the encoding and decoding

of their ideological messages to a larger public, an issue that I deal with in my own work on political filmmaking during the period.⁴⁴

Leftist publications became a venue through which competing factions and conflictive perspectives from the left came into contact with each other. An excellent recent work that explores this space of representation is Raúl Burgos' *Los gramscianos argentinos*, which maps the trajectory of the Gramscian communist publication *Pasado y presente*, published in Córdoba, which also circulated clandestinely as “Cuadernos de *Pasado y presente*” under the military regime. *Pasado y presente* became a key site of intellectual engagement for leftists of a variety of stripes. In fact, the periodical even intervened in debates between groups, taking on, for instance, the divide that emerged between the Peronist Montoneros and anti-militant Peronists within the labor movement. Writers for the magazine belonged to a variety of parties and groups, which not only helped to establish their credibility in writing about political tensions, but also gave *Pasado y presente* an important role in helping to provide a roadmap of the intellectual developments of various groups.⁴⁵

In addition to the regular journalistic efforts of periodicals of the left, authors such as Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman have signaled the importance of political manifestos of artists and others that were published in weeklies such as *Primera Plana* and *Confirmado*, which also created a space of collective imagination.⁴⁶ Longoni and Mestman also examine the case of radical cultural production, such as the activist art of *Tucumán Arde*, during which several left-leaning artists from the cities of Rosario and Buenos Aires armed to defend a set of exhibitions as an act of solidarity with workers and peasants in the sugar mills of the northern province of Tucumán that had been systematically attacked by local power brokers in league with the military. This demonstrated the active engagement of artists, filmmakers, songwriters, and performers in trying to frame and make sense of the brutal economic policies of Onganía's regime. Their work is perhaps one of the most important of the last decade, in that the authors are able to trace how the artists traveled alongside the labor movement to mount exhibitions and to bring their ideas to a wider working-class public.

Silva Sigal and Eliseo Verón also examine the relationship of specifically Peronist graphic portrayals of political conflicts post-1955, describing some as a means by which the Peronist resistance hoped to recuperate history.⁴⁷ This work takes a close look at the Peronist publication *El Descamisado*, which started its run in 1973 after Héctor Cámpora entered office, in order to understand the means by which the Peronist left came to terms with the substantial gap between Peronist ideals pre-1955, the period of Peronist militancy, and the anticipated return of Perón. Arguing that “to study the discursive production associated with a determined camp of social relations is to describe the significant mechanisms

without which identification and conceptualization of social action, and above all, the determination of the specificity of the studied processes, is impossible,”⁴⁸ Sigal and Verón examine the discursive and representational practices of social actors to connect their behavior to their political consciousness. The authors describe a symbolic structure created by Peronist cultural production that fashioned and contested meanings of political action, asking when social actors were fully conscious of the wider implications of their actions and delimiting the spaces within which they questioned their understandings and wrestled with ideas that became internal enemies to the cause.

Along these same lines, though not explicitly focusing on radicalization, Laura Vazquez’s *El oficio de las viñetas*, details the manner in which Argentine *historieta* artists and authors also served to frame the ideological tensions of the period and influenced radicalization by cultivating an audience receptive to the left’s critiques of the state. Her work traces the evolution of the industry and the professionalization of the Argentine *historieta*; central to the work is her portrayal of the transition from mainstream publication venues to leftist venues, such as the radical publications *El Descamisado* and *Evita Montonera*. By tracing the origins of the movement of artists and authors to their own personal radicalization and the radicalization of the content and publication of their work, Vazquez elucidates what she describes as an “acceleration of history” around the political events of 1968/1969 and a moment during which the relationship between visual representations of the political situation through mass culture and other cultural engagements exhibited agency in the field of meaning-making.⁴⁹ Focusing on the monumental impact of the work of Héctor Oesterheld, author of *El Eternauta*, one of the most popular political cartoons of the late 1950s, and later author of a graphic series in *El Descamisado* entitled *450 años de imperialismo*, a sweeping study of the history of imperialism and its relationship to Argentina’s founding and nation-building efforts, Vazquez skillfully demonstrates how the complicated internal political tensions of the left were made tangible by graphic representation.

Several works of the past decade have focused on Onganía’s crack down on intellectual and student sectors. One subject that has received more attention is that of Onganía’s reversal of the University Reforms of 1918 that had granted the faculty and student body autonomy in university decision-making and intellectual freedom. Sergio Morero, writing with journalists Ariel Eidelman and Guido Lictman, describes the 1966 occupation of the University of Buenos Aires, which led to “la noche de los bastones largos,” or the Night of the Long Bats. This work, titled after the event and clearly a cultural history of the student movement, describes the experiences of the 400 students and faculty who were detained and how they eventually dealt with the event, some by choosing exile,

and others by becoming increasingly involved with militancy.⁵⁰ This nuanced work provides in rich detail the more subjective side of radicalization, looking carefully at the individual experiences of a targeted group to illustrate shifting perspectives of activists and academics confronting repression and violence.

In addition to the micro-study of events, two of the most valuable resources for understanding the cultural politics of leftist groups during this period are the collections of documents compiled by Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo. Altamirano's *Bajo el signo de las masas*, and Sarlo's *La batalla de ideas*, each bring a rich set of primary sources that focus on intellectual stirrings of leftism during the period, much in line with Terán's work. They bring the political culture of leftism into dialogue with intellectual history to explain the emergence of radicalism during this period of Argentina's history. Their selections of documents have become essential readings that give shape to the contours of the field.⁵¹ While many works of this nature tend to be criticized as privileging elite perspectives and attributing radicalism to top-down rather than an organic agency of participants, works such as Altamirano's *Peronismo y cultura de izquierda*, an intellectual history of the radicalization of Peronist politics,⁵² does add important nuances to understanding the mythological construction of radical populism and its connections to both liberation theology and political utopias of earlier eras.⁵³

Conclusion

These new developments represent a break from earlier understandings of the left that tended to map parties according to their counterparts in other parts of the world, to treat the Cold War as a more monolithic and totalizing process, and to treat the labor movement from the 1940s to the late 1960s and the early 1970s and its relationship to Peronism without substantial reflection on how it was influenced by other aspects of the political spectrum. New work that has resituated Peronism and the left has illustrated the complexity and heterogeneity of Peronists' engagement with forms of cultural leftism both within and outside of political, economic, and labor systems. Work that has recently historicized the emergence of the *nueva izquierda* in Argentina complements a strong current within the literature of sociology and political science that have begun to look for the local roots of Latin America's "Left Turn." These works reframe the periodization of studies of the left, parting ways with the typical isolation of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They simultaneously break from the hegemonic narratives of the Cold War, state violence and authoritarianism, and also providing a local and national perspectives on Argentina's 'global 1960s.' Finally, studies that have begun to look more carefully at cultural histories of

Argentine radicalism, while benefitting from the tremendous volume of newly published primary sources and living subjects available to interview, are also constrained, to an extent, by the sheer magnitude of interest in the subject by a voracious and broad readership.

These developments in the historiography of radicalism during the late 1960s and early 1970s should have implications for historians of the left in the post-1976 period, as well. In particular, these works should lend themselves well to richer studies of the evolution of social movements on the left and the emergence of new parties in the aftermath of the dictatorship. As writers begin to approach historical study of the most recent period of Peronism under Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, these studies that have added insight to Peronism's relationship to the left may further advance understandings of this contemporary history. The most obvious opening created by this new wave of scholarship is the fuller integration of cultural sources into the realm of political history to reveal how leftists experienced both their activism and how the political influenced private lives.

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank David Sheinin for organizing the panel "New Directions in Argentine Political History" at the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 41st Annual Congress, Kelowna, British Columbia, 18 May 2012, which led to the writing of this article. She would also like to thank both David and Jorge Nallím for their comments on earlier drafts.
- 2 Federico Schuster, "Izquierda política y movimientos sociales en la Argentina contemporánea," *La nueva izquierda en América Latina, sus orígenes y trayectoria futura*, eds. César A. Rodríguez Garavito, Patrick S. Barrett, Daniel Chavez (Bogotá, Grupo Editorial Norma, 2004), 241. For a comprehensive catalogue of such divisions, see Roberto Pitaluga, *Catálogo de publicaciones políticas de las izquierdas argentinas, 1890-2000s* (Buenos Aires, CeDInCI, 2000).
- 3 María José Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol: Armed Struggle, 1969-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Alain Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en Argentina, 1943-73*, Vol. II (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1988); Guillermo O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina 1966-1973 in Comparative Perspective*, trans. Rae Flory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Robert Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1962-1973* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Marcelo Cavarozzi, *Autoritarismo y democracia, 1955-1983* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Editor Latino America, 1983), for which a new edition was updated and printed as *Autoritarismo y democracia, 1955-2006* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2006); Juan Carlos Marín, *Los hechos armados. Argentina, 1973-1976* (Buenos Aires, La Rosa Blindada/P.I.C.A. SO, 1996 [México, 1979]).
- 4 For a comprehensive study of the historiography of the left in the twentieth century, see Omar Acha, *Historia crítica de la historiografía argentina, vol. 1: Las izquierdas en*

- el siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, Prometeo Libros, 2009). See also, Nora Pagano y Fernando Devoto, *Historia de la historiografía argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009).
- 5 The essay does not deal with many new works that have been released during this decade but that follow a slightly more traditional, though crucial, path. Several, however, of note are those that deal substantially with labor history and leaders, including Silvia Licht, *Augustín Tosco: Sindicalismo clasista, socialismo y peronismo revolucionario* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2009); Jorge Cadús and Ariel Palacios, *Combatiendo al capital, 1973/1976, Rucci, sindicatos y Triple A en el sur santefesino* (Rosario: Editorial Municipal de Rosario, 2009). For accounts centered on the relationship of resistance to state terrorism, see Vera Carnovale, *Los combatientes. Historia del PRT-ERP* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2011); Pilar Calveiro, *Política y/o violencia* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2005); Liliana de Riz, *Historia Argentina 8. La política en suspenso, 1966-1976* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2007); María Matilde Ollier, *Golpe o revolución. La violencia legitimada, Argentina 1966/73* (Caseros: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, 2005); Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The 'Dirty War' in Argentina* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); and the exceptional work by Marina Franco, *Un enemigo para la nación: Orden interno, violencia y 'subversión', 1973-1976* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012). For testimonial literature on resistance, see Carlos Flaskamp, *Organizaciones político-militares, testimonio de la lucha armada en la Argentina, 1968-1976* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nuevos Tiempos, 2002) and Daniel De Santis, *La historia del PRT-ERP: por sus protagonistas* (Temperley: Estación Finlandia, 2010). For works focused on specific guerrilla groups, see Christian Petralito and Alberto Alderete, *Trelew: historia de una massacre y la organización popular como respuesta* (Buenos Aires: Nuestra América, 2007); Eduardo Zamorano, *Peronistas revolucionarios. Un análisis político del apogeo y crisis de la organización Montoneros* (Buenos Aires, Distal, 2005); María Cecilia Corda, *Los vanguardias políticas de los años 70: la experiencia del PRT ERP, desajuste y distanciamiento de la realidad* (FLASCO, Buenos Aires, 2008); Daniel Gutman, *Tacuara: historia de la primera guerrilla urbana argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones B/Vergara, 2003); and Julio Santucho, *Los últimos guevaristas: la guerrilla marxista en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones B/Vergara, 2004).
 - 6 James Brennan, *The Labor Wars of Córdoba, 1955-1976: Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in an Argentine Industrial City* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 359.
 - 7 Because this topic is covered extensively by Eduardo Elena in his contribution to this special issue, I will not go into any substantial detail on James' path-breaking work here, except to say that his scholarship brought much needed attention to matters of culture and class in understanding how leftist groups were situated within the Peronist labor movement.
 - 8 Roberto Carri, *Sindicatos y poder en la Argentina, del peronismo a la crisis* (Buenos Aires: Sudestada, 1967); Norberto Ceresole, Miguel Gazzera, Carlos Mastroianni *Peronismo: de la reforma a la revolución* (Buenos Aires, Peña Lillo Editor, 1972); Reubens Iscaro, *Historia del movimiento sindical* (Buenos Aires, Fundamentos, 1973); Juan C. Torre, *Los sindicatos en el gobierno, 1973-1976* (Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1983); Rubén Rotondaro, *Realidad y cambio en el sindicalismo* (Buenos Aires: Pearnar, 1971); Alvaro Abós, *La columna vertebral, Sindicatos y peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1986); Daniel Parcerro, *La CGT y el sindicalismo latinoamericano* (Buenos Aires: Fraterna, 1987); Oscar Cardoso and Rodolfo Audi, *Sindicalismo: el poder y la crisis* (Buenos Aires: Belgrano, 1983); Marcelo Cavarozzi, *Sindicatos y política en Argentina* (Buenos Aires:

- Cedes, 1984); Ernesto Salas *La Resistencia peronista, la toma del frigorífico Lisandro del Torre* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1990); María Fernanda Arias, "From Rebellion to Rupture: Peronist Party Politics in Neuquén, 1961-1973," in *Peronism and Argentina*, ed. James Brennan (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998): 57-77.
- 9 Alejandro Schneider, *Los Compañeros: Trabajadores, izquierda y peronismo, 1955-1973* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Imago Mundi, 2005), 12.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, 25.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, 375-380.
 - 12 Alicia Sevetto, *De la Córdoba combative a la Córdoba militarizada, 1973-1976* (Córdoba: Ferreyra Editor, 1998).
 - 13 Alicia Sevetto, *73/76, el gobierno peronista contra las 'provincias montoneras'* (Buenos Aires: Siglo veintiuno, 2010).
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 55.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 82.
 - 16 Richard Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón: Argentina's Montoneros* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).
 - 17 Julio César Melon Pirro, *El Peronismo después del Peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo veintiuno, 2009).
 - 18 Fortunato Mallimaci, "Catolicismo y militarismo en Arengina (1930-1983)," *Ciencias Sociales*, 4 (2010); José Pablo Martín, *El movimiento de Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo, un debate argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1997); Lucas Lanusse, *Cristo revolucionario, la Iglesia militante* (Buenos Aires, Vergara, 2007); Luis Miguel Donatello, *Catolicismo y montoneros* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2010).
 - 19 Lila Caimari, *Perón y la Iglesia Católica* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1995); Loris Zanatta, *Perón y el mito de la nación católica* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999).
 - 20 Humberto Cucchetti, *Combatientes de Perón, herederos de Cristo. Peronismo, religion secular y organizaciones de cuadros* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2010).
 - 21 Vera Carnovale, "Jugarse al Cristo: mandatos, formas de sacralización y construcción identitaria en el PRT-ERP," *Entre pasados. Revista de Historia*, 14.28 (2005).
 - 22 Cucchetti, *Combatientes de Perón*, 408.
 - 23 An earlier version of this argument appears in James Brennan, "Industrialists and *Bochileros*: Business and the Peronist Populist Alliance, 1943-1976," in *Peronism and Argentina*, ed. James Brennan (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 79-123.
 - 24 Brennan, James, and Marcelo Rougier. *The Politics of National Capitalism: Peronism and the Argentine Bourgeoisie, 1946-1976* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 13.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 154.
 - 26 See, for example, Maxwell A. Cameron and Eric Hershberg, eds., *Latin America's Left Turns: Politics, Policies and Trajectories* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010); Kurt Weyland, Raúl Madrid, and Wendy Hunter, eds., *Leftist Governments in Latin America: Successes and Shortcomings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Steven Levitzky and Ken Roberts, ed. *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).
 - 27 Claudia Hilb and Daniel Lutzky, *La nueva izquierda argentina: 1960-1980* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984), 19.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, 24.
 - 29 María Matilde Ollier *De la revolución a la democracia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2009), 16-17.

- 30 Ibid., *De la creencia a la pasión* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1998).
- 31 Ibid., *De la revolución a la democracia*, 24.
- 32 Ibid., 125.
- 33 Ibid., 125, 157.
- 34 Ibid., 180-181.
- 35 María Cristina Tortti, *El "viejo" partido socialista y los orígenes de la "nueva izquierda* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009).
- 36 Also of note is the collection: Hernán Camarero and Carols Herrera, eds. *El partido socialista. Argentina. Sociedad, política e ideas a través de un siglo* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005), to which Cecilia Blanco contributes a chapter, "La erosión de la unidad partidaria en el Partido Socialista, 1955-1958" (367-390), Tortti contributes a concluding chapter, "Las divisiones del Partido Socialista y los orígenes de la nueva izquierda argentina," (391-412). On the Communist Party, see Jorge Brega, *¿Ha muerto el comunismo? El maoísmo en la Argentina. Conversaciones con Otto Vargas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Agora, 2008).
- 37 Ibid., 20.
- 38 Pablo Pozzi and Alejandro Schneider, *Los setentistas, Izquierda y clase obrera: 1969-1976* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2000).
- 39 Pablo Pozzi, *Oposición obrera a la dictadura, 1976-1982* (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2008).
- 40 Ruth Werner and Facundo Aguirre, *Insurgencia obrera en la Argentina, 1969-1976* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones IPS, 2007).
- 41 Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration, Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 42 Oscar Terán, *Nuestros años sesentas*, (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991), 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2013).
- 43 Mirta Varela, "Media History in a 'Peripheral Modernity': Television in Argentina 1951-1969." *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4.4 (2007): 84-102. 96, 100.
- 44 Jessica Stites Mor, *Transition Cinema: Political Filmmaking and the Argentine Left* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).
- 45 Raúl Burgos, *Los gramscianos argentinos. Cultura y política en la experiencia de Pasado y Presente* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004).
- 46 Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde." Vanguardia artística y política en el 68 argentino* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones El Cielo por Asalto, 2008).
- 47 Silvia Sigal and Eliseo Verón, *'Perón o muerte': Los fundamentos discursivos del fenómeno peronista* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2003).
- 48 Ibid., 2 (my translation).
- 49 Laura Vazquez, *El oficio de las viñetas: la industria de la historieta argentina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2010), 18.
- 50 Works that discuss this episode include: Sergio Morero, Ariel Eidelman, and Guido Lichtman, *La noche de los bastones largos*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Latinoamericana, 2002); Eduardo Anguita, *La voluntad: una historia de la militancia revolucionaria en la Argentina, 1973-1976*. 2nd ed., (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 1998); and Oscar Terán, "La década del 70. La violencia de las ideas," *Revista Lucha Armada*, 2.5 (2006): 24-38.

- 51 Carlos Altamirano, *Bajo el signo de las masas* (Biblioteca de Pensamiento Argentino VI, Buenos Aires, Ariel, 2001); Beatriz Sarlo, *La batalla de ideas* (Biblioteca de Pensamiento Argentino VII, Buenos Aires, Ariel, 2004).
- 52 Carlos Altamirano, *Peronismo y cultura de izquierda* (Buenos Aires, Temas Grupo Editorial, 2001).
- 53 Several primary source collections have recently been published, which serve to complicate this top-down approach, such as those compiled by Roberto Bashetti, Juan Gasarini, Florencio Monzón, Martín Fioretti, and Federico Shinzato, and Miguel Ángel Moyano Laissué, to name just a few.

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