

ARGENTINE LITERARY
JOURNALISM:
The Production of a Critical Discourse

Francine Masiello
University of California, Berkeley

Todo genuino movimiento literario, todo amanecer, toda ruptura, ha tenido indefectiblemente su primera exteriorización en las hojas provocativas de una revista. La revista descubre, polemiza; el escritor de revistas anticipa, es el guerrillero madrugado, el pionero que zampa terrenos intactos. La revista es vitrina y es cartel. El libro ya es en cierto modo un ataúd, quizás más duradero y más perfecto, pero menos jugoso y vital.

Guillermo de Torre¹

La biblioteca es infinita y pasiva . . . propende a ser todos los libros o lo que es igual, a ser el pasado. . . . La revista, en cambio, es humana; condesciende a simpatías y diferencias.

Jorge Luis Borges²

The literary journal has enjoyed a privileged position in Argentine cultural life. As an anthology of creative works in progress and a forum for the exchange of contemporary ideas, it monitors changes in editorial politics and intellectual history. Enjoying an advantage over the lengthy delays imposed by the institutionalized publishing process of books, the journal offers an up-to-date testimony of cultural process in formation, stressing the heterogeneity of materials that might coexist at a particular moment. Finally, by the authority of editorial decisions, the review directs the reading tastes of the day and creates specific models for the critical reception and interpretation of texts.

In what is surely the most extensively annotated catalog of modern Argentine literary magazines, Héctor Lafleur and Sergio Provenzano emphasize the organizational function of the little review in relation to intellectual life: "entendemos por revista literaria: exteriorización de un grupo, conjunto o cenáculo de intelectuales que buscan a través de ellas la difusión de su mensaje, libres de objetivos comerciales y al margen del presupuesto oficial."³ As the authors have noted accurately, the little review records a history of polemics among writers, publicizing recent works and promoting novel ideas about art. But the little review also defends the position of the artist in society, projecting a particular doctrine of authorship in the broad play of letters and history.

Accordingly, the personality of the writer becomes central to the organization of the little review, dominating creative contributions and theoretical proposals about art. Literary journalism often presents a portrait of the artist as an originator of literary movements or as an innovator of forms and ideas by which he or she actively challenges tradition. In this way, the creative writer, as generator of ideas or as object of the critic's eye, provides the general stimulus for all activity in the little review. Readers intuitively trace an image of the author as he or she emerges from the folds of an explicitly theoretical discourse or from a pastiche of graphic materials, photographs, and interviews. This composite vision of the artist at work, more often fortuitously arranged than strictly planned by editorial decision, allows readers a new way of understanding the writer's identity and personality.

From the time of the early Russian formalist critics, the role of the individual's personality in literary tradition has been debated with great enthusiasm. Jan Mukarovsky, for example, rejected a stable definition of authorship and insisted that the notion of the author is constantly in the process of redefinition.⁴ By these terms, the author ceases to exist as the potentially unifying force behind the order of a given text; rather, his or her identity is subordinated to a host of ideas and expressions that have been generated in the course of literary history.⁵ More recently, thinkers such as Michel Foucault have drawn attention to the notion of authorship as a "privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas. . . ."⁶ As a critique of authorial privilege and a reassessment of the individual's transcendence, these ideas stay with readers in contemporary criticism and philosophy, allowing them to change their focus from the central role of individual intention to a study of the practices of writing as they engage both reader and writer.

Attuned to the issues of the day, the literary review also calls into question the stability of literary authorship by suggesting not so much an aprioristically determined image of the writer, as a personality that is constantly redefined and expanded within the context of sociocultural debate. Thus the review as a composite text containing essays and interviews, autobiographical notes, and critical speculations on the arts produces various images of the writer that are bound to the cultural polemics of the day. The pastiche of texts in the journal challenges the fixed observations of disengaged literary historians in order to emphasize the contemporary disputes and discussions through which the concept of the writer is formed. In this way, the review suggests an alternative notion of authorship, one in which individual identity is formed by the interaction of creative texts and peripheral commentaries on culture and social life. From this aggregation of ideas, one observes a shift in the basis for the writers' authority, which depends less on their desired

self-representation than on the fluid cultural polemics of the day assembled in the little review.

The different experiences drawn within the review invite speculation on the writer's function as a "performer" and simultaneously position the writer within a new version of literary history. Recent contributions to the study of discourse offer a concrete way to study this projected image. From linguistics and poststructuralist theory, we have learned that the tradition of writing gives prominence to the voice that speaks within the text. Language, then, is not "objective"; rather, as a discourse or utterance, it involves active speaking subjects as well as active listeners or readers. Consequently, this speaking subject does not claim authority on its own but finds its identity within a broad network of communicative codes.⁷ Put another way, the speaking subject is bound within a web of interrelationships so that its identity is redefined with each new encounter with different listeners or in different grammatical contexts.⁸

The concept of a speaking subject whose identity is constantly renewed may also be used to explain the multiple definitions of authorship contained in the little review. On the pages of the journal, two principal expressions of authorship come forth: on the one hand, the writer is described as a sovereign interpreter of knowledge, destined to enlighten others by his or her elucidation of texts and culture; on the other hand, authorial control emerges in a less obvious way, when cultural data give rise to unpredictable voices.

In the following pages, I will present a configuration of selected literary reviews in Argentina to demonstrate how the figure of the author comes into being. The breadth of this project will be determined by the experiences of the first Peronist period (1945–55) and will extend through the national crisis of the mid-1970s. In the aftermath of the Peronist government in the mid-1950s, a time when the writers' estate was severely threatened by a climate of turmoil, critics began to evaluate literature less as the product of unique individual behavior than as a broad play of writers enveloped in historical and social struggles. The theoretical studies contained in the various Argentine reviews explored the position of the artist within national literary culture and society as they attempted to find a successful model to analyze questions of authorship. Sartrean reflections, psychoanalytical theory, and the debates among Marxists and structuralists provided the seeds for a prolonged discussion about the status of the artist. Writers also drew attention to the legal stipulations of "official discourse" (those articulations that endorse or reflect the interests of groups in power) and reconsidered their role within the dialectics of social and cultural forces. Writers accounted for the evolution of elite and official expression and also considered the

influence of mass readership and popular culture in determining new literary expression and the transformation of ideas. Thus critics and writers not only called into question the privileges granted by authorship, but they also studied the ways in which artistic expression was generated from the conflicts of culture. Even the format of the literary journal insisted on this concern by placing an image of the intellectual as a public figure in the text. Thus photographs, squibbs, graphic designs, and often an oversized tabloid format that competed with the style of the dailies all were utilized to forge various portraits of the artist as a figure in national events. Often, however, another figure emerged from this pastiche of graphic material to diffuse the authority of the writer (in an absolute sense) and to insist instead upon his or her activity as a product of cultural crisis. These considerations and practices were not restricted to the journals of recent years; rather, they were built upon existing notions of authorship as they had been drawn in the little reviews of the early decades of this century.

In this study, I will trace the conflicting notions of authorship that have been exhibited in Argentine literary journals of the independent left. I first will provide as background material an introduction to the early avant-garde journals of this century, among them *Nosotros*, *Martín Fierro*, and *Sur*, because these periodicals established the style and format that has continued to this day. *Sur* in particular serves as a type of "control text," a forum for the most significant literary debates in Argentina during the first half of this century and a model for future literary publications. Inherent in the ideology of *Sur* has been unquestioned confidence in the personal appeal of writers and their generational promise as well as in the towering importance of authorial subjectivity as a way to control historical process. Even among the left-wing publications that later would repudiate *Sur's* elitism, this faith in authorial subjectivity continued to dominate critical inquiries. *Contorno* in the 1950s exemplified this view, for its contributors insisted on biographical data to explain the writer's artistic expression. Yet the programmatic objectives of *Sur* and *Contorno* gave way in the 1960s to a loss of faith in individualist expression so that magazine contributors began to take into account the effects of the mass media, popular culture, and the internationalization of political dependency on art. The tone of the reviews of the 1960s suggested an erosion of faith in the singular authority of the writer, calling into doubt the biographical basis for literary study. By the following decade, Argentine literary reviews clearly broke away from biographical approaches to literary criticism, questioning by this point the very ideology of the critical process itself. In this fourth phase, *Los Libros* emerged as the significant review to offer this kind of critique by integrating structuralism, psychoanalysis, and Marxist theory within a global analysis of culture. The following study is de-

signed to show the changing articulation of critical practices in Argentine literary journalism as these periodicals progressed from an almost naive faith in the authority and power of the writer to a vision that places the entire critical endeavor under scrutiny.

AUTHORITY DEFENDED: THE EARLY AVANT-GARDE

The rise of literary journalism in Argentina coincided with a broad debate about the professionalization of the writer. The growth of the literary establishment as an autonomous discipline, freed from official functions, promoted a new consciousness concerning the craft of writing in the early decades of the twentieth century. Additionally, art conceived as an independent activity, separate from any obligations to the state, was supported by the rise of literary clubs, guilds, and professional societies. Writers thus joined in fraternity as persons of leisure and apostles of art. These factors also provided the necessary conditions for the rise of the modern Argentine literary review.⁹ In this regard, the monumental contributions of *Nosotros* and *Sur* and the avant-garde journals of the 1920s reflected a concerted effort to defend the writers' estate. Editors filled these public texts with abundant cultural commentary on art and politics, describing society's obligations to recognize intellectual activity. These journals also fulfilled a coordinating function by ordering artistic and literary endeavors. For example, *Nosotros* (1907–34 and 1936–43) consistently provided information about the genesis of literary clubs, the organization of professional conferences, and the financial benefits of writing. Alfredo Bianchi and Roberto Cíusti, the editors of this long-lived review, called for an integration of diverse literary movements and brought the trends of international modernism under their wing, always emphasizing the role of the intellectual as an agent in the transformation of culture. With special issues on Groussac and Lugones as well as attention to younger authors, *Nosotros* sifted old ideas with the new, promoting the writings of both established authors and lesser-known artists of the day. Above all, these avant-garde journals pledged impartiality in their presentation of literary ideas.¹⁰

The most self-conscious promotion of intellectual activity was articulated in the Argentine avant-garde journals of the twenties.¹¹ Here, the assertion of the individual transcended the constraints of tradition. As part of the social isolation of the avant-garde, behavior became elite, reserved, and authoritarian. Accordingly, the new writer was positioned as a harbinger of novel ideas and forms, rising above the restrictions of the official literary establishment and challenging the ignorant public. Both the left-wing, anarchist journals, *Campana de Palo* (1925–27) and *Claridad* (1926–41), and the cosmopolitan, aestheticizing reviews,

Martín Fierro (1924–27) and *Proa* (1924–46), were simultaneously committed to this common defense of the individual writer. This stance is especially notable in the manifestoes of these reviews, where the identity of the avant-garde artist is described vis-à-vis potential opponents. These adversaries included the academic critic, the common reader, and all those contemporary authors who were straying from the folds of a particular coterie. The latter were denounced for their fraudulent promotions of art and were condemned to the margins of a central aesthetic revolution in progress. The oft-cited manifesto of *Martín Fierro* clearly articulates this program of opposition:

Frente a la impermeabilidad hipopotámica del “honorable público.”
Frente a la funeraria solemnidad del historiador y del catedrático que momifica cuanto toca.
Frente al recetario que inspira las elucubraciones de nuestros más “bellos” espíritus y a la afición al ANACRONISMO y al MIMETISMO que demuestran. . . .
Martín Fierro siente la necesidad imprescindible de definirse y de llamar a cuántos sean capaces de percibir que nos hallamos en presencia de una NUEVA sensibilidad y de una NUEVA comprensión que, al ponernos de acuerdo con nosotros mismos, nos descubre panoramas insospechados y nuevos medios y formas de expresión.¹²

The paradigmatic order of the text is structured by dissent and negation so that the *martínfierristas* are clearly separated from the solemn traditions of their elders. Even the adversarial debates of Boedo and Florida (those respective groupings of social realist writers and cosmopolitan esthetes in the 1920s) served much the same purpose of isolating members of the group from the unindividuated masses.¹³ As a result of these controversial discussions, the avant-garde promoted creative activity as a spectacular performance staged before the public.

This portrait of the writer was also supported in the avant-garde journal by a theoretical model of group behavior. Principally influenced by the writings of José Ortega y Gasset, Argentine intellectuals of the twenties announced their allegiance to a generational philosophy.¹⁴ The theory of generational behavior carried with it the concept of homogeneity among writers of the same epoch by suggesting their common purpose and their isolation from those who had preceded them. By promoting what Ortega described as an “instinct shared by contemporaries,” avant-garde writers brought unity to their special mission in history.¹⁵ The generational perspective erased the differences that potentially separate writers of a coterie while it also situated the writer in a harmonious, stabilized present.¹⁶ Finally, it provided the rationale for what Shklovsky called the “canonization of the junior line,” preserving contemporary contributions to art within the safeguards of a critical theory.¹⁷

The commentary published in the avant-garde reviews, joined loosely under a generational banner, presupposed a faith in the superi-

ority of writers, as it inscribed them in an almost mythical space belonging to elites. Since its founding in 1931, *Sur* has continued this project. The most prestigious Argentine literary review of this century, *Sur* is more than an anthology of international modernist expression because it specifically defends the individual greatness of the artist in a unified program of criticism and commentary.

Victoria Ocampo, the director of *Sur* during its forty years of publication, was responsible for consolidating this unique project in the history of literary journalism. She believed that the review should preserve a unified definition of culture as it had been transmitted through the “great traditions” of philosophy and art. Bowing to the intellectual traditions of Europe, *Sur* thus has sustained an active dialogue among distinguished modernists, often subordinating Argentine literature to the criteria of foreign scholarship and international philosophical currents.

Many critics have sharply condemned this elite defense of culture by taking issue with *Sur*'s disdain for the national problematics of Argentine literature and with its mystification of artistic process.¹⁸ But this negativity has failed to take into account *Sur*'s great contribution in monitoring specific ideas about writing that were consonant with the ideologies of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁹ In this regard, Victoria Ocampo's broad inclusion of Western philosophical currents—to the apparent detriment of national cultural issues—might be evaluated more profitably in terms of her specific aesthetic inquiry. *Sur*, in fact, has not ignored Argentine cultural issues; rather, it seeks a theoretical model to explain all of literature within a system of history. To this end, *Sur* expanded the personalizing discourse of the avant-garde reviews of the 1920s; and as Victoria Ocampo developed a personal basis for literary analysis, insisting on intellectual autobiography as her central justification for sensibility in the arts, she also confronted in theoretical terms the importance of subjectivity within artistic production.

From prolonged debates about the relation of biography and letters and the personal rapport among writers of Europe and the Americas, *Sur* brought forth a theory of literary performance and interpretation. Accordingly, the presence of thinkers such as Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau Ponty in *Sur* were not simply “points” on the map of Ocampo's editorial eclecticism. Rather, the phenomenological basis of their essays served to organize a broader theory of the role of the speaker or perceiver in art. Similarly, *Sur*'s essays on national literature have often been devoted to exploring the relationship between the artist's eye and the objects located in the visual field. Even the occasional insertion of graphic material in *Sur* has supported this kind of study. Thus *Sur* has included reproductions of avant-garde painting, *trompe l'oeil* collages, and photographs of national landscapes and interior de-

sign to accompany the discursive material of the essays. Together these narrative and visual texts have celebrated the technological expertise of the creator as they herald his or her incontrovertible tyranny over the phenomenological world.

Raising direct questions about individual consciousness and the ideology of authorship, *Sur* has also asked how the perceiver organizes literary discourse. This kind of critical discussion has been consonant with the investigations of the Argentine Instituto de Filología, which from 1927 to 1946 undertook a profound and detailed study of literature based on stylistic analysis. As frequent contributors, Amado Alonso and Pedro Henríquez Ureña provided the groundwork for this method of analysis in *Sur*, describing the formal properties of art in terms of individual creation. In an effort to organize the expressive devices of the text and restore its organic unity, they began to explore basic assumptions about the intuitions and motivations of literary critics and writers.²⁰ The romantic emphasis on style as the expression of the individual personality irrefutably directed their inquiries and served as their point of entry to the artistic text. Time and again, the literary work was treated as a specific example of the author's personality, whose original purpose and intention must be elucidated by the critical act. Criticism, then, was to be devoted to the quest for authorial intention, thereby bestowing a single and all-embracing meaning on the work.

As the contributors of *Sur* struggled to bring coherence to the literary text, they inevitably accepted the prevailing influence of the writer's personality. In this regard, criticism has often fulfilled a promotional design to support the endeavors of individual artists or to call attention to a generational program obeying a particular school of thought. From this perspective, *Sur* has used the study of individual style to organize extensively the works of a period so that modernism, for example, might be reconstructed as a complete historical project. Emphasizing the individuality of expression and then passing on to group performance, *Sur* has clearly articulated measures for evaluating the modernist endeavor as a whole. *Sur's* contributors thus have described the texts of writers as examples of individual achievement and then have consolidated the writers' estate by joining great works together. As the most important review to emerge in Argentina during the first half of this century, *Sur* has summarized a belabored quest to identify individual sensibility as it emerges from the artistic text. From its earliest years, *Sur* has also raised a series of questions that were to be expanded in the 1950s, testing the scientific conditions of criticism and the evaluation of art while also defending relentlessly the authority of the modernist writer.²¹

ARTISTIC SUBJECTIVITY IN THE 1950S: FROM BIOGRAPHY TO
POLITICAL ACTION

The unhesitant confidence of *Sur* in matters of interpretation and cultural analysis gave way in the 1950s to a dramatic political awareness. The new critics denounced the national crisis of government and protested their own marginalization, attempting to locate a role for themselves consonant with political activism. Although initially reminiscent of the *fin de siècle* attitudes of writers (like Rubén Darío) who adopted an almost messianic stance as apostles of art and political change, the new authors of the 1950s differed in having to confront the crisis of modernization that beset intellectuals under Perón. In an essay published in 1949, Juan José Sebreli expressed the attitudes of this new generation of critics:

El mundo moderno es un caos, una disolución de elementos sin un orden integrador, causado por la antítesis entre la existencia individual, personal y *concreta* del hombre y los conceptos ideales, impersonales y abstractos tales como la Iglesia, el Estado, la Sociedad, la Razón, la Moral, etc. Estos conceptos son productos de la actividad de los mismos individuos, pero se han convertido en cuerpos distintos y autónomos, independientes del hombre, entes concretos, objetivos, cosas en sí, y en esas condiciones todos estos conceptos originariamente útiles y provechosos al hombre se vuelven elementos de explotación, destrucción y esclavitud, cuerpos disociadores y anárquicos y que encontrando su fin en sí mismos convierten en sus medios a cuanto pueden atrapar, incluso al mismo Individuo que los creara. . . . En medio de esa lucha de titanes que son los conceptos, el hombre pequeño se siente abandonado, desamparado, impotente y desoladamente solo; se cree un medio, un productor, una proyección del otro, una cosa complementaria. . . . Para no ser una Nada el hombre debe ser un Todo y en un esfuerzo de voluntad personal vencer el caos apoderándose de los elementos que infringen su soberanía, convirtiéndolos en sus instrumentos.²²

The alienation of the individual described by Sebreli coincided with the effect of Peronism on intellectual activity. Peronism unleashed a series of prolonged debates about intellectual commitment and self-identity within a national context. Reviewing the conditions of intellectual life in Argentina, critics of the day began to seek a mode of being in society that was both responsible and active. "Averiguar lo que somos" became the battle cry of this generation of writers, who attempted to locate a sense of self in the vanguard of political reform.²³ For the purposes of their inquiries, the young writers of the 1950s reevaluated the premises of subjectivity in art by first rejecting the elusive abstractions that were often identified in the essays of *Sur*. Opposing that ahistorical stance, they suggested a new activity for writers that would link subjectivity to a firm political commitment. Their analysis of literature therefore centered on concrete conditions of artistic production in order to provide a serious analysis of literature as produced within history.

Those who comprised this team of investigators began their careers as students at the University of Buenos Aires, where they initiated a series of socially oriented literary journals. *Centro* (1951–61) was the first of these periodicals. With the collaboration of Sebrelí, Adolfo Prieto, and David Viñas, its editorial staff confronted the political crisis of Argentina as an ethical dilemma whose origins could be traced to previous decades in national history. For this reason, the collaborators of *Centro* (like so many critics of the 1950s) took as their principal point of departure the ideology of intellectual generations before them. The Boedo and Florida artistic movements of the 1920s became a common topic of study, providing critics with a key example of conflict and contradiction in Argentina's literary past. Condemning the spiritual basis of avant-garde liberalism, *Centro* denounced the Boedo and Florida movements for their exaltation of the role of the individual in the formation of literary history and texts. To prove this point, *Centro* even took on the avant-garde challenges of the 1920s by focusing on the figure of Leopoldo Lugones, a writer who had in fact been condemned by the Boedo and Florida groups. In a particularly insightful article on the creative writings of Lugones, Oscar Masotta summarized the critical direction of *Centro*.²⁴ He argued the absence of an organic subject in Lugones's verse by first describing what he believed to be the writer's principal flaw: "no lograba sobrepasar el nivel de lo inmediato y . . . le era imposible establecer relaciones de conjunto" (p. 150). Lugones's fragmented vision was corroborated by his poetic style, in which he tended to enumerate random objects drawn from the visual field. But as Masotta hastened to observe, this strategy cancelled the possibility of any dialogue between subject and object, leaving the poet in hollow abandon without a unified coherence: "La elección original de Lugones podría ser definida por el intento de dar absoluta importancia al ser-para-los-otros en detrimento al 'para sí'" (p. 150). Expressing a general concern shared by the contributors to *Centro*, Masotta went on to study the ways in which a political subject takes form in modern literary discourse. He was preoccupied not by the formal merits of literary texts, but by the way in which the language of the text mediates the relationship between the writer and the objects described and in turn serves as an instrument of the social consciousness of the writer. It is this particular focus on writers of the past that motivated the collaborators of *Centro*, who joined in a quest for a remedial literary form that would integrate political consciousness into art.

Ciudad, a review of brief duration (1955–56) organized by Carlos Manuel Múñiz, continued this program of study. Reviewing the philosophical conflicts of past generations, the contributors to this publication evaluated the role of the intellectual in modern society.²⁵ In their literary studies, they described the relationship between a perceiving

consciousness and its object in the hope of finding the political motivations that inform the work of art. Referring to the conditions under which political value is drawn from literature, Adolfo Prieto emphasized the significance of a reflexive consciousness: "es la conciencia reflexiva de un estado de interés referido a su objeto; y el interés es la reacción total del yo frente al objeto."²⁶ From here it follows that the perceiving "I" should expound a political practice destined to modify human relationships within the situations provided by daily life. In a similar vein, *Ciudad* also considered the conditions of the contemporary reading public in order to oblige the writer to assume a position of engagement. As an example, Eduardo Dessein condemned the impoverished reading selections offered to the mass public, which he perceived to be caused by the reluctance of the writer to participate in an open dialogue with others.²⁷ Dessein therefore exhorted writers to abandon their privileged isolation in order to improve the general culture of the common reader "con ideales de mejoramiento social auténtico, para cada individuo, para cada ser humano y perfectible" (p. 10). This theme of the need to engage with popular audiences was to orient future reviews, wherein the writer would be designated as a pioneer of social change.

While *Centro* and *Ciudad* began to reconsider the role of the intellectual vis-à-vis his or her audience, *Contorno* (1953–59) was studying the historical role of the writer in society, demanding political commitment. Synonymous with the "generation of 1955," the contributors to *Contorno* were Ramón Alcalde, Noé Jitrik, Adolfo Prieto, León Rozitchner, Juan José Sebreli, and David and Ismael Viñas, a group that decisively influenced the formation of modern Argentine criticism.²⁸ They proposed that intellectuals should join the vanguard of public activity for the purpose of assessing the misguided programs of national politics and letters. Their formal study of texts was also governed by a political ethic, which enforced a materialist reading of art and society. In this regard, they reacted sharply to the traditional idealistic abstractions of earlier literary reviews of this century, criticizing *Sur* in particular for its disengaged, cosmopolitan vision and its mystified interpretations of history.²⁹ Aptly called the "generation of parricides," the *Contorno* group formed a critical practice based on a discourse of negation in which each writer defined his or her activity in contrast with the failures of those who had come before.³⁰

The new literary criticism of the *Contorno* group derived from two analytical perspectives: first, the authors developed a theory of subjectivity based on the lessons of Sartre, and then they applied their psychosocial theories to the canonical figures of Argentine literature. The monumental influence of Sartre, which derived from his contributions in *Les Temps Modernes*, provided the initial stimulus for *Contorno's*

broad evaluation of the intellectual in modern society. The Argentine critics attempted to situate the writers within their national context in order to propose a course of action for political engagement in art. Fundamental to their critical exercise was the Sartrean notion of *situation*, the combination of all forces, both psychological and social, that shape individuals and determine their roles in the world.³¹ This concept extricates writers from an atemporal realm and places them instead in a social context from which political engagement is born.

Principally studying the relationship between biography and writing, *Contorno* critics used the ideas of Sartre to explicate the works of Argentine authors. Thus Manuel Gálvez, Eduardo Mallea, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, and Manuel Mujica Láinez emerged as exemplars of “official discourse,” while Roberto Arlt provided the *Contorno* group with a patent example of resistance to tradition. In their commentary on these writers, the *Contorno* critics repeatedly studied the social positions of characters in texts as they related to events within history. At the same time, the critics analyzed the arrangement of details in narrative as reflections of reality. Consequently, the way in which concrete, material objects were positioned in relation to literary characters offered a telling sign of the writer’s vision of history. Gálvez’s novels provide a particularly apt example for this kind of analysis. In this vein, Juan José Sebrelli studied the novels of the lauded Argentine writer as a problematic encounter of characters awaiting their turn for glory.³² Denied a participatory function in determining great events, Gálvez’s characters lose their individuality and are thus condemned to the sidelines of the history. They are marginalized, Sebrelli explained, precisely because the author relegated political analysis to a minor function in his narrative:

A pesar de que toda la obra histórica de Gálvez gira alrededor de las absorbentes figuras de los caudillos populares, en su mundo no hay lugar para los héroes a lo Carlyle, a lo Emerson, a lo Nietzsche, para las individualidades prodigiosas capaces de modificar el curso de la historia imponiéndole su propia ley. Al suprimir los factores históricos y sociales que condicionan la acción de los hombres, todo se explica por los más mínimos detalles, por nada. . . . Todos son por lo tanto inocentes, nadie puede hacerse responsable de la causalidad, nadie obra con conocimiento de causa ni deliberadamente, lo cual no impide, no obstante, que todos sean juzgados de acuerdo a los más elementales esquemas morales: buenos y malos, fieles y traidores, valientes y cobardes, virtuosos y depravados, blancos y negros. El realismo de Gálvez, como todo realismo de tipo ayuda de cámara, no es consecuente ni coherente consigo mismo, no es sistemático, ya que cuando así le conviene abandona su cínico escepticismo y se pasa sin avisar al campo del idealismo moral utilizando subrepticamente su terminología. (P. 3)

Far from integrating various narrative elements within a coherent design, Gálvez sacrificed all analysis for a series of unsystematic descriptions, Sebrelli explained. Consequently, his characters remain alienated

observers whose detached vision of situations and events excludes the possibility of free will and action. In a study of Mujica Láinez's *Los ídolos*, Adolfo Prieto employed a similar critical focus. He described Mujica's characters as slothful, inconsequential beings who are denied a clear function within a particular historical situation.³³ Yet the characters' loss of history, Prieto went on to explain, results from Mujica's style, in which a preponderance of aesthetizing details only emphasizes narrative contrivance to the detriment of critical analysis.

Among the *Contorno* critics, literary technique was often considered a facile tactic of the author insofar as it obfuscates history and denies the possibility of analysis. David Viñas, for example, denounced the abuses of narrative artifice in those cases where it only calls attention to itself.³⁴ Thus technique that does not advance the consciousness of the author remains only a formal contrivance that denies individual freedom and action. Put another way, art as a sum of devices imprisons the writer in a formal web that represses meaning beyond the literary text.

Contorno's evaluation of Martínez Estrada was also organized in this way. An essay signed by Raquel Weinbaum (a pseudonym for David Viñas) condemned Martínez Estrada for his incomplete appraisal of national realities: "Los ojos de Martínez Estrada no opinan, no juzgan; se limitan a ver y a narrar lo que ven. Todas son interminables acotaciones para figuras que nunca se desprenderán del *dramatis personae*. . . . El mundo es lo que está ahí. Ahí abajo. Muy por debajo del escritor puro que describe. El otro mundo ancho y mediato ha desaparecido. Todo se ha desaparecido. Todo se ha concentrado en ese islote: se asiste al espectáculo desplegado en ese escenario. Sólo sirven los ojos. Sólo se ven las causas de efectos exteriores."³⁵ Because of his lack of coherent analysis, Martínez Estrada failed to engage in a possible dialogue with history. In Rodolfo Kusch's terms, "uno de los más graves errores cometidos por Martínez Estrada es, precisamente, no haber incluido a la Argentina en la historia."³⁶ Yet Martínez Estrada was not condemned unilaterally by all *Contorno* writers, some of whom found in his literary texts a potential voice of opposition to the tyranny of the Argentine government. They found that Martínez Estrada, because he was a marginalized social figure, expressed constant disillusion with the efficacy of legal institutions and the state. Thus beneath his apparently objective and disengaged descriptions, Martínez Estrada conveyed a skepticism about human progress while simultaneously announcing man's incapacity to judge the consequences of any national crisis.³⁷

In contrast to their often-hostile critiques of the fathers of modern Argentine literature, the *Contorno* critics found a liberating voice in the works of Roberto Arlt. This writer provided the *Contorno* group with

an authentic example of resistance to the status quo, especially observable in his marginalized heroes and in his strategies for linguistic transformation.³⁸ The young critics of the 1950s reconstructed Arlt's novels, showing how they rose against the constraints of official discourse and introduced the lumpen into literature.³⁹ As such, his texts avoid the facile dichotomies that separate the individual from society while eschewing a spiritual mystification of the conflicts of the day. Instead, the *Contorno* writers claimed, Arlt actively reconstituted the modern dialectics of history, beginning with a fundamental questioning of the modern individual as a humiliated being in society. As one *Contorno* critic explained, "existe otra certeza que únicamente estriba en el que se humilla, en la medida en que al declarar 'No soy nada,' establece tácita e irreductiblemente la presencia del sujeto."⁴⁰ Alternating between a torturous questioning of self and a barbed degradation of the other, Arlt's characters elicit the abject horror of modern times and denounce the sustaining myths of contemporary society.

Arlt was evaluated at the crossroads of biography and fiction. Events of his personal life—his lack of formal culture and his untutored perspectives on philosophy and art—allowed the *Contorno* critics to draw parallels between the author and his marginal heroes. As insignificant figures, Arlt's characters suffer the same dilemmas as their author and consequently rebel against authority and the tyrannical constraints of institutions. Unlike the other writers of the generation of 1925, Arlt dramatized for the *Contorno* critics the conflicts of the common man, offering a symbol of human degradation in modern times. Far from distancing himself from his characters or condemning them for their faults, Arlt participated as one of them in their alienation and despair. For the *Contorno* group, then, the convergence of the author's personal anguish with the suffering of his or her fictional heroes was a theme to be praised, one that distinguished the committed writer from the bourgeois aesthete.

In general, the *Contorno* critics sought to reconstruct the biography of the writer from the evidence of fictional material in order to emphasize literary production as ongoing political engagement. Thus they perceived literature as an autobiographical act by which the writer ideally should challenge the authority of tradition. In the process, they proposed to demystify official thought while exposing the ideology of a particular narrative hero in contrast to the ideology of those earlier heroes drawn from Argentine literary history. Finally, by their prolonged investigation of the writers who came before them, the *Contorno* critics embarked on a course that led to self-discovery. By negating the "other" (those who preceded them), they came to terms with their own contemporary goals for change. Future publications would expand this

study of the national past in order to posit new criteria for an analysis of Argentine letters.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE WRITER'S AUTHORITY: FRAGMENTATION AND CRISIS IN THE 1960S

Contorno was the fundamental review that turned the tide of contemporary Argentine criticism, reversing the impressionistic explications that had dominated previous theories of writing. Following the initiatives of *Contorno*, the editors of subsequent literary journals continued to raise questions about the social responsibility of the writer. Yet a single solution no longer seemed adequate to explain the role of the Argentine intellectual in society; nor would a single literary journal achieve the fame of *Contorno*, with its steadfast critical leadership. Instead, in the decade of the 1960s, there occurred a splintering of literary opinions and programs for textual study, along with multiple alternatives for understanding the relationship between politics and art. Varied critiques of culture came forth, ranging from discussions of ideology to a consideration of modernist literature as an art that called attention to form over content. Clearly, critics were beginning to lose faith in the absolute authority of the intellectual, moving away from strict considerations of biography and history. In this way, the reviews of the 1960s began to address the importance of the mass media, the problematics of popular culture, and the bearing of international politics on Latin American art and society. The diversity of these issues may be traced in four major publications of the independent left that came forth beginning in the mid-1950s and extending through the following decade. *La Gaceta Literaria* (1956–60), followed by its direct heir, *Hoy en la Cultura* (1961–66), reflected the forceful direction of Pedro Orgambide and Juan José Manauta.⁴¹ These two journals continued the Sartrean-inspired critiques of national literary figures of the kind nourished by *Contorno*, but they also provided a critical context for evaluating popular culture. Della Volpe, Gramsci, and the later Lukacs stimulated a discussion of the responsibility of writers in a social context, leading to a reevaluation of the limits of individual performance and expression. The editors of these Argentine reviews applied the lessons of European Marxism in studying the specific relationships between the writer and the public, but they simultaneously described the effects of mass media on intellectual production. Finally, they concluded that independent writers have all but lost their importance in modern society. In the contemporary age, these critics argued, writers lose their sovereign identity as they are drawn into an international network of cultural dependency and helplessness. For this reason, these critics began to focus on the content

of communication between Latin American nations and with the world. According to this view, expression becomes subordinated to a larger international process.

In the same period, Abelardo Castillo organized two journals that were also devoted to commenting broadly on popular and official expression. While taking the political agenda into consideration, Castillo revealed a unique commitment to the formalist study of writing. This approach is seen in *El Grillo de Papel* (1959–60) and in *El Escarabajo de Oro* (1961–74), two reviews he directed.⁴² Although Castillo, like Or-gambide, was interested in popular culture and theories of Latin American dependency, he principally defended the sovereignty of art and the autonomy of the Latin American artist. In particular, Castillo focused on the struggles of the new writer against social marginality and isolation. Castillo's reviews urged writers to organize in unions and to find modes of resisting official discourse and evading censorship and repression. Castillo therefore alternated between expressing his concern regarding specific literary analysis and defending authors from state authorities and silencing.

Although each review maintained an independent vision, the overlapping of contributors and the fraternal dialogue among editors in the 1960s suggest a shared objective among the contributors of testing the notion of authorship as part of a broad popular struggle. Crucial to their examination was a study of the so-called *ser latinoamericano*, the question of the degree to which the individual's identity is determined by the international politics of culture. From the context of a restricted study of Argentine literature, like that proposed by *Contorno*, these younger reviews opened their pages to a massive evaluation of Latin American writing set within an international framework of politics and social debate.

The expanded inquiries of these modern literary journals were specifically motivated by the international historical events of the decade. Thus the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 generated a forceful reevaluation of the role of the writer in society. Cuba became a model for successful relations between the intellectual and the state, providing an exemplary demonstration of vanguard cultural reform under socialism. The editors of these Argentine reviews consequently devoted abundant attention to the island nation, describing in particular the status of the intellectual in this new society. *Hoy en la Cultura* interviewed the members of the Unión de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos (UNEAC); the journal's contributors praised Juan Marinello's reforms for intellectual production; and aesthetic problems of the mass media discovered in the Soviet Union suggested new courses for intellectual activity in Argentina.⁴³ José Bianco, Julio Cortázar, and Ezequiel Martínez Estrada were praised and admired for their ritual journeys to

Cuba by the contributors to these Argentine reviews.⁴⁴ Above all, the success of the Cuban Revolution invited Argentine intellectuals to question their impoverished status at home. The cultural vitality that they perceived abroad contrasted sharply with the increased censorship and repression at home (beginning with the Frondizi government in 1958), which only underlined their deteriorating role in Argentine national life.

Military rule, censorship, and the enforced silence of intellectuals particularly concerned the editors, who promoted a series of discussions designed to organize the writers' endeavors. Far from resigning themselves to authoritarian rule, the editors actively asserted the need to oppose the prevailing intellectual silence. *Hoy en la Cultura* opened its preliminary issue with a discussion of censorship in Argentina, while its masthead bore the following statement: "Pensar es un oficio no bien visto por la ley."⁴⁵ *El Escarabajo de Oro* denounced government intervention in newspapers and publishing houses within Argentina and evaluated the political responses of prestigious literary institutions.⁴⁶ Finally, both journals called for a formal organization of progressive Argentine intellectuals that would be designed to resist passivity and silence. *Hoy en la Cultura*, for example, begged for a union of Argentine writers to protect specific objectives, including the defense of democratic freedoms, the preservation of national culture, and full support for the Cuban Revolution.⁴⁷ The publishing industry was also reviewed, and marketing and copyright laws were debated as journal editors defended the autonomy of Argentine intellectual production.⁴⁸

Mario de Lellis formally introduced the concept of "official literary discourse," a term that would carry serious implications for the critical practices surrounding Argentine literature.⁴⁹ In their denunciation of official expression, Argentine critics identified and repudiated the kind of closed and self-sufficient text that refuses to engage with history; moreover, they denounced the specific exclusion of popular writers from the assemblage of canonical texts that then constituted "official art." Consequently, the editors of reviews of the sixties revived an interest in those neglected authors who had been relegated to the sidelines by traditional literary histories. In 1961 Pedro Orgambide explained the project of the new generation as part of a decisive inquiry into Argentina's forgotten past: "Valoran a Jorge Luis Borges sin compartir su actitud lúdica en lo estético ni su postura reaccionaria en la política; respetan a Ezequiel Martínez Estrada pero niegan los elementos de su nebulosa sociología; redescubren a Arlt, a Quiroga, a Payró en la medida en que estos hombres consideran los hechos probables de un ayer todavía cercano."⁵⁰

The new reviews studied in particular the legacy of the Boedo group, including essays on writers such as Arlt, Leónidas Barletta, Raúl

González Tuñón, and Roberto Mariani.⁵¹ As writers who embraced popular ideals within the Argentine narrative tradition, these authors provided an alternative to the prevailing literary language that emphasized preciousness and formal contrivance in order to open Argentine narrative to a democratic inclusion of the common man. In general, the reviews expanded the terms of literary culture to include all coexisting artistic forms that exercise an influence on the mass reading public. Consequently, films, cartoons, television, and tango and modern lyrics became integrated within the little reviews as serious topics of study. *Hoy en la Cultura*, for example, studied Brazilian protest songs and the indigenous poetry of Paraguay; *El Escarabajo de Oro* concerned itself with New Wave cinema, "happenings," and popular theater. At the same time, illiteracy in Argentina, life in the provinces, and the mechanisms of state surveillance were also discussed in these reviews. These notes on marginal cultural expression were not gratuitously included; rather, they fostered a central concern that would be reiterated by the contributors to the Argentine reviews of the 1960s. As such, they offered a critique of the artificial categories separating elite and popular culture in order to ask what constitutes a vanguard, how public taste is formed, and how one can articulate the difference between old and new. In this way, in the face of the vast mechanisms of economic and political dependency in Latin America, multinational penetrations of industry and commerce, and foreign domination of publishing processes, the editors of these modern literary reviews attempted to break the selective process belonging to official discourse and to decode the ideology of literary taste.

This program was made explicit in the opening statement of *La Gaceta Literaria*, whose editors proposed to revise the informing principles of literary culture:

Una publicación literaria puede trascender la actividad específica y alcanzar con su prédica una ubicación consciente que coincida con los anhelos culturales de nuestro país. Todavía más: reconocemos que es imposible, inclusive, salir a la calle si no se tienen en cuenta esos propósitos que, en definitiva, aspiran a la realización cultural en la historia de un país demorado. . . . No puede el arte, ni tampoco la cultura en general, alcanzar manifestaciones que lo trasciendan si no trabajan en pro de los objetivos populares. En nuestro país, esa concepción condicionó una corriente dada en lo social por Mayo y sus hombres y en lo estético por Echeverría y Juan María Gutiérrez. Nosotros consideramos que esa herencia revolucionaria tiene vivencia actual, por cuanto no se realizó la nacionalidad plenamente, y si se debe superar es atendiendo a su sentido revolucionario. Es decir, completándola, actualizándola, sin desvirtuar el aliento liberador que la animó, porque en ese soplo está comprometida la peripeia de toda una cultura que aspira a ser auténtica en lo nacional y válida en lo universal.⁵²

While *La Gaceta Literaria* was clearly indebted to Argentine traditions, its program was to bring into question the possibilities of a popular cul-

ture.⁵³ Thus contributors were to propose another alternative to the tyranny of the isolated, artistic text so that popular culture might reveal, on terms of its own, a true revolutionary direction. Humberto Costantini, for example, defended the merits of populist discourse while repudiating the pretensions of highly individualized bourgeois art.⁵⁴ He urged his readers not to eschew the roots of popular culture, but to integrate their artistic endeavors in the service of popular audiences. L. E. Soto also discussed this concern in one of his essays.⁵⁵ He asserted that the artist and the intellectual must participate in a collective examination of consciousness, especially in light of the political realities in Argentina following the fall of Perón:

No hay recuperación efectiva de la democracia si quienes pretenden dirigir la opinión pública o influir en ella no se adelantan espontáneamente al pueblo con heroica y purificadora humildad, confesando sus propios errores, sea por acción u omisión. Lo contrario equivale a la más jactanciosa forma de bastarse a sí mismo, llámese aislamiento egoísta o suficiencia. . . . Cuando el escritor argentino se pregunta entonces "para quién se escribe" responde a una instancia de la crisis histórica y espiritual, pero sobre todo contribuye con sus distingos y alertas a salir de ella en el más breve plazo. Forma fila entre los posibles *orientadores* de la opinión pública justamente para prevenir a ésta contra los *rumbeadores* que asimilaron el curso básico de la reciente demagogia y ya se adjudican la herencia vacante.

Nos falta todavía el novelista que convierta ese proceso caótico en materia de una obra dotada de tanta dignidad artística como de interés humano y social para merecer una vasta difusión en la Argentina, y aún en América. . . . Uno y otros coinciden en una exigencia que es el aporte constructivo a la recuperación de los ideales democráticos: el afán de revitalizar nuestra literatura mediante la búsqueda del *hombre total*. (P. 2)

The quest for the "total man" indicated in Soto's essay was a theme taken from popular forms of expression. Following this strategy, *La Gaceta Literaria* went on to record the abundant artistic forms found in contemporary society. The review included notes on mural art, theater, science fiction, penny dreadfuls, tango, and indigenous folk art. Within this context, popular expression was defended without hesitation and glorified as humankind's engagement with the particulars of everyday life.⁵⁶ As part of this kind of discussion, *La Gaceta Literaria* also sought the roots of indigenous American forms. Its contributors hoped to capture the essence of the modern individual, whose personal artistic conflicts derive exclusively from American conditions. Time and again, *La Gaceta Literaria* insisted on this common question in order to identify a literature of engagement within the diversity of American art.⁵⁷ *La Gaceta Literaria's* heir, *Hoy en la Cultura*, continued this investigation of popular cultural expression with the explicit purpose of establishing a social history of the marginalized sectors of Latin America.⁵⁸ Its editors sought to revive regional artistic forms to demonstrate the importance

of local American expression. But while *Hoy en la Cultura* provided a panoramic view of popular cultural expressions, its editors also took into account the effects of mass media products. They thus began to investigate the manipulations of popular literature prescribing a course of behavior for the wide readership that it commands. As an example, Enrique Revol, a frequent contributor to *Hoy en la Cultura*, discussed the reception of the *fotonovela* among readers of different social classes.⁵⁹ He claimed that this popular reading format, which is supported by foreign capital, is destined to affect the behavior of Latin American readers by prescribing specific attitudes for dealing with the situations of everyday life. The *fotonovela*, Revol explained, is a product of the industrialized age, one that manipulates the consciousness of readers within a dependent culture.

Despite their concentrated emphasis on the forms of popular expression, the editors of these reviews nevertheless harked back to a clear allegiance to the individual writer as one who heralds social reform. According to this view, while critics may study anonymous artistic expression, their real interests should properly center on the triumphs of acknowledged individual achievement. Consequently, the journals of the sixties were filled with interviews of distinguished authors, questionnaires about the merits of recent works, and biographical notes on artists. The interviews with such authors as Miguel Angel Asturias, Bertold Brecht, Jean Paul Sartre, Augusto Roa Bastos, and Richard Wright repeatedly posed the same questions: How do authors impose their authority on the public? How do writers satisfy their obligations to society? And what are the possibilities of integrating an avant-garde aesthetic into a larger program of general cultural reform? Resembling the point of view of *Contorno* in their emphasis on biographically related critiques, the reviews of the early 1960s insisted on retrieving the private opinions of writers in order to assess their works of art. Even in the earliest critiques of writers like Julio Cortázar, biographical study prevailed as a dominant approach to literary and cultural analysis. In *Hoy en la Cultura*, for example, critic Francisco Herrera attacked the author of *Rayuela* for his isolation from America: "uno puede abrigar serias dudas . . . sobre el alcance y la significación finales del disconformismo de este escritor argentino que reside en París."⁶⁰ But in the same issue, *Hoy en la Cultura* defended Cortázar's engagement in the political struggle by characterizing his visit to Cuba as a mark of conviction and commitment.⁶¹ Far from defending the autonomy of the work of art, the editors of *La Gaceta Literaria* and *Hoy en la Cultura* often returned to the safety of biographical analysis, where they emphasized the personal merits of the writer to explain proposals for cultural reform.

Going beyond an exclusive emphasis on biography and personal-

ism, Abelardo Castillo insisted in his reviews, *El Grillo de Papel* and *El Escarabajo de Oro*, on the independence of the isolated work of art.⁶² This approach was announced in the editorial of the first issue of *El Grillo de Papel*, in which Castillo defended the formal study of creative texts: “la revista es para quienes la literatura es, antes que otra cosa, una actividad creadora.”⁶³ While certainly aware of the social considerations surrounding artistic production, *El Grillo de Papel* insisted on the prestigious autonomy of art. In this review, Castillo published the works of young Argentine writers, among them the early stories of Cortázar, excerpts of novels by David Viñas and Ernesto Sábato, and experimental poetry. Moreover, in their critical analysis of literature, the contributors to *El Grillo* and *El Escarabajo* did not separate the writings of avant-garde authors from those of the social realists, but they insisted on the literary text as a verbal construct above all. Literature, in short, should not bow to political interests. As the editor described it: “es imposible hablar de literatura comprometida—revolucionaria, testimonial, argentina, realista o cincuenta especialidades más—si primero no se habla de literatura a secas.”⁶⁴ Castillo was attempting to explode the illusions of modern bourgeois writers who believe that their avant-garde activities might provoke a revolutionary consciousness in society. To this end, Castillo constructed a history of literature of engagement to demonstrate the unavoidable elitism contained in all literary undertakings:

No hay más que hojear el apéndice a la *Síntesis histórica de la literatura argentina* de Yunque, el *Café de los inmortales* de Cuitiño, o interiorizarse en la ya mitológica polémica de Boedo contra Florida para advertir, si no otra cosa, al menos que en alguna época anterior el quehacer artístico tuvo una influencia notoriamente mayor que la actual. Pero si, como es sensato, aceptamos que el nivel eco-cultural del pueblo era más bajo, debemos concluir que el público real del artista, cuando éste lo tuvo, se reclutó entre la burguesía y la pequeña-burguesía. . . . Sartre . . . (en 1947) . . . llegaba a una conclusión idéntica; conclusión que, no por obvia, dejara de ser inédita para algunos, o espantosa, pues suponen ser *escritores populares*.⁶⁵

Using this concise overview of socialist-realist proposals in Argentine literature, Castillo challenged the myths espoused by the “popular writer” while protecting the integrity of art, regardless of the author’s intention. Toward the realization of this objective, Castillo submitted all expressions of culture to rigorous analysis, whether “official art,” television, or folkloric American traditions.

The contributors to *El Grillo* and *El Escarabajo* also studied artistic activity within the context of literary history. Cortázar’s *Las armas secretas* was described in relation to Borges; David Viñas and Sábato were interpreted in a chronological line following Roberto Arlt.⁶⁶ At the same time, Castillo initiated a vast revision of Borges, positioning him not as an enemy of social realist propositions but as part of a specific literary

tendency that emphasized artistic playfulness.⁶⁷ Like other critics writing for *El Escarabajo de Oro*, Castillo was concerned less with the political references named in the text than with the systems of relationships that organize the discourse. Accordingly, *El Escarabajo de Oro* recognized the tyranny of technology in the construction of literary texts. In an essay entitled "El poeta y el demiurgo y el robot," Carlos Astrada described the fall of the romantic writer in the modern age.⁶⁸ The supreme being endowed with exceptional knowledge and insight is challenged in the contemporary period by the seemingly autonomous devices that inform the work of art. Unlike the *Contorno* critics who denounced narrative artifice as a convenient manipulation of the writer, Astrada claimed that writers of the modern age are falling victims to technology, becoming the servants of literary devices that elude their complete mastery and control.

Finally, the narrative production of the 1960s, with its formal challenge to the institutions of literature, generated a particular critical interest within the little review. In the Argentine context, Cortázar, Sábato, and David Viñas provided points of departure for the inquiries of critics in their attempts to draw together a new science of literature that would account for both ideology and form. Together, critics and writers began to disown the "theological" assumptions surrounding the sacred act of writing in order to question the materialist principles that underlie literary experience. When viewed in this manner, the writer then loses his or her privilege as a founder and administrator of meaning and instead is perceived as a subject produced by literary language itself. At the same time, a new inquiry was emerging within the parameters of criticism, one that was purporting to evaluate the mechanisms of art as a reflection of the hierarchies of modern society. To actualize this emerging critical logic, Argentine writers prevailed upon the contributions of theorists of international scope. Not only Sartre, whose determining influence on *Contorno* has already been described, but also Althusser, Goldmann, and Gramsci provided models for Argentine critics to reevaluate cultural production in the early years of the 1960s. Within this project, critics avoided a narrow definition of the function of literature as a mimetic machine, reproducing daily reality, and instead supported another justification of art as a mediator between history and the writer.

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR: RECONSIDERING AUTHORITY, IDEOLOGY, AND THE CRITICAL PROCESS

The orientation of the Argentine literary review of the last years of the 1960s responded to major political changes and to the rise of new literary forms. First, the so-called boom in Latin American narrative

demanded a historical accounting and a new critical apparatus to account for its formal innovations. As Jorge Lafforgue explained in a prominent critical anthology of those years, the “nueva novela” gave rise to a “nueva crítica,” producing a technical critical language to accompany contemporary texts.⁶⁹ The writings of Cortázar and Manuel Puig, along with the endeavors of Haroldo Conti, Hector Tizón, and David Viñas, generated a new perspective on literary language and narrative structure while inviting consideration by a new audience of readers. As a whole, these texts provided new situations for writing while raising a series of questions about the ideology of literary discourse and the politics of art.

At the same time, the crisis in Argentine government during the Onganía regime and the subsequent organization of a massive popular resistance also prompted a reevaluation of the instruments of Marxist criticism at the service of literary study and contemporary political analysis. In particular, the assessment of Latin American political economy by proponents of dependency theory provided a model for literary criticism of the 1960s. The mature works of the *Contorno* writers put these theories into practice.⁷⁰ Thus in their books written during the sixties, Jitrik, Prieto, and David Viñas were concerned with the articulation of literary form within a dependent Latin American context controlled by metropolitan centers abroad. As a whole, their essays during this period expressed a sociological interest in the organization of literary movements within the rhythms of political crisis. Europe versus America, economic dependency versus democratic autonomy, and the general structural crisis of authoritarian government set against the promise of socialist alternatives has informed the critical inquiries in recent periodicals.

Younger critics have expanded this political study of literature by using the theoretical perspectives of structuralism and psychoanalysis to elucidate the Argentine literary tradition. Jacques Lacan was received with particular enthusiasm, especially in light of Oscar Masotta’s radical revision of psychoanalytical theory in Argentina. Masotta, who is perhaps best known in literary circles for his writings on Roberto Arlt, was singularly responsible for introducing Lacanian theory in Argentina, thus providing a new critical discourse that would account for the language of the unconscious in literature.⁷¹ Not only did literary critics begin to trace the expressions of repressed desire in writing, but they also began to study the psychodynamic process in art, thus going beyond the Sartrean principles that had organized criticism since the time of *Contorno*.

If Lacan’s influence was strongly felt in the late 1960s, the new promotion of imported structuralism also cast a dense shadow on Argentine criticism. Although the structuralist legacy has been accused of

a disappointing formalism that isolates the object of criticism from history, Argentine authors of the 1960s employed the structuralist approach in its Marxist articulation to study national literature as an ideological formation. Borrowing particularly from the interpretations of Althusser, Argentine critics evaluated art as the reproduction of existing social forms. They sought to define ideology, in Althusserian terms, as the “imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”⁷² The gaps between reality and expression, indeed, the imaginary nature of this relationship as Althusser described it, exercised a determining influence on the course of Argentine literary scholarship in the late 1960s, thus affording critics a theoretical basis upon which to study art and ideology.

At the same time, structuralist theory allowed Argentine critics to reconsider intellectual performance in light of state and social institutions. In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu must be cited for his towering influence and contributions to Argentine literary criticism. In particular, Bourdieu’s essay “Campo intelectual y proyecto creador” stimulated a prolonged discussion on the limits and scope of intellectual activity.⁷³ Bourdieu emphasized the notion of the legitimacy of intellectual activity as it is tested against a recognized social system, determined by specific rules and a fixed course of action. According to Bourdieu, the intellectual attempts to disrupt this social organization in order to establish an autonomous (and legal) role for his or her innovation or critical opinion. In light of the broad concern for the role of intellectuals described by Argentine critics, Bourdieu’s theory condensed years of critical inquiry. It allowed Argentine critics to reconsider the role of the author and the degree to which he or she is locked into a circuit of fixed behavioral patterns.

Taking these concerns into account, editors expanded the enterprise of literary journalism in the decade of the 1970s, often sifting political opinions with commentary on the arts. Juan Carlos Martini Real and Alberto Vanasco took up the question of the mission of intellectuals within a broad Latin American context. This issue was discussed in two of their journals of the period, *Macedonio* (1969–72) and *Latinoamericana* (1972–74). In its short-lived run of four issues, *Latinoamericana* promised to clarify the goals of Latin American writers while simultaneously leading Argentine intellectuals toward the pro-Peronist tendencies of the left. This review drew upon the notes of Juan José Hernández Arregui and Arturo Jauretche for political inspiration while studying the phenomenon of the “boom” and issuing a call to action to Latin American intellectuals in general. Also seeking to integrate political and literary analysis, Vicente Battista and Geraldo Mario Goloboff initiated *Nuevos Aires* (1970–74). But unlike the other journals described,

Nuevos Aires took an unmistakably theoretical focus on international problems in artistic production, reissuing key essays by Althusser, Gramsci, and Lukacs while also interpreting specific works of literature in light of theories on political dependency.

In the same period, *Crisis* (1973–76), under the direction of Eduardo Galeano, also organized a wide range of topics pertaining to art and politics in Latin America. Folk songs, poetry, popular graphics, and removable poster art were included in the oversized format of this monthly publication. Moreover, *Crisis* was clearly a political magazine that was committed to interpreting and analyzing artistic trends in both repressive nations and liberated zones of the Americas. Along with its multidisciplinary emphasis on the arts, the magazine included commentary on the mass media in Latin America, the coup in Chile, the war in Vietnam, colonialism past and present, and indigenous histories of the Americas. *Crisis* also devoted numerous interviews to rehabilitating those marginalized artists in Latin America who might offer models for the intellectual's engagement in political struggle. *Crisis* enjoyed wide popularity during its three years of existence and provided a unique format for discussing the arts and the neocolonial experience of Latin America.

Of all the literary journals that have considered these intellectual issues, it was *Los Libros* that most typically embodied the radical revisions of critical thinking in Argentina.⁷⁴ Directed first by Hector Schmucler and later by editors Carlos Altamirano, Ricardo Piglia, and Beatriz Sarlo, *Los Libros* surveyed contemporary cultural trends in Argentina and in the Americas.⁷⁵ Its masthead bore the claim of "la crítica del libro en América Latina," and it accordingly reviewed new texts devoted to politics, sociology, and the arts. Such diverse topics as television, university training, and the politics of communication media were incorporated into its discussions, while Cuba, Chile, and the war in Vietnam also received considerable attention. At the same time, *Los Libros* took on the challenge of incorporating French structuralism and Marxist criticism in order to produce a useful critical approach that might elucidate Latin American texts. A summary of the themes considered in the first issue of *Los Libros* indicates the breadth of its interests: Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital*, French psychoanalysis, *vandorismo* in Argentine politics, and Octavio Paz's visual poetry all formed part of a general study of international culture during a period of crisis. *Los Libros* refused to limit its commentary to literature; its collaborators proposed instead a new critical approach that would transcend the "sacredness" of artistic form and the restrictions of a learned culture. As the unsigned editorial of the first issue proclaimed:

Se trata, pues, de crear un espacio que en el caso de *Los Libros* tiene un terreno preciso: la crítica, darle un objeto—definirla—y establecer los instrumentos de su realización, permitirá dibujar la materialidad con que se pretende llenar el “vacío” de la recordada expresión de circunstancia.

Los Libros no es una revista literaria, entre otras, porque condena la literatura en el papel de ilusionista que tantas veces se le asignara. La revista habla del libro, y la crítica que se propone está destinada a desacralizarlos, a destruir su imagen de verdad revelada, de perfección a-histórica. En la medida que todo lenguaje está cargado de ideología, la crítica a los libros subraya un interrogante sobre las ideas que encierran. El campo de una tal crítica abarca la totalidad del pensamiento. Porque los libros, concebidos más allá del simple volumen que agrupa un número determinado de páginas, constituyen el texto donde el mundo se escribe a sí mismo.⁷⁶

New books and critical ideas were to be described within *Los Libros* in relation to the ideological discourse that gave them form. Moreover, *Los Libros* was to be in no way restricted to studying Argentine literature; rather, it would take on the challenge of a global postmodernist culture.⁷⁷

In all cases, legitimacy of expression became central to the concerns of *Los Libros* as its editors attempted to analyze the institutional structures of power. They sought a recognition of marginal cultural expression and tried to explain various forms of popular resistance against authoritarian rule. The organization of the critical task thus followed two principal courses: first, explicating power as it emanates from institutions of the state and controls individual behavior; second, tracing the resistance strategies offered by contemporary culture.

In all aspects of its criticism, *Los Libros* challenged the assumptions of official discourse, exalting the voices of minority writers as a form of resistance to the state. Contributors studied children’s literature, comic books, and literary magazines, tracing the emergence of literary subgenres that incorporate alternative expression.⁷⁸ Thus *Los Libros* brought into view the common “readings” of culture that shape the public’s logic and enforce the dominant ideology. In a discussion of the Nobel Prize, for example, *Los Libros* described the way in which bourgeois history is consolidated and sustained:

Lectura canónica que certifica la *legalidad* de una escritura, el Premio Nobel es uno de los movimientos fundamentales de la crítica burguesa: cristalización y proyecto de “historia” literaria, es posible verificar allí, al mismo tiempo, los límites de la literatura y la capacidad de consumo de “mercancías simbólicas” que tiene la sociedad. . . . Esta recuperación consagratoria de una de las experiencias más corrosivas de la literatura contemporánea obliga a plantearse una vez más la cuestión del “poder” de la literatura, sobre todo en un momento en que la literatura se vigila únicamente en el espejo de la crítica tradicional y parece buscar en la consagración europea la certidumbre de sus realizaciones.⁷⁹

Literature and criticism were considered in terms of a power struggle that is established between the author and a public of readers. Conse-

quently, *Los Libros* devoted ample attention to the role of the intellectual in the state and the ideological proposals contained in art. The contributors spoke of literature not as an isolated expression but in terms of the possible resistances that it might provide to official ideas.

In the specific study of literary discourse, they sought to locate those points of disruption that destroy our common expectations of reality. They thereby tested the "truthfulness" of representation and analyzed the formal aspects that give order to the text; they studied the ways in which reality is constructed from the arrangement of words on the page and the position of characters in fiction in order to expose the premises of conventional realism in art. Finally, *Los Libros* insisted on the infinite productivity of the work of art, which resists conventional methods of reading and analysis. As aptly described by Oscar del Barco, this kind of reading is contrasted with the closure of official discourse: "Una lectura que contradice la lectura institucionalizada, la lectura del encierro, regida por la alienación, en la cual hay un texto exterior (objetivo) que puede leerse a distancia, una obra que pertenece a un creador y es extraña, por lo tanto, al lector, quien la posee como una materia en sí, como distracción; un objeto ajeno a la experiencia interior. Este esquema somete la obra a la momificación propia de una sociedad cuyo rasgo esencial es la pérdida de la obra: lo cortado."⁸⁰ According to del Barco's terms, reading unchains the restrictions of bourgeois institutions and disrupts the premises upon which realist ideology is constructed. Art, then, is no longer considered an accomplice to a fixed reality but suggests an endless productivity set in motion by the reader. By this understanding, a new literary experience is presented, one in which the free play of writing refuses any fixed origin of meaning and surpasses the control of the individual.

The contributors to *Los Libros* insisted on the productivity of literary discourse as they attempted to reconstruct the ideology suggested by the artistic process. They challenged the notion of literature as a fixed reflection of reality and instead urged a reappraisal of the relations of literature to society. As Ricardo Piglia explained: "La función estética no es una propiedad 'real' del objeto, un 'dato' de su esencia o de su estructura: es un proceso que está determinado por un lado por los pasajes de un modo de producción a otro en el desarrollo immanente del sistema literario y a la vez por el movimiento y el desplazamiento de las estructuras de conjunto de la sociedad."⁸¹

Piglia went on to evaluate the basis of idealist aesthetics, which refuses to acknowledge the concepts of movement and productivity in the artistic process. In this obsolete condition, the writer only advances a metaphysical concept of art by enshrining the text in the mysteries of the sublime. Like other contributors to *Los Libros*, Piglia proposed an alternative reading in which he relates literary production to the activi-

ties of social change. According to Piglia's final analysis, literary exegesis ought to expose a particular relationship between the conditions of literary production and those of society at large. Consequently, *Los Libros* always considered literary production as a subversion of the rules of verisimilitude that had been proposed by the dominant classes.

Finally, *Los Libros* addressed the ideology of the critical act by offering a statement about the reading process itself. These points of study are explained in an editorial statement:

Existe una ideología de la literatura que se corresponde con una ideología de la crítica: el centro es la naturalización de las relaciones de producción y sus consecuencias, la naturalización de las relaciones entre una práctica, la escritura y la producción.

Se producen textos, pero sólo algunos son legitimados como literatura. La demarcación, mágicamente fundada en la ideología y confirmada en diversas "tradiciones literarias," abre un abismo entre los textos legítimos y los otros. Franquear ese abismo implica develar una relación de propiedad: la de la retórica, los verosímiles, los códigos específicos. Sobre esta "apropiación" se articula y se define el sistema de la literatura, creado por la crítica y reconocido luego por ella como natural. Este sistema (fuertemente codificado y convencional) es elevado por la clase que tiene los medios de producirlo a la condición de Literatura, de única escritura posible. Y es precisamente cierta crítica la que viene a rubricar con el gesto de interrupción esta *legalidad* basada en la represión de otras escrituras y lecturas posibles. Porque el sistema de la literatura no sólo produce textos, sino que produce lecturas, así, como un determinado sistema de producción no sólo elige sus escritores sino que también elige y produce sus lectores.⁸²

Criticism is here made equivalent to an act of disruption, a way to test the legality of inherited literary traditions. As such, criticism must also provide an alternative structure to receive new literary endeavors and to decipher the rules of representation at a particular moment in social history. For the realization of this objective, *Los Libros* relied on linguistics, political theory, and psychoanalysis in order to articulate a series of systems that join literature with cultural institutions. Of specific importance to *Los Libros* was the reading process itself and the particular privileges that certain readings have exercised over others. In opposition to these inherited privileges, *Los Libros* went on to call for an act of violent intrusion, by which the reader might question the legitimacy of consecrated ideas about art.

Recent Argentine literary criticism has reevaluated the conventional process of reading in order to suggest a more productive approach to the interpretation and analysis of texts. In contrast with the biographical emphasis of earlier reviews like *Contorno*, the journals of the 1970s—especially *Los Libros*—have considered the multiple dialogues that are heard in the artistic process.⁸³ Accordingly, the text is extricated from the sovereign control of the author and is opened to a general transformation in which the reader participates actively. All dis-

courses therefore warrant the scrupulous study of the critic because they offer points of entry to a wider understanding of modern culture. The literary review, in this regard, ceases to be a repository of fixed ideas; instead, it sets in motion a ceaseless debate about the abundant activities of social life and the manifestations of ideology in culture.

NOTES

1. Cited in Néida Salvador, *Revistas argentinas de vanguardia (1920–1930)* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1962), pp. 92–93.
2. Jorge Luis Borges, "Intenciones," *La Biblioteca*, second series, 9, no. 1 (1957):5.
3. Héctor René Lafleur, Sergio D. Provenzano, and Fernando P. Alonso, *Las revistas literarias argentinas, 1893–1967*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1968), p. 9. For a similar opinion on the little review's role in U.S. literary culture, see Tom Montag, "The Little Review/Small Press Connection: Some Conjectures," in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, edited by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers, N.Y.: Pushcart, 1978), pp. 575–93.
4. Jan Mukarovsky, "The Individual and Literary Development," in *The Word and Verbal Art*, translated by John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 161–79.
5. All formalist critics shared this opinion; see, for example, Juri Tynjanov, "On Literary Evolution," in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, translated by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 66–78.
6. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 115.
7. On the positioning of a speaking subject in verbal discourse, see, for example, the seminal works of Emile Benveniste, *Problemes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); and Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 350–77.
8. For a broad overview of the philosophical and ideological implications of this problem, see Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977). On the notion of textual productivity in particular, see Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974).
9. I discuss these questions in a forthcoming book, *Lenguaje e ideología: las escuelas de vanguardia en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Hachette, in press).
10. In the introductory statement of the first issue of *Nosotros*, the editors insisted upon the anthological purpose of their review: "Esta revista no será excluyente. No desdenará las firmas desconocidas. Si lo hiciera, renegaría de este su origen, humilde como el lector ve. Todo aquello que bien pensado y galanamente escrito a sus puertas se presentare, recibirá una afable acogida. Ningún otro anhelo anima a sus directores que el de poner en comunión en sus páginas, las viejas firmas consagradas con las nuevas ya conocidas y con aquéllas de los que surgen o han de surgir. Siempre que lograra revelar algún joven, ya podría esta revista vanagloriarse de su eficacia. Y si estas aspiraciones pudiesen salvar las fronteras de la patria y extenderse a toda la América Latina, mejor aún. Nada de más urgente necesidad que la creación de sólidos vínculos entre los aislados centros intelectuales sudamericanos." From "Presentación," *Nosotros* no. 1 (Aug. 1907):5–6.
11. Beatriz Sarlo discusses the self-consciousness of Argentine avant-garde activity in her article, "Vanguardia y criollismo: la aventura de Martín Fierro," *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 8, no. 15 (1982):39–69.
12. "Manifiesto de 'Martín Fierro,'" *Martín Fierro* 1, no. 4 (15 May 1924):1.
13. The "Boedo and Florida" controversy has received extensive critical commentary. See, for example, Adolfo Prieto, *El periódico Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires: Galerna,

- 1968); Beatriz Sarlo Sabajanes, *Martín Fierro (1924–1927)* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Pérez, 1969); and Marta Scrimaglio, *Literatura argentina de vanguardia (1920–1939)* (Rosario: Editorial Biblioteca, 1974).
14. Argentine intellectuals were especially influenced by Ortega's generational philosophies, which were described in journals and in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (Madrid, 1923). Among the Argentine avant-garde journals of the 1920s, *Inicial*, the self-proclaimed voice of the "new generation," followed Ortega's theories with the greatest enthusiasm and commitment.
 15. See José Ortega y Gasset, *El tema de nuestro tiempo* and his notes in *Meditación de un pueblo joven* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1958).
 16. Recent critics have begun to study the ideological implications underlying generational philosophy. See, for example, Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).
 17. Victor Shklovsky, cited in P. N. Medvedev and M. M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method of Literary Scholarship* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 160.
 18. For an example of condemnation of *Sur*'s elite positions, see Nicolás Rosa, "Sur o el espíritu de la letra," *Los Libros* 2, nos. 15–16 (Jan.–Feb. 1970):5–6; David Viñas, *Literatura argentina y realidad política: de Sarmiento a Cortázar*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veinte, 1974); and the entire issue of *Punto de Vista* 6, no. 17 (Apr.–June 1983), dedicated to an analysis of *Sur*.
 19. For the most serious evaluations of *Sur*, see María Luisa Bastos, "Sur y la obra de Borges," in *Borges ante la crítica argentina, 1923–1960* (Buenos Aires: Hispamérica, 1974); and her articles, "Escrituras ajenas, expresión propia: Sur y Los Testimonios de Victoria Ocampo," *Revista Iberoamericana* 46, nos. 110–11 (Jan.–June 1980):123–37; and "Dos líneas testimoniales: Sur, los escritos de Victoria Ocampo," *Sur* 348 (Jan.–June 1981):9–23. See also John King, "Toward a Reading of the Argentine Literary Magazine *Sur*," *LARR* 16, no. 2 (1981):57–78; David Lagmanovich, "Sur y las revistas literarias argentinas de medio siglo," *Sur* 348 (Jan.–June 1981):25–33; and Jesús Méndez, "The Origins of *Sur*, Argentina's Elite Cultural Magazine," *Inter-American Review of Bibliography* 3 (1981):3–16.
 20. For a summary of Amado Alonso's understanding of stylistic criticism, see his *Materia y forma en poesía* (Madrid: Gredos, 1965).
 21. *Sur*'s project was continued in several Argentine journals of the 1940s and 1950s, among them *Anales de Buenos Aires* (1946–48), *Realidad* (1947–49), *Buenos Aires Literaria* (1952–54), *Poesía Buenos Aires* (1950–60), and *Ficción* (1956–67).
 22. Juan José Sebreli, "Posición del hombre en el caos moderno," *Existencia* 1, no. 1 (1949):1–2.
 23. Ismael Viñas, "Reflexión sobre Martínez Estrada," *Contorno* no. 4 (December 1954):2.
 24. Oscar Masotta, "Leopoldo Lugones y Juan Carlos Ghiano: antimercantilistas," *Centro* no. 12 (Oct. 1959):146–62.
 25. See, for example, those issues of *Ciudad* devoted to specific Argentine authors: Martínez Estrada in no. 1 (1955); Borges in nos. 2–3 (1955); and Francisco Luis Romero in no. 5 (1956).
 26. Adolfo Prieto, "Sobre la indiferencia argentina," *Ciudad* 1, no. 1 (1955):8.
 27. Eduardo Desein, "La literatura de quioscos contra el individualismo," *Ciudad* nos. 2–3 (1955):5–10.
 28. *Contorno* has enjoyed extensive critical evaluation. See, for example, María Luisa Bastos, *Borges ante la crítica*, pp. 245–52; and her article, "Ciudad, Contorno, Gaceta Literaria: Tres enfoques de una realidad," *Hispamérica* 2, nos. 4–5 (1974):49–64; William Hamilton Katra, "The Argentine Generation of 1955," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1977; Beatriz Sarlo, "Los dos ojos de *Contorno*," *Punto de Vista* 4, no. 13 (Nov. 1981):3–8; Gustavo Valádez, "David Viñas y la generación del 55," *Vórtice* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1974):93–102.
 29. See especially Adelaida Gigli, "Victoria Ocampo: V.O.," *Contorno* no. 3 (Sept. 1954):1–2.
 30. See Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *El juicio de los parricidas: la nueva generación argentina y sus maestros* (Buenos Aires: Deucalión, 1956).

31. See, in particular, Jean-Paul Sartre's *What Is Literature?* (1947), a book that exercised a decisive influence on the *Contorno* generation.
32. Juan José Sebreli, "Manuel Gálvez y el sainete histórico," *Contorno* no. 3 (Sept. 1954):2-3.
33. Adolfo Prieto, "A propósito de *Los ídolos*," *Contorno* no. 1 (Nov. 1953):5.
34. David Viñas, "Onetti: un novelista que se despide," *Contorno* no. 3 (Sept. 1954):13.
35. Raquel Weinbaum, "Los ojos de Martínez Estrada," *Contorno* no. 4 (Dec. 1954):1.
36. Rodolfo Kusch, "Lo superficial y lo profundo en Martínez Estrada," *Contorno* no. 4 (Dec. 1954):8.
37. In defense of Martínez Estrada, see Ismael Viñas, "Reflexión sobre Martínez Estrada," *Contorno* no. 4 (Dec. 1954):2-4.
38. The second issue of *Contorno* is devoted to Roberto Arlt (May 1954). In the early 1950s, renewed interest in Arlt is also documented in *Sur*, in *Letra y Línea* no. 1 (1953), and in a book-length study by Raúl Larra.
39. See for example the comments of Ismael Viñas in "Una expresión, un signo," *Contorno* no. 2 (May 1954):2-5.
40. Gabriel Conte Reyes, "La mentira de Arlt," *Contorno* no. 2 (May 1954):1.
41. Until its eleventh issue, *La Gaceta Literaria* was codirected by Pedro Orgambide and Roberto Hosne. Thereafter, Orgambide became the sole director of the review, recruiting various writers for its editorial board. After the demise of *La Gaceta Literaria* in 1960, Orgambide opened *Hoy en la Cultura* with the editorial support of Raúl Larra, Juan José Manauta, and David Viñas. Beginning with no. 14 (June 1964), Manauta took charge of the publication. Although these two cultural reviews espoused independent visions, their contributors nevertheless revealed a close adherence to the politics of the Argentine Communist party (it should be noted, however, that the official cultural journal of the Argentine Communist party was the *Cuadernos de Cultura*; also, in the 1960s, *La Rosa Blindada* followed that party's orientation).
42. *El Grillo de Papel* and *El Escarabajo de Oro* reflect the forceful direction of Abelardo Castillo, and to a lesser extent, that of Arnoldo Leiberman and Liliana Heker, occasional editors of both reviews. In 1977 Castillo initiated *El Ornitorrinco*, a sequel to these earlier reviews that was more tempered and politically neutral, due to the political climate.
43. See, for example, Jorge Zelaya Morante, "La lección del primer congreso de escritores y artistas de Cuba," *Hoy en la Cultura* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1961):2; and the interview with Juan Marinello in *Hoy* 1, no. 3 (May 1962):2. On esthetic questions raised in the Soviet Union, see "Vanguardia y decadencia," *Hoy* 1, no. 6 (Oct. 1962):7.
44. On Cortázar's visit to Cuba, see the comments of Edmundo Graciarena in "Primera Plana, la revista y sus armas secretas," *Hoy* 3, no. 17 (Nov.-Dec. 1964):12.
45. On censorship, see the editorial of *Hoy* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1961):1 and 8-9. It should be noted that all literary reviews of the 1960s, not merely the journals of the independent left, denounced the conditions of intellectual repression in Argentina. See, for example, *La Gaceta* of Tucumán, *Sur*, *Capricornio*, *Cormorán* y *Delfín*, and *Testigo*, which together offer a wide variety of comments on the censorship of Argentine writers.
46. See "Comunicado," *El Escarabajo de Oro* 1, no. 1 (May-June 1961):2; and the editorial of *El Escarabajo* in 2, no. 5 (Feb. 1962):4. The editorial staff repeatedly denounced the general indifference of intellectuals and, in particular, singled out the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE) for its political detachment and silence on the issue of censorship.
47. See the proclamation of *Hoy en la Cultura*, announcing the formation of an Argentine Unión de Escritores in vol. 1, no. 5 (Sept. 1962):5. The manifesto was signed by Sábato (as President of the organization), Manauta, Orgambide, and David Viñas (secretaries), and Sebreli, Roa Bastos, and Verbitsky (members of the executive committee). In a second proclamation, "Actuar ahora," the Unión de Escritores encouraged the active participation of all intellectuals against the machinations of the state. See *Hoy* 1, no. 6 (Oct. 1962):2.
48. On the rights of intellectuals, see the editorial, "La crisis de los intelectuales," *Hoy* 2,

- no. 8 (Apr. 1963):2; the unsigned essay, "Un importante acontecimiento: la ley del libro," *Hoy* 4, no. 17 (Nov.–Dec. 1964):10–11; Rubén Benítez, "El compromiso literario," *Hoy* 2, no. 7 (Nov. 1962):7; and Pedro Orgambide, "La gran frustración," *Hoy* 2, no. 8 (Apr. 1963):3.
49. See Mario de Lellis, "Respuesta a Borges," *Hoy* 1, no. 3 (May 1962):3, on official discourse; for a similar understanding of "official" texts, see also Tabaré di Paula, "La crítica literaria y sus fantasmas," *Escarabajo de Oro* 3, no. 8 (also listed as no. 14) (Aug. 1962):21.
50. Pedro Orgambide, "Sociedad y literatura," *Hoy en la Cultura* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1961):5.
51. On Leónidas Barletta, see *Gaceta Literaria* (GL) 1, no. 4 (May 1956):1; and GL 3, no. 19 (Nov.–Dec. 1959):15. On Arlt, see *Hoy*, no. 5 (Sept. 1962):4. On Raul González Tuñón, see GL 2, no. 10 (July 1957):11; and GL 3, no. 19 (Nov.–Dec. 1959):10, 11. On Roberto Mariani, see GL 1, no. 5 (June 1956):5; and GL 2, no. 11 (Nov. 1957):4. The special issue of *Gaceta Literaria* devoted to Argentine literature contains various studies on the writers of the Boedo group. See vol. 4, no. 20 (May 1960).
52. Unsigned editorial, *Gaceta Literaria* 1, no. 1 (Feb. 1956).
53. In defense of an active popular culture, *Gaceta Literaria* sharply attacked the traditional historical reconstructions of *Contorno*. See for example Roberto Hosne, "El disconformismo de la nueva generación," GL 1, no. 4 (May 1956):11; and José Chiaramonte, "Contorno y el Peronismo," GL 1, no. 8 (Oct.–Nov. 1956):15.
54. See Humberto Costantini, "Arte popular y populismo," GL 3, no. 17 (Jan.–Mar. 1959):1.
55. Luis Emilio Soto, "El escritor, el público y el pueblo," GL 1, no. 4 (May 1956):1–2.
56. In general, these publications failed to critique popular culture; rather, they relentlessly glorified populist expression without attention to the ideology or the structure of those discourses. See for example Humberto Costantini, "Arte popular"; Gregorio Weinberg, "Sentido y signo de la cultura americana," GL 1, no. 7 (Sept. 1956):3; or Jorge A. Ruiz, "Posibilidades de una literatura popular," GL 1, no. 6 (July 1956):6.
57. On this concern, see for example the questions directed to Asturias on the vanguard responsibilities of the Latin American writer in Alfredo Andrés, "Entrevista con Asturias," *Hoy en la Cultura* 2, no. 4 (Nov.–Dec. 1961):8–10; or Pedro Orgambide, "Rastreo del ser americano," GL 1, no. 5 (June 1956):9.
58. On regional manifestations of popular culture, see Omar Estrella, "Tucumán y el panorama cultural argentino," *Hoy en la Cultura* 2, no. 10 (Sept. 1963):2; a questionnaire on the value of folklore and popular culture in *Hoy en la Cultura* 1, no. 5 (Sept. 1962):10; and Edgar Váldez, "Acerca del bilingüismo paraguayo," *Hoy en la Cultura* 4, no. 20 (May–June 1965):6.
59. Enrique Revol, "Literatura industrializada," *Hoy en la Cultura* 2, no. 8 (Apr. 1963):2. The "best seller" phenomenon also became a topic of study, and many popular journals such as *Primera Plana* promoted new texts in that style.
60. Francisco Herrera, "Rayuela," *Hoy en la Cultura* 2, no. 14 (June 1964):18.
61. For an impassioned defense of Cortázar's politics and literature, see Edmundo Graciarena, "La revista y sus armas secretas," *Hoy en la Cultura* 3, no. 17 (Nov.–Dec. 1964):12.
62. The autonomy of the literary text is also emphasized and defended in other liberal and left-wing reviews of the early 1960s. See for example the material contained in *Cero*, *Fichero*, or *Testigo*. In *Cero*, author Jorge Carvenale attacked reviews like *Hoy en la Cultura* for dividing art along partisan lines; consequently, he defends the artistic merits of literature, expunging political debates from the arena of criticism. See Jorge Carnevale, "Cortázar o el verdadero rostro," *Cero* no. 1 (Sept. 1964):29; or his article, "Literatura argentina actual o la máscara del coraje," *Cero* no. 2 (Dec. 1964).
63. Editorial, *El Grillo de Papel* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1959):1.
64. Editorial, *El Escarabajo de Oro* 4, no. 20 (Oct. 1963):3.
65. Abelardo Castillo, "Ir hacia la montaña o hacer que venga," *El Grillo de Papel* 2, no. 3 (Mar.–Apr. 1960):10.
66. On Cortázar and Borges, see Abelardo Castillo, "Las armas secretas," *El Grillo de Papel* 1, no. 2 (Dec. 1959):19; or Liliana Heker, "Rayuela," *El Escarabajo de Oro* 4, no. 20 (Oct. 1963):2. On Viñas and Sábato and their situation within Argentine literary history,

- see Liliana Heker, "Dar la cara: novela de David Viñas," *El Escarabajo de Oro* 4, no. 17 (Apr. 1963):19–22.
67. Within left-wing literary criticism in Argentina, Castillo's defense of Borges contrasts markedly with the earlier commentary of *Contorno* critics such as Adolfo Prieto, who had demanded that a political content be explicitly drawn from Borges's creative writing. See Castillo's essay "Las armas secretas" in *El Grillo* 1, no. 2; and Adolfo Prieto's book, *Borges y la nueva generación* (Buenos Aires: Letras Universitarias, 1954).
 68. Carlos Astrada, "El poeta y el demiurgo y el robot," *El Escarabajo de Oro* nos. 18–19 (July–Aug. 1963):10–14.
 69. Jorge Lafforgue, *Nueva novela latinoamericana*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1969), p. 28.
 70. See, in particular, Noé Jitrik, *El escritor argentino: dependencia o libertad* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Candil, 1967); Adolfo Prieto, *Literatura y subdesarrollo* (Rosario: Editorial Biblioteca, 1968); and David Viñas, *Literatura argentina y realidad política*, 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: Jorge Álvarez, 1964).
 71. See Oscar Masotta, *Sexo y traición en Roberto Arlt* (Buenos Aires: Jorge Álvarez, 1965). Masotta and his work with Lacanian psychoanalytical theory in Argentina are the subject of a recent book: German García, *Oscar Masotta y el psicoanálisis en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Argonauta, 1980). Masotta's essays in *Los Libros* provide a general overview of the issues surrounding Lacanian analysis and the study of literature. See, for example, Masotta's articles, "Aclaraciones en torno a Jacques Lacán," *Los Libros* 2, no. 10 (Aug. 1970):6–7; "Tres preguntas sobre J.L.," *Los Libros* 2, no. 9 (July 1970):10; "¿Qué es el psicoanálisis?," *Los Libros* 1, no. 5 (1969):15 and 21.
 72. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, translated by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 162.
 73. Pierre Bourdieu, "Campo intelectual y proyecto creador," in *Problemas del estructuralismo*, translated by Julieta Campos (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1967), pp. 135–82.
 74. Most contemporary reviews of the late 1960s also took up the question of intellectual performance and the ideology of artistic production, but in my opinion, none competes with the depth and breadth of *Los Libros*.
 75. Forty-four issues appeared before *Los Libros* was closed by state authorities during the 1976 military coup. The later directors of *Los Libros*—Altamirano, Piglia, and Sarlo—have continued their critical undertaking in *Punto de Vista*, a quarterly cultural review that first appeared in 1978. With an explicitly educational mission, *Punto de Vista* carries forth the projects of *Los Libros* and was designed, as Beatriz Sarlo expressed it, "to keep alive a historical consciousness during a period of repression and authoritarian rule." Interview with Beatriz Sarlo, Buenos Aires, August 1982.
 76. Unsigned editorial, *Los Libros* 1, no. 1 (July 1969):3.
 77. While *Los Libros* always emphasized a broad political commentary of culture, after issue no. 22 (September 1971), the review turned exclusively to political and social issues. At that time, the journal abandoned its book review format (described at first in the masthead as "un mes de libros en la Argentina y en América Latina") in order to study what was announced as "una crítica política de la cultura." In the final issues of *Los Libros* (under the direction of Altamirano, Piglia, and Sarlo), Maoism was openly defended and the national political crisis was centrally discussed. Debating the courses of possible political action, Piglia, in an open letter to Sarlo and Altamirano, resigned from the editorial committee (no. 40, Mar.–Apr. 1975).
 78. For an analysis of the ideology of children's literature, see, for example, Paula Waisman and Carlos Sastre, "Las revistas infantiles," *Los Libros* 1, no. 6 (Dec. 1969):12 and 21. The authors studied the representation of violence in children's magazines, tracing the organization of colors, images, and language as possible ways to rearrange and defy the order of the dominant culture.
 79. Unsigned essay, "Samuel Beckett," *Los Libros* 1, no. 5 (Nov. 1969):19.
 80. Oscar del Barco, "La escritura desencadenada," *Los Libros* 1, no. 5 (Nov. 1969):20.
 81. Ricardo Piglia, "Mao Tse Tung: Práctica estética y lucha de clases," *Los Libros* 3, no. 25 (Mar. 1972):22.

82. "Hacia la crítica," *Los Libros* 4, no. 28 (Sept. 1972):3. In this article, the editors formulate four basic questions to organize their discussion of criticism: First, "Desde el comienzo de la escuela, se va internalizando una ideología de la literatura, definida por el lugar que se le asigna a la misma, la 'función' que se le define, etc. ¿Es una tarea de la crítica la de definir y precisar los efectos que esta ideología tiene en nuestra manera de leer literatura?" Second, "Si es verdad que en nuestra sociedad existen simultáneamente muchos códigos de lectura (según las clases sociales, los diversos grupos, etc.), ¿la crítica deberá privilegiar alguna de esas perspectivas ya dadas o crear teóricamente su propio código?" Third, "En la producción de un texto literario se ponen en relación varios sistemas (económico, ideológico, estético, etc.). ¿Puede la crítica dar cuenta de las relaciones entre estos sistemas y lo que resulta socialmente 'legible en un momento dado'?" Fourth, "En la actual crítica literaria argentina ¿cuáles serían las posibilidades teóricas y prácticas que permitirán dar cuenta de las relaciones entre los sistemas extraliterarios (económicos, políticos, etc.) que están en juego en la producción de un texto? ¿Y el texto mismo como sistema? ¿Cuáles son los límites que impiden este proyecto o, en todo caso, el proyecto crítico que usted crea pertinente?" (p. 4) These questions were asked of young Argentine critics, among them Aníbal Ford, Luis Gregorich, Josefina Ludmer, Angel Núñez, and Ricardo Piglia. Although it was common to interview literary critics in the journals I have described, the 1972 inquiry by *Los Libros* represented the most serious endeavor to meet the challenge of modern criticism by coming to terms with new systems for the reception and evaluation of art. In recent years, other attempts to understand the direction and historical development of Argentine criticism fall short of the sophisticated vision of *Los Libros*. See, for example, Adolfo Prieto, *Encuesta: la crítica literaria en la Argentina* (Rosario: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1963), in which Prieto expressed concern about the professionalism of the critics and their potential influence upon the evolution of modern letters. See also the article by Jorge Lafforgue, "Literatura y crítica: una encuesta," in *Latinoamericana* no. 2 (June 1973) and no. 3 (April 1974), wherein the author investigates the possible roles of criticism within the Argentine context. In Lafforgue's terms, "la literatura no es más que la lectura institucionalizada por el sistema, por su cultura, que consecuentemente exige (y obtiene) una crítica explicativa y reverencial" (no. 3, p. 6).
83. Other reviews also challenged the power vested in the individual writer by studying popular culture in a dependent society. See for example *Barrilete*, published by Roberto Santoro, in which detachable sheets of poetry and fiction, political manifestoes, and criticism challenged the closed form of the book. *Barrilete* published abundant material by anonymous authors and challenged the assumptions of an institutionalized literary canon. In the same period, *Crisis* (1973–76) reduced the figure of the sovereign author to one of many participants in political struggle. Together the journals of the early 1970s defied the centrality of authorial control by subordinating individual performance to a broad debate about politics, the mass media, and the neocolonial nature of daily experience in Latin America. Since the 1976 coup, when the journals of the independent left were intercepted by state authorities, a new critique of Argentine culture has slowly begun to emerge, taking into account particularly the importance of popular culture. Among the publications to renew this kind of discussion, the already mentioned *Punto de Vista* is the most significant. Other journals include *Brecha* (directed by Francisco Boeris, Marcos Meyer, and Gerardo Serrano), *Crear* (directed by Oscar Castellucci), *Literatura Boletín* (directed by Enrique Medina), *Medios y Comunicación* (directed by Raul Barreiros), and *Pie de Pá-gina* (directed by Alberto Castro and Gabriela Borgna). Especially after the Falklands crisis of 1982 and with the increased liberalization of censorship policies, editors of Argentine literary reviews have taken courageous positions, defending the freedom of intellectuals and offering cogent analyses of contemporary culture. Editors have begun to offer democratic alternatives for culture while also taking into account the ideological implications of national rock music, soap operas, and cultural colonialism in Argentina.