

Children's Culture and Citizenship in Argentina

A History of
Billiken Magazine
(1919–2019)



Lauren Rea

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In memory of Annie Austin

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Introduction

Marco Tulio Valencia Duque was born in 1920 in Santuario, Colombia, a town at the foothills of the Andes where the mountains meet the cloud forest. He lost his father when he was just two years old, and his mother relied on the help of family to provide for her three children. Marco went to school when finances allowed and had completed a total of five years by the age of 15. After starting to work full time on a relative's coffee farm in return for food and board, his prospects improved when a family member offered him his own small coffee plot. This meant that he could keep the proceeds of what he harvested and sold. Once he had covered his living costs, he had just enough left to make what he saw as an investment in his education. Every week, Marco visited the bookseller Señor Vélez, who brought his wares into Santuario on the back of a mule, and every week he would buy an Argentine children's magazine called *Billiken*.

Billiken became Marco's connection to the outside world. He used the magazine as a way of continuing his education, practising his reading with the stories and the comics, learning about geography and history, and becoming inspired by the exploits of Latin America's Great Men. He read and re-read the moral messages at the bottom of each page: 'Make your mother proud'; 'Try to find your vocation in life'; 'Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today'. The message he took most to heart was 'La vida más ocupada es la menos infeliz' [A busy life is a happy life]. Years later, Marco would recount how he took that message and everything he learned in *Billiken* and used it to transform his life. He went on to become a local businessman and community leader. He and his wife had seven children and then 11 grandchildren, one of whom went to study in Argentina. When Marco's daughter, Alba, was visiting her daughter in Buenos Aires, she called in to the offices of *Billiken*'s publisher, Editorial Atlántida. Marco had wanted his daughter to see the place where *Billiken* came from and to tell the people making *Billiken* about how this magazine had changed his life.¹

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Marco's story is the manifestation of Constancio C. Vigil's dream for his magazine: the transmission of a pan-Latin-Americanist sensibility, inspired by the writings of his fellow Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, twinned with the commercial gains from cross-regional publication.² Stories about the impact of *Billiken* on people's lives illustrate the magazine's reach. Judge Elizabeth Odio Benito, appointed president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2020, recalled how *Billiken* taught her to read in 1940s Costa Rica. In the same decade, the Peruvian Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa read *Billiken* magazine as a boy, and Mexican writer and journalist Carlos Monsiváis's earliest memories of reading are of an adapted version of Homer's *The Odyssey* published as part of *Billiken*'s book collection.³ Although reaching most of Latin America at different points in time, *Billiken*'s influence was most felt in Argentina, where generations of children grew up with the magazine. The memory of *Billiken* is connected to school, to issues led by the commemoration of key dates in the school calendar, and to teachers setting homework based on the pages of the magazine. Marco's story is also emblematic of the emotional pull of *Billiken* for many readers who link the magazine to fond childhood memories. Since I started researching *Billiken* I have been treated to spontaneous, heart-warming anecdotes from Argentines ranging from academic colleagues, taxi drivers taking me to the offices of Atlántida, extended family members, politicians, and diplomats. Middle-class readers remember Monday as the best day of the week because it was when Father would come home from work with *Billiken* under his arm. Other readers remember inheriting piles of *Billiken* magazine from a cousin, neighbour or older sibling and using them as an archive of reference material to help with schoolwork. For Argentine artist Mirta Toledo, growing up in the 1950s in a rented room with her parents, *Billiken* was her 'window onto the world in a room with no window'.⁴ At a talk in London commemorating *Billiken*'s centenary, the then Argentine ambassador to the UK, Carlos Sersale di Cerisano, said of *Billiken*: 'Es un tesoro nacional y parte de todos nuestros recuerdos como niños y padres' [It is a national treasure and part of all our memories as children and parents] (*Gente*, issue 2821, 13 August 2019).

Just as the ambassador talked about 'our' memories, *Billiken* talks of 'us', *nosotros*, employing what Billig calls 'the deixis of homeland', which 'invokes the national "we" and places "us" within "our" homeland'.⁵ The employment of this weekly reminder of nationhood is one way in which *Billiken* inserted itself into nation-building discourses. Part of establishing the identity of *nosotros* involves determining who this excludes and, indeed, not everyone in Argentina grew up reading this magazine. Academic criticism of *Billiken* has pointed out the magazine's dominant editorial line, which constructed an imagined homogenous readership as white and middle class, reaffirming patriarchal and conservative discourses and leaving little room for diversity or dissent from established norms. *Billiken* is not remembered with universal fondness. The warm glow of nostalgia surrounding *Billiken* sits alongside other sets of different, uncomfortable memories, underpinned by the complexities and contradictions in *Billiken* that this book explores. The most widely held negative

association concerns the magazine's support of the civic-military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983 through Editorial Atlántida's complicity with the regime. For some readers and critics, that association stains all of *Billiken's* history.

This study seeks to hold the multiple, contrasting perspectives on *Billiken* together, understanding them as a reflection of the multivocal and multimodal nature of this product of children's culture. This book is, in broad terms, a biography of *Billiken*, and not a study about the reception of the magazine. If I were publishing it in Spanish, and in Argentina, *Billiken* would need no introduction to readers over the age of 30, if not younger, and it is no exaggeration to state that *Billiken* is part of the national consciousness. These memories of *Billiken*, offered here mainly for those who did not grow up reading it, recognise the strength of feeling surrounding this magazine, and the contrasting reactions it provokes. The accumulative effect of the memories and anecdotes I have collected over the past decade have been vital for my understanding of the cultural significance of *Billiken*. I do not form part of the *nosotros* who read *Billiken*, and these are not my childhood memories.

The first issue of *Billiken* was published on 17 November 1919, and it sustained weekly publication with remarkably few breaks until 2018. The consistency of ownership was broken in 2007 when the Vigil family sold Atlántida to the Mexican media giant Televisa. Atlántida subsequently returned to Argentine ownership in 2018. *Billiken* moved to monthly publication from issue 5129 (6 June 2018) and to once every two months from issue 5141 (18 June 2019). The last issue to be printed was the centenary issue, 5143 (8 October 2019). A final issue, the 2020 annual, was intended for print distribution but was instead offered, free of charge, in a digital format in March 2020 during the first COVID-19 lockdown. At the time of publication of this book, *Billiken* exists as a brand within Grupo Atlántida, a legacy publishing house turned digital media company. *Billiken*, evolving from a print magazine to a multiplatform product, consists of a website hosting news and general interest articles, as well as downloadable educational materials, a YouTube channel, the Billifest festival, and the spin-off project Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas [Great Latin American Women], which I co-direct. Whilst most of this book is concerned with *Billiken* as the print magazine, the transition beyond print is also covered up to 2022, and in this I reflect upon my own involvement with *Billiken*, the impact that this research project has had on its object of study and the impact that this co-produced work has had on the research project.

***Billiken* as a magazine: massivity, longevity, materiality**

There are many possible routes into *Billiken*. Each of *Billiken's* content offerings—cover art, comics, short and serialised stories, graphic material, school material, quizzes, illustrations, photographs, posters, news reports, musical scores, activity pages, readers' letters and drawings, advertisements, and printed ephemera including stickers, trading cards and cardboard models—can

be analysed through a different disciplinary lens. *Billiken* is a multimodal text as per Kress and van Leeuwen's definition as 'any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code'.⁶ As a magazine, the text, the images, and the relationship between the two in the page layout all work together to create meaning. The understanding of the magazine as an object and cultural artefact is fundamental to this study's methodological approach, which places the contents of the magazine within their cultural and historical context and avoids decoupling these contents from their surroundings on the page. This aligns my approach with Claire Lindsay's *Magazines, Tourism and Nation-Building in Mexico*, which 'moves beyond an exclusively text-based or semiotic analysis of the magazines' visual and narrative contents to embrace a historically situated interdisciplinary methodology, informed by the very constitution of its distinctive object of study'.⁷ Notwithstanding the distinctiveness of the magazine, the premises established by scholarship on the history of the book provide a cornerstone for understanding the magazine as printed object. The work of Roger Chartier has been influential in Argentina, particularly in the work of leading periodicals scholar Sandra Szir. Szir uses two principal, inter-linked premises established by Chartier and also adopted by this study: that the process of production, distribution and reception of the printed object situates it within economic, social, political and cultural systems, and that the materiality of the printed object underpins the articulation between the object's form and the meaning attributed to it by the reader.⁸

The work of Néstor García Canclini, who pioneered ideas of hybridity, consumption, citizenship and the impact of globalisation, is key to any study of cultural production in Latin America. His position on analysing the social meaning of a work of art is similar to that of Chartier on the book:

Las claves sociológicas del objeto estético y de su significación en el conjunto de una cultura no se encuentran en la relación aislada de la obra con el contexto social; cada obra es el resultado del campo artístico, el complejo de personas e instituciones que condicionan la producción de los artistas y que median entre la sociedad y la obra, entre la obra y la sociedad.⁹

[The sociological keys of the aesthetic object and of its meaning in the context of a culture are not found in the isolated relation of the work with the social context; each work is the result of the artistic field, the set of people and institutions that condition the artists' production and mediate between society and the work, between the work and society.]

Sánchez Prado identifies the dialogue that García Canclini establishes with Pierre Bourdieu in the above quotation in a volume that looks at the influence of Bourdieu in Latin America.¹⁰ Bourdieu's theoretical concepts have also been employed by scholars of magazines. Greenberg evokes Bourdieu's concept of field when examining the 'gatekeeping' role of magazine editors, and Crisp Crawford engages with theories of capital to argue that magazines

are cultural agents, not just transmitters of culture: ‘mediated messages serve as a powerful cultural reinforcement, generating symbolic and cultural capital that helps establish societal norms.’¹¹ As *Billiken*’s identity as a magazine is so critical to understanding its insertion into Argentine cultural life, this book also asks whether *Billiken* can still contain and create meaning in its current post-print phase.

The notion of the magazine as a repository of content is aligned with the origins of its name: magazine, originally meaning storehouse, derived from the Middle French *magasin*, in turn from the 16th-century Arabic *makazin*, plural of *makzan*.¹² The Spanish *revista*, closer in meaning to ‘review’, can be translated as magazine or periodical. *Billiken* shares many of the characteristics of *revistas ilustradas* [illustrated magazines] that Maria Chiara D’Argenio identifies as distinguishing this genre from other types of magazines such as literary or avant-garde examples. These characteristics, listed by D’Argenio, include the centrality of visual technology; images and the verboiconic; the central role played by advertising; the polyphony and ‘hybridity’ of their contributors, content and discourse; and the shared objectives of informing, entertaining and generating profit.¹³ A further characteristic listed by D’Argenio but which does not apply to *Billiken* is the ephemeral nature of illustrated periodicals.

A characteristic of many of the illustrated magazines that proliferated towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries was that they were short-lived, one notable exception being the pioneering *Caras y Caretas* (Argentina, 1898–1941), a first version of which was founded in Uruguay in 1890. *Billiken*’s longevity, as well as the massivity and the geographical reach of its readership, distinguishes it from smaller-scale and briefly published periodicals that provide windows onto a specific place, time and group of people. It also adds another layer of temporal complexity: as *Billiken* became increasingly embedded in the national consciousness, those making it became increasingly aware of the responsibility of maintaining its legacy, affecting editorial decision-making. Whereas the paper copies of *Billiken* may have been ephemeral, the magazine as an editorial project was never intended to be so. As we will see, a forward-projected sense of legacy was embedded into the magazine’s self-reflexive narratives from a very early stage. A further characteristic of magazines identified by Lindsay, which *Billiken* also does not share, is concerned with the contemporaneity and responsiveness to events.¹⁴ *Billiken*’s periodicity was based primarily on the school calendar and on recurring anniversaries of historical events rather than current affairs. The magazine’s brief incursions into the political events of the day are all the more notable for the breaks they introduce in the magazine’s temporal rhythm.

The magazine as a product of print culture invites consideration of its links to the nation-building projects of Latin America’s 19th century via the seminal, and much contested, work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson partly attributes the formation of national consciousness to a print culture that enabled those reading their local newspaper to identify or ‘imagine’ themselves as part of the community even before the independence struggle.¹⁵ Many critics have

challenged Anderson's thesis, citing the absence of significant numbers of newspapers prior to independence and his omission of oral and popular cultures as factors in the formation of national identities.¹⁶ The idea of the 'imagined community' is useful, however, particularly when extended to the 20th century and to the role of products of popular and mass print culture. I previously used the frameworks developed by Anderson and also Jesús Martín Barbero in my work on the narratives of nation-building in Argentine serialised radio drama.¹⁷ Martín Barbero shows how *folletines* (cheap, pamphlet-type publications) and *novelas por entregas* (mass-produced serialised novels) were precursors to the radio as democratising products of popular and mass culture. He states that in almost all Latin American countries radio provided people from different regions and provinces with a first daily lived experience of the nation, 'transforming the political "idea" of nationhood into the daily experience and feeling of nationhood'.¹⁸ The radio series I have previously analysed circulated in print format as *folletines* to collect in their serialised, episodic structure, or as scripts to perform.

Billiken, as a product of print culture with interactive and collectable potential, can be seen as part of the corpus of popular texts that contributed to nation-building. Whilst *Billiken* did not reach every corner of Argentina and was not universally read, its circulation, both paid and informal, and its geographical reach within Argentina and across the region, place it into the category of mass culture. The paid circulation of 139,500 in November 1939 had risen to 226,000 by November 1943, with total readership five times that, if *Billiken's* own calculation is applied. The 1944 anniversary issue included a map of the Americas showing the locations of the 2,000 agents who distributed 350,000 issues every week. In addition to the capitals of Spanish-speaking Central and South America, the cities of Juneau, Ottawa, Washington and Rio de Janeiro were included. The caption read: '*Billiken* llega puntualmente todas las semanas a los pueblos más lejanos de las tres Américas' [*Billiken* arrives punctually every week in the most distant villages of the three Americas] (issue 1304, 13 November 1944).¹⁹ In May 1958, *Billiken* became the first publication in Spanish, anywhere in the world, to sell 500,000 copies in a week (issue 2003, 26 May).

Within the complex, heterogenous world of magazines, and *revistas*, perhaps the one uniting characteristic of these publications is centred on the reading experience. Unlike a book, a magazine does not have to be read in a linear way, and not all of it has to be read at all. As Kress and van Leeuwen explain, 'Non-linear texts impose a paradigmatics. They select the elements that can be viewed and present them according to a certain paradigmatic logic ... but leave the reader to sequence and connect them.'²⁰ The magazine invites a leafing through or skipping through of its pages, creating multiple possible pathways of engagement with each issue by each reader. Marina Alvarado calls this '(h)-ojea', merging 'hojea' [leafing through] with 'ojea' [casting an eye over], highlighting the variance in levels of engagement when viewing a magazine.²¹ The use of this term also implicitly distinguishes '(h)ojea' from *lectura*,

or the practice of reading. This impacts on the relationship between editorial intention and reader reception because, although page layout can be used as an attempt to guide the reading process, the very nature of a magazine undermines attempts at editorial control. Like many other magazines, *Billiken* did not solely consist of pages to be read but additionally offered a wealth of ephemera that was intended for a life beyond their assigned issues, as well as pages that were designed to be written on, drawn on or coloured in by the reader. The *Billiken* magazine was an object of enquiry and of play, to be used, interacted with and passed around, before being discarded, given away, or preserved by the same owner for a future year because of its perennial school content.

Today, the encounter with the magazine as a physical object in the archive permits observation of the changes in the weight and texture of the paper, and the size and thickness of the issues. The reading experience as a researcher does not reproduce that of children reading the issues of the magazine the week they came out. In the Atlántida archives, the issues are collected by the hundred in leather-bound volumes, the handling of which changes the physicality of the reading experience down to the ease with which the page can be turned. The issues are archived in their published state, untouched by children's hands. These are the clean copies, mostly intact, with no pages coloured in or exercises completed. The ephemera is variably preserved either as an insert within the magazine or filed away separately. The accompanying covermount gifts, provided from the 1960s onwards, have not been preserved. Unlike *Billiken's* original readers, I did approach the magazine in a linear way, reading it mostly chronologically, varying between accessing the paper copies in situ and working at a distance with the digital photographs taken by research assistants. Reading multiple issues in one sitting, accelerating through the sequences of each year, exposed *Billiken's* generational shifts and continuities and highlighted my awareness of the cycles and repetitions woven into the rhythm of the magazine.

The first critic to argue for the significance of *Billiken* as a cultural product was Mirta Varela. Her book *Los hombres ilustres del Billiken* (1994), a cornerstone for subsequent scholarship on the magazine, examines *Billiken's* early biographies of Great Men, demonstrating how *Billiken* found its place alongside official school textbooks by offering complementary and innovative discourses. Varela's key contribution was to demonstrate why *Billiken*, so ubiquitous in Argentina that it had become unremarkable, was, rather, a 'nucleus' of Argentine culture and part of historical memory. Following on from Varela, María Paula Bontempo's detailed and prolific work on the early decades of Editorial Atlántida stems from her PhD thesis, in which she focusses on three of the publishing house's magazines: *Billiken*, *Para Ti* and *El Gráfico*. Bontempo's nuanced and balanced treatment of founder Constancio C. Vigil stands out for recognising the complexities of this figure who was revered in biographies published during his lifetime but has in recent decades been overlooked or dismissed. Much of the academic criticism on *Billiken* is concentrated on the early decades of the magazine, with significant attention also paid to *Billiken*

during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship, most notably by Paula Guitelman. The present book is the only study to take the whole of *Billiken's* history into account. It is based on exclusive access to the full run of paper copies of the magazine held privately by Atlántida and in paper format only.²²

This history of *Billiken* seeks to examine the changes and continuities in the magazine over time as it responded to political events, adapted to new commercial realities, and made use of technological advances. The study is organised chronologically with three key themes running throughout. First, *Billiken's* editorial construction of childhood and the construction along gender lines that divided readers into 'men of tomorrow' and 'future mothers' traverses both the content and the timeframe of the magazine. The second theme concerns the tensions inherent in the magazine's dual self-imposed mission of being an unofficial partner to the national system of public (state) schooling whilst attracting and retaining child readers through its entertainment content. The third theme is the changing role and function of cultural production (literature, comics, printed ephemera) for children as published in the magazine in different time periods and contexts. *Billiken* widens our understanding of the potential and power of magazines within popular and mass culture whilst offering a lens through which to view Argentine histories of gender representations, politics, childhoods and education. The editorial (adult) constructions of Argentine childhood that emerge in *Billiken* invite questions regarding the role ascribed to popular culture for children in the context of the Argentine nation-building project.

Children, citizenship and education

Billiken, aimed at children of primary school age, from six to 12, was intertwined with the political and pedagogical discourses behind public education. Children, conceptualised as the future of the nation, were at the heart of the nation-building project. Following the Wars of Independence from 1810, the Declaration of Independence in 1816, and a series of civil conflicts that only ended in 1860, the political and cultural struggle for Argentine national identity continued into the 20th century. In the late 19th century, the nation's past became valued as an element of cohesion upon which to build the nation's future. What constituted this national past was a curation of what Shumway calls Argentina's 'guiding fictions', rooted in the liberal version of history that stemmed from the historiographical production of journalist and writer Bartolomé Mitre, president of Argentina from 1862 to 1868. In Mitre's *Galería de celebridades argentinas*, featuring biographies of the Great Men of Argentine history since independence, Mitre placed the birth of the nation at the 1810 May Revolution and cited the *porteño*, or Buenos Aires-based, leaders of the formal move to independence as Argentina's founding fathers.²³ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874, and director

of schools for the Province of Buenos Aires from 1879 to 1882, identified with the 'official' line of history as promoted by Mitre. He was one of a group of intellectuals who sought to 'civilise' Argentina by encouraging immigration from Europe, turning their backs on Argentina's 'barbarous' American identity, personified by the gaucho, Indigenous and Afro-Argentine populations. Sarmiento's use of an infancy metaphor in his seminal text *Facundo o Civilización y barbarie* (1845) links children to nation-building conceptually, whilst placing children firmly on the barbarism side of his dichotomy: 'Los pueblos, en su infancia, son unos niños que nada prevén, que nada conocen, y es preciso que los hombres de alta previsión y de alta comprensión, les sirvan de padre' [Nations, in their infancy, are children who foresee nothing, who know nothing, and men of much foresight and much knowledge must serve as their fathers].²⁴ Similarly, school would provide the civilising and domesticating influence necessary for these inherently barbarous children to grow into useful citizens for the nation.²⁵

Influenced by the US educational reformers Horace and Mary Mann, Sarmiento developed national teacher training through Normal Schools, the first of which came into operation in 1869, and laid the foundations for Law 1420 of 1884, which established provision for compulsory, free and lay schooling.²⁶ Women had a key role to play in the formation of future citizens, principally as bearers of those citizens but also as teachers, even as they were not yet imagined as citizens themselves. The 1912 Sáenz Peña Law, which guaranteed compulsory, secret and 'universal' suffrage, did not extend to women or immigrants. Women did not have the right to their own earnings until a reform of the Civil Code in 1926.²⁷ In promoting women as teachers, Sarmiento also followed Horace Mann, who believed that women were the 'natural guardians of the young'.²⁸ As Lucía Lionetti points out, women were thought of as naturally destined to carry out the 'civilising mission' of schooling. Teaching was seen as the service to a vocation, rather than the exercising of a profession, partly because of the low level of pay, which was thought to be more acceptable to women than to men destined to be their families' breadwinners. Early years teaching was identified with caregiving, moral guidance and repetitive, rudimentary instruction, rather than the imparting of knowledge, for which women were assumed to be less prepared.²⁹

What emerges in the debates of the time is the central importance of the teacher as mediator between the state and its future citizens. For Beatriz Sarlo, school was part of the 'cultural machine' and the teacher was, in Bourdieusian terms, the dominated fraction of the dominant class:

La escuela era una máquina de imposición de identidades, pero también extendía un pasaporte a condiciones mejores de existencia: entre la independencia cultural respecto del Estado y convertirse en servidor del proyecto cultural de ese mismo Estado, quedaban pocas posibilidades de elección.³⁰

[School was a machine for imposing identities, but it also extended a passport to better conditions of existence: there were few options between cultural independence from the state and becoming a servant of that same state's cultural project.]

Law 1420 had aimed to consolidate the nation state by creating a common experience that could bind together new generations of citizens, whether native-born or children of immigrants. According to Sandra Carli, 'las "nuevas generaciones" se convirtieron en objeto de interpelación del nuevo Estado conservador que las constituía en masas de alumnos y en futuros ciudadanos' [the 'new generations' became the object of interpellation of the new conservative state that constituted them as masses of pupils and as future citizens].³¹

It was not enough to turn out future Argentines, however. These citizens had to be the right type of citizen needed for a successful and prosperous nation. As such, the moralising and socialising function of schooling was key, and school subjects that focussed on moral and civic instruction imparted desirable values, as well as a sense of national belonging. Just as Bourdieu establishes the connection between culture, school and nation, stating that the school system 'is a great instrument for the constitution of national emotions', in Argentina, school was identified as the place where emotional ties to the *patria* [homeland] could be forged alongside the transmission of knowledge and moral instruction.³² Symbols, narratives and rituals were at the heart of school's nation-building function. The teaching of history, of the deeds of the founding fathers, of the glories of the nation's past, was meant to inspire, and also to integrate. As the liberal project of European immigration came to fruition with arrivals peaking in the 1890s, the hoped-for Northern Europeans from the professional classes were significantly outnumbered by rural immigrants from Italy and Spain. The Argentine state failed to provide incomers with a welcoming environment and adequate logistical support. Many immigrants destined for agricultural work joined rural migrants in their move to urban centres in a process that was bolstered by the industrialisation of the following decades. Poor living and working conditions led to misery and unrest and were significant factors in immigrant communities' unwillingness to integrate into Argentine society. School was increasingly identified as the place where the 'hijos de inmigrantes' [children of immigrants] could become Argentine.

Lilia Ana Bertoni locates the late 1880s as the point at which schools became one of the principal sites of preservation and transmission of the patriotic practices, symbols and content that were invented and developed around this time. She details the initiatives taken to construct patriotic traditions including the commemoration of national dates, the celebration of the lives of the founding fathers, the building of monuments and the opening of museums, all in 'la elaboración de la legitimación de la identidad nacional basada en la apelación

al pasado patrio' [the elaboration of the legitimisation of national identity based on the appeal to the patriotic past].³³ In 1888, the National Council of Education formalised schools' celebration of the *fiestas mayas*, the commemoration of anniversaries of events leading up to and including those of the May Revolution, with particular emphasis on 25 May 1810, the date of the formation of the First Assembly, the first government of the future Argentina.³⁴ The teaching of history around a pantheon of heroes also provided an opportunity to promote desirable values. Military leaders General José de San Martín and General Manuel Belgrano were lauded for their sacrificing of self-interest for the good of the nation and were held up as role models for the common citizen.³⁵

School reading materials, including reading books and *manuales* [textbooks], became a principal site for the transmission of patriotic history and civic values.³⁶ The effects of the introduction of compulsory public schooling were felt in the increase in literacy rates, expanding the market for mass-produced publications at the same time as advances in printing technology made mass production more affordable.³⁷ Industrial developments in lithography and the adoption of the reprographic technique of halftone were, according to Szir, instrumental in the rise of the illustrated press.³⁸ *Billiken* became the first Argentine children's magazine to enjoy long-term success but was not an original proposition in term of format or concept, as Szir's research on early illustrated periodicals for children demonstrates. Short-lived publications such as *El escolar argentino* (1887), with the slogan 'Educar deleitando' [Educating while delighting] were precursors to *Billiken* as extracurricular consumer products which ran in parallel to formal schooling.³⁹ Constancio C. Vigil's first attempt at a children's magazine, *Pulgarcito* (1904–1907), which he founded shortly after arriving in Argentina from his native Uruguay, was the testing ground for many of the strategies and content segments later found in *Billiken*.⁴⁰ Neither *Pulgarcito* nor *Billiken* was educational in the way of publications such as *La Obra*, a long-standing educational magazine for teachers, first published in 1921.⁴¹ *Billiken*'s early material on patriotic anniversaries, and featuring the illustrious men analysed by Varela, may not have been explicitly directed towards use in school, but it still had an educational value.

Importantly, *Billiken*'s imagined readers were schoolchildren, or, as Bon-tempo calls them, 'hijos-alumnos' [schoolchildren with parents].⁴² In the year of *Billiken*'s founding, the law concerning Patronage of Minors gave the state control over children living on the street or in institutions, framing such children as a category separate from schoolchildren.⁴³ In March 1920, *Billiken* marked the start of the school year for the first time. A photograph showed children going back to their classrooms, one boy posing with a copy of *Billiken* under his arm (issue 17, 8 March 1920). The children are wearing the *guardapolvo blanco* [white smock], the uniform of children at state schools, which had been officially endorsed, also in 1919. The *guardapolvo blanco* became part



Figure i: A boy carrying *Billiken* magazine and schoolchildren wearing the white school smock at the start of the new school year. *Billiken*, issue 17, 8 March 1920. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

of what Inés Dussel calls the ‘grammar of school’; a symbol of, on the one hand, democratisation of opportunities and integration and, on the other, homogenisation and erasure of difference.⁴⁴ *Billiken* published the photographs that schoolchildren from all over the country sent in of themselves wearing this uniform. This circulation of photographs was reinforced by illustrations, further imbuing the image of the white smock with a sense of national belonging. By helping to instil the image of the *guardapolvo blanco* in the national consciousness *Billiken* became linked to it, creating two associations of Argentine childhood that would endure for more than a century.

As a magazine for schoolchildren, *Billiken* combined the aesthetics of the popular illustrated press with the moral compass of school publications. Variations on the following reassurance to parents and teachers were repeated at judicious intervals over the first decades of publication. A framed notice that interrupts an early cowboy story states that:

Estos relatos están cuidadosamente seleccionados y nada hay en ellos que pueda perjudicar a la niñez. El hecho de aparecer en *Billiken* es la

mejor garantía que pueden tener padres y maestros con respecto a su naturaleza y su publicación no obedece a otro fin que el de substraer al niño, ávido de emociones, de la influencia de otras lecturas altamente perjudiciales (issue 307, 5 October 1925).

[These stories are carefully selected and there is nothing in them that can harm children. The fact that they appear in *Billiken* is the best guarantee that parents and teachers can have regarding their nature, and their publication serves no other purpose than to remove the child, so eager for emotions, from the influence of other highly harmful reading.]

In the 1930s, the message was tweaked to make the criteria for selection in the magazine more explicit: ‘Todo cuanto publica *Billiken* está cuidadosamente seleccionado del punto de vista moral y religioso’ [Everything that *Billiken* publishes is carefully selected from a moral and religious point of view] (issue 649, 25 April 1932). These messages reveal *Billiken*’s dual discourse. It was a magazine for children but was also directed at adult readers (teachers and parents), whose ideological and commercial buy-in was vital for the magazine to reach its child readers. Such messages bring *Billiken* into dialogue with other dedicated children’s magazines published on both sides of the Atlantic as higher-quality alternatives to the dime novels in the United States and the penny dreadfuls in Great Britain. It also underscores one of the distinguishing characteristics that separate children’s magazines from other illustrated periodicals or *revistas*: *Billiken* was directed at a particular group of people who rarely bought it for themselves. The didacticism present in *Billiken* was not necessarily only there because this was a children’s magazine. Miglena Sternadori identifies the didactic nature inherent in all magazines: ‘Any collection of content that does not offer to guide us to a better version of ourselves—socially, intellectually, cognitively, emotionally, financially, professionally, or physically—is unlikely to be recognized as a magazine.’ She also argues that the periodicity of publication emulates the nature of educational settings, where lessons are delivered in intervals, allowing for some time to process and absorb what has been learned.⁴⁵

From the outset, *Billiken* sought to entertain its readers as well as to educate them. It was at the vanguard of the latest technology and printing techniques, offered a visually innovative design and a cosmopolitan outlook, publishing the latest comics from the US, as well as translated stories from popular European children’s publications, at the same time as it showcased Argentine history. *Billiken* was caught up in the same tensions that Carretero and Kriger identify as the contradictory philosophical underpinnings of the teaching of history in schools as a tool in the formation of the nation state: Enlightenment (promoting rationality and universality) and Romanticism (fomenting of a sense of belonging to the nation). Using the same question that Carretero and Kriger ask of the history of teaching, was *Billiken* supposed to be forging patriots or educating cosmopolitans?⁴⁶ *Billiken* was one of many new

publications that gave expression to the increasingly modern and cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, with some of the most successful ones coming out of Atlántida. Constancio C. Vigil's publishing empire produced what Bontempo has called a 'continent' of publications that aimed to reach different members of the household. Beginning with the general interest magazine *Atlántida* in 1918 (published until 1970), a suite of magazines covering varying interests including golf, agriculture and cinema came and went over the years. Most significantly, Vigil founded the women's weekly *Para Ti* (1922–present) and *El Gráfico* (from 1919 until it was sold to Torneos y Competencias in 1998). The latter was initially a men's magazine and became exclusively dedicated to sport only in 1931. All of these magazines were consumer products in and of themselves that also promoted other consumer products. Varela notes that when *Billiken* was launched, its striking appearance and use of modern graphic techniques made it look similar to the magazines sold to adults at the time. At 20 cents, it was also the same price as most magazines for an adult readership.⁴⁷ By catering to different sectors of the population, Editorial Atlántida constructed both adults and children as consumers, seeking to respond to their interests in order to increase circulation, and offering them a way of participating in Argentina's emerging modernity whilst guiding them into making consumer choices.

In *Billiken*, children were imagined variously, and sometimes simultaneously, as passive vessels to be filled with knowledge and moral or spiritual guidance, as future citizens charged with fulfilling patriotic destiny, and as modern consumers to be attracted and retained. There is an inherent tension here as the imagined passive child, valued for their projected adult future self, sits uncomfortably alongside the more active child consumer exercising the power of choice in the here and now. This tension complicates and enriches the trajectory of theoretical understandings of childhood(s) if we map the chronology of the shifts in the field of childhood studies onto the timespan of *Billiken*. For the majority of *Billiken*'s life as a print magazine, the dominant theoretical understandings of children and childhood were, as synthesised by Merah Gubar, the 'difference model', which others children by placing them into a separate and unknowable category distinct from adults, and the 'deficit model', which sees children as lacking or incomplete as they are on their path to adulthood.⁴⁸ The latter describes the developmental or positivist view of children, which was very much in line with the ideological underpinnings of state schooling in Argentina.

From the 1980s these previously uncontested notions of children and childhood were challenged by scholars, mainly from Anglophone and Nordic countries, whose work brought forth the 'new' paradigm of childhood studies. The collection *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, edited by Allison James and Alan Prout and first published in 1990, set out the 'tenets' of what was then an 'emergent' paradigm, the first of which was that childhood was to be understood as a social construct and the second, that childhood as a 'variable

of social analysis, can never be entirely separated from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity'. The third tenet held that:

childhood and children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults. This means that children must be seen as actively involved in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. They can no longer be regarded as simply the passive subjects of structural determinations.⁴⁹

In parallel, Jens Qvortrup overturned the 'deficit model' in arguing that children are human beings (social actors in the present with recognised rights) as opposed to human 'becomings' (adults in the making).⁵⁰ This new paradigm had real-world applications and political implications. It was in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and, as Hart and Boyden argue, 'a new ethic emerged that emphasized the authenticity of children's voices as well as their right to participate to the greatest extent possible in all aspects of academic and policy-related inquiry'.⁵¹ This new way of seeing children and childhood did not trickle down to those who made *Billiken*, however, and the magazine continued to see children both as future citizens and as current consumers, with little attention paid to the plurality of children's lived experiences and little effort to engage meaningfully with children or to view them as co-participants in the making and sustaining of *Billiken*.

It is possible to agree with James and Prout that children are worthy of study in their own right whilst persisting in the study of adults' construction of children when dealing with a product of children's culture that historically privileged this construction over real children. Indeed, this study's focus on the editorial construction of childhood—and of the child reader as addressed by the magazine—has something in common with Daniel Cook's historical work on the social production of the child consumer. There are parallels to be drawn between *Billiken*'s envisaged child reader and Cook's child consumer as 'discursive construct[s] with a history' as opposed to 'sentient being[s] with a biography'.⁵² A study of *Billiken* orientated towards the 'new' paradigm's tenets would look very different and would be in the vein of scholarship that privileges children's voices, their cultural production, their experiences, and their interventions as a way of uncovering evidence of children's agency. Such a study might use a predominantly ethnographic approach, incorporating, perhaps, co-produced research with children on how they read the magazine. The historical analysis of the magazine would seek out and bring forth the instances in which children's voices seep through editorial control, highlighting them as evidence of children's agentic resistance. It would focus on articles such as this one from 1971 in which children were interviewed for a piece on dressing up for Carnival:

¿De qué te disfrazarías y por qué?

¡Yo quiero ser bruja!
Catalina León, 7 años

- Yo quiero disfrazarme de bruja.
Para hacer magia...
- ¿No te gustaría ser hada, en lugar de bruja?
- No, bruja para asustarlos y cambiar cosas.
- Dame un ejemplo. ¿Qué cambiarías?
- Este árbol en un pájaro.
- ¿Y si pudieras cambiarte a ti?
- Me haría pájaro también.
- ¿Por qué?
- Para salir volando.

What would you dress up as and why?

I want to be a witch!
Catalina León, 7

- I want to dress up as a witch.
To do magic...
- Wouldn't you like to be a fairy instead of a witch?
- No, a witch, to frighten people and change things.
- Give me an example. What would you change?
- This tree into a bird.
- And if you could change yourself?
- I would make myself into a bird too.
- Why?
- To fly away.

(issue 2667, 22 February 1971).

Catalina's response is a compelling illustration of the power of children's agency and independent thinking, even when adults try to control their thought processes. The reporter's suggested alternative to Catalina, of fairy instead of witch, was in keeping with the responses of other children drawn across stereotypical gendered boundaries. The other girls interviewed for the piece named fairy, queen and bride as their preferred dress-up personas. The boys chose pirate, cowboy and clown, with resistance emerging from 11-year-old Jorge Sánchez, who did not intend to get dressed up and was very clear that nobody was going to make him do so. There is an undoubted appeal in uncovering such examples of children's agency, particularly when they align with our own world view. Of all the instances I could have used from *Billiken* to illustrate this point, I chose this one because of Catalina. She is my perfect girl reader, with her defiant stance that destabilises the norms and expectations of a society that were both reflected in and propagated by *Billiken*. I could take this a step further and interpret her desire to 'change things', immediately clarified as a reference to magical transmutation, as a statement of (social) changemaking intent, and her desire to 'fly away' as an expression of emancipation. By centring this girl child and her agency I can present evidence for what I already know to be true: like the reporter, *Billiken* tried to steer its child readers into certain ways of thinking, and the readers, just like the children interviewed here, would have variously assimilated, reproduced, contested, rejected and remade the messages transmitted by the magazine. There is an alternative approach, however, that entails looking beyond the child.

Recent currents in childhood studies seek to move beyond the now dominant social constructionist paradigm with its focus on the structure-agency duality, arguing that the field has reached an impasse with its 'fixation' on the 'agentic,

reflexive child.⁵³ The quotation is taken from Spyros Spyrou, who along with Rachel Rosen and Daniel Thomas Cook edited the volume *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, in which they call for a decentring of the child in order to move the field forward. As they set out in their introduction:

[T]he generative problematic of the field— i.e., the constructed, agentic, knowing child— regularly enfolds back onto itself, often reappearing as the solution to the problem it poses. No question or inquiry in the arena of childhood studies, it seems, can attract a satisfying response without some recourse to this figure— this skeleton key of sorts— which is increasingly apprehended as sufficiently self-explanatory or, at least, analytically self-contained. It may very well be the case that the ‘child’ of childhood studies— as it has been forged and reforged collectively over the years— stands as a foremost obstacle to ways forward.⁵⁴

For Spyrou, the proposition to decentre the child as ‘autonomous and independent individual’ and to move towards ‘the connections and networks that make up the social world’ involves understanding agency as relational, ‘embedded in social relations’ and ‘attuned to the constantly shifting power dynamics of inter and intra-generational relationships’. A relational ontology of childhood that decentres the child can ‘move both theoretical and empirical investigations into the material-semiotic sphere where the child as an entity constitutes and is constituted by the phenomena in which s/he participates.’⁵⁵ As this is a study of *Billiken* magazine and not of the magazine’s readers, the child is decentred here by default. At the centre of this study is the magazine both as a physical product and as conveyor of meaning that constructs its child readers and is in turn constructed by them with each new reading. This interplay is replicated by the magazine itself, which both reflects and constructs society, in accordance with David Abrahamson’s theory of ‘magazine exceptionalism.’⁵⁶ *Billiken* is unique: no other children’s magazine in the world published so many issues over such a long timeframe. In the case of *Billiken*, reflection became amplification on a mass scale, sustained over multiple generations, maximising the potential of *Billiken* to shape and guide societal changes. As an exceptional magazine, it provides a unique opportunity to test this idea of ‘magazine exceptionalism’.

There are points of connection between the rethinking of the study of children and childhood from the perspective of relationality and some of the guiding concepts for thinking about *Billiken*. Prout’s later work on the hybridity of childhood seeks to move away from structural dichotomies of the natural and the social, and of ‘beings’ and ‘becomings’, drawing on Latour’s actor–network theory and Deleuzian notions of flow. *Billiken*’s hybridity works on many levels. It can be read alongside García Canclini’s theory of hybridity, both as a product of Latin American culture caught between tradition and modernity and as a hybrid text with porous borders between the literary and the graphic, and the educational and the popular. As *Billiken* crosses the boundaries between industry,

home and school, it can also be seen as one of Prout's 'hybrid actants,' 'the people and things that flow in and between different settings and that all may play a part in constructing what emerges as "childhood" there.'⁵⁷

A second guiding concept is multiplicity. Anna Sparrman uses the child character Alice in Wonderland to rethink theoretical concepts in what she refers to as child studies. Taking the character Alice and her multiple versions across literature, film and television, Sparrman's aim is to 'approach each Alice-figuration as an accumulation and to show how these figurations are bound up, entangled and intertwined over time, practices and generations, while making ontological claims about what a child "is"'. Sparrman argues for the additive nature of multiplicity, which 'adds through contradictions and differences and by multiplying "reality"'.⁵⁸ In *Billiken* there are different, co-existing, versions of the child and of children who emerge as constructs, as real beings and as (visual, textual and multimodal) representations all at the same time. *Billiken's* multiplicity is partly due to the inherently collaborative nature of the production of a magazine. *Billiken* was the collective work of a heterogeneous group of individuals. Hundreds of professionals were involved in the making of the magazine, including illustrators, editors, writers, translators, educational consultants, graphic designers, photographers and art directors—some on the permanent staff and some working as freelance collaborators—across 5144 issues published over one hundred years and read by millions across Latin America. The creators of the content within *Billiken* are counted in the thousands if we include two groups on the periphery of this study: advertisers, and the children who contributed to the magazine by sending in letters, photographs, drawings, stories, poems, and pen pal requests. Whilst the contributions of all these groups were mediated by the magazine's editorial line, this was not monolithic but rather reproduced by different individuals with varying priorities and influences. *Billiken's* inconsistencies and contradictions, born of its multiplicity and hybridity, and coupled with its cyclical and iterative rhythm, pose challenges for the presentation of this study. The magazine's chronology provides a linear organising structure whilst emphasising the embeddedness of *Billiken* within Argentine cultural history.

A history of *Billiken*

Chapter 1 looks at the early decades of *Billiken* (1919–1945) and introduces the institutional narratives built around the magazine, which aspired to create a legacy at the same time as obscuring its commercial nature. *Billiken's* self-appointed role in the formation of future citizens, and, within this, the gendered division between 'men of tomorrow' and 'future mothers', reveals some of the tensions between Constancio C. Vigil's commercial objectives and the ideological positioning of his magazine. Literature and its role and presentation, both in *Billiken* magazine and in the *Biblioteca Billiken* book collection,

emerges as a similar site of tension. In 1925, Constancio C. Vigil's son Carlos took over the directorship of *Billiken*, marking the start of its transition from a predominantly literary publication towards a graphic, educational magazine aligned to the school year. From the late 1930s, *Billiken's* contents more consistently accompanied schools in their task of reinforcing patriotic education until the magazine adopted a cyclical pattern of the school year organised around patriotic anniversaries.

Chapter 2 focusses on *Billiken* during General Juan Domingo Perón's first two terms as president (1946–1955). This chapter's dual purpose is to explore how Peronism found its way into *Billiken* through the magazine's incorporation of Peronist propaganda, and to explore how *Billiken's* visual identity found its way into Peronism. It takes as a starting point *Billiken's* four missing weeks in 1949, the only significant break in the entirety of *Billiken's* weekly publication, after which *Billiken* published its first photograph of Perón. In one example of the many conservative continuities of the self-identifying 'revolutionary' Peronist regime, Peronism, like the conservative *Billiken*, constructed children in terms of their future potential. The only difference in this vision was the political identity of the ideal future citizen with Peronism focussed on creating citizens for the 'New Argentina'.

Following the death of Constancio C. Vigil, in 1954, swiftly followed by the ousting of Perón, the greatest challenge facing *Billiken* was the arrival of rival children's magazine *Anteojito* in 1964. Chapter 3 considers how those in charge of *Billiken* leveraged tradition as a resource in the response to this new competitor, reaching back into the history of printed ephemera by launching a collectable *figuritas*, or picture card, album. This initiative paved the way for *Billiken's* later provision of *figuritas* for cutting out and sticking into schoolwork, which for so many Argentines would come to be remembered as a childhood ritual. The chapter explores how the *figuritas* album was the starting point for a series of strategies to build a community of readers. These were organised around competitions and events and reveal *Billiken's* proximity to educational and military authorities at the time of the dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970).

The civic-military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983 was the most brutally repressive of the dictatorships of Argentina's 20th century. Chapter 4 begins by examining the relationship of the press to the dictatorship and Editorial Atlántida's complicity with the regime. *Billiken* was one of the cultural expressions of the 'Argentine way of life' that the military attempted to install through its 'Proceso de Reorganización Nacional' [Process of National Reorganisation], and the chapter examines *Billiken's* content during these years in the contexts of complicity and censorship, with a focus on children's literature. The chapter closes with an analysis of *Billiken's* representation of the Malvinas/Falklands War of 1982 through graphic and educational content.

Chapter 5 considers *Billiken's* final decades as a print magazine against a backdrop of great political change from the transition to democracy, the neoliberalism

of Carlos Saúl Menem's years in office (1989–1999), and through to the celebrations of the bicentenary of independence under the presidency of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–2015). *Billiken* transformed during these years in tandem with the rise of globalised children's culture, turning away from its identity as a print magazine linked to the school year to become a brand that housed different products in the form of supplements, gifts and spin-offs and one that started to engage with the world of technology. The chapter ends by reflecting on the magazine at the point of its centenary of publication.

The epilogue marks a shift in the book's approach, departing from the biography of the magazine and considering the final years of the magazine and the post-print transition up to 2022, with the acknowledgement that I was actively working alongside *Billiken*, and in partnership with *Billiken*'s director, using historical research to shape the narrative around the centenary, working on new products and the creation of new narratives, co-creating *Billiken*'s post-print future and becoming an active participant in the challenge of returning *Billiken* to its past glories.

So vast is the *Billiken* archive that there are many other stories to tell about this magazine, other aspects to focus on and other approaches to take that have not been considered in this book. The process of looking at the entirety of the magazine and selecting and curating themes for analysis has emerged as a result of a mixture of practical, serendipitous, situational and contextual factors. It deviates from the research project's initial methodology and has taken shape over the course of 10 years of contact with the *Billiken* archives. Instead of looking at all aspects of all 5144 issues, a more sensible, manageable, and systematic approach would have been to sample the archive from the outset, limiting the volume of content to analyse. I originally intended to confine the study to *Billiken*'s literary content, with literature understood in a wide sense, encompassing short and serialised stories, comics, and graphic educational materials. My objective was always to understand the literary content within its paratextual context, in the context of page layout, the relationship between text and image, and of its position within the issue. Even with the literary content established as parameter and sample, the aim was never to treat the magazine as a repository by lifting the content from its surroundings.

The practical considerations of working on a non-digitised archive housed in a different hemisphere from where I was living with my young family impacted on early decisions. It was clear that this project would only be feasible with funding and the move into the sphere of the UK funding landscape, with what in 2014 was still an emerging 'impact' agenda, in turn affected the scope and direction of the project. Thanks to funding from my own institution, the University of Sheffield, designed to help researchers return to their research projects following extended periods of maternity leave, I was able to engage a research assistant based in Buenos Aires to take digital photographs of two decades' worth of the magazine. This was far from professional digitisation but

was of good enough quality for me to be able to work with the material at a distance. This also served as the pilot study that helped me to secure substantial funding in the form of an early career AHRC Leadership Fellowship.⁵⁹ A project that set out to look at children's literature in *Billiken* in the 1930s was lavishly extended and repackaged for the fellowship application which promised to analyse the entirety of *Billiken*'s literary content in the run-up to the *Billiken* centenary whilst co-creating literary products with *Billiken*'s publisher to commemorate that centenary. This was a direction I would not necessarily have taken had I been working with the *Billiken* archives held at Argentina's National Library and not directly with the complete private archives held by Atlántida. Funded by the fellowship, Dr Stacey Dunlea spent three months in the Atlántida archives taking photographs of around 70 per cent of the remaining issues of *Billiken* and helping to catalogue the contents. During several research trips taken over the following years, I read hundreds of issues of the magazine in situ, completed the photographing of the remaining issues, and consulted material in Atlántida's other magazines and from the publishing house's vast photographic and newspaper cuttings archives.

The scope of the analysis gradually widened out from solely the literary content as a result of presenting research in progress to different academic and non-academic audiences. The inherently interdisciplinary nature of *Billiken* makes it as appealing to academics working in the field of graphic design, as it does to childhood studies scholars, but neither group would be predominantly interested in the literary content. In *Billiken*'s centenary year I curated two different versions of the same exhibition, a research-led critical overview of *Billiken*'s history for the University of Buenos Aires's Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism (FADU), which was later moved to a museum in General Roca in Patagonia, and an institutionally focussed version for Atlántida, imbued with nostalgia and eliding the problematic aspects of *Billiken*'s history as part of the official commemorations of the *Billiken* centenary at the Argentine National Congress. Curating different narratives to appeal to the interests of different audiences heightened my awareness of the multiplicity of meanings contained within, and conveyed by, *Billiken*, and its often contradictory nature. The present book is an attempt to pull some of those narratives together even whilst recognising the inherently mediated nature of the research project itself in the selection and curation of themes for analysis.

Many of the opportunities to engage with different audiences in Argentina came about thanks to introductions made by Euhén Matarozzo, director of *Billiken* since 2011. Euhén, a graphic design graduate, always cautioned against restricting the focus of the study to *Billiken*'s literary content, advocating for the importance of *Billiken* in the history of design and illustration in Argentina. This also influenced the move to considering the whole of the magazine in this analysis. At the time of writing, the impact that my research has had on *Billiken* and the impact that working with *Billiken* has had on my research fits nicely

into the 'Knowledge Exchange' agenda, a strategic priority in the UK academic landscape that had not yet been named as such in the early years of my contact with *Billiken*, and with Euhén, beginning in 2012. The epilogue offers reflections on this process as a contribution to the conversation about what happens when academics from within the humanities, who have traditionally operated at a critical distance from their objects of study, start to change their objects of study through engagement with the Impact or Knowledge Exchange agendas.

Billiken told the story of the Argentine nation, cyclically and repeatedly, gaining such momentum that it became part of the nation's story itself. Of course, not all Argentine children read *Billiken*. Many chose not to buy it, many could not afford it, and many would have found themselves at odds with *Billiken*'s imagined white, middle-class, heteronormative and sometimes 'default male' reader.⁶⁰ But for one hundred years *Billiken* was at the heart of Argentine cultural life, a childhood companion to generations of schoolchildren, and the brand name continues to trade largely on the goodwill of nostalgia. Euhén Matarozzo took exception to the title of an academic symposium I co-organised with Claire Lindsay and Maria Chiara D'Argenio of UCL in 2019: 'Periodicals on the Periphery? Magazines and Print Cultures in Latin America'. *Billiken*, he argued, was not on the periphery but very much at the centre. As part of that event, we organised a workshop on keywords to explore the methodologies and vocabularies that scholars of periodicals can share. The academics' keywords included concepts such as intermediality, precarity, ephemerality, seriality and periodicity. Euhén, the only representative from industry present, shared a rather different list of keywords: the job, my colleagues, the budget, the deadlines. The research for this book has been undertaken against the backdrop of this encounter between academia and industry, at the interstices between research and production, and between distance (physical and critical) and engagement (emotional and practical). It locates *Billiken* as a product of children's culture that manages to be simultaneously wondrous and problematic, and whose creators were in the business of forming future citizens

Notes

- ¹ Marco's story was published in *Billiken* in issue 4943, 13 November 2014. I extend my thanks to Alba Lucía Valencia Carmona, Marco's daughter, for providing additional information.
- ² On Rodó's 1900 essay 'Ariel' see *This America We Dream Of: Rodó and Ariel One Hundred Years On*, ed. by Gustavo San Román (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2001).
- ³ Raymond Leslie Williams, *Mario Vargas Llosa: A Life of Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), p. 9. On Carlos Monsiváis see Juan Domingo Argüelles, *Historias de lecturas y lectores: los caminos de los que sí leen* (México: Océano Travesía, 2015).

- ⁴ Interview with Mirta Toledo on the occasion of the *Billiken* centenary (public event), Congreso de la Nación Argentina, 19 November 2019.
- ⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221648>> Chapter 5.
- ⁶ Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 183.
- ⁷ Claire Lindsay, *Magazines, Tourism, and Nation-Building in Mexico* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2019), p. 11 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01003-4>>.
- ⁸ Sandra M. Szir, *Infancia y cultura visual: los periódicos ilustrados para niños (1880–1910)* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2007), p. 26; Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).
- ⁹ Néstor García Canclini, *La producción simbólica: teoría y método en sociología del arte* (México: Siglo XXI, 1979), p. 37.
- ¹⁰ Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, *Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture* (Cham: Springer International, 2018). See also Mabel Moraña, *Bourdieu en la periferia: Capital simbólico y campo cultural en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2014).
- ¹¹ Susan Greenberg, 'Editorial Roles and Practices: Exploring the Creative Enterprise', in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research*, ed. by David Abrahamson and Marcia Prior-Miller (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 168–78; Elizabeth Crisp Crawford, 'Magazines and Popular Culture: Exceptional People, an Exceptional Medium', in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research*, ed. by Abrahamson and Prior-Miller, pp. 285–307.
- ¹² Eric Jon Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 5.
- ¹³ Maria Chiara D'Argenio, 'Visualidad, modernidad y prensa ilustrada en América Latina (1880–1950)', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 85.267 (2019), 355–60 (pp. 355–56) <<https://doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.2019.7766>>.
- ¹⁴ Lindsay, p. 29.
- ¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 61–63.
- ¹⁶ John Charles Chasteen, 'Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities', in *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. by Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), ix–xxv.
- ¹⁷ Lauren Rea, *Argentine Serialised Radio Drama in the Infamous Decade, 1930–1943: Transmitting Nationhood* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).
- ¹⁸ Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, trans by Elizabeth Fox (London: Sage, 1993), pp. 179, 165.
- ¹⁹ See issues 1042, 6 November 1939, and 1252, 15 November 1943, for the circulation figures and 592, 23 March 1931, for the readership calculation.

The Instituto Verificador de Circulaciones [Circulation Verification Institute] was in operation from December 1946. Prior to this date, some notices of *Billiken's* print run were accompanied by the statement 'De esta tirada nos responsabilizamos moral y legalmente ante quienes anuncian en *Billiken*' [We take moral and legal responsibility for this print run before those who advertise in *Billiken*] (issue 1338, 9 July 1945).

- ²⁰ Kress and van Leeuwen, p. 208.
- ²¹ Marina Alvarado, 'Del almanaque al magazín: irrupción de una nueva forma de ver la prensa en Chile (1860–1905)', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 2019, 397–424 (p. 399) <<https://doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.2019.7769>>.
- ²² Mirta Varela, *Los hombres ilustres del Billiken: héroes en los medios y en la escuela* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1994); María Paula Bontempo, *Editorial Atlántida: un continente de publicaciones, 1918–1936* (PhD thesis, Universidad de San Andrés, 2012) <<https://repositorio.udes.edu.ar/jspui/handle/10908/879>> [accessed 22 November 2022]; Paula Guitelman, *La infancia en dictadura: modernidad y conservadurismo en el mundo de Billiken* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2006). Other perspectives on *Billiken* include, but are not limited to, work on advertising (Mariel Falabella and Gaspar F. Tomino, 'La lección pedagógica de lo publicitario. La construcción de un niño lector en *Billiken* 1978–1982', *Revista Argentina de Comunicación*, 2.2 (2007), 121–38), graphic design (Verónica M. Carman, 'El diseño editorial y la infancia. Las revistas *Humi*, *Billiken* y *Anteojito*, 1982–1984' (unpublished master's thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2019); Gustavo Eduardo Saucedo, 'Construção do gênero editorial revista infantil: Linguagem Visual e Cultura Visual nas revistas *Billiken* e *Recreio* nas décadas de 1970 e 2000' (unpublished master's thesis, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2018), and comparisons with a Chilean children's magazine (Vanessa Tessada Sepúlveda, 'El Peneca y *Billiken*. Ser niño en Chile y Argentina a principios del siglo XX', in *América Latina en el nuevo milenio: procesos, crisis y perspectivas*, ed. by Elena Oliva and others (Centro de Estudios Culturales Latinoamericanos: Universidad de Chile, 2009), pp. 17–37).
- ²³ Nicholas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 190–91.
- ²⁴ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo o Civilización y barbarie* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación, 2018 [1845]). Translation taken from Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* trans. by Kathleen Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [1845]).
- ²⁵ For the wider Latin American context see Carlos Alberto Torres and Adriana Puiggrós, 'The State and Public Education in Latin America', *Comparative Education Review*, 39.1 (1995), 1–27.
- ²⁶ Georgette Magassy Dorn, 'Sarmiento, the United States, and Public Education', in *Sarmiento and his Argentina*, ed. by Joseph T. Crisenti (Boulder and London: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp. 77–89 (pp. 80–83).

- ²⁷ On Sáenz Peña see David Rock, *Argentina, 1516–1987. From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 190–202. On the Civil Code see Cynthia Jeffress Little, ‘Education, Philanthropy, and Feminism: Components of Argentine Womanhood, 1860–1926’, in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Asunción Lavrin (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 235–53 (p. 243).
- ²⁸ Barbara Finkelstein, ‘Perfecting Childhood: Horace Mann and the Origins of Public Education in the United States’, *Biography*, 13.1 (1990), 6–20 (p. 16).
- ²⁹ Lucía Lionetti, *La misión política de la escuela pública: formar a los ciudadanos de la República (1870–1916)* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2019). Kindle ebook. Chapter 6.
- ³⁰ Beatriz Sarlo, *La máquina cultural: maestras, traductores y vanguardistas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2017), p. 37.
- ³¹ Sandra Carli, *Niñez, pedagogía y política: transformaciones de los discursos acerca de la infancia en la historia de la educación argentina entre 1880 y 1955* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2002), p. 37.
- ³² Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989–1992* (Cambridge; Malden: Polity, 2014), p. 158. On the translation of *patria*, Diana Taylor notes: ‘Patria, which comes from Padre or father, does not mean fatherland in Spanish. Rather, the word Patria signals the image of motherland as envisioned by patriarchy. Thus, the word itself alerts us to the dangerously slippery positioning of the “feminine” in this discourse.’ Diana Taylor, ‘Making a Spectacle: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo’, in *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology*, ed. by Jan Cohen-Cruz (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 74–86 (p. 99) <<https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/2774>>. The term ‘Madre patria’, which could be more straightforwardly translated as motherland, is largely absent from *Billiken*.
- ³³ Lilia Ana Bertoni, *Patriotas, cosmopolitas y nacionalistas: la construcción de la nacionalidad argentina a fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2001). Kindle ebook, Chapter 3.
- ³⁴ Anny Ocoró Loango, ‘La emergencia del negro en los actos escolares del 25 de mayo en la Argentina: del negro heroico al decorativo y estereotipado’, *Pedagogía y saberes*, 34 (2011), 33–50 (p. 34).
- ³⁵ Lionetti, Chapter 8.
- ³⁶ María Cristina Linares, ‘Los libros de lectura en la Argentina, sus características a lo largo de un siglo’, in *La lectura en los manuales escolares: textos e imágenes*, org. by Roberta Paula Spregelburd and María Cristina Linares (Buenos Aires: UNLu; UNNE, 2009), pp. 47–57 (p. 47).
- ³⁷ Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1988), p. 26.
- ³⁸ Sandra M. Szir, ‘Discursos, prácticas y formas culturales de lo visual. Buenos Aires, 1880–1910’, in *Travesías de la imagen: historias de las artes*

visuales en la Argentina, ed. by María Isabel Baldassare and Silvia Dolinko (Buenos Aires: CAIA; EDUNTREF, 2011), i, 65–93 (pp. 68–71).

- ³⁹ Szir, *Infancia y cultura visual*, p. 21. Szir connects this to Ségolène Le Men's work on extracurricular consumer print culture for children from 19th-century France: *Les abécédaires français illustrés du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Cercle De La Librairie, 1984).
- ⁴⁰ Sandra Szir, 'De la ilustración didáctica a la imagen lúdica y publicitaria. El proceso de masificación de la prensa periódica para la infancia (1880–1910)'; in *Discutir el canon. Tradiciones y valores en crisis* (Buenos Aires: CAIA, 2003), pp. 237–48; Szir, *Infancia y cultura visual*, pp. 111–47. On *Pulgarcito* see also María López García, 'Revista *Pulgarcito* (1904–1907): La formación de un público infantil para la Argentina', *Olivar*, 19.29 (2019).
- ⁴¹ Silvia Finocchio, 'Lectores y lecturas de la prensa de los profesores en la Argentina', in *La prensa pedagógica de los profesores*, ed. by José María Hernández Díaz (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2018), pp. 85–100 (pp. 87–89).
- ⁴² Paula Bontempo, 'Los niños de *Billiken*: Las infancias en Buenos Aires en las primeras décadas del siglo XX', *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos 'Prof. Carlos S.A. Segreti'*, 12 (2012), 205–21.
- ⁴³ María Carolina Zapiola, 'Niños en las calles: Imágenes literarias y representaciones oficiales en la Argentina del Centenario', in *Formas de historia cultural*, ed. by Sandra Gayol and Marta Madero (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2007), pp. 305–32.
- ⁴⁴ Inés Dussel, 'La gramática escolar de la escuela argentina: un análisis desde la historia de los guardapolvos', *Anuario de la Sociedad Argentina de Historia de la Educación*, 4 (2003), 11–36.
- ⁴⁵ Miglena Sternadori, 'Magazines as Sites of Didacticism, Edutainment and (Sometimes) Pedagogy', in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. by Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley, 2000), pp. 278–92 (p. 279).
- ⁴⁶ Mario Carretero and Miriam Kriger, 'Enseñanza de la historia e identidad nacional a través de las efemérides escolares', in *La construcción del conocimiento histórico: enseñanza, narración e identidades*, ed. by José A. Castorina and Mario Carretero, 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Tilde Editora, 2021), pp. 76–108 (p. 15); Mario Carretero and Miriam Kriger, '¿Forjar patriotas o educar cosmopolitas? El pasado y el presente de la historia escolar en un mundo global', in *Aprender y pensar la historia*, ed. by Mario Carretero and James F. Voss (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 2004), pp. 71–98.
- ⁴⁷ Varela, *Los hombres ilustres del Billiken*, p. 24.
- ⁴⁸ Marah Gubar, 'Risky Business: Talking about Children in Children's Literature Criticism', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 38.4 (2013), 450–457 (p. 454).
- ⁴⁹ Allison James and Alan Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: New Directions in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer Press, 1990), pp. 8–9.

- ⁵⁰ Jens Qvortrup, 'Childhood Matters: An Introduction', in *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*, ed. by Jens Qvortrup and others (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994), pp. 1–23 (p. 4).
- ⁵¹ Jason Hart and Jo Boyden, 'Childhood (Re)Materialized: Bringing Political Economy into the Field', in *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, ed. by Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen and Daniel Thomas Cook (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 75–89 (p. 80).
- ⁵² Daniel Thomas Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 5.
- ⁵³ Spyros Spyrou, *Disclosing Childhoods: Research and Knowledge Production for a Critical Childhood Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 17.
- ⁵⁴ Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen and Daniel Thomas Cook, 'Introduction: Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities... Relationalities... Linkages', in *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, pp. 1–20 (p. 1).
- ⁵⁵ Spyrou, pp. 129, 70.
- ⁵⁶ David Abrahamson, 'Magazine Exceptionalism', *Journalism Studies*, 8.4 (2007), 667–70 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700701412225>>.
- ⁵⁷ Alan Prout, 'Taking a Step Away from Modernity: Reconsidering the New Sociology of Childhood', *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1. 1 (2011), 4–14 (p. 11).
- ⁵⁸ Anna Sparrman, 'Through the Looking-Glass: Alice and Child Studies Multiple', *Childhood*, 27.1 (2020), 8–24 (pp. 9, 22) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568219885382>>.
- ⁵⁹ Arts and Humanities Research Council. 'The Billiken Centenary Project: Children's Literature and Childhood in Argentina, 1919–2019' [grant number AH/N010078/1/].
- ⁶⁰ The term 'default male' is taken from Caroline Criado Perez, *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2019).

CHAPTER I

Billiken's Early Transitions. From a Literary Founding to a Graphic Identity (1919–1945)

When *Billiken* first hit the newsstands on 17 November 1919 it was positioned as a modern magazine for modern children. The early issues were heavily text-based and literary-focussed; by the end of the period covered by this chapter, *Billiken* had settled into its recognised identity as a graphic magazine organised around the Argentine school calendar. This chapter explores the tensions that emerge in this lengthy period of transition, stemming from the foundational context in which Constancio C. Vigil's ideological positioning of his magazine was used to downplay commercial objectives. *Billiken's* early anniversary messages created an institutional narrative that projected a future legacy for the magazine, underscoring the founder's ambitions for this editorial project, and demonstrating that *Billiken* was never thought of as ephemeral. This narrative also projected the magazine's readers forward in time, constructing them as future citizens or, more specifically, as 'men of tomorrow' and 'future mothers'.

This chapter draws on theories of organisational imprinting to examine the continued influence of Constancio C. Vigil long beyond 1925, when he stepped away from the day-to-day running of *Billiken* to concentrate on cementing his legacy as a children's author. One of Vigil's other editorial projects, the *Biblioteca Billiken* series of books for children, has a particular bearing on the literary content of *Billiken* magazine. The interplay between the book collection and the magazine reveals a hierarchy of literary content born at the intersection of ideological and commercial preoccupations. In parallel, the influence of Constancio C. Vigil's successor, his son Carlos, can be seen in the magazine's increasing focus on graphic content and alignment to the school calendar. This chapter pays attention to the ebbs and flows in the shifting influence from father to son, and from the literary to the graphic, as a way of understanding how *Billiken* arrived at the editorial pattern that it would maintain for its life as a print publication.

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Billiken's early years: Constancio C. Vigil as father and founder

Constancio C. Vigil launched his new children's magazine on 17 November 1919 with a name and a first cover that did not presage the magazine's place in Argentine national culture. The name *Billiken*, pronounced in Argentine Spanish as [biz'iken], referenced the Billiken figure whose design was patented by Kansas City illustrator Florence Pretz in 1908. In the United States, the craze for products in the image of this good-luck charm, marketed as 'The God of Things as They Ought to Be', peaked in the 1910s. Pretz herself took the name Billiken from the 1896 poem 'The Song of the Little People', by the Canadian William Bliss Carman.¹ Constancio C. Vigil was not the only publishing entrepreneur drawn to the name. In Venezuela, Lucas Manzano founded, also in 1919, the literary magazine *Billiken*, which he directed at an adult readership, and edited until its closure in 1958. In 1915, Saint Louis University in the United States adopted the Billiken figure as the mascot for the athletics team and prospective students are still urged in marketing campaigns to 'Be a Billiken.' The figure found its way into Alaskan folklore and also inspired the character around which Chicago's annual African American Bud Billiken Day Parade was first created. The cultural reach of this figure extended to Japan, where the city of Osaka boasts several Billiken statues.² The Billiken figure was present in Vigil's magazine until 1925. The magazine's first logo shaped the 'B' for Billiken like a Billiken doll in profile and incorporated small Billiken figures. The Billiken figure appeared occasionally on cover illustrations and was used in the advertisements for the Billiken shop, *La casa de los niños*, which sold toys and children's clothes and offered a savings scheme to 'asegurar el porvenir de los niños' [ensure children's future] (issue 303, 7 September 1925).

In the first issue, the 'borrowed' nature of the name was acknowledged but in an invented origin story that turned the Billiken into the statue of a little god who lived in a temple in India and who, after transcending his physical form to travel the world bringing joy to children, decided to settle in Argentina (issue 1, 17 November 1919). Later, a fictional man took the place of Florence Pretz in a story that could never get itself straight. In 1993, Billy Kent was an English inventor who created a model of a Hindu god (issue 3853, 15 November). In 1994 Billy Kent, from North America, manufactured the 'Billy-kent' doll but it was Constancio C. Vigil who united the two words to make 'Billiken' (issue 3907, 28 November). A special eightieth anniversary publication retained the Billy Kent story and managed to conflate Buddhism with Hinduism in its description of the Billiken as a religious idol. Pretz was finally acknowledged within the pages of *Billiken* in the magazine's centenary year.³

Billiken's eye-catching inaugural cover illustration showed a boy footballer with a defiant stance and evidence of match-time injuries. Now considered iconic within Argentine graphic culture, it was also taken from the United States and was a modified version of a J.C. Leyendecker illustration which had appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in November 1914. *Billiken's* founding act



Figure 1.1: A Billiken doll in the illustration and Billiken figures incorporated into the logo. *Billiken*, issue 105, 16 March 1920.

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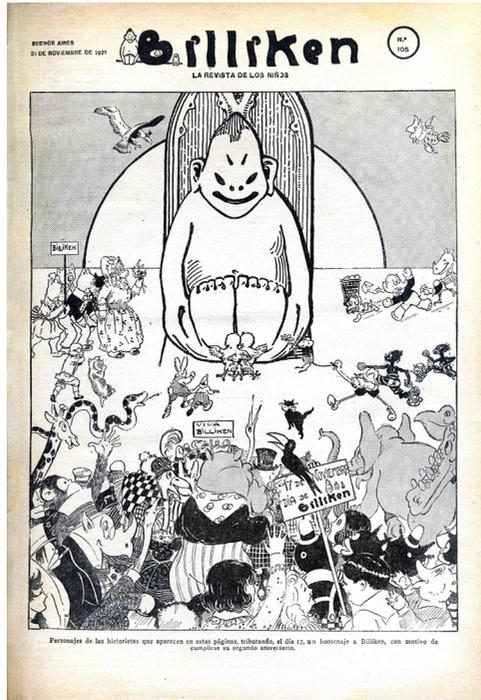


Figure 1.2: Characters of comics featured in the magazine pay homage to a Billiken statue. *Billiken*, issue 105, 21 November 1921.

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of plagiarism, never officially acknowledged in the magazine until the time of its centenary, had always been common knowledge amongst illustrators, not least because of Leyendecker's status as a groundbreaking commercial artist. Leyendecker's footballer was 'acriollado', or 'Argentinianised', for his appearance in *Billiken*. His hair was darkened, the team flag was changed to the Argentine flag and the face guard, originally held in the boy's left hand, was removed, transforming the sport from American football to *fútbol*. The boy's unruly assertiveness remained, however, and *Billiken* was launched with an image of rebellious and modern childhood derived from the 'New Kid' of the United States.⁴

The collage of past covers for *Billiken*'s second anniversary issue, shown in Figure 1.4, gives a flavour of the early recurring themes with images of cute toddlers, animals and toys, highlighting the incongruity of the inaugural illustration. It also reveals the influence of the graphic magazine and advertising culture of the United States, particularly in terms of the stereotypical representation of Black children.⁵ Although the practice of leading issues with key dates in the school calendar did not become installed until the late 1930s, there were some early indications of the potential *Billiken* had to create and transmit alternative visual imagery around the founding fathers, and other symbols for



Figure 1.3: *Billiken's* first cover. *Billiken*, issue 1, 17 November 1919. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 1.4: A collage of early covers for *Billiken*'s second anniversary. *Billiken*, issue 105, 21 November 1921. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

nation-building, as exemplified by the crossover image of a toddler incongruously draped in an outsized uniform of the *granaderos*, the mounted regiment of independence hero General San Martín. Rebellious, modern childhood (or, rather, boyhood) would not be seen regularly on the cover of *Billiken* until Lino Palacio took over as principal cover artist in 1938. It took *Billiken* 69 years to publish an image of girlhood that explicitly matched the rebellious 'New Kid' energy of Leyendecker's football boy (see Figure 1.5).

Billiken magazine had a better chance of survival than previous children's periodicals because it was part of a larger publishing enterprise, Editorial Atlántida. Its founder, Constancio C. Vigil, born in Rocha, Uruguay, in 1876, had a dramatic start to life: his cot bore the marks of bullets that had been meant for his father, an opponent of dictator Lorenzo Latorre.⁶ Constancio C. Vigil moved to Argentina in 1903 and, following his early magazine initiatives, the children's *Pulgarcito* and the agrarian *Germinal*, established the magazine *Mundo Argentino* for Editorial Haynes in 1911. Vigil started his own publication, *Atlántida*, in 1918, opening Editorial Atlántida shortly afterwards. *Billiken*'s nature as a commercial product is vital for understanding the construction of children as modern consumers and, also, the product itself. The lack of



Figure 1.5: Echoes of *Billiken's* first cover. From left to right: Cover illustration by Lino Palacio. *Billiken*, issue 1067, 29 April 1940. Cover illustration by Alberto De Piero for the start of the World Cup. *Billiken*, issue 3047, 6 June 1978. Cover of the supplement celebrating *Billiken's* sixty-ninth birthday. Illustration by J. Gonza. *Billiken*, issue 3592, 14 November 1988. All images ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

business records and personal correspondence in the Atlántida archives makes it hard to determine how the company was run at any given time. In the absence of access to, or indeed existence of, commercial archives—letters, memos, accounts—that could reveal insights into the strategic or operational involvement of the different Vigil family members, the level of power of appointed editors, processes for the appointment of new staff, or the acquisition or commissioning of new content, theories from organisational or management studies provide some insights.

Particularly relevant to understanding Vigil as founder is organisational imprinting. Now a cornerstone principle of management and entrepreneurial studies, even as the concept continues to be challenged and refined, this had not even been coined during Vigil's lifetime. In 1965, Stinchcombe published his theories about how organisations embed the social and economic contexts of their moment of founding into their structure, identity and practices and can continue to bear the traces of the founding context through time. Advancing the debate on organisational imprinting, Victoria Johnson argues that not all organisations founded at the same time absorb the same imprints. Imprinting is not a passive process, but rather is conditioned by the agency of the founders (Johnson's 'cultural entrepreneurs') and other interested parties who select and combine the elements of the founding environment.⁷ When creating *Billiken*, Constancio C. Vigil drew on Argentine, European and US influences, included pre-existing material (text and images) and magazine design conventions, used his prior experience with *Pulgarcito*, and combined different ideological and pedagogical strands in currency at the time, to

fashion a new, modern product tailored to its context. In the case of *Billiken*, the founding context of mass print modernity, increased literacy rates and public schooling is imprinted on the magazine and persists over time. *Billiken's* early years coincided with the democratic currents of thinking about children and the role of schools espoused by the Argentine version of the New School movement. This short-lived window was framed by two periods during which the patriotic role of schools was emphasised: the centenary of independence, 1910–1916, and the 'infamous decade' of the 1930s, with its attendant rise in Catholic nationalism. *Billiken* absorbed and retained elements of these contrasting ideological imprints, and the resulting tension between innovation and conservatism is carried from the moment of foundation throughout *Billiken's* history.

Vigil wove his life, deeds and ideologies into *Billiken*, and into Atlántida's wider institutional narratives, adjusting them where necessary to meet changes in the political climate. Alongside his involvement with the Women's Rights Association, and the advancement of women in his organisation, Vigil created magazines that perpetuated conservative notions of gender norms. Vigil wrote in *Atlántida* in support of the 1930 military coup yet promoted himself as a pacifist: in 1936, a committee was formed to present him as a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his mediation in the Chaco War. Having initially pursued anti-clericalist spiritualism, Vigil became increasingly identified as a Catholic writer, to the extent that he was awarded the Gold Papal Lateran Cross in 1949.⁸ These shifting ideologies account for, to some degree, the contradictions at the heart of *Billiken*. Their presence in the magazine also served to draw attention away from Atlántida's commercial objectives, which were, by the standards of the time, considered unseemly, and instead situated the magazine within a loftier, more legitimate sphere. The tendency to downplay commercial ambitions brought *Billiken* into the realm of journalism, which was seen as an academic rather than commercial endeavour, and identified journalists, printers and illustrators as intellectuals and artists, rather than workers.⁹ The chasm between this negation of the context of production, and of sociopolitical realities, is particularly wide at the moment of *Billiken's* founding when Vigil, as a proprietor, was in direct conflict with his own workers. In late 1919, Vigil bought his own printing presses in a strategic move to give him more control over his printing workers in the context of the labour stoppages, brutal repression of strikes, and riots that had continued throughout the year. These had been sparked by the events of what is known as 'La semana trágica' [The tragic week] in the January of 1919.¹⁰

Vigil promoted himself, and was promoted as, a journalist, writer, founder and father, and not a businessman, proprietor or entrepreneur. He derived further prestige from the company he kept in literary, publishing and educational circles. In Montevideo, Vigil had founded the literary-political publication *La Alborada*, which led to fellow Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga's breakthrough when he won second prize in a short-story competition organised by Vigil.¹¹ Quiroga would go on to be considered one of Latin America's great writers, and

a master of the short story. Quiroga's first contribution to Editorial Atlántida's magazines came with the story *Juan Polti: Half-back* (*Atlántida*, issue 11, May 1918) and he went on to publish, anonymously, 10 of the series of stories now collected as 'Cartas de un cazador' [Letters from a hunter] in *Billiken* in 1924 (from issue 219, 28 January). Vigil and Quiroga were also connected through Leopoldo Lugones, the first author to be published by Atlántida's books division in 1919 and a regular contributor to *Atlántida* magazine in the early years.¹² Another luminary of Latin American literature involved in *Billiken* from the very beginning was the Chilean future Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral. Vigil is widely reported to have offered Mistral the directorship of the magazine. The evidence for this claim comes from a letter that Mistral wrote to Normal School director Maximiliano Salas Marchán, just a month after the first issue was published. Mistral commented that she had been about to accept Vigil's offer but had instead decided to collaborate from Chile and asked Salas to help by sharing some of the materials he had brought back from the United States. Describing the magazine as 'escolar', a school magazine, rather than using magazine's official slogan 'la revista de los niños' [the children's magazine], she informed Salas that Constancio C. Vigil needed children's literature for *Billiken*, as well as full-page illustrations (*láminas*, or plates).¹³

Whilst not identifying *Billiken* as a school magazine, *Billiken*'s editors did promote all its content as 'educational'. The 1921 anniversary message reads: 'A través de la ingenua puerilidad de sus cuentos, en sus sencillas máximas, en sus sabios consejos y hasta en la travesura de sus regoncijadas historietas, hallaréis palpable o disimulada, una enseñanza' [Through the naïve childishness of [*Billiken*'s] stories, in its simple maxims, in its wise advice and even in the mischievousness of its playful comics, you will find, whether palpable or concealed, a lesson]. *Billiken*, the message continued, helps children to aim for perfection and teaches them: 'No con el gesto severo de un preceptor adusto y gruñón, sino amable, dulce, alegremente' [Not with the stern gesture of a dour and grumpy instructor, but kindly, sweetly, cheerfully] (issue 104, 14 November 1921). These early anniversary messages, serving as vehicles to transmit *Billiken*'s mission and promote Vigil's ideology, reproduced the understanding of the place of children in the nation-building project as future citizens to be moulded for the nation. The 1923 message stated: 'a nosotros nos parece que al enseñar a los que hoy son niños, modelamos en el alma grande del pueblo argentino y también del pueblo americano de mañana' [it seems to us that by teaching those who are children today, we are modelling the great soul of the Argentine people, and also of the American people, of tomorrow] (issue 208, 12 November 1923). Those involved in *Billiken* anointed themselves with the right and responsibility of forming future citizens as a way of legitimising the magazine in the eyes of teachers and parents. The 1923 message stated that those working in *Billiken* are contributing to their readers' moral education, working together with their parents and teachers: '¡Es como si tuviéramos muchos, muchísimos hijos bien amados!' [It is as if we have many, so many

well-loved children!]. The parent–child relationship imagined here was also linked to the construction of Vigil as (founding) father. *Billiken* was ‘concebido y fundado expresamente para vosotros, por alguien que los ama con amor de padre y de maestro’ [conceived and founded expressly for you, by one who loves you with the love of a father and a teacher] (issue 208).

This emphasis on love, on spiritual connection, and on being good as the only guarantee to a happy life permeated many of the editorial interventions in the early decades of the magazine. Of Vigil's work and sense of purpose, Bontempo states:

Analizada en su totalidad, el objetivo principal de la producción de Vigil es proporcionar una guía para orientar a la humanidad hacia una regeneración moral. Los sujetos del cambio son los pueblos americanos y el éxito de esta cruzada depende de la formación infantil.¹⁴

[Analysed in its entirety, the main aim of Vigil's production is to provide a guide to orient humanity towards moral regeneration. The subjects of change are the American peoples, and the success of this crusade is dependent on educating children.]

The linchpin of Vigil's oeuvre, *El erial*, published in English as *The Fallow Land*, is a collection letters, parables and prayers written as a pacifist response to the First World War. The influences of José Enrique Rodó's Pan-Latin Americanism and German philosopher Karl Christian Krause's spiritualism are also identifiable in the text.¹⁵ Even as *Billiken* accompanied and reinforced the nation state's project to homogenise the population through public schooling, Vigil's Krausist influences brought his editorial project into contact with more democratising pedagogical discourses. According to Carli, these coalesced around the Argentine version of the New School movement, which sought to restore considerations of the ‘nature’ of children and their ‘spirituality’ to pedagogical thought and recuperated Rousseau to emphasise children's natural tendency towards benevolence. The New School movement promoted a child-centred approach to learning that valued child autonomy and spontaneity and contrasted with the positivist influences of Sarmiento's Normal Schools.¹⁶

In 1925, Vigil's final year as director, *Billiken*'s anniversary message was written in the first person, in *Billiken*'s voice with *Billiken* presented as an entity with a body and soul: a child, growing, just like its readers. *Billiken*'s physicality is emphasised with the play on words of ‘cuerpo de papel’, literally ‘body of paper’, but commonly used to describe the main physical characteristic of an object of print culture. The heft of *Billiken*'s physical form is highlighted: the issues sold over the past seven years would weigh three million kilos and *Billiken*'s weight advantage has enabled it to knock out 20 competitors to be the only one left in the ring. *Billiken*'s weight implies a sacrifice: a whole forest of trees has disappeared to allow *Billiken* to educate and entertain its readers.

Billiken has, then, a debt of honour: 'Sería un crimen que mi substancia, de tan noble origen, se empleara en pervertir el corazón de los niños o en perturbar su mente con ideas disparatadas' [It would be a crime for my material form, of such noble origin, to be used to pervert the hearts of children or to disturb their minds with nonsensical ideas]. The message is not entirely taken up with ideological mission statements but also explains the economics behind *Billiken* to justify the purchase price of 20 cents. We are told that Editorial Atlántida sells each issue for 14 and a quarter cents with the remainder taken by newsboys and other sellers. The costs that must be covered by that selling price are listed and the readers are invited to compare *Billiken*, printed on high-quality paper, complete with colours and images (*grabados*), to products of an equivalent selling price such as a bag of sweets or a packet of harmful cigarettes.¹⁷ This explanation is an acknowledgement of *Billiken* as a commercial product and also of children as consumers who have the power of choice but who can also be guided into making the 'right' choice. The 1925 message also contains a nod to the changing of the guard: 'Yo sé que viviré mucho, mucho más que este señor Vigil que tanto me cuida. Él se va poniendo viejo; yo estoy cada vez más fuerte' [I know that I will live much, much longer than this Mr Vigil who takes such good care of me. He is getting older; I am getting stronger and stronger] (issue 313, 16 November 1925).

These anniversary messages were self-congratulatory about the work *Billiken* had carried out to date and were used strategically to create a narrative about *Billiken* that was projected into the future, shaping the idea of *Billiken*'s legacy, even when the magazine had just started. There was an awareness of the generational legacy that sustained publication would eventually create: 'Mañana, cuando seáis a vuestra vez padres, sabréis qué inmensa dicha es tener hijos bondadosos, inteligentes, capaces de todo buen sentimiento' [Tomorrow, when you become parents yourselves, you will know what an immense joy it is to have children who are kind, intelligent, capable of every good feeling] (issue 208). With these messages, *Billiken* was not just constructing children's futures but was building its own, even as it was in the nascent stages of building a readership.

The early years of *Billiken* focussed on reader participation and interaction, through the formation of communities of readers, and the organisation of events and competitions. Space was given to publishing photographs, reader letters and reports on events held by groups of children who organised themselves into *Comités Billiken*. These committees led on philanthropic initiatives, perpetuating the narrative of *Billiken* as a force for good and solidifying the emotional connections between the magazine and its readers.¹⁸ Children were incentivised to buy the magazine to see if the photograph sent in of their committee's latest event had been published; mothers would buy it to see if the photograph they had submitted for the 'Mothers and children' series of portraits had appeared. This content was phased out in the 1930s as the print run rose from a weekly average of 103,000 in 1931 (issue 592) to 200,000 in 1943 (issue 1239) and to 325,000 in 1944 (issue 1283). As a general trend, the periods of high circulation in *Billiken* are those that feature fewer photographs of their child readers.

COMITÉS BILLIKEN

C. D. del C. B. «Por el camino de la Prosperidad», con las mascotas, que preside Esther Gilleman.

Parte de la C. D. y algunos socios del C. B. «Hogar y Escuela», Arroyito (Córdoba).

Carmen María Cavenago, pequeña socia del C. B. «Alberto Williams».

Delia Giacomo, presidenta del C. B. «Necochea» (de Necochea), que obtuvo título de profesora elemental de solfeo y teoría.

C. B. «Sendero del Bien», (de Paso de los Libres), que preside María C. Nin.

C. D. del C. B. «Hermanitos de los Pobres» (de Ramallo).

Mascota del C. B. «Trelaw» (Chubut).

C. B. «Hermanitos de los Pobres»; la directiva, socios y mascotas (Ramallo).

Cora y Angélica Obilitas, socias del C. B. «El Porvenir» (Anhelados).

Figure 1.6: Billiken committees. *Billiken*, issue 268, 5 January 1925.

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Figure 1.7: ‘Mothers and children.’ *Billiken*, issue 25, 3 May 1920. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

Billiken's high circulation figures were showcased in the magazine to reassure readers that they were buying into a successful and relevant publication, and to attract and retain advertisers. Advertisers were further informed of the calculation of five readers per copy sold, stretching the estimated weekly readership to around half a million (issue 592, 23 March 1931). Editorial notes in *Billiken* encouraged readers to pass their copy on to someone who could not afford it, reinforcing *Billiken's* identity as a middle-class magazine promoting charitable giving in the absence of a welfare state, a feature of *Billiken* analysed by critics such as Clara Brafman.¹⁹ An advertisement from 1931 reads: ‘*Billiken* no es un caramelo, el que pronto se acaba; dura años y es preciso que sus lectores sepan bien esto, para prestarlo generosamente a los hermanos y también a los amiguitos que no lo pueden comprar’ [*Billiken* is not a sweet that will soon run out; it lasts for years and its readers must know this, so that they can generously lend it to their siblings and also to their little friends who cannot afford to buy it] (issue 619, 28 September). Such practices were encouraged also, presumably, because they helped *Billiken* to reach the calculation of five readers per copy sold. Constancio C. Vigil went to extraordinary personal lengths to build the *Billiken* community of readers, as demonstrated by his replies to readers’ letters published in the magazine. The following responses, selected from December 1923, are indicative of the nature of such correspondence.

Violeta Leiva. – Montevideo. –

Queda registrado el Comité. Envíe cuanto antes los nombres de las niñas que forman la comisión directiva.

Angelina Grandi. – Capitán Sarmiento. –

Las fotografías se recibieron. En breve se publicarán.

Ana María Quiro. – Caucete (San Juan). –

Contesto por la revista porque su carta llegó tarde y ustedes ya deben haber partido de esa ciudad. Complacido espero su visita cualquier día hábil de 15 a 18 horas en esta redacción, Patricios 233 ...

M. Méndez. – Málaga. – Su cartita me ha causado satisfacción porque veo que no solamente en las repúblicas sudamericanas tengo buenos amigos, sino que también en lejanas tierras ...

Inés Margarita Stroeder. – Mamá Catalina aceptará gustosa mantener correspondencia con usted; su cartita me demuestra que es usted una buena niña.

(issue 214, 24 December 1923).

Violeta Leiva. – Montevideo [Uruguay]. –

The committee has been registered. Send as soon as possible the names of the girls on the steering committee.

Angelina Grandi. – Capitán Sarmiento

[Province of Buenos Aires]. – The photographs have been received. They will be published shortly.

Ana María Quiro. – Caucete (Province of San Juan). –

I am answering in the magazine because your letter arrived late and you must already have left your city. I look forward to your visit any working day from 15:00 to 18:00 hours to this office, Patricios 233 ...

M. Méndez. – Málaga [Spain]. – Your little letter has given me satisfaction because I see that I have good friends not only in the South American republics, but also in faraway lands.

Inés Margarita Stroeder. – Mamá Catalina will be happy to correspond with you; your little letter shows me that you are a good girl.

Mamá Catalina, whose correspondence with readers was also published, was unmasked in the issue cited here as Carmen S. de Pandolfini, the first woman member of the National Education Council. Other contributors included Mercedes Dantas Lacombe, poet, journalist and co-founder of the Argentine Women's Club, and Margarita Rothkoff, playwright and an editor of the feminist magazine *Unión y Labor*.²⁰ School director and children's author María Leonor Smith de Lottermoser contributed to *Billiken*, as did Uruguayan writer and journalist María Morrison de Parker, who signed the 1921 anniversary message. The number of women who worked with *Billiken* and Editorial Atlántida during the early years, and Vigil's membership of Women's Rights Association, should be noted because it potentially complicates the image that is often retained of Vigil today as ultra-conservative and reactionary. Either that or it sheds light onto Vigil's strategic thinking given that both education and children's literature were worlds largely dominated by women. It also bears mentioning that, whilst women were treated with professional respect and lauded for their achievements, their treatment in *Billiken* differed from that of men. A special back-to-school issue in 1925 included photographs of the authors of some of the most widely circulated school reading books. Three women and three men authors were selected. The men were all photographed

behind their desks, indicating their erudition and formal professional credentials. The women all appeared with children, signalling how their 'natural' caregiving instincts had taken them to the path of motherhood and/or teaching, and that their writing of school reading books was a natural extension of that (issue 280, 30 March 1925).

Men of tomorrow and future mothers

Marilú, the first of *Billiken's* spin-off products, was a site where the tensions between commercial objectives and societally appropriate values converged in the context of the disjuncture between the theory and practice of women's place in society. Atlántida's involvement with the Marilú doll came about because of Vigil's association with this product's creator, Alicia Larguía. Larguía, a divorced mother and entrepreneur, led a very different life from the vision promoted to *Billiken's* girl readers of their ideal futures. Marilú's success was fuelled by her appearance in *Billiken* in stories written by Larguía using the pseudonym Tía Susana (beginning in issue 678, 14 November 1932) and the doll was sold from Atlántida's bookshop. From 1933 to 1937, Editorial Atlántida published *Marilú* magazine weekly before turning it into a monthly women's fashion magazine. From 1948 to 1951, Marilú appeared periodically in *Billiken* in a double-spread advertorial 'El ajuar de Marilú' [Marilú's trousseau] and, throughout Marilú's commercial life, a mother/daughter discourse was consistently maintained. In 1933, readers of *Billiken* were advised that a third consignment of the dolls had been ordered from Germany following the second having been fully reserved by 'futuras mamitas' [future little mothers] (issue 695, 13 March 1933). An advertisement from 1951 for the 55cm-tall Marilú explained that girls would now be able to take this doll by the hand and walk with her like a 'verdadera hijita' [real little daughter] (issue 1657, 17 September 1951). As Daniela Pelegrinelli observes, Tía Susana offered advice about how to take care of Marilú, whilst promoting the latest accessories and clothing collections as necessary purchases, because being a 'good mother' entailed ensuring that one's 'little daughter' never went without.²¹ Whereas Larguía encouraged her readers to spend, editorial notes in *Billiken* emphasised that Marilú was sold at cost and that no profit was made on the doll (issue 693, 27 February 1933). The Marilú stories in *Billiken* were often accompanied by dress patterns so that 'little mothers' who could not afford to buy the latest clothes could make them themselves, and, in doing so, practise some of the skills they would need to employ in their future role. Thriftiness was also an admirable virtue to be cultivated by future housewives.

The *Marilú* magazine was 'dedicada a las mujercitas de mañana' [dedicated to the little women of tomorrow] and promoted as:

indispensable en los hogares donde se aspira a realizar en las hijas la mujer ideal: aquella que, junto a las dotes espirituales que la convierten

en una agradable compañera de todos los momentos, reúne los conocimientos prácticos que la transforman en hada de la casa (advertisement in *Billiken*, issue 695, 13 March 1933).²²

[indispensable for households who aspire to making their daughters into the ideal woman: she who, alongside spiritual gifts which make her an agreeable companion, has the practical knowledge which will turn her into the fairy of the house.]

If girlhood was a waiting room for motherhood, what was a girl supposed to be and do in the meantime? A vignette in 1925 had provided the answer. Set out like an advertisement and with the title 'La patria busca una niña' [The homeland is looking for a girl], it listed all a girl should be: 'Despierta, obediente, estudiosa, sincera, agradecida, de carácter esforzado, bondadoso y leal' [Alert, obedient, studious, sincere, grateful, hard-working, kind and loyal]. She should also be: 'cariñosa con sus hermanos ... aseada en sus hábitos, dedicada en sus juegos, buena para con los animales y las plantas; sencilla, natural y veraz en toda su vida; consuelo y esperanza de su madre y de su padre, ternura y bendición de su hogar' [affectionate with her siblings ... neat in her habits, devoted in her games, good to animals and plants; simple, natural and truthful in all aspects of her life; the comfort and hope of her mother and father, the tenderness and blessing of her home]. The piece ends with the exhortation that the girl reading it should try to become the girl her country is always seeking (issue 285, 4 May 1925).

The print content of the Marilú product offered the practical guidance to turn these ideal girls into ideal women (mothers), helping them to fulfil their patriotic destiny. Other pages in *Billiken* specifically for girls had a similar function. In the early 1930s, the page 'La hermanita mayor' [Big little sister] offered dress patterns, recipes and cleaning tips, under the heading 'useful advice', which included instructions on the judicious use of ammonia in cleaning, and best practices for shining glassware and salvaging men's hats following rain damage (issue 537, 3 March 1930). A decade later, the new iteration of this page was called 'Labores para niñas' [Labours for girls], which later morphed into 'Trabajos manuales escolares' [Manual school work]. These pages reflected the school curriculum, with Law 1420 of 1884 stipulating girls' obligatory instruction in 'Labores de manos y nociones de economía doméstica' [Manual work and notions of domestic economy].²³ In *Billiken*, early examples of the 'Labores' pages concentrated on embroidery and were placed in issues that also contained the page 'Entretenimientos', or entertainments. The latter included practical, scientific or engineering activities such as making a lamp with a battery to take camping, decorative woodworking, and gardening tips, as well as magic tricks and games. The pages for girls were initially framed explicitly as such because all the entertainment-based content in the magazine was directed at boys, as the default male reader, with girls given their own special sections. Following this logic, the entertainments page was directed at

boys even though it was not specified as such. Of course, there was nothing to stop girls reading this page and preferring woodworking to embroidery, but there is a notable division here between, not just the nature of boys' manual work, which is ingenious and adventurous and takes place outdoors, and girls' manual work, which involves containment and individual, quiet contemplation, but also in the framing of the former as 'entertainment' and of the latter as 'labours' (issue 1157, 19 January 1942).

Elsewhere, *Billiken* was indeed preparing girls for their future labours. In school material for second grade on the theme of work, a mother baths the baby, sews, teaches the children how to eat properly, takes them to school and looks after the house ('Los quehaceres de mamá' [Mother's tasks], issue 955, 7 March, 1938). In 'La vida en el hogar' [Life at home], material for the first grade, mother serves breakfast before father goes to work. She spends the time cleaning the house, knitting and looking after her son whilst the father only appears at mealtimes (issue 959, 4 April 1938). As the school content in *Billiken* increased, a pattern was established of using material linked to school to reinforce expected roles. Mother's Day also provided an opportunity for similar representations. In 1941, the 'homage' paid to mothers used photographs, illustrations and a poem to list everything a mother does for her children, from taking them to school to looking after the house. All but one of the representations is of a white woman. In the final image, a woman in Andean traditional dress, possibly Aimara, has her face turned away from the camera and a baby on

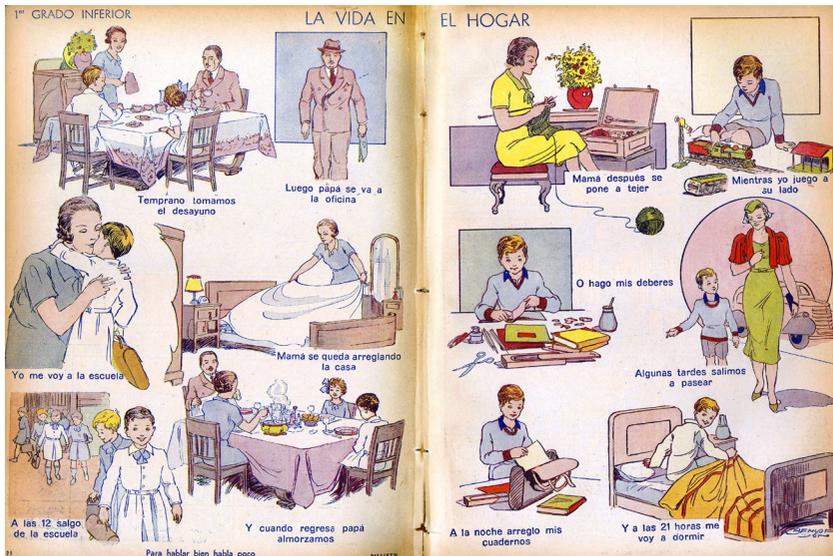


Figure 1.8: 'Life at home.' School material for first grade. *Billiken*, issue 959, 4 April 1938. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

HOMENAJE A LA SEMANA DE LA MADRE



Da de comer en la boca a sus hijos pequeños.



Les enseña los primeros conocimientos.



No me olvides, flor de la semana de la madre.

SI TIENES UNA MADRE TODAVIA...

(Fragmento)

Si tienes una madre todavía,
da gracias al Señor que te ama tanto:
que no todo mortal contar podría
dicha tan grande ni placer tan santo.
Si tienes una madre... sé tan bueno
que ha de cuidar tu amor su paz
sabrosa,
pues la que un día te llevó en su seno
siguió sufriendo, y se creyó dichosa.
Veló de noche y trabajó de día,
levas las horas en su afán pasaban;
un cantar de sus labios te dormía,
y al despertar sus labios te besaban.

E. Neumann.



Solicita y cariñosa los besa cuidadosamente y los viste.



Atiende los quehaceres de la casa y cuida de la ropa de los suyos.



Se atlige con las penas y goza con las alegrías de sus hijos.



Los acompaña a la escuela y se preocupa de sus lecciones y deberes.



De cualquier raza que sean y cualquier lugar que habiten las madres son siempre tiernas y abnegadas.

13 OCTUBRE, 194133

Figure 1.9: A homage to mothers for Mother's Day. *Billiken*, issue 1143, 13 October 1941. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

her back. There is an othering of this Indigenous woman as she is used to universalise the concept of motherhood: 'De cualquier raza que sean y cualquier lugar que habiten las madres son siempre tiernas y abnegadas' [Whatever race they are and wherever they live, mothers are always tender and self-sacrificing] (issue 1143, 13 October 1941).

Representations of girls on the covers of *Billiken* revolved around them role-playing motherhood or emulating their mothers as they carry out domestic chores. The cutesy incongruity of seeing toddler girls perform adult tasks was, presumably, more appealing to the mothers who bought *Billiken* for their children than to the children themselves. A toddler cradling a crying baby is tenderly captioned '¿Hasta cuándo, vida mía?' [How much longer, my love?] (issue 515, 30 September 1929) and the caption of a chubby-legged blonde girl tipping out the coins from her money box reads: 'Me parece que ya tengo para casarme' [It looks like I have enough to get married] (issue 523, 25 November 1929). Captioned 'El brazo derecho de mamá' [Mother's right hand], a toddler girl in an apron and headscarf grins from the top of a ladder whilst holding a feather duster (issue 491, 15 April 1929). A little girl overwhelmed by a pile of washing taller than her asks: '¿Cómo haré para colgarla!' [How will I hang it up?] (issue 854, 30 March 1936). With the early anniversary messages establishing *Billiken*'s future legacy, by 1936 those in charge of *Billiken* could be confident of the role the magazine had played in the lives of this first generation of readers. The message for the eighteenth anniversary stated that all the children who held the first issue are now 'hombres de provecho, madres dispuestas y abnegadas, padres cariñosos que unieron a las enseñanzas de su hogar y de su escuela lo aprendido en las páginas de *Billiken*' [men of worth, willing and self-sacrificing mothers, loving parents who combined the teachings of their home and school with what they learned in the pages of *Billiken*] (issue 887, 16 November 1936).

In the 1940s, when the ludic covers were firmly in the domain of Lino Palacio, the contrast between girls' caring, domesticated pursuits, and boys' outdoor cheeky rebellion was visually reinforced. Whilst girls were still following the recommendations of the 1925 'A girl for the homeland' by cleaning, looking after younger siblings and acting out their future roles as mothers, boys were getting into scrapes like breaking windows with footballs (see Figure 1.10). In the 1930s, however, rebellious boyhood was mostly confined to the literary series 'Emociones futbolísticas de Comeuñas': Comeuñas, literally 'nail biter', was the nickname of the leader of a gang of boys who formed the Sacachispas football club. Bontempo notes the contrast between the interior world Marilú presented to 'little mothers' and the freedom afforded the boys in the Comeuñas stories, with the street, the corner and the neighbourhood as their domain.²⁴ The exploits of these boys recall Leyendecker's manipulated inaugural cover image for the connections made between freedom, rebellion, masculinity, football and *argentinidad*, and are in tension with the predominant construction of boyhood in *Billiken* at this time, which is concerned with the creation of 'hombres del mañana'. The men of tomorrow must be exemplary



Figure 1.10: Cover illustrations by Lino Palacio. On the left, girls as ‘future mothers’, *Billiken*, issue 1613, 13 November 1950 and, on the right, an image of rebellious boyhood, *Billiken*, issue 1085, 2 September 1940.

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pupils today, just like Eduardo, seen in Figure 1.12, who has attended school all year come rain or shine, applied himself consistently, ingratiated himself to his teacher and fellow pupils because of his good character, and has made his parents proud (issue 939, 15 November 1937). This same issue from 1937 contains the magazine’s anniversary message, in which *Billiken*’s mission is defined as: ‘hacer más buenos e instruidos a los niños, esos hombres del mañana, de los que tanto espera la patria’ [to make the children, those men of tomorrow, of whom the homeland expects so much, kinder and better educated] (issue 939, 15 November 1937).

Whilst *Billiken* was turning out future mothers and men of tomorrow for the nation, it was also turning out future readers of *Para Ti* and *El Gráfico*, Atlántida’s main magazines for adults, which were divided along the same gender lines. An early notice to potential advertisers placed in *Billiken* recognised that children were today’s consumers but with future purchasing power: ‘El niño no sólo influye en las compras, sino que es el COMPRADOR DE MAÑANA. La impresión indeleble que queda en la mente infantil asegura el porvenir del producto que se anuncia’ [The child not only influences purchases, but is the BUYER OF TOMORROW. The indelible impression left in the child’s mind ensures the future of the product being advertised] (issue 123, 27 March 1922). In 1931, *Billiken*’s readers were presented to potential advertisers as ‘tomorrow’s

27 MARZO, 1933 29

EMOCIONES FUTBOLISTICAS DE COMEUÑAS

LOS VERSOS PARA LA MURGA



puestos por el poeta de la barra.
 —Me da vergüenza leerlos — dijo el Lecherito en voz baja.
 —En cambio — respondió Rompehuesos, — a Pancongrasa no le da vergüenza comer.
 —¿Y eso qué tiene que ver? — le preguntaron.
 —Tiene que ver... que Pacongrasa es comilón y el Lecherito es poeta; y si al gordo no le da vergüenza comer, al poeta no tiene que darle vergüenza hacer versos...
 No le pudieron contestar, porque quererle explicar algo a Rompehuesos era perder el tiempo.
 Con voz un poco ahogada por la emoción, el Lecherito leyó:

“Esta sociedad hace lo que puede:
 come lo que tiene,
 agarra lo que viene
 y no paga lo que debe.

—¡Muy bien!... ¡Muy bien!... — gritó la barra entusiasmada contagiando al poeta que comenzó a leer más de corrido, sin equivocarse y con voz fuerte.
 —Somos como el portugués que no paga a nadie y al lechero le debe tres meses... y al panadero... — comenzó a decir el Turquito Antonio.
 —Callate, Turquito — dijo Comeuñas. — Aunque sea todo cierto, basta que lo digas vos para que parezca mentira.
 De tan mentiroso que era aquel Turquito, todo lo que dijera parecía mentira.
 El Lecherito prosiguió:

“Si a ustedes les gusta
 como nosotros cantamos,

la primera reunión de la murga Aflojale que Colea, el Lecherito apareció con los versos. —No me salieron muy bien... Además, aquí se hizo un borrón... —El borrón no lo cantamos — dijo en broma Comeuñas.
 Estaban contentos los muchachos. Muy ansiosos de oír los versos com-

con darnos unas monedas muy fácil nos conformamos...
 —¡Eso es mejor! — decían. — No



hay que olvidar el pechazo, ya que para eso se hace la murga.

“El Sacachispas, señores, es el mejor cuadro del mundo, y el capitán Comeuñas tiene un tiro furibundo...
 —¡Bravo!... ¡Viva el poeta del Sacachispas!
 La barra estaba entusiasmada. El Lecherito se había portado como la gente. Y conste que los versos no eran copiados.
 Seguían otros versos que también el Lecherito leyó. Luego, vueltos a la calma, se habló de que la parte que se refería al capitán la tenía que cantar uno solo y que era necesario elegirlo.
 —Yo fui el “solo” el año pasado — dijo Tiquiflequi medio lloroso.
 —Sí... pero chillabas mucho — respondió Comeuñas. — Ahora te vamos a probar con Terremoto que tiene linda voz. Quien gane se queda de “solo”.
 —Como en el fútbol — respondió Cabeza de Trapo. — Quien mejor juego se queda en el puesto, y el otro de suplente.
 Así se estableció. Para la otra reunión se probarían los dos candidatos a “solo”. La lucha estaría entre Tiquiflequi y el rosarino Terremoto.

Estaban contentos los muchachos. Muy ansiosos de oír los versos com-

Es malo dormir en una pieza cerrada



BOROCOTÓ

Figure 1.11: An instalment of Borocotó's stories about the Sacachispas football club members. *Billiken*, issue 697, 27 March 1933.

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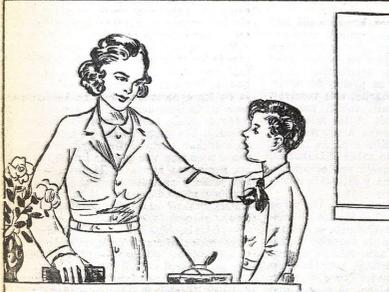
UN ALUMNO EJEMPLAR



Eduardo estudió todo el año con gran entusiasmo y voluntad; no dejó nunca de aprender sus lecciones.



Ni el frío ni la lluvia le impidieron ir a la escuela; su asistencia fué siempre un verdadero ejemplo.



Se hizo querer de su maestra y condiscipulos, porque, además de ser aplicado, fué un niño educado y generoso.



Su buen carácter, su constante alegría, lo hicieron el compañero insustituible en los recreos.



Hoy, al terminar el año escolar, Eduardo obtiene la recompensa a sus afanes pasando de grado.



Sus padres se sienten satisfechos de él y exclaman: "¡Qué orgullo nos da tener un hijo como Eduardo!"

Figure 1.12: 'An exemplary pupil'. *Billiken*, issue 939, 15 November 1937. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

parents' whom businesses can teach to 'comprar inteligentemente el día de mañana mostrándoles hoy la bondad y el valor de sus productos' [buy intelligently tomorrow by showing them the goodness and value of your products today] (issue 592, 23 March 1931). As part of *Billiken's* entertainment offering, the *Comeñas* series of stories were designed to be for children, as opposed to being what adults wanted for their children. They also had the function of bringing boy readers into the wider *Atlántida* universe as they were written by Borocotó, the pen name of Ricardo Lorenzo Rodríguez, Uruguayan journalist and future director of *El Gráfico*.²⁵ In the hierarchy of literature established in *Billiken*, Borocotó's stories were at the lower end but above serialised adventure stories that appeared with no author names. This hierarchy was established in tandem with Constancio C. Vigil's wider editorial enterprises, to which he turned his attention after he stepped down from the operational directorship of his magazines.

Hierarchies of literature: *Billiken* and *Biblioteca Billiken*

In 1925, Constancio C. Vigil's became managing director of Editorial *Atlántida*, handing over the responsibility of *El Gráfico* to his son Aníbal and *Billiken* to his son Carlos. The changes coincided with the company's move to the premises on Azopardo Street, located in the centre of Buenos Aires not far from the Casa Rosada. The move into this 'verdadero palacio de la industria' [veritable palace of industry] was heralded as a new era for *Atlántida*. It was promoted as part of a no expenses spared project that would set up the publishing house for the future and which also included the tripling of the printing presses (issue 280, 30 March 1925). From this point, Vigil devoted significant time to writing books for children as a way of building and preserving his legacy. The exact number of children's books written by Vigil is difficult to ascertain due to crossovers in some collections of stories. A previous version of the *Atlántida* institutional website cited 85 children's books in addition to his more theoretical works and advice manuals such as *La educación del hijo* (1941) [Your Child's Education]. Vigil tailored some books specifically for use in schools, breaking them down into manageable sections and targeting progressively competent levels of reading ability.

Five were accepted as official primary school reading books in Argentina, and this recognition extended to other Latin American countries including Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay where Vigil's books were read in schools or approved as official texts.²⁶ Vigil's success was also down to self-promotion and the leveraging of his many contacts and networks in the literary and educational worlds. The archive of Guatemalan president Juan José Arévalo contains a 1947 telegram from Constancio C. Vigil, thanking the president for 'su noble y prestigiosa ayuda para difundir mis libros en su patria' [your noble and prestigious help in disseminating my books in your country]. This is an indication of Vigil's direct action in promoting his books across the region.²⁷

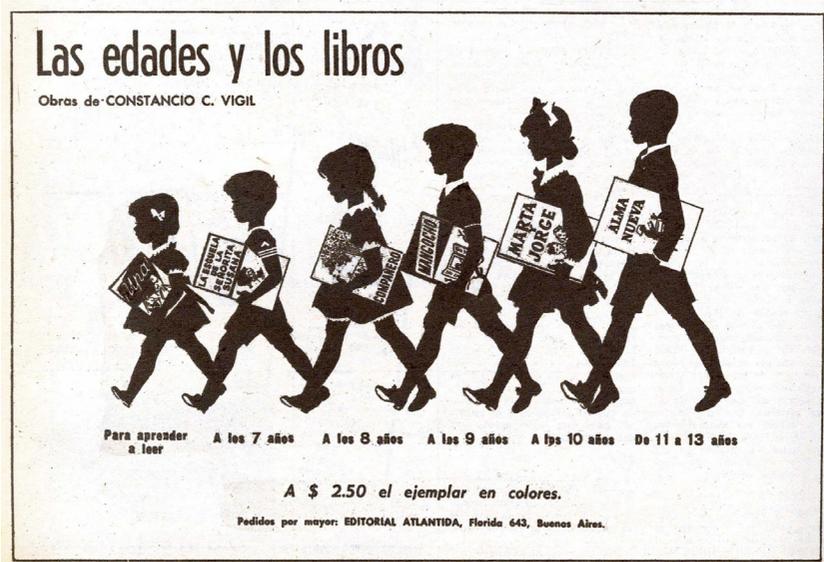


Figure 1.13: 'Ages and books'. Constancio C. Vigil's books for different school years. Advertisement in *Billiken*, issue 1435, 5 May 1947.

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News of Vigil's growing acclaim was published in *Billiken* to reassure readers, their parents and their teachers that *Billiken* was a high-quality publication founded on solid pedagogical principles. In turn, Vigil used the pages of *Billiken* to promote his books and perpetuate narratives about his own legacy. The notes published in *Billiken* about Vigil's official endorsements and external standing functioned as advertorials, raising awareness of the publications sold by Editorial Atlántida's books division. Children's literature was an enticing commercial prospect and official inclusion into curricula also meant guaranteed sales. With the Catholic Church displaced from its traditional position of imparting moral values, school reading books like Vigil's supported the instruction of secular morality in subjects such as 'moral and civic instruction'.²⁸ Beyond school, Vigil had identified children as the most prolific of readers and, therefore, as an important market. In a letter to Gabriela Mistral, Vigil suggested publishing an anthology of her poetry as part of a series on Spanish American writers. This was designed for women readers because: 'Ella algo lee, nada el hombre, mucho el niño' [She reads a little; men, not at all; children, a lot].²⁹

In *Billiken*'s marketing of Vigil's books, a division was maintained between the school reading books and the stories for entertainment value based on original characters. The latter were still marketed as wholesome and 'sano' [healthy], with an emphasis on their intrinsic moral value, but were distinguished by the quantity and quality of their illustrations. Two of Vigil's most enduring stories

were *La Hormigueta Viajera* [The little travelling ant] and *El Mono Relojero* [The watchmaker monkey], both of which transmit clear morality tales. The first story follows the adventures of a little scout ant who journeys home after having accidentally been carried far away. She returns to the queen, who praises her industriousness and resilience in the face of adversity. In *El Mono Relojero*, the monkey escapes his imprisonment in the watchmaker's shop and attempts to sell stolen watches to different animals. His punishment for his dishonesty is his inability to cope with the hardships brought by freedom. The story ends with his willing return to the comfort of captivity.

The Atlántida bookshop, Librería Atlántida, located on Lavalle 720 in the centre of the city of Buenos Aires, mostly sold works from other publishing houses such as Calleja, Sopena and Renacimiento, with Atlántida expanding its own book publishing in the 1930s. An advertisement for Librería Atlántida in *Billiken* from 1930 catalogues the books sold for children under the title 'Forme la Biblioteca para sus Hijos' [Form the library for your children]. The books are broken down into different series including 'Lecturas educadoras y morales' [Moral and educational reading] 'Obras maestras al alcance de los niños' [Great works within the reach of children] and 'Grandes hechos de los grandes hombres' [Great deeds of great men], as well as school textbooks and books about nature (issue 561, 18 August 1930). Later advertisements reveal that these series belonged to the Colección Araluce from Barcelona (issue 740, 22 January 1934).³⁰ In the 1930 advertisement, listed under *Biblioteca Billiken* [The *Billiken* Library] was a modest collection of titles including *350 poesías para niños*, a collection of poems appropriate for children, if not originally created for children, from writers such as Lugones, Héctor Pedro Blomberg and Olegario Víctor Andrade, whose poem 'Atlántida' had lent its name to the publishing house. The Vigil collection of stories appeared under a separate heading and, as such, were not conceived as belonging to the nascent *Biblioteca Billiken* initiative, which published works adapted for children, as opposed to children's literature.

In 1930, in his prologue to the first edition of *350 poesías para niños*, Constancio C. Vigil wrote that the volume was priced modestly to help it reach all Argentine homes. The book's publication was, he wrote, in the performance of a necessary duty for the nation and its future, given the precarious conditions of the local publishing industry. Vigil also emphasised the self-sacrificing nature of this endeavour, which is 'alimento del alma' [food for the soul] and chastens those who suspect 'nada más que avidez mercantil' [nothing more than commercial greed]. Vigil expressed his hope that the success of this volume would pave the way for *Biblioteca Billiken* to reach its full potential. The objective was to 'colaborar en la magna obra de la dignificación de la niñez, que es contribuir al engrandecimiento de la República, que es trabajar por la redención humana' [to collaborate in the great work of the dignifying of children, contributing to the greatness of the Republic, and working in the service of human redemption].³¹ It took until 1938 for *Biblioteca Billiken* to fully take shape. In

the meantime, Librería Atlántida continued to sell the Araluce collections and, in 1933, moved around the corner to Florida 643. This was an arguably more prestigious location as Buenos Aires's main shopping street and the location of the renowned Harrods department store (advertisement in issue 922, 19 July 1937). A 1938 advertisement about the first releases of *Biblioteca Billiken* has the series organised into different collections colour-coded in blue, green and red (issue 991, 14 November 1938). The *Colección Azul* was for 'Vidas, Obras y Asuntos exclusivamente americanos' [Exclusively American lives, works and matters] and the inaugural publication was a biography of General José de San Martín. The *Colección Roja* was for world literature adapted for children, with *Don Quijote* already published and to be followed by *The Iliad*. The *Colección Verde* was 'reservada al estudio de grandes hombres, universales por su acción, sus obras y sus servicios a la humanidad' [reserved for the study of great men, universal by their actions, their works and their services to humanity]. Volumes on Columbus and Pasteur had already been published by this point. The next biography to be published in this series of Great Men was that of Marie Curie.

In parallel, *Billiken* magazine was publishing a series on Great Men but with a prioritising of image over text. The series 'Cuando los grandes hombres eran niños' [When the Great Men were children] in 1935 and 1936 departed visually from *Billiken*'s childhood biographies from the 1920s analysed by Varela in *Los hombres ilustres del Billiken* (see, for example, 'Hans Cristian Andersen', issue 850, 2 March 1936). The grid format with three panels by three panels was the same as that employed in comics such as *Harold Lloyd* and *Rin-Tin-Tin*, both based on silent movie stars, as well as in the recurring graphic history page 'Nuestra historia' [Our history] from 1932, blurring the boundaries between educational and entertainment content. The theme later fed back into *Biblioteca Billiken* with the publication of *Infancia de grandes hombres* [Childhood of great men] (advertisement in issue 1162, 23 February 1942). From 1938 to 1941, the magazine's image-led content on Great Men appeared regularly with the default title of 'Los grandes hombres' (such as 'Jacques Chartier', issue 982, 12 September 1938), adopting variations on the rare occasions in which women were included in the series. Isabel la Católica appeared under 'Figuras históricas' [Historical figures] (issue 1090, 7 October 1940) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz under 'Figuras americanas' [American figures] (issue 1116, 7 April 1941).

The Great Men theme was a continuation of Bartolomé Mitre's *Galería de celebridades argentinas* (1857), which had filtered down into school textbooks. One of these was Enrique Antuña's 1904 *Moral cívica*, illustrated with examples from national history that matched great men to specific values, creating a system of role models. Independence heroes Generals Manuel Belgrano and San Martín opened the book, espousing the first theme of 'Abnegación por la patria' [Self-sacrifice for the homeland], and President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was one of the examples offered for 'Perfeccionamiento intelectual' [Intellectual improvement]. Women had their own chapter, under the heading 'Patriotismo en la mujer' [Patriotism in women], which featured a collage of

portraits of Argentine patrician women and mentions of independence heroines Juana Azurduy, Gertrudis Medeiros and Manuela Pedraza. In the same year that Antuña published this book, he co-founded *Pulgarcito* magazine with Constancio C. Vigil.

The colour-coding of the different collections, or libraries, of *Biblioteca Billiken* recalls the *Bibliothèque blue*, the generic name given to the collections of chapbooks sold by peddlers in 18th-century France. For Roger Chartier, these collections represented a defining moment in France's popular culture because of the control readers exerted on the market. If they bought more of a certain type of text, more texts like that were produced.³² The premise of *Biblioteca Billiken* was different as it was an exercise in the selection of suitable titles and the curation of a collection, reinforcing notions of the canon and its exclusionary nature. The editors were not responding to children's tastes but were, rather, participating in an existing tradition of shaping the field of literature for children, according to established norms. *Biblioteca Billiken's* local competition was Acme Agency's 'Robin Hood' collection, which started in 1941 and published many of the same titles.³³ These series can be seen as a continuation of Sarmiento's work with popular libraries, curating catalogues of useful and inspirational reading material, some of which was adapted and translated, in a nation-building initiative related to the formation of lettered citizens and their integration into the Argentine nation state.³⁴ Around the centenary of independence, cultural nationalist intellectual Ricardo Rojas published the book series *La Biblioteca Argentina*, bringing him into competition with José Ingenieros's rival series, called *La Cultura Argentina*. Both editorial projects aimed to create an Argentine canon by publishing selected political and literary works that reflected, or could be curated to reflect, their conflicting nation-building ideologies. The appeal of these series of inexpensive publications lay not in the serialisation of mass-produced novels (*novelas por entregas*) but in the promise of collecting the separate instalments to form one's own library.³⁵ The success of *Biblioteca Billiken* and the Acme Agency series lay in taking this established model and adapting it for children.

With *Biblioteca Billiken's* most direct antecedent being the Araluce collections, the influence of Spain on the collection was extended through the exiles who settled in Argentina following the Spanish Civil War. Constancio C. Vigil invited writer Rafael Dieste to curate *Biblioteca Billiken*, and Dieste brought in other significant writers such as José Otero Espasandín and Francisco Ayala, later creating the *Colección Oro* based on geography, history and science. Pablo Medina emphasises the role played by writer Carmen Muñoz Manzano, Dieste's wife, in this enterprise.³⁶ *Biblioteca Billiken* was more than a spin-off to the *Billiken* magazine and developed into a stand-alone product. Unlike the case of Marilú, in which the doll, the *Marilú* magazine and *Billiken* magazine all worked together in a mini transmedia ecosystem, in the case of *Biblioteca Billiken* a one-way relationship was established in which *Billiken* drew readers to *Biblioteca Billiken* but *Biblioteca Billiken* did nothing for the magazine.

The nature of this relationship is uncovered when looking at the connections between *Billiken's* international influences, the treatment of Europe, and the hierarchies of literature that were established within *Billiken* magazine.

The early influence on *Billiken* from the United States, seen in the name and on the first cover, had not been openly acknowledged at the time of the magazine's launch. From there on, comics from the US and Europe and stories from Europe were sourced to fill *Billiken's* pages. An early US star to feature was Jackie Coogan of the Charlie Chapman film *The Kid* (1921), both on the cover of *Billiken* and in the *El Pibe* comic. This comic, like the *Laurel and Hardy* comic published in *Billiken* from 1930 to 1954, bears a striking similarity to the UK's comics magazine *Film Fun* and may have been taken from there, as opposed to from a US publication.³⁷ Key US imports were Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's *Superman* comic, published for the first time in Spanish by *Billiken* as *El Superhombre* (from issue 1037, 2 October 1939) and *Familia Conejín*, a translation of Walter Harrison Cady's comic version of Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit*. From 1942, these were published alongside an original Argentine comic, José Vidal Dávila's *Ocalito y Tumbita*, specially created for *Billiken* (from issue 1206, 28 December 1942).

The influence of Europe on literature in *Billiken* was not confined to the 'Universal' (i.e. European) literature increasingly curated and adapted by exiled Spanish writers in *Biblioteca Billiken*. Until *Billiken* increased school material in 1937, the magazine was publishing up to eight short stories and three episodes of serialised stories every week. *Billiken* largely favoured European authors whose work required translation into Spanish. The majority of the French authors whose works appeared in *Billiken* had been originally published in the Éditions de Montsouris 'La Collection Printemps' series of adventure novels for children and included Norbert Sevestre, León Lambry and Maria de Crisenoy.³⁸ Italian authors included Milly Dandolo, children's writer and literary translator, and Emilio Salgari, prolific author of pirate adventure stories who was also widely published elsewhere in Argentina. The origins of many of the British stories published in *Billiken* can be identified thanks to Holland and Stephensen-Payne's meticulously researched British Juvenile Stories and Pocket Libraries Index. By searching authors' names and translations of story titles and cross-referencing with publication dates, it is possible to determine that most of the British stories published in *Billiken* were originally published in the boys' magazines owned by Amalgamated Press, in particular *The Boys' Friend* (1895–1927) and *Chums* (1927–1941).³⁹

Given the historical contexts of publishing and the transnational circulation of texts, it is fair to assume that *Billiken* published this material with no authorisation from the original publishers. Like the comics studied by Gandolfo and Turnes, these stories went, to use their title, 'fresh off the boat and off to the presses', but presumably first via a translator.⁴⁰ Other publishing houses were employing this practice. Abraham reproduces the oral history myth surrounding chapbook publisher Editorial Tor's practices for acquiring translations of

foreign-language novels. In this account it is alleged that Tor's owner, Juan Torrendell, would place an advertisement for translators in a newspaper, send each of the applicants a couple of chapters to translate, supposedly as a test, and then stitch the chapters together for a full translation after writing rejection letters to the applicants.⁴¹ Whilst, as Abraham acknowledges, this rather extreme account may have become embellished over time, it does show a general trend for publishing houses to reproduce material they had not paid for and for which they did not own the rights. There is a long trajectory of such practices. Szir identifies a multitude of strategies employed by 19th-century Latin American illustrated periodicals in the production of images including copying, plagiarising, translation and appropriation of those published in European periodicals. She also pinpoints specific practices such as the periodical *La Ilustración Argentina*, published from 1881, acquiring cliché plates from European illustrated periodicals.⁴²

In 1935, a note in *Billiken* reported that Editorial Atlántida had been taken to court by cartographer Pedro Cantos for publishing his maps of Argentine provinces without permission. Readers were reassured, however, that Atlántida had immediately paid compensation and was now on excellent terms with Cantos. The cartographer apparently accepted that Atlántida had been the victim when it paid, in good faith, for the rights to the person who claimed to have been the creator of the maps: 'La Editorial Atlántida pagó los mapas, como todo cuanto publica, al artista que los presentó como propios' [Editorial Atlántida paid for the maps, like everything else it publishes, to the artist who presented them as his own]. The note is titled: 'La Editorial Atlántida sabe respetar los derechos de autor' [Editorial Atlántida respects copyright] (issue 806, 29 April 1935). Whilst it is hard not to assume that Atlántida was simply caught out on this occasion, it is possible that those in charge of *Billiken* did endeavour to recognise the copyright of national production but were more flexible when it came to international texts and images. In *Billiken*, the practice of publishing material from Europe without first securing the rights continued through to the 1960s at least, with comics such as Edgar P. Jacob's *Blake and Mortimer*, originally published in Belgium, appearing in translation. Such practices were prevalent across the world: Alain Lerman, in his ambitious project to map the transnational publishing contexts of *Blake and Mortimer*, has uncovered numerous instances of unauthorised publication of this comic across the Americas and Asia.⁴³

For *Billiken*, and other magazines and illustrated periodicals, Europe was a useful source of material. When the European origins of this material were acknowledged, its provenance also provided marketing opportunities. In Argentina, Europe had long been imagined as the site of progress and civilisation and the myth of Argentina as a white nation of European cultural heritage was cultivated in different ways. These ranged from practices around the recording of ethnicity in the census, to the images circulated in school textbooks and, of course, in products of popular culture such as *Billiken* magazine. Ezequiel Adamovsky outlines how this myth impacted on the ideas of national

identity: 'el "ser argentino" tenía que ver con determinada cultura (ser "civilizado", europeo), e implícitamente se asociaba a un determinado origen étnico (blanco) y a una región (la pampeana, particularmente la ciudad de Buenos Aires)' ['being Argentine' had to do with a certain culture (being 'civilised', European), and was implicitly associated with a certain ethnic origin (white) and a certain region (the Pampas, particularly the city of Buenos Aires)]. Adamovsky also shows how consumer products were outward markers of taste and status used to organise social hierarchies.⁴⁴

Elsewhere I have explored the shift from *Billiken* taking stories from European publications to commissioning local authors to replicate the style of European stories. In the case of the Sexton Blake detective stories, this occurred to preserve the commitment to publishing only stories with a suitable moral framework. The original Sexton Blake stories, created by Harry Blyth in 1893, had a similar remit to *Billiken* and were promoted as the 'healthy' alternative to the penny dreadfuls.⁴⁵ Sexton Blake differed from his fellow, more famous, Baker Street detective in that he was the work of multiple authors. In 1905, *The Union Jack* became 'Sexton Blake's Own Paper', and the short stories were joined by Sexton Blake novels published in 'The Sexton Blake Library'. According to Hinrich, 200 authors contributed to this collection over 65 years.⁴⁶ Translated versions of these made their way to other Argentine publishing houses, with the uncomfortable result of *Billiken* publishing the same stories as Editorial Tor, a mass publisher for an adult readership and which did not seek to occupy the same high moral ground as *Billiken*.⁴⁷ As the Sexton Blake stories of the 1930s became more targeted towards an adolescent or adult readership, they were no longer suitable for publication in a children's magazine. The solution for *Billiken*, which allowed the continued publication of a popular character without compromising on promises made to parents, was to commission locally authored, tamer versions of Sexton Blake stories, under the title 'Hazañas de Sexton Blake' [Exploits of Sexton Blake] (from issue 696, 20 March 1933). According to Abraham, Editorial Tor also started to publish unauthorised, locally authored Sexton Blake stories and even included a series set in Buenos Aires.⁴⁸ *Billiken*, conversely, did not draw attention to the fact that its Sexton Blake stories were now locally authored, identifying the prestige to be derived from Sexton Blake's European origins.

From 1935 onwards, author names were increasingly absent from *Billiken*, impeding the tracing of the origins of the stories. The number of stories had already started to decrease before the onset of the Second World War and the consequent difficulties in obtaining the latest European stories made *Billiken* turn to local authors but not immediately to local themes. Throughout the war, *Billiken* continued to publish coming-of-age and adventure stories with pirates, cowboys, detectives and air pilots, retaining the style of the European stories but commissioning them from local authors.⁴⁹ These serialised stories were published with low levels of 'visual power', a term employed by Paul Cleveland and defined as 'the degree of visual stimulus emanating from a given design: the higher the stimulus, the greater the degree for attracting attention'.⁵⁰ At a time

at which *Billiken* was increasingly making use of illustrations in educational material, these stories normally had only one opening illustration, repeated in each instalment. The story was slotted into columns of text, extending over several pages, and sharing space with other elements of the magazine. Reading the story required a level of commitment as the flow was frequently interrupted by having to find the continuing page. The instalments were not built around an episodic structure and did not end on cliff-hangers that would have encouraged the purchase of the following week's issue to find out what happened next.

In my previous work, I have argued that these stories were not attractively presented in a careful layout that facilitated reading, or in a structure that made the most of the serialised format, because it was assumed that the type of story was enough for children to want to read them. Instead, page layout was employed to divert children away from these stories and towards literature in books, specifically those published by Atlántida Libros.⁵¹ For example, 'El león de Marruecos' [The lion of Morocco] is an adventure story set in the Tangier Garrison in the 1660s about a young English man separated from his royalist father who had followed Charles II into exile. The exoticised location and military escapades are foils for a coming-of-age story centred on the recovery of a lost identity. The historical context blends the feasible, using real dates and the names of real battles, with the improbable, including giving characters names such as Lord Danger. Each week, the story fills the available space in *Billiken* with chapters broken up across issues, and each instalment is periodically interrupted by vignettes promoting the reading, not of serialised adventure stories, but of books. In one such vignette, an illustration of children is captioned:

Estos niños y niñas que aquí se ven crecerán con los años y luego serán hombres y mujeres. Es de desear que no sólo les crezca el cuerpo, porque este también ocurre en los irracionales; es de desear, para bien de la patria y de ellos mismos, que crezcan en inteligencia y en bondad, que su cerebro se nutra y que su corazón sea embellecido con la lectura de los mejores libros escritos para ellos (issue 1205, 21 December 1942).

[These boys and girls you see here will grow over the years and then they will become men and women. It is to be hoped that not only their bodies will grow, because this happens also in the irrational; it is to be hoped, for the good of the homeland and of themselves, that they will grow in intelligence and goodness, that their brains will be nourished and that their hearts will be embellished by reading the best books written for them.]

Whereas this exhortation explicitly encompasses boys and girls, another vignette uses just 'niño' as the default male child when stating that every child should have a collection of books and that this is as vital for development as food and clothing: 'No puede crecer un niño sin comer; tampoco puede crecer su mente sin la lectura de libros bien elegidos' [A child cannot grow without food; nor can his mind grow without the reading of well-chosen books]

(issue 1209, 18 January 1943). In other examples, the gender split between boys' and girls' futures is emphasised. Boys need to grow up to become 'hombres de provecho' [men of substance] and reading books can help them to achieve that (issue 1274, 17 April 1944). Reading the right kind of literature in the right format can also help to prevent less desirable alternative futures:

Todos los niños tienen el deseo de llegar a hombres. Pero hay hombres de muchas clases, desde los que están en la cárcel hasta los que merecen la estimación y el cariño de cuantos los conocen. A ti te interesa ser un hombre de mérito. Para esto tienes que alimentar tu cerebro, y tu cerebro ha de nutrirse con la buena lectura. Procúrate, pues, buenos libros y serás lo que quieres ser, lo que debes ser, lo que es preciso que seas (issue 1269, 13 March 1944).

[Every boy has the desire to become a man. But there are many kinds of men, from those in prison to those who deserve the esteem and affection of all who know them. You would like to be a man of merit. For this you must feed your brain, and your brain must be nourished by good reading. Seek out good books, and you will be what you want to be, what you ought to be, what you must be.]

A vignette focussing on a girl reader seems to suggest that reading is one of the ways to knowledge that will ultimately contribute to her future competence as a housewife. Luisa wanted to help her mother and started to iron but ended up scorching a handkerchief:

Esto es el resultado de la ignorancia. En todas las cosas de la vida pasa lo mismo. ¡Hay que aprender, hay que saber, hay que salir de la ignorancia! Unas cosas se aprenden en el hogar; otras en la escuela y otras en los buenos libros que es necesario que tengan Luisa y todas las niñas (issue 1221, 12 April 1943).

[This is the result of ignorance. It is the same in all things in life: one has to learn, one has to know, one has to overcome ignorance! Some things are learned at home; others at school and others in the good books that Luisa and all girls need to have.]

These vignettes served as advertorials for *Atlántida Libros*, planting the idea of the importance of literature in book format and then invariably following up a few pages later with a full-page advertisement for *Biblioteca Billiken* or for Vigil's children's books. Such interventions, which place the literature in books at the top of the literary hierarchy, construct the literature within the magazine as lesser and more ephemeral. *Atlántida* ensured the continued relevance of Vigil's works in cases in which the political and ideological landscape had shifted from the time of their original publication. Continued publication of



Figure 1.14: Advertisements for *Biblioteca Billiken*. Left: ‘The best present for life’. The titles are colour-coded by series. *Billiken*, issue 1204, 14 December 1942. Right: ‘With *Biblioteca Billiken*, school is a home and home is a school.’ *Billiken*, issue 1173, 11 May 1942. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

El arial brought Vigil’s earlier spiritualist influences to new generations of readers even as Vigil was reorientating himself towards the Catholic nationalism of the 1930s.⁵² Vigil’s *Vida espiritual*, another earlier work that constructed morality tales from examples of children’s behaviour, took its place in the new political context and was marketed as a gift both for the Day of the Virgin (8 December), and for children’s First Communion, offering an alternative to the traditional gift of a Bible.⁵³ Conversely, the lack of investment in, and attention paid to, children’s literature published in the magazine hastened *Billiken*’s transition from being a predominantly text-based literary publication to an image-based educational and ‘edutainment’-focussed product.

Establishing *Billiken*’s cyclical pattern: patriotic anniversaries and the school calendar

When Carlos Vigil took over as editor in 1925, the change in direction was marked by the dropping of the Billiken figure from the logo. The final cover to feature this logo was that of issue 271, 6 January 1925. The Billiken figures were retained in the logo on the title page for a few more weeks until issue 279, 23 March 1925. This issue also contained an advertisement for the

following week's one-off special back-to-school issue, which boasted 16 extra pages and a total of 20 pages of glazed paper. The issue, priced as normal at 20 cents, contained school material and anecdotes from former teachers, as well as articles about school life across the country (issue 279, 23 March 1925). That same year, *Billiken* began to include full-colour central double-pages (*láminas*), which could be used to supplement visual materials found in schools. From February 1931, these *láminas* were referred to as 'láminas escolares' (issue 588). Such *láminas* were a vital visual resource that had lined the walls of classrooms since the 19th century, with key themes including Argentine flora and fauna, buildings of historic importance, and portraits of the founding fathers. According to Szir, the use of *láminas* was inspired by Pestalozzi's intuition principle, which called for children to learn via sensory experience. Images were thought to serve as a substitute for seeing objects in real life or visiting buildings and monuments.⁵⁴

Georgina Gluzman's work on Adolfo Pedro Carranza, the founder and director of the National Historical Museum who also oversaw two accompanying illustrated periodicals, demonstrates the awareness of the importance of visual imagery for nation-building. As Gluzman states, 'El uso de la imagen impresa, con su capacidad de llegar a públicos amplios, fue una de las estrategias de Carranza en la constitución de una Argentina unificada por un imaginario común' [The use of the printed image, with its capacity to reach wide audiences, was one of Carranza's strategies in the constitution of an Argentina unified by a common imaginary].⁵⁵ Mantovani y Villanueva look at the use of images in school reading books around the time of the centenary, singling out Carlos Imhoff and Ricardo Levene's 1910 *Historia argentina de los niños en cuadros* [Children's history of Argentina in pictures]. Joaquín V. González's prologue to the book sets out the argument for the use of illustration in history books: 'La historia, más que ilustrada, es referida por la imagen misma' [History, rather than being illustrated, is referred to by the image itself].⁵⁶ Mantovani y Villanueva also discuss the short-lived Oficina de Ilustraciones y Decorado Escolar [Office of School Illustration and Decoration] (1908–1911), the work of which included creating a catalogue of images in different series. The themes, which included portraits of illustrious Argentines and founding fathers, reproductions of historical monuments, flora and fauna and great works of art, were the same ones which continued through to *Billiken*.⁵⁷

As Argentina approached its centenary, intellectuals such as Ricardo Rojas were concerned that the heterogeneous immigrant population constituted the 'new barbarians', and a threat to achieving a cohesive Argentine national identity.⁵⁸ The teaching of history was, for Rojas, the key to unlocking the nation-building potential of schools. In his 1909 report on education, *La restauración nacionalista*, he championed the teaching of history across the curriculum, along with the development of 'un ambiente histórico' [a historic environment] beyond school, to develop a culture of living 'historically' and not just in the present: 'Vivir de una manera histórica ... es dar un valor

y una permanencia morales a la vida, reviviendo en recuerdo el ayer que huye, y anticipando el mañana en la vislumbre de un ideal colectivo' [To live historically ... is to give a moral value and permanence to life, reliving in memory the yesterday that escapes and anticipating tomorrow in the glimpse of a collective ideal].⁵⁹ The magazine and periodicals industry had the potential to become a powerful contributor to the development of this lived historical environment as it serviced a mass readership with products appearing at regular intervals.

Carlos Vigil's inclusion of *láminas* in *Billiken* as the centrepiece of the magazine's educational content places him in this pedagogical tradition, which linked visibility, history and nation-building. His contribution to book publishing, which would not appear to withstand comparison with his father's prolific output, can also be seen within this vein. Whereas Constancio C. Vigil poured his efforts into children's literature because 'reading is key to a happy future', Carlos Vigil published only two volumes, both serving to provide catalogues of visual material for educational purposes: one volume on historical monuments featuring photographs and descriptions, and the second an illustrated guide to the birds of Argentina and South America.⁶⁰ The latter was first published in 1973 but with illustrations that had been commissioned for *Billiken's* *láminas* three decades previously. These were the work of French artist Henri Lachaud de Loqueyssie, resident in Argentina and the recipient, in 1944, of a prize for foreign painters in the thirty-fourth national exhibition of fine arts (issue 1297, 25 September 1944). This painter, known to *Billiken's* readers as Don Enrique de Loqueyssie, had died in 1958.⁶¹

Billiken's *láminas* and the use of illustration in educational materials were not pioneering initiatives. However, Carlos Vigil made a distinctive contribution to the development of *Billiken*, shaping it into the type of magazine it would become and largely remain. Like his father before him, Carlos Vigil's innovation lay in the repackaging of existing ideas and products and in making them available on new platforms and to a mass audience. By including *láminas* within the magazine he was also able to bring down the cost of these materials. The central *lámina* for the 1925 back-to-school issue, for example, was a pull-out map of Argentina created by the cartographic publishing house Bemporat. This would normally sell for 30 cents but was included within *Billiken* for the magazine's normal price of 20 cents. The inclusion of *láminas* helped to establish the use of *Billiken* in schools as, instead of purchasing *láminas* separately, schools and teachers could get them with the magazine for the same price or cheaper. In 1932, the *láminas* were joined by other educational material, such as descriptive maps and pages to inspire written compositions (issue 678, 14 November). By 1938, *Billiken* had amassed a whole back catalogue of *láminas* that were advertised as available for purchase separately from the magazine (issue 963, 2 May). *Billiken's* school material was the subject of an exhibition in Bahía Blanca that same year, complete with the assembled versions of *Billiken's* cardboard models (issue 982, 12 September).



Figure 1.15: Children looking at the display of *láminas* at a 1938 exhibition in Bahía Blanca. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

Towards the end of the 1930s, *Billiken* started to take the shape it would maintain for the duration of its life as a print publication. Contents started to follow the school calendar more closely, with issues leading with the *efemérides*, the anniversaries of nationally significant events and their historical protagonists. Silvia Finocchio argues for the agency of teachers in creating the daily social reality of school and producing shifts in imaginaries through the practices they chose to follow and the knowledge they produced. She identifies the 1930s and 1940s as the moment when ‘los docentes hicieron de la formación nacional la principal razón de su práctica cuando una parafernalia de artefactos vinculó el día a día de la escuela con contenidos, liturgias, símbolos nacionales’ [teachers made national education the main reason for their practice when a paraphernalia of artefacts linked everyday school life to contents, liturgies, national symbols].⁶² By no coincidence, this was the moment when *Billiken* refined the cyclical alignment to the school year that would come to define it. *Billiken* was a source, and resource, of this ‘paraphernalia’, adopted by teachers and integrated into classrooms across the country. This coincided with the increasingly nationalistic context of the *década infame*, seen in the reinforcement of rituals, patriotic traditions, and the introduction of national holidays in commemoration of independence heroes Belgrano and San Martín in 1938.

Billiken increased all of its school-focussed content, not just content linked to patriotic education, from issue 911 (3 May 1937) with eight additional pages, labelling the content with specific primary school years, or grades. There was

no systematic approach, or sense of trying to cover the whole curriculum, and different topics, ranging from literacy to numeracy to history and geography, were tailored to different grades on different weeks. This new approach was formally launched the following March for the start of the school year, with a note to readers stating that the following issue would contain more colour pages, 'dedicadas en su mayor parte a los distintos asuntos de programas escolares en vigencia' [mostly dedicated to the different matters pertaining to current school curricula] (issue 954, 28 February 1938). The increase in *Billiken's* educational content has been seen as a response to the arrival on the market, in 1936, of the magazine *Figuritas*. Unlike educational magazines directed at teachers, such as *La Obra*, *Figuritas* was a magazine for children, making it *Billiken's* direct competitor. The slogan for *Figuritas*, 'la revista argentina del escolar' [the Argentine magazine of the schoolchild], signalled the prioritisation of educational material and differentiated it from *Billiken*, 'la revista de los niños' [the children's magazine].⁶³ Alongside the competition from *Figuritas*, the change in *Billiken's* content was also related to the upgrading of the printing presses, with new machines being shipped in from Germany (issue 887, 18 November 1936). Ultimately, *Billiken's* transition from a literary/textual to an educational/graphic magazine in the late 1930s was not so much a shift in direction but rather a development of Carlos Vigil's focus on education through visual materials that also recognised, and sought to meet, both the rising demands of teachers for material and the new national political context.

The visual identity that accompanied *Billiken's* new phase was led by Chilean artist Raúl Manteola's portraits of the Great Men of the nation. Prior to commissioning Manteola, *Billiken* had used images of the *próceres* already in circulation such as the portrait of San Martín painted in Brussels by an unknown artist that had been reproduced in Adolfo Pedro Carranza's *Ilustración histórica argentina* in 1908. Gluzman shows how this image was reproduced in periodicals' consumer product advertising, including of the San Martín brand of cigarettes, and credits its appearance in *Billiken* with bringing it into schools.⁶⁴ The commissioning of a large collection of portraits specifically for *Billiken* was part of the magazine's investment in illustrated content, along the lines of the commissioning of Lachaud de Loqueyssié for the illustrations of birds. Manteola's first portraits for *Billiken* were of José María Paz and Juan Lavalle, two military heroes of independence remembered for their later opposition to federalist General Juan Manuel de Rosas, and identified, as such, within the current of *mitrista*, official history (issue 922, 19 July 1937).

The numerous Manteola portraits afforded *Billiken* a revolving cast of Great Men to be periodically showcased in the magazine. Within this, the protagonists were Manuel Belgrano, José de San Martín and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, easily identified at the top of the hierarchy of *próceres* for being featured year after year in their dedicated issues. In the case of Belgrano and San Martín, this hierarchisation reflected their national status, with the anniversaries of both of their deaths declared national holidays from 1938 onwards.

The date of Belgrano's 'passing into immortality' was designated the Day of the Flag and his military contribution to the Wars of Independence has become diluted in the national imaginary to accommodate his identification with the foremost national symbol of the newly independent nation that he is credited with creating. In contrast, San Martín is remembered for being San Martín. He is *the* founding father, and his centrality in the national story will be further considered in the following chapter. There is no national holiday dedicated to Sarmiento and the anniversary of his death, 11 September, only officially became the Day of the Teacher in Argentina in 1945, following the designation of this day at the Panamá Educational Conference of 1943. Sarmiento had been appearing in *Billiken*, and on *Billiken*'s covers, since the 1920s but in the main school issue that launched the school year in March and not in his later allocated slot around 11 September.⁶⁵ In 1940, the Manteola portraits of San Martín, Belgrano and Sarmiento appeared on their respective covers for the first time.

The graphic identity of *Billiken*'s year started to fall into place around the dates dedicated to these three protagonists and other key dates with iconography less intimately tied to a leading man. The May Revolution of 1810, which started the Argentine War of Independence, provided the opportunity for at least two patriotic covers each year. The issue closest to 25 May was either represented by the crowd gathered in what is now known as the Plaza de Mayo, on 25 May 1810, to press for the resignation of the viceroy, or by a Manteola portrait of a member of the Primera Junta [First Assembly], which formed a provisional government on that day. The previous week's issue was generally represented by a cover dedicated to the 'Día de la escarapela' [Day of the Cockade]. The *escarapela*, one of three national symbols alongside the flag and the coat of arms, was instituted by decree in 1812 and the National Education Council named 18 May as the Day of the Cockade only in 1935. The signatories of the Declaration of Independence on 9 July 1816 all had Manteola portraits but these were more likely to appear inside the magazine, sometimes as pull-out posters, than on the cover. The Casa de Tucumán, where the declaration was signed, was the cover image of choice to represent this date. From 1938, another new date was added to the school calendar: the anniversary of the birth of José Hernández, creator of the *Martín Fierro* epic poems, on 10 November 1834, became the 'Día de la tradición' [Day of Tradition].⁶⁶

The addition of the Day of the Cockade and the Day of Tradition to the school calendar was a further manifestation of the continued nation-building impulse in the 1930s and the reinforcement of the link between school, patriotic ritual and the formation of a national consciousness based on the national story. According to Anny Ocoró Loango, during this time, 'La nación se fue narrando a través de la escuela y la celebración de efemérides que contribuyeron a construirla discursivamente' [The nation was narrated through the school and the celebration of anniversaries that contributed to constructing it discursively].⁶⁷ The nation was also narrated through *Billiken*, and *Billiken*'s narration found its way into schools and homes. Under Carlos Vigil,



Figure 1.16: Children interacting with *Billiken's* printed ephemera. The photograph was included in *Billiken*, issue 1304, 13 November 1944. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 1.17: Children and their teachers with the completed *Billiken* models of the Plaza de Mayo. Editorial Atlántida photographic archive (undated). ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 1.18a: The *Billiken* School calendar by month (pt 1).

Row 1 (left to right):

Presents from the Three Kings. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1259, 3 January 1944.

Carnival. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1266, 21 February 1944.

Back-to-school in March after the summer holidays. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1269, 13 March 1944.

Row 2 (left to right):

Easter. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1272, 3 April 1944.

The Day of the Cockade as part of the commemorations of May Week. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1278, 15 May 1944.

Portrait of Manuel Belgrano by Raúl Manteola for the Day of the Flag. Issue 1335, 18 June 1945.

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Figure 1.18b: The *Billiken* School calendar by month (pt 2).

Row 1 (left to right):

The House of Tucumán, where the Declaration of Independence was signed. Issue 1077, 8 July 1940.

Portrait of José de San Martín by Raúl Manteola to commemorate the anniversary of his death. Issue 1291, 14 August 1944.

Portrait of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento by Raúl Manteola to commemorate the Day of the Teacher. Issue 1347, 10 September 1945.

Row 2 (left to right):

Reproduction of the portrait of Columbus by Sebastiano del Piombo (1519) to commemorate 12 October. Issue 1351, 8 October 1945.

The Day of Tradition. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1147, 10 November 1941.

Christmas. Illustration by Lino Palacio. Issue 1310, 25 December 1944.

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Billiken completed its transition from a text-based literary magazine to a vehicle for this graphic and material narration of the national story. The prioritisation of a visually attractive design, abundant use of images and provision of paper or card-based craft activities encouraged reader participation. *Billiken* invited active, engaged readers to take part in the making and remaking of the nation's story as they cut round images of the founding fathers to stick in school workbooks, made cardboard models of landmark historical buildings, and lined the walls of the classroom with posters of Argentina's flora and fauna.

Figure 1.18 shows the pattern of the *Billiken* year, which emerged from the late 1930s and was established by 1945, visually represented by the Manteola portraits of key founding fathers and by Lino Palacio's more ludic treatments. Palacio's covers were arranged around annual placeholders such as Epiphany (when children receive presents from the Three Kings), the school summer holidays, Carnival in February, back-to-school in March, the winter school holidays in July, and Christmas and New Year. The Day of the Cockade and the Day of Tradition were two patriotic dates that shared the distinction of being entrusted to Palacio. The former invited reworkings of Palacio's familiar gender dynamics with older girls sewing the *escarapelas* on their little brothers' jackets in a performance of patriotism and future motherhood, similar in theme to the back-to-school issues in which older girls march their reluctant younger brothers to school. On the Day of Tradition, boys played at being gauchos and children performed folkloric dances in traditional dress. Other annual placeholders were Easter, which generally incorporated a religious theme, and 12 October, still then called the Day of the Race, often featuring a reproduction of an existing painting of Columbus, as opposed to a commissioned Manteola portrait or a Palacio cover.

Outside of these key daters, Palacio produced dozens of covers annually, often returning to the same themes of rebellious boyhood and responsible girlhood, but always on the side of the children, with adults suffering a fair amount of leg pulling and broken windows. Palacio's tenure as the principal cover artist coincided with the longest-standing use of the same logo, from 1939 to 1967, representing the most sustained period of graphic identity in *Billiken*'s history. The Palacio artwork is considered by many to be quintessentially representative of *Billiken* and his tenure coincides broadly with *Billiken*'s most successful years, tempting the identification of Palacio with a 'golden age' for *Billiken*. Beyond the Palacio and Manteola years, the pattern of the ludic and the patriotic persisted with new generations of illustrators. By July 1945, *Billiken*'s weekly paid circulation had risen to 400,000, representing the highest ever circulation for a magazine in Spanish (issue 1338). *Billiken* went into the Peronist era as an established publication with a clear vision for its content, a recognisable graphic identity, and plans for further Latin American expansion. Backed also by the successful Editorial Atlántida, *Billiken* was in a strong position to weather the challenges of the coming years.

Notes

- ¹ Nigel Pennick, *The Ancestral Power of Amulets, Talismans, and Mascots: Folk Magic in Witchcraft and Religion* (Rochester: Simon and Schuster, 2021), p. 63.
- ² María F. Sigillo, 'La Caracas aniversaria: Lucas Manzano', *Opinión y noticias*, 25 July 2018 <<http://www.opinionynoticias.com/opinioncultura/33164-sigilo-m>> [accessed 8 September 2022]; Nancy Gates, *The Alaska Almanac: Facts about Alaska* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 2006); Sachiko Gomi and Edward R. Canda, 'The Billiken: Bringer of Good Luck and Cultural Competence', *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 18.1 (2012), 73–82.
- ³ The commemorative publication was included with issue 4170, 29 November 1999: *Billiken 1919–1999: la vuelta a la infancia en 80 años* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1999). On Pretz in *Billiken* see Lauren Rea, *¡Un nombre perfecto! Billiken*, issue 5141, June/July 2019.
- ⁴ Gary Cross, *The Cute and The Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 51–53, 67. The original Leyendecker image is reproduced in Michael Oriard, *The Art of Football: The Early Game in the Age of Illustration* (Lincoln, NE; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), p. 140.
- ⁵ Cynthia Bailin, 'From Picanniny to Savage Brute: Racialized Images and African American Stereotyping in Turn-of-the-Century American Advertising', in *We Are What We Sell: How Advertising Shapes American Life...And Always Has*. Vol. 1., ed. by Danielle Sarver Coombs and Bob Batchelor (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2014), 87–101. For an analysis of racial stereotyping in *Billiken's* early years and the interplay between imported stereotypes from the US and stereotypical representations derived from the local context see Alejandra Josiowicz and Mayra Juarez, 'Estereotipos en blanco y negro: la negritud en la revista *Billiken*. Argentina 1919–1946', in *Literatura infantil na América Latina. A infância y a diversidade de imaginários (sociais, raciais y de gênero)*, coord. by Alejandra J. Josiowicz and María Carolina Zapiola (Rio de Janeiro: Dialogarts-UERJ, 2022), pp. 353–393. This chapter includes an analysis of early comics characters such as los Betunes from *La familia de Betuncete*, visible in Figure 1.2.
- ⁶ Luis Villaronga, *El sembrador, Constancio C. Vigil* (San Juan: Biblioteca de autores puertorriqueños, 1949).
- ⁷ Victoria Johnson, 'What is Organizational Imprinting? Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Founding of the Paris Opera', *American Journal of Sociology*, 113.1 (2007), 97–127 <<https://doi.org/10.1086/517899>>.
- ⁸ On Vigil's membership of the Asociación Pro-Derechos de la Mujer, see Dora Barrancos, *Inclusión/Exclusión. Historia con mujeres* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), p. 61. On the 1930 coup see Constancio C. Vigil 'La revolución del 6 de septiembre', *Atlántida*, 18 September,

1930. On the Nobel committee see Serafin Cordero Criado, *Por la paz mundial* (Comité Central Americano pro Premio Nobel de la Paz a Constancio C. Vigil, 1936). An article about the award of the *Cruz Lateranense* appeared in *Billiken*, issue 1556, 10 October 1949.

- ⁹ James Cane, *The Fourth Enemy: Journalism and Power in the Making of Peronist Argentina, 1930–1955* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2011), pp. 81, 121. I previously examined the tensions surrounding the commercialisation of children's culture in 'Education, Popular Literature and Future Citizenship in Argentina's *Billiken* Children's Magazine (1919–1944)', *Global Studies of Childhood*, 8.3 (2018), 281–91 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610618797403>>.
- ¹⁰ Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2013), pp. 32–33; María Silvia Badoza and María Inés Tato, 'Cuando Buenos Aires se quedó sin diarios: los conflictos de 1919 en la prensa gráfica argentina', *Sociohistórica*, 19–20 (2006), 113–38.
- ¹¹ Emir Rodríguez Monegal, 'Introducción', in *Diario de viaje a París de Horacio Quiroga* (Montevideo: Número, 1950), p. 39.
- ¹² In 1919, when Lugones published *La torre de Casandra* and *Las industrias de Atenas*, the books division was not yet formally constituted. The name of the publisher was Talleres Gráficos Atlántida, as opposed to Editorial Atlántida, referencing the printing presses, rather than the publishing house. See also Lauren Rea, 'Trajectories in Argentine Children's Literature: Constancio C. Vigil and Horacio Quiroga', *International Research in Children's Literature*, 12.1 (2019), 76–89 <<https://doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2019.0292>>.
- ¹³ Gabriela Mistral, '[Carta], 1919 dic. 19, Punta Arenas, Chile [a] Maximiliano Salas M.', Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile <<http://www.biblioteca.nacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-553262.html>> [accessed 30 June 2022].
- ¹⁴ Paula Bontempo, 'Los niños de Billiken: Las infancias en Buenos Aires en las primeras décadas del siglo XX', *Anuario Del Centro de Estudios Históricos 'Prof. Carlos S.A. Segreti'*, 12 (2012), 205–21 (p. 209).
- ¹⁵ Constancio C. Vigil, *El erial* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Heliográficos de R. Radelli, 1915).
- ¹⁶ Sandra Carli, *Niñez, pedagogía y política: transformaciones de los discursos acerca de la infancia en la historia de la educación argentina entre 1880 y 1955* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2002), pp. 94–95; Sandra Carli, 'The New School Movement in Argentina', *Paedagogica Historica*, 42.3 (2006), 385–404 (pp. 390–97).
- ¹⁷ On the topic of sweets, the Argentine confectionary company Billiken Golosinas has no commercial connection to the magazine even though it does use one of *Billiken* magazine's former logos in its branding.
- ¹⁸ María Paula Bontempo, 'Los lectores y las lectoras de Billiken se asocian. El desarrollo de los Comités Billiken. Argentina, 1919–1925', *Trashumante*.

Revista Americana de Historia Social, 8 (2016), 32–57 <<https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.trahs.n8a03>>.

- ¹⁹ Clara Brafman, 'Billiken: poder y consenso en la educación argentina (1919–1930)', *Todo es historia*, 25.298 (1992), 70–88 (p. 74).
- ²⁰ On Pandolfini, see Cintia Mannocchi, 'Huelga de maestros en 1912. En contra del Estado educador y del docente servil', *Historia de la educación. Anuario*, 14.1 (2013), 43–64 (p. 64). Mamá Catalina is unmasked as Pandolfini in issue 214, 24 December 1923. On Dantas Lacombe see Juan Carlos Maubé and Adolfo Capdevielle, *Antología de la poesía femenina argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ferrari Hermanos, 1930), p. 179. On Rothkoff see Edit Rosalía Gallo, *Periodismo político femenino: ensayo sobre las revistas feministas en la primera mitad del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Cruz del Sur, 2013), p. 17.
- ²¹ Daniela Pelegrinelli, 'Prodigiosa Marilú', *Boca de Sapo: Revista de arte, literatura y pensamiento*, 7.9 (2011), 14–19 (p. 18). See also Bontempo, 'Enseñando a las niñas a consumir. La revista infantil *Marilú* (1933–1937)', *Avances del Cesor*, 7.13 (2015), 107–32.
- ²² In the original, 'hada de casa' is presumably a play on 'ama de casa' or 'housewife'.
- ²³ *El Monitor de Educación Común*. Year 3, N°. 63, 1884. Quoted in Lucía Lionetti, *La misión política de la escuela pública: formar a los ciudadanos de la República (1870–1916)* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2019). Kindle ebook. Chapter 10.
- ²⁴ Bontempo, 'Los niños de *Billiken*', p. 220.
- ²⁵ On Borocotó's journalistic formation of the idea of a uniquely Argentine style of football see Eduardo P. Archetti, 'Estilo y virtudes masculinas en El Gráfico: la creación del imaginario del fútbol argentino', *Desarrollo económico*, 35.139 (1995), 419–442.
- ²⁶ Amongst numerous other examples, the educational authorities in Uruguay acquired Vigil's story collection *Marta y Jorge* for primary schools (issue 1175, 25 May 1942). The Dominican Republic adapted Vigil's books for use as textbooks (issue 1327, 23 April 1945). Bolivia (issue 1429, 7 April 1947) and Honduras (issue 1504, 13 September 1948) officially recognised *El erial* for use in schools.
- ²⁷ Constancio C. Vigil, 'Telegrama de Constancio C. Vigil', 30 June 1947. Archivo personal de Juan José Arévalo Bermejo. Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica <<http://cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php/ISADG:GT-CIRMA-AH-045-004-002-008-024-009>> [accessed 15 May 2023]. I came across this telegram when looking for correspondence related to Arévalo's first wife, the Argentine school teacher and children's writer Elisa Martínez de Arévalo. A series of graphic adaptations of national and world literature including *Facundo* and *Don Quijote* was published in 1949 and 1950 with adaptations by E. de Arévalo. Whilst I found no proof that the First Lady of Guatemala was writing for *Billiken*, she made visa applications

to travel to Argentina around this time and she and her husband were acquaintances of one of Constancio C. Vigil's sons—another Constancio—from the time they spent in the Argentine province of San Juan.

- ²⁸ Rubén Cucuzza, 'Retórica de la escena de lectura en las carátulas del libro escolar', in *La lectura en los manuales escolares: textos e imágenes*, org. by Roberta Paula Spregelburd and María Cristina Linares (Buenos Aires: UNLu; UNNE, 2009), pp. 13–29 (p. 22). On the commercial benefits of writing officially endorsed texts see Rea, 'Trajectories in Argentine Children's Literature'.
- ²⁹ Constancio C. Vigil, '[Carta] 1941 Oct. 17, Buenos Aires, [Argentina] [a] Gabriela Mistral, Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile <<http://www.biblioteca.nacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-144121.html>> [accessed 10 September 2022].
- ³⁰ Teresa Julio, 'María Luz Morales y la colección «Las obras maestras al alcance de los niños» de la editorial Araluce ante la censura franquista', *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 99.320 (2020), 665–701.
- ³¹ 350 *poesías para niños*, Biblioteca Billiken (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1930) <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/libros/00076947/00076947.pdf>> [accessed 8 June 2022].
- ³² Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 38.
- ³³ Carolina Tosi, 'La emergencia de las colecciones de literatura infantil y juvenil, y su impacto en la industria editorial. Los casos Robin Hood y Biblioteca Billiken', *Catalejos. Revista sobre lectura, formación de lectores y literatura para niños*, 1.1 (2015), 132–58.
- ³⁴ Javier Planas, 'Para un catálogo atractivo: libros y políticas editoriales para las bibliotecas populares. La propuesta de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento', *Información, cultura y sociedad*, 20 (2009), 63–81.
- ³⁵ Fernando Degiovanni, 'The Invention of the Classics: Nationalism, Philology and Cultural Politics in Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 3.2 (2004), 243–60.
- ³⁶ Pablo Medina, *Gallegos. Sembradores de ideas* (Buenos Aires: Centro Betanzos, 2016). My thanks to Amanda Salvioni for sharing this resource. On Dieste and *Biblioteca Billiken* see Ana Pelegrín, 'Una aproximación a los libros infantiles en el exilio español (1939–1977)', in *Pequeña memoria recobrada: libros infantiles del exilio del 39*, ed. by Ana Pelegrín, María Victoria Sotomayor and Alberto Urdiales (Ministerio de Educación, 2008), pp. 13–42 (pp. 18–24).
- ³⁷ See 'Bill Wakefield (1887–1942)', *UK Comics Wiki* <[https://ukcomics.fandom.com/wiki/Bill_Wakefield_\(1887-1942\)](https://ukcomics.fandom.com/wiki/Bill_Wakefield_(1887-1942))> [accessed 9 September 2022].
- ³⁸ The original titles can be seen in this website, 'Collection Printemps – FORUMPIMPE.NET' <<https://www.forumpimpf.net/viewtopic.php?t=44917>> [accessed 9 September 2022].

- ³⁹ Steve Holland and Phil Stephensen-Payne, 'British Juvenile Story Papers and Pocket Libraries Index' <<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/bjsp/0start.htm>> [accessed 25 June 2022]. *Chums* was started by Cassell and Company in 1892.
- ⁴⁰ Amadeo Gandolfo and Pablo Turnes, 'Fresh off the Boat and Off to the Presses: The Origins of Argentine Comics between the United States and Europe (1907–1945)', *European Comic Art*, 12.2 (2019), 45–76 <<https://doi.org/10.3167/eca.2019.120204>>.
- ⁴¹ Carlos Abraham, *La Editorial Tor. Medio siglo de libros populares* (Buenos Aires: Tren en Movimiento, 2012), pp. 56–57.
- ⁴² Sandra M. Szir, 'Imágenes y tecnologías entre Europa y la Argentina. Migraciones y apropiaciones de la prensa en el siglo XIX', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.70851>>.
- ⁴³ Email correspondence in 2021 following a request for me to locate the Blake and Mortimer episodes in *Billiken*.
- ⁴⁴ Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Historia de la clase media argentina: apogeo y decadencia de una ilusión, 1919–2003* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009), pp. 65, 68–70.
- ⁴⁵ Ernest Sackville Turner, *Boys Will Be Boys: The Story of Sweeney Todd, Deadwood Dick, Sexton Blake, Billy Bunter, Dick Barton et al.* 3rd edn (London: Michael Joseph, 1975), p. 102. On Sexton Blake and *Billiken* see Rea, 'Education, Popular Literature and Future Citizenship in Argentina's *Billiken* Children's Magazine (1919–1944)'.
- ⁴⁶ Derek Hinrich, 'The Other Baker Street Detective', *Blakiana* <<http://mark-hodder.com/blakiana/bakerstreet.html>> [accessed 18 June 2022].
- ⁴⁷ For example, *The House of Silence* by G.H. Teed, first published by Amalgamated Press in 1930, was then published by Editorial Tor as *La casa del silencio*. Between November 1930 and February 1931, this same story was serialised in *Billiken*, in a different translation from Editorial Tor, and under the title *La mansión del silencio*.
- ⁴⁸ Abraham, p. 165.
- ⁴⁹ Preliminary research into the interplay in *Billiken* magazine between serialised adventure stories and advertisements for *Biblioteca Billiken* was published in Lauren Rea, 'The Newsboy's Good Deed: *Billiken* Magazine's Construction of Argentine Childhood In 1942', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 12.1 (2019), 68–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2019.0004>>.
- ⁵⁰ Paul Cleveland, 'How Much Visual Power Can a Magazine Take?', *Design Studies*, 26.3 (2005), 271–317. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2004.05.007>>.
- ⁵¹ See Rea, 'The Newsboy's Good Deed' for a discussion of the use of page layout in *Billiken* in the establishment of a literary hierarchy.
- ⁵² Carli, *Niñez, pedagogía y política*, p. 229. On the 'infamous decade' more generally see David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement*,

its History and its Impact (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995).

- ⁵³ *Vida espiritual* first appeared in *Billiken* in excerpts from issue 977 (8 August 1938). See 1045 (27 November 1939) for a Day of the Virgin advertisement and 1193 (28 September 1942) for a First Communion advertisement.
- ⁵⁴ Sandra Szir, 'Discursos, prácticas y formas culturales de lo visual. Buenos Aires, 1880–1910', in *Travesías de la imagen: historias de las artes visuales en la Argentina*, ed. by María Isabel Baldassare and Silvia Dolinko (Buenos Aires: CAIA, 2012), pp. 65–93 (pp. 80–83).
- ⁵⁵ Georgina Gluzman, 'Imaginar la nación, ilustrar el futuro. *Ilustración Histórica Argentina e Ilustración Histórica* en la configuración de una visualidad para la Argentina', in *Atrapados por la imagen: arte y política en la cultura impresa argentina*, ed. by Laura Malosetti Costa and Marcela M. Gené (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013), pp. 47–73 (p. 69).
- ⁵⁶ Cited in Larisa Mantovani and Aldana Villanueva, 'Libros escolares y enseñanza de la historia: El manual ilustrado *Historia argentina de los niños en cuadros*', in *Ilustrar e imprimir: Una historia de la cultura gráfica en Buenos Aires, 1830–1930*, ed. by Sandra Szir (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ampersand, 2016), pp. 179–211 (p. 196).
- ⁵⁷ Mantovani and Villanueva, pp. 182–85.
- ⁵⁸ Rafael S. Gagliano, 'Nacionalismo, inmigración y pluralismo cultural. Polémicas educativas en torno al Centenario', in *Historia de la educación en la Argentina II: Sociedad civil y Estado en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1991), pp. 281–307 (p. 293). See also Jean H. Delaney, 'Imagining "El ser argentino": Cultural Nationalism and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34.3 (2002), 625–58 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X0200648X>>.
- ⁵⁹ Ricardo Rojas, *La restauración nacionalista: crítica de la educación argentina y bases para una reforma en el estudio de las humanidades modernas* (La Plata: UNIPE, 2011 [1909]), pp. 267–69 <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Argentina/unipe/20171121055305/pdf_336.pdf> [accessed 1 July 2022].
- ⁶⁰ Carlos Vigil, *Los monumentos y lugares históricos de la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1959); Carlos Vigil, *Aves Argentinas y Sudamericanos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1973).
- ⁶¹ An obituary notice was published in *Billiken* in issue 2035, 5 January 1959.
- ⁶² Silvia Finocchio, 'La historia inventada por los docentes (o de cómo la cultura escolar recrea la enseñanza de la historia en un contexto de transformaciones intensas)', *Revista Práxis*, 2 (2011), 21–30 (pp. 22–23).
- ⁶³ On *Figuritas* magazine see Mónica Demarco, 'Constitución del espacio literario en la escuela de la Argentina Moderna: El caso de la revista *Figuritas*', in *La lectura en los manuales escolares: textos e imágenes*, org. by Roberta Paula Spregelburd and María Cristina Linares (Buenos Aires: UNLu; UNNE, 2009), pp. 141–58.

⁶⁴ Gluzman, p. 57.

⁶⁵ On the designation of 11 September as the 'Día del maestro' see 'Decreto n°. 21.215', *Boletín del Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública de la Nación Argentina*, Year 8, N° 67 (1945), pp. 1313–14 <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/monitor/Boletin-del-ministerio/Boletin-del-ministerio-1945-a8-n67.pdf>> [accessed 10 September 2022].

⁶⁶ The poem was published in two parts: *El gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879).

⁶⁷ Anny Ocoró Loango, 'La emergencia del negro en los actos escolares del 25 de mayo en la Argentina: del negro heroico al decorativo y estereotipado', *Pedagogía y saberes*, 34 (2011), 33–50 (p. 37).

CHAPTER 2

Peronism in *Billiken* and *Billiken* in Peronism (1946–1955)

For a children's magazine to survive for a hundred years is an extraordinary achievement and it is unsurprising that *Billiken* and Editorial Atlántida would want to qualify just how remarkable this was. Prior to this research project, there were two claims upon which Atlántida had settled. The first was that *Billiken* was the world's longest-running Spanish-language children's magazine and the second that it had achieved continuous publication since 1919 without ever having missed a week. The first claim would appear to be too modest as the closest contender, the Russian monthly children's magazine *Murzilka*, was published only from May 1924.¹ The continuity claim, however, is disproved by *Billiken's* publication break of four weeks in 1949, which had been omitted from the publishing house's institutional memory. This occurred during 'el primer peronismo', the term used to refer to General Juan Domingo Perón's first two terms as president, running from his election in 1946 to his re-election in 1952 and ending with his ousting by military coup in 1955. This 'first Peronism' is one of the most comprehensively researched periods of Argentine history and continues to attract studies from a variety of disciplines because of the complex and contradictory nature of the era's politics, the transformative effect it had on Argentine culture and society, and the enduring legacy of, and fascination with, both Perón and his wife, María Eva Duarte de Perón (Evita).

Billiken's break in publication, from 21 February to 21 March 1949, coincided with a month-long printers' strike during which hardly any newspapers and magazines were printed in Buenos Aires.² There is an identifiable 'before' and 'after' the break in *Billiken's* approach to the Peronist regime, which moves from barely registering the regime's existence to publishing *Billiken's* first photograph of Perón on 28 March 1949 (issue 1528). From then until 1952, the majority of Peronist propaganda published in *Billiken* in the form of text, photographs and illustrations, or combinations thereof, falls into one of three categories: i) regime-sponsored events related to schools and children's sports, ii) content

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related to the 'The Year of the Liberator San Martín', commemorating Argentina's foremost independence hero and founding father on the centenary of his death in 1950, and iii) features relating to the death of Evita, in which her love for children was emphasised. From 1953, *Billiken* published more explicitly political propaganda, intensifying the focus on key Peronist dates and featuring the government's Segundo Plan Quinquenal [Second Five-Year Plan], which was by then integrated into the school curriculum.

Peronism changed Argentina's political landscape indefinitely. It was a political and social revolution based on the promise of delivering *justicialismo* [social justice] to the majority working-class public, and explicitly overturning the old order. The Peronist regime embraced both continuities and ruptures, making its ideology hard to pin down. Karush has shown how the regime was crafted out of the sociocultural context of the preceding years, with the popular culture of the radio and cinema of the 1930s creating the conditions for Perón's rise.³ *Billiken*, a cultural product identified with the middle classes whose dominance and privilege Perón sought to overturn, does not presage Peronism in this way. Marcela Gené, however, has demonstrated that the regime appropriated and adapted the graphic style of the magazine industry as one of the ingredients in the creation of a visual identity that was central to the regime's production of propaganda.⁴ The Peronist regime placed emphasis on children, 'the only privileged ones', and their education, because children were the key to the generational perpetuation of the regime's ideology. By the time of Perón's election, *Billiken* was reaching a second generation of readers, had a weekly print run consistently averaging over 300,000 copies and was an established extracurricular vehicle for the formation of future citizens. *Billiken* was clearly of interest to a regime that saw the political advantages of constructing children in terms of their future potential. Nevertheless, the incorporation of *Billiken's* visual identity into the visual identity of Peronism has hitherto gone unrecognised. This chapter, therefore, has a dual purpose: to explore how Peronism found its way into *Billiken* through the magazine's incorporation of Peronist propaganda, and to explore how *Billiken's* visual identity found its way into Peronism.

Billiken's four missing weeks

For the first 30 years of *Billiken*, the material offered to the magazine's readers was seldom anchored to their wider contemporary or political reality. *Billiken* occasionally published notices relating to public health announcements, such as regarding the 'patriotic duty' of fumigating against mosquitos (issue 1380, 29 April 1946), but news relating to national or international events was scarce. A photograph of Ramón Castillo, taken at the inauguration of the first Argentine Book Fair, is the only photograph of a president in 30 years of publication (issue 1222, 19 April 1943). From 1939 to 1945 there were only two pages relating to the Second World War, one featuring British evacuee children and another on an

exhibition of European children's art (issues 1141, 29 September 1941, and 1222, 19 April 1943). In terms of national events, the San Juan earthquake of January 1944 merited a mention, if only to draw attention to Editorial Atlántida's own fundraising efforts. Atlántida donated 10,000 pesos and all employees contributed a day's pay, raising an additional 6,000 pesos (issue 1263, 31 January). Incidentally, the San Juan fundraising event held in Buenos Aires passed into popular memory as the occasion of Perón and Evita's first meeting. Over *Billiken*'s first three decades, the scarcity of incursions from the contemporary world into the magazine compounds the sense of it operating cyclically and in its own time and space. It also makes the infiltration of the contemporary political reality of Peronism into the magazine all the more striking.

Prior to *Billiken*'s 1949 break in publication, references to the Peronist regime were largely contained within small, framed notes containing announcements by the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión [Secretary of Labour and Social Security], where Perón had developed his power base since its creation in 1943. These notes are similar in length and presentation to the earlier public health announcements and do not immediately appear to be out of place in the magazine:

La Dirección General de Asistencia Social de la Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión aspira a hacer llegar su ayuda a toda persona desamparada o necesitada, sin distinción de sexo o edad (issue 1498, 2 August 1948).

[The General Management of Social Welfare of the Secretary of Labour and Social Security aspires to reach all who are vulnerable or in need, without distinction of sex or age.]

In the same August 1948 issue, and framed within the same serialised story, an editorial note encouraged readers to carry out a good deed by taking books to hospitals, prisons and children's homes. As Perón was laying the foundations for a welfare state and shaping the new order that would send him to power, *Billiken* was still promoting philanthropy and charity, and representing the world view of its middle-class readers whose parents had the disposable income to buy the magazine for them. Aside from the Secretaría notes, there were only two other references to the contemporary political context before the break in publication. The first, placed in a discreet frame, reads:

Con todo el pueblo hemos repudiado el criminal complot contra el Jefe del Estado y su señora esposa, y lo repudiamos con toda nuestra energía, pues tan salvaje atentado, incompatible con la civilización, hiere nuestra convicción y nuestros sentimientos (issue 1508, 11 October 1948).

[Together with all the country we have repudiated the criminal plot against the Head of State and his lady wife, and we repudiate it with all our energy, as such a savage attack, incompatible with civilisation, wounds our conviction and our feelings.]

Here, neither Perón, Evita nor the perpetrator of the attack, Cipriano Reyes, were referred to by name. In the second reference, *Billiken* published a double spread of photographs of a festival of physical education, which, a caption tells us, was attended by the minister of education, also unnamed (issue 1516, 6 December 1948).

Within the Atlántida archives there are no records— they either do not exist or I have not been permitted to see them—of conversations, correspondence or business decisions that would shed light on what happened during the four-week printers' strike in 1949 that led *Billiken* to increase its Peronist propaganda content. The publishing house's institutional memory of *Billiken*'s dealings with the Peronist regime was constructed from recollections of former employees and is based on anecdotes that cannot be corroborated by archival documentation. These anecdotes create an overarching narrative of *Billiken*'s ability to endure and resist during Peronism, even as the regime cut the publishing house's paper supply, and this in itself offers a valuable insight into Atlántida's self-image. Tellingly, the institutional memory of *Billiken* under Perón does not include reference to the break in publication or any comments regarding *Billiken*'s subsequent publication of Peronist material. Luján Gutiérrez, long-standing former director of Atlántida's *Gente* magazine, recalled conversations with former colleagues who had been at the publishing house during the Peronist period and clarified that the quota of paper allowed by the government applied to the publishing house as a whole and that the decision of how to distribute that paper would have been taken internally. In order to protect the circulation of the magazine in Argentina, *Billiken*'s Pan-Latin American ambitions were curtailed and its 'Grancolombiano' edition distributed in Colombia and Venezuela was shelved.⁵ Retired head of systems Abel Valenzuela remembered a conversation with Constancio C. Vigil's former secretary who stated that Perón had reduced the paper supply and the matter was eventually resolved through the Ministry of the Interior. Perón is alleged to have said: 'Sé que Constancio Vigil no me quiere, pero déjenlo entrar papel porque tampoco usa sus medios para atacarme' [I know that Constancio Vigil does not like me but let him get paper in because neither does he use his media to attack me]. Regardless of whether this can be taken as accurate or representative of what Perón may have said, or thought, about Vigil, it is offered here because of the emphasis placed on Vigil's personal relationship with Peronism. Editorial Atlántida's institutional memory, retained by retired employees who had worked with the Vigil family, rejects the notion that Vigil was in any way aligned to Peronism, despite his inclusion in Goldar's list of intellectuals close to the regime.⁶ The key idea expressed here is that the Vigil family did not support Perón but pursued a policy of what Plotkin has called 'passive consent'.⁷

There is enough historical context to suggest that, during these four missing weeks, *Billiken* entered into a period of negotiation with the regime regarding the extent of the propaganda that the magazine would have to publish in order to ensure its continued access to the government-controlled paper supply. What is surprising about this situation is not so much that a conservative house like

Atlántida published Peronist propaganda but that *Billiken* was able to publish as little as it did, and that the Vigil family retained control of their publishing empire. The Peronist regime's expropriation of *La Prensa*, Argentina's largest daily newspaper, is the most famous example of Peronist press control, but this title was just one of the constituent parts of what Cane calls Perón's 'para-state media apparatus' with major opposition newspapers *El Mundo*, *Crítica*, *Noticias Gráficas* and *La Razón* already having been brought under Peronist control. Cane states that this apparatus was assembled by those closest to Eva and Perón via a myriad of strategies 'both behind closed doors and in the streets' and that included 'popular violence against newspaper buildings, denial of paper quotas and official advertising, labor slowdowns and bureaucratic footdragging'.⁸

Perón's media strategy was constructed out of the problematic relationship between the owners of print media companies and the state that had been brewing since the 1930s. Perón had laid the groundwork for the Journalists' Statute under Edelmiro J. Farrell's administration and this was ratified after the 1946 election, redefining the relationship between the state and the media as it established professional norms for the industry.⁹ Also, at this time, Perón was able to evoke an existing anti-speculation law that had been passed in 1939 as a result of the onset of the Second World War. In a letter to Gabriela Mistral dated 30 May 1942, Constancio C. Vigil wrote that: 'Nosotros nos salvaremos [*sic*] las dificultades que plantea la guerra a los gráficos porque teníamos gran provisión de papel en previsión de lo que está sucediendo' [We will save ourselves from the difficulties posed by the war on the graphic industry because we had a large stockpile of paper in anticipation of what is happening].¹⁰ By the following year, however, notices in *Billiken* apologised to readers in other countries that, due to paper shortages, the central double-colour feature page, or *lámina*, had been suspended (issues 1210, 25 January 1943, and 1245, 27 September 1943). As Varela confirms, the scarcity of paper was a real, international crisis but the ability to control the provision of imported newsprint gave Perón the opportunity to put pressure on opposition print media and was a factor in many agreeing to sell to agents of the regime.¹¹ Even within this framework of 'passive consent', there are hints that the relationship between the regime and Atlántida may have been more complex than the publishing house's institutional memory suggests. According to Sirvén, in 1949 the Buenos Aires Graphic Federation had reached an agreement with the Secretaría to resolve the strikers' pay dispute but the membership did not support it.¹² For Cane, this 'wildcat strike' 'presented the "workers' government" with the horrifying specter of its own deepening internal contradictions: Peronist labor combating Peronist capital'.¹³ In particular, this confrontation with printers put the proprietors of newspapers and publishing houses on the same side as the government, at least temporarily, and may have been a factor in Atlántida's negotiation of its relationship with the regime.

In October 1949 *Billiken* gained a competitor in the form of *Mundo Infantil*, published by Editorial Haynes, where Constancio C. Vigil had founded *Mundo Argentino* in 1911. The Haynes portfolio also included the magazines *El Hogar* and *Selecta* as well as *El Mundo*, then Latin America's second-largest

newspaper.¹⁴ Editorial Haynes was in Peronist hands by early 1949 and in 1951 added to its portfolio *Mundo Peronista*, the official magazine of the Escuela Superior Peronista, a training school for Peronist leaders.¹⁵ Haynes also started publishing Peronist versions of existing magazines. In direct competition with Atlántida's publications were *Mundo Deportivo*, the Peronist answer to *El Gráfico*, *Mundo Agrario*, created to compete with *La Chacra*, and *Mundo Infantil*, the regime's alternative to *Billiken*. Contrary to Plotkin's claim that *Mundo Infantil* 'started a new pattern in children's magazines', *Mundo Infantil* based itself on *Billiken*. The content cited by Plotkin as evidence of *Mundo Infantil*'s originality—stories that 'dealt with things that interested both children and young boys and girls', 'fixed sections on model planes, sports, and a female advisor to whom girls wrote to seek advice for their personal problems'—all has precedence in *Billiken*. Plotkin also claims that *Mundo Infantil* in a move that was 'quite unusual for the times ... featured material that could help children with their homework', when *Billiken* had been offering this for some time.¹⁶ In 1949, when *Mundo infantil* took over from *Figuritas* as *Billiken*'s main competitor, it drew inspiration from both magazines and its originality lay in the Peronist reconfiguration of their content. The process is similar to that examined by Gené: the images associated with Peronist visual aesthetics such as representations of *descamisados* [shirtless ones], workers and working families did not originate in Peronism but were elaborated upon and reconfigured by the regime.¹⁷ *Mundo Infantil* reconfigured content found in *Billiken* that was itself there as a result of reconfigurations of earlier publishing conventions. For example, the Peronist take on the 'Great Men' trope, so familiar to readers of *Billiken*, can be found in *Mundo Infantil*'s 1951 section 'Hombres de la Nueva Argentina' [Men of the New Argentina]. One of the men chosen is Carlos Aloé, candidate for governor of Buenos Aires and the director of Editorial ALEA and *Mundo Infantil*.¹⁸ Whilst *Mundo Infantil* replicated the conservative gender norms of *Billiken* in the way it addressed girl readers, there were key differences in the content directed at the male future citizen reading the magazine. Whereas *Billiken*, at this time, gave no real steer as to children's desirable future occupations other than that they be virtuous, *Mundo Infantil* promoted the recently established technical schools by guiding boys towards technical professions.¹⁹ The mapping of *Mundo Infantil* onto *Billiken*'s existing sections supports Bontempo's argument that *Billiken* created a 'código comunicacional' [communicational code] for Argentine children's magazines.²⁰ The continuities between the magazines also extended to the editorial construction of childhood. Both publications constructed children as future citizens but, for *Mundo Infantil*, these citizens were to be Peronist.

Billiken's presence in the market is a major factor when considering why *Billiken* was allowed to exist alongside *Mundo Infantil* at a time when so many opposition publications were taken over by the Peronist regime. We can also look to Cane, who argues that the newspapers amassed by Perón were changed in political orientation but were not drastically altered in terms of graphic

identity, target audience and register, with the result that ‘the broad contours of the Buenos Aires editorial landscape remained fairly stable’. The idea was not to homogenise all the publications and risk alienating established audiences by creating a ‘Peronist journalism’: the goal, rather, was to create a ‘Peronist public.’²¹ Although Cane does not specifically consider magazines, this is helpful in terms of *Billiken*, particularly if we accept that the middle-class, opposition buying public (the parents of *Billiken*’s readers) were more likely to continue to buy *Billiken* than they were to switch to the Peronist *Mundo Infantil*. The Peronist propaganda content of *Billiken* was reduced and more selective than that of *Mundo Infantil* but it was guaranteed to reach *Billiken*’s significant readership. A notice in *Billiken* from 1950 supports Cane’s thesis. This thanked Editorial Haynes for having come to Atlántida’s aid following a fire in the printing workshop. The notice reports that Editorial Haynes, along with Editorial Emilio Rodríguez and Compañía General Fabril Financiera, offered help ‘en un espíritu de compañerismo que enaltece el periodismo nacional’ [in a spirit of companionship which ennobles national journalism] (issue 1597, 24 July 1950).²²

The ‘Year of the Liberator San Martín’ and Peronist propaganda in *Billiken*

Billiken’s first photograph of Perón shows him swearing in the new constitution and is placed above a photograph of the crowds in the Plaza del Congreso watching a military parade (issue 1528, 28 March 1949). The next photograph of Perón to feature him in a purely political context shows him being sworn in for his second presidential term in June 1952 (issue 1697, 23 June). From 1949 to 1952, the themes around which Peronist propaganda in *Billiken* were grouped illustrate the sociocultural proximity of *Billiken* to Peronism, even as they were politically incompatible, and highlight the conservative underpinnings of Peronism even as it presented itself as a radical break from the past. Other photographs of Perón, and Perón and Evita, in *Billiken* show them at events related to children and schools, rendering as less incongruous their presence in a children’s magazine unaccustomed to featuring political figures. The events reported in *Billiken* reflected only a small percentage of the regime’s initiatives for children, however. The scale of these is much more apparent in *Mundo Infantil*, with each issue dedicating several pages to Evita’s charitable foundation and the Torneos Infantiles Evita [The Evita Children’s Games].²³

A number of the photographs that *Billiken* published of Perón are of inaugurations: of the Ciudad Infantil [Children’s City] with Evita (issue 1545, 25 July 1949), of the Ribera Norte School Baths (issue 1573, 6 February 1950), and of the Argentine championship of children’s football (also with Evita, issue 1575, 20 February 1950). This event, by now called Campeonatos Infantiles Evita [Evita Children’s Championships], was featured in *Billiken* 1951 with

photographs of the competition finalists, and with photographs of Perón in the corresponding issues in 1952 and 1953.²⁴ In 1954 and 1955, Perón was photographed at the latest incarnation of the children's sporting event, the *Olimpiada de los Deportes Juveniles Juan Perón e Infantiles Evita* [Olympics of the Juan Perón Youth Sports and Evita Children's Sports]. According to Pons, photographs like these were part of the regime's visual propaganda in which sport was linked to morality, or virtue, and was shown as a space in which the youth could develop their national consciousness.²⁵ The desire to be present in every part of children's lives—at home, at school, in children's spiritual life and in their leisure time—was, as we have seen, also shared by *Billiken*.

Another suite of photographs of the presidential couple in *Billiken* featured them at commemorative events relating to the hundredth anniversary of the death of independence hero General José de San Martín in 1950, declared as 'Año del Libertador San Martín'. The commemorations culminated on 17 August, the anniversary of San Martín's death, in a ceremony in Huaura, Peru, attended by Perón and Evita and recorded in a double-page photographic spread in *Billiken* (issue 1603, 4 September 1950). One photograph shows Perón ringing the Huaura bells to mark the exact time that San Martín 'entró en la inmortalidad' [passed into immortality], a phrase that would be used a little under two years later to mark Evita's death and was repeated on the radio every day at the hour of her death for the remainder of Perón's time as president. In January 1951, another double-page spread of photographs marked the closing of the San Martín year in Mendoza, the province and city on the edge of the Andes from where San Martín led his liberating army. These photographs, linking Perón and Evita to San Martín, helped to integrate the presidential couple into the pages of *Billiken* (issue 1622, 15 January 1951).

Of all the founding fathers, San Martín holds the undisputed prime position in Argentine history, as the scale of his achievements and the timeframe in which he accomplished them allowed his legacy to rise above and beyond the later political and ideological battles over Argentine nationhood and national identity. Such was the Liberator's symbolic power that the proponents of competing liberal and revisionist narratives of Argentine history were united in their admiration for him. By respecting the 'official', liberal or *mitrista* history hitherto taught in schools and promoted by *Billiken*, Peronism did not engage in the historical revisionism that emphasises the role played by federalist caudillos such as Juan Manuel de Rosas. Rather, by identifying himself with San Martín, Perón sought to legitimise his 'New Argentina' as the manifestation of the nation's true destiny, faithful to the ideals of the independence movement.

As part of the 1950 commemorations, all newspapers, magazines, books and official documents were obliged to include the motto 'Año del Libertador San Martín'.²⁶ *Billiken* included the motto on every right-side page, where it replaced the usual saying, moral message or trivia statement in a tradition first instigated by founder Constancio C. Vigil. *Billiken* exceeded its obligations by dedicating the first cover of the year to the 'Año del Libertador' with an illustration of the monument in Plaza San Martín in Buenos Aires. The first contents page

of that issue displays an illustration of San Martín overlaid by text, the first paragraph of which reads:

Este año de 1950 es el consagrado al Libertador general don José de San Martín. El gobierno y todo el pueblo se aprestan a conmemorarlo. “Billiken” rinde homenaje al Gran Capitán y dice con todos los niños argentinos: ¡Gloria al Libertador! (issue 1568, 2 January 1950).

[This year of 1950 is consecrated to the Liberator, General Don José de San Martín. The government and all the people are preparing to commemorate him. *Billiken* pays homage to the Great Captain and says, together with all Argentine children, Glory to the Liberator!]

The first photograph of Perón related to the ‘Año del Libertador’ shows him at the ‘Justicialist’ primary school, in the neighbourhood of Los Perales, in an event to mark the beginning of the school year. The caption reads:

El presidente de la Nación, general Juan Perón, dando por iniciada, con un brillante discurso, la campaña de alfabetización, que se desarrollará con el lema ‘En la patria de San Martín no debe haber analfabetos’ (issue 1580, 27 March 1950).²⁷

[The president of the nation, general Juan Perón, launching, with a brilliant speech, the literacy campaign which will be rolled out with the motto ‘There must be no illiterates in the homeland of San Martín.’]

The rationale for linking San Martín to literacy in this motto was fleshed out in a speech given by Oscar Ivanissevich, minister of education, at the conference marking the universal literacy campaign’s launch. Literacy, he said, was so central to Perón’s vision because it would play a fundamental role in ensuring the equality of the citizenry: ‘Todos los argentinos serán iguales porque todos podrán leer a SAN MARTÍN a través de Mitre’ [All Argentines shall be equal because all will be able to read San Martín through Mitre].²⁸ In *Billiken*, however, no further comment was offered on the campaign or its evocation of San Martín and this Peronist identification of San Martín with education and literacy was ignored by the magazine. In Ivanissevich’s 1950 back-to-school message to the readers of the Ministry of Education’s communications bulletin, he referred to Perón as ‘Primer Maestro de la Nueva Escuela Argentina’ [First Teacher of the New Argentine School].²⁹ This honorific was never used in *Billiken* and the magazine resisted displacing Sarmiento from his position as Argentina’s great educator, pioneer of the schooling system and literacy campaigner. *Billiken* continued to herald Sarmiento as the father of Argentine education throughout the Peronist period, particularly in its issues commemorating 11 September as the Day of the Teacher. The issue corresponding to the Day of the Teacher in 1950 was largely dedicated to Sarmiento as usual. In this issue, the page on

'Efemérides del Libertador' [The Liberator's historic anniversaries] was placed alongside 'Recuerdos de Sarmiento' [Memories of Sarmiento], emphasising the parity of the two figures (issue 1604, 11 September 1950). These details reveal that *Billiken's* editors tried to embrace the 'Año del Libertador' on their own terms, resisting, where possible, the promotion of the link between Perón and San Martín.

The 'Año del Libertador' was embraced by *Billiken*, but to suggest that all content relating to San Martín published by *Billiken* during this year should be considered Peronist propaganda would fail to take into account *Billiken's* pre-existing affinity with, and promotion of, San Martín. In 1950, the recurring sections 'Diccionario sanmartiniano' [San Martín Dictionary] and comic-style 'Efemérides del Libertador' were in keeping with *Billiken's* previous three decades of San Martín-related content. Also fitting seamlessly into *Billiken* was the full page dedicated to Segundo Manuel Argañaraz's lyrics to the 'Hymn for the Liberator', the winning entry in a national competition organised by the state-led National Commission of Homage to the Liberator (issue 1578, 13 March 1950). By the time of the 'Año del Libertador', Atlántida already had a sizeable back catalogue of San Martín-related material, which straddled the divide between education (school material) and entertainment (serialised fiction and comics). The more innovatively presented of the two, *Los granaderos de la libertad*, was a serialised graphic historical novel focussing on San Martín's military career and his command of the Regiment of Mounted Grenadiers in the Argentine War of Independence. Written by Gabriel Fagnilli Fuentes and illustrated by Carlos Lugo, it was published in *Billiken* from issue 1324, 2 April 1945, to issue 1463, 1 December 1947. From 1944 to 1947, Arturo Capdevila contributed four serialised historical novels based on San Martín's personal life. *La infanta mendocina* [The Infanta from Mendoza] invites readers to discover 'los detalles íntimos de la vida de un prócer a través de su hija [Mercedes]' [the intimate details of the life of a founding father through his daughter Mercedes]. *El niño poeta* [The child poet] looks at San Martín's childhood, and *El abuelo inmortal* [The immortal grandfather] focusses on his legacy. The final novel, *Remeditos de Escalada*, is the story of 'la abnegada esposa de San Martín' [San Martín's selfless wife].³⁰ Following serialisation in *Billiken*, Capdevila's novels were published by Atlántida's books division as part of the *Biblioteca Billiken* children's book collection. They were allocated a place in the Blue Series, *Hombres de América* [Men of America], underscoring the inconsequential role played by Mercedes and Remedios in their own biographies. In April 1950, the four Capdevila novels were republished in special editions in homage to the 'Año del Libertador' and were joined by a new edition of Alberto Larrán de Vere's 1943 biography of San Martín. Advertisements emphasised the books' affordability: these special editions were still priced at 4 pesos 50 cents, the same as other *Biblioteca Billiken* books with colour illustrations. Their republication not only allowed Atlántida to exploit the

commercial opportunities afforded by Perón's focus on San Martín, but also enabled those in charge of *Billiken* to control the discourse around the magazine's commemorations of this founding father. These pre-existing *Billiken* publications had been written 'con el mejor homenaje que un escritor puede rendir a San Martín' [as the best homage that a writer can pay to San Martín] and were perfectly suited to the centenary at a time when 'sentimos la necesidad de asociarnos de alguna manera al momento que vive la nación' [we feel the need to associate ourselves in some way with the present moment that the nation is living] (advertisement in *Billiken*, issue 1589, 29 May 1950).

Given San Martín's prominence in *Billiken*, it is certain that the magazine would have commemorated the centenary of San Martín's death even if the government of the day had not obliged the editors to include such material. If there is a line to be drawn across *Billiken*'s content that divides business as usual from propaganda, the literary and educational material related to San Martín could be placed on one side and photographs of Perón and Evita at San Martín-related events on the other. The consideration of how blurred any line might be during Peronism is useful in the context of examining *Billiken* in the later military dictatorship (1976–1983). During this period, which will be the focus of Chapter 4, the conservative content that *Billiken* had always published blurs into propaganda when viewed in the context of the political moment. That these blurred lines exist at all in a children's magazine underscores the power of this medium to both reflect and shape society, and to project visions of nationhood onto child readers, constructing children simultaneously as future citizens and current political subjects. In *Billiken*, Perón was removed as the mediator between San Martín and the readers, and the commemorations of the centenary were divested of their Peronist political context. The underlying assertion was that it was *Billiken* that was best qualified to pay homage to San Martín. Furthermore, it was the San Martín imagined by *Billiken*—not by Perón—that was commemorated by this magazine and its publishing house.

As Peronism encroached into *Billiken*, first with the publication of propaganda photographs and, after 1952, with content from the Peronist school curriculum, the aesthetics of *Billiken* and its 'communicational code' also found their way into the grand Peronist tome *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*. Published by the State Control of the Presidency of the Nation, led by Colonel Dalmiro Jorge Adaro, who would later oversee the Secretariat of State Intelligence (SIDE), this imposing physical object measures 35cm × 27cm and contains 806 pages filled with full-colour illustrations. The title references the 1949 Justicialist constitution, which proclaimed Argentina to be 'una nación "socialmente justa, económicamente libre y políticamente soberana"' [a nation 'socially just, economically free and politically sovereign'].³¹ The book employs an illustrated graphic format to herald the achievements of the regime so far by examining the state of the country in 1943, the progress made to 1950, and the

projection forward to an even more prosperous future. For Punte, this notion of time links *Justa, libre, soberana* to children: 'los niños materializan el futuro. Son presencia actual de algo que está por hacerse y que apunta a otra dimensión temporal, la de aquello que todavía no es' [children materialise the future. They are the current presence of something which is about to happen and that points towards another temporal dimension, that which is not yet here].³² Perón linked the central themes of *Justa, libre, soberana* to children during the speech inaugurating the academic year of 1950 that was featured in *Billiken* in issue 1580. Perón noted that the name of the school—Justicialista—'nos pone en contacto con todas las aspiraciones de una patria justa, libre y soberana con que soñamos' [puts us in contact with all the aspirations of the just, free and sovereign homeland of which we dream].³³

A note in the third and final edition of *Justa, libre, soberana* clarifies that the volume's material had been produced solely by existing state employees with no contracting of external services.³⁴ The names of 18 artists appear at the end of the first edition and include Amleto Scarzello, watercolourist, illustrator and employee of the Ministry of Public Works, Walter Ciocca, creator of the gauche *Hormiga negra* comic strip published in *La Razón* in 1950, and Horacio Alvarez Boero, an artist employed by Office of Post Propaganda, who would later produce several series of postal stamps.³⁵ As *Justa, libre, soberana*'s illustrators came from a number of different artistic backgrounds, there are a variety of styles and influences present in the book's illustrations, ranging, as Santoro describes, from Soviet-influenced political propaganda to images reminiscent of US post-war consumer advertising, to popular graphic art.³⁶ In Gené's study of the Peronist images of workers, she describes the process by which the regime appropriated existing graphic traditions and reinscribed them with new symbolic meanings. Recognising the regime's borrowings from graphic print culture, Gené states: 'No fueron ... las artes eruditas sino las gráficas el vehículo privilegiado para visualizar la acción y los objetivos del gobierno' [The graphic arts, rather than the erudite arts, were the privileged vehicle used to visualise the government's action and objectives].³⁷ One of Evita's portraits that was extensively reproduced in political posters was painted by Raúl Manteola. Manteola's contribution to Atlántida extended beyond the portraits of Argentina's Great Men commissioned by *Billiken* and he produced covers for *Para Ti* from 1935 for nearly 30 years.³⁸ By illustrating Evita in the manner of a *Para Ti* cover, Manteola brought the aesthetics of women's weekly cover artwork into the sphere of political propaganda.

According to Santoro, the influence of popular graphic art in *Justa, libre, soberana* renders its style naïve, and the quality of some of the illustrations varies downwards from the amateurish bordering on the incompetent.³⁹ The book's image-based communication strategy leads Soria and Ballent to question who its intended readership was. For Soria, the book is an instruction manual, probably intended for use in schools, and she also identifies Peronist propaganda's

use of children's and school texts to reach a popular audience.⁴⁰ For Ballent, the book's pastel-coloured images recall school reading books and its historical, geographical and statistical content presupposes use in schools. Simultaneously, however, Ballent recognises that the book's use of images speaks of collective mythmaking: 'la obra parece atribuir a su público de ciudadanos las habilidades e intereses de una población infantil. En otras palabras, el lector presupuesto es un niño, y el lector real se siente invitado a serlo, en sentido literal o figurado' [the work seems to attribute to its readership of citizens the skills and interests of children. In other words, the presumed reader is a child and the real reader feels invited to be one, in a literal or figurative sense].⁴¹

Santoro, Soria and Ballent all identify the mixture of influences including illustrations for children and the popular graphic art found in print media, yet only Soria makes a brief reference to the similarity of *Justa, libre, soberana*'s 'Algunos jalones de nuestra historia' [Some milestones in our history] to *Billiken*'s regular page 'Nuestra historia' [Our history], which had been published from 1932.⁴² The graphic similarity goes beyond that section, however, as many of the pages of *Justa, libre, soberana* use versions of a standard grid format in which captioned panels are linked in rows, as in comics. In *Justa, libre, soberana*, sections as diverse as the Statute of the Rural Worker (see Figure 2.2), 'Hogares de tránsito' [shelters for women and children], 'Los niños santiagueños empiezan a vivir' [Santiago's children start living] and 'Algunas reformas universitarias' [Some university reforms], amongst others, reproduce *Billiken*'s organisation of graphic material.⁴³ Many other pages modify the style by omitting borders or angling images.

Santoro states that 'una síntesis radical que aporta *Justa, libre, soberana*, son los pictogramas que enumeran casas, escuelas, barcos, fábricas ... en centenares de cuadrículas, como en un extenso inventario gráfico' [a radical synthesis that *Justa ...* brings are the pictograms which enumerate houses, schools, boats, factories ... in hundreds of grids, like an extensive graphic inventory].⁴⁴ This use of images organised in grids to present educational material could not be considered 'radical' by 1950. This system was not exclusive to, and was not invented by, *Billiken*, but *Billiken* pioneered the transmission of this to a mass readership. From 1937, when *Billiken*'s educational material was increased and formalised, emphasis was placed on the visuality of this material. *Billiken*'s graphic presentation of history was extended from this point to other subjects including geography and vocabulary, creating, in effect, a graphic inventory presented in squares and grids, of objects ranging from animals to machinery and from plants to rural customs. The Peronist visual aesthetics showcased in *Justa, libre, soberana* appropriated and reconfigured the pre-existing graphic layouts used in *Billiken*, widening the readership of image-based pedagogical material from children to include the adults who also needed to be educated about their new roles, rights and responsibilities in the 'New Argentina'.

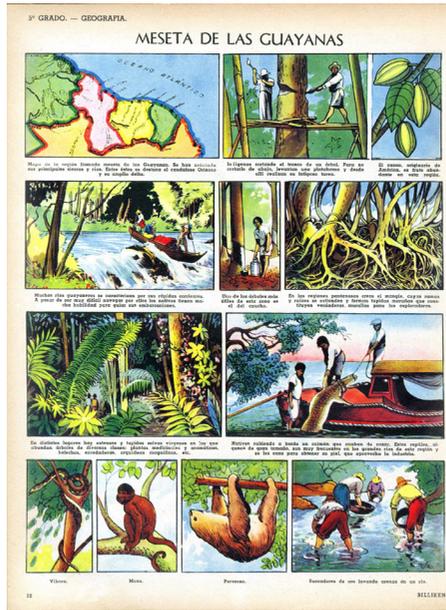


Figure 2.1: Image-led school material, in this example the Guiana Plateau for third-grade geography. *Billiken*, issue 1176, 1 June 1942. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

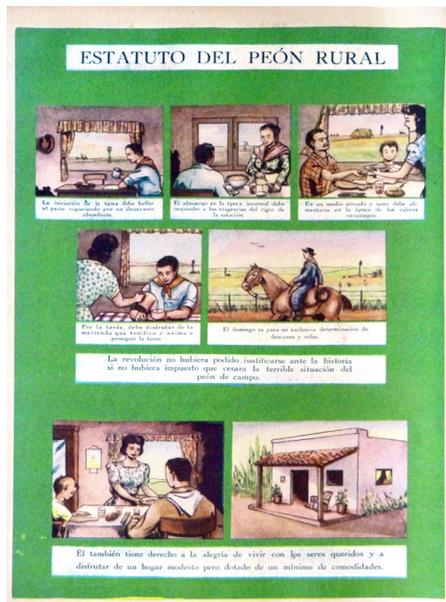


Figure 2.2: There is a similar layout in the presentation of material in *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, 1950 (p. 162). Anonymous work, public domain. Photograph courtesy of Rosana Drossi.

Evita's death and children's Peronist privilege

In 1950, *Billiken* and Peronism were largely held in balance, with each extracting benefit from their association: the regime by transmitting select propaganda to households of different political affiliations who may not have chosen to buy *Mundo Infantil*, and *Billiken* by capitalising on the commercial opportunities afforded by the 'Año del Libertador'. In 1952 this balance shifted with the amount of Peronist material published in *Billiken* increasing, not least because of the references to Evita's death on Saturday 26 July. This was acknowledged by *Billiken* at the earliest possible opportunity in issue 1703 on Monday 4 August. The title page of issue 1703 was replaced with Numa Ayrinhac's 1950 portrait of Evita that had been used for the cover of Evita's book *La razón de mi vida*.

The caption in *Billiken* can be translated as:

Mrs Eva Perón, Spiritual Leader of the nation, whose passing has motivated moving demonstrations of grief, and who continues to live in the hearts of those on whom she lavished her love and tenderness in the vast and admirable endeavour inspired by the beautiful motto that 'children are the only privileged ones'.



Figure 2.3: The notice of Evita's death in *Billiken*. Issue 1703, 4 August 1952. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

The phrase 'En la Nueva Argentina los únicos privilegiados son los niños' [In the New Argentina, children are the only privileged ones] is number 12 of the 'Veinte verdades peronistas' [20 Peronist Truths] referred to in Perón's speech from 17 October 1950. Prior to this, Perón had already called children 'los únicos privilegiados' in the context of schools and literacy, in his speech on the inauguration of the school year in 1950, made at the same event reported by *Billiken* in issue 1580 in March 1950 and referenced earlier. In his speech, Perón proclaimed: 'Que sean ellos [los niños] los únicos privilegiados en el país; que reciban en cada escuela el privilegio que les corresponde ... y que aprendan cuanto deben aprender los niños argentinos para asegurar el futuro de la patria' [May they be the only privileged ones in the country, and may they be given, in every school, this privilege that is owed to them ... and may they learn all that Argentine children must learn to ensure the future of the homeland].⁴⁵ The 'Veinte verdades' were then printed in full in the first issue of *Mundo Peronista*, on 15 July 1951, and also on the final page of *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*. The shortened 'Los únicos privilegiados...' captioned the cover image of *Mundo Peronista*'s issue 6, which shows Evita surrounded by children. In issue 8, the magazine's page dedicated to children, 'Tu página de pibe peronista' [Your Peronist Kid's Page], included one of the few photographs of children to appear in this page and the reminder: 'No olvidés nunca, pibe peronista, que en la Nueva Argentina de Perón "los únicos privilegiados son los niños"' [Never forget, Peronist kid, that in Perón's New Argentina 'children are the only privileged ones'].

This cornerstone of Justicialist political doctrine, taken, as *Mundo Peronista* tells us, from the 'pensamiento vivo de Perón' [living thought of Perón], is turned into a 'hermoso lema' [beautiful motto] by *Billiken* in Evita's death notice. It is further depoliticised and divested of its Peronist context with the magazine's omission of 'Nueva' from 'Nueva Argentina'. Indeed, this 'beautiful motto' was adopted by *Billiken* as a way of reconciling the magazine's spotlighting of Evita in *Billiken*, much in the same way as the earlier photographs of the presidential couple largely featured their participation in events related to children and schools. From its inclusion in Evita's death notice, the phrase 'los únicos privilegiados son los niños' was repeated in the following week's issue, the first opportunity to properly address Evita's death and which also featured three pages of photographs of Evita surrounded by children in different locations across the country (issue 1704). Similarly, on the first anniversary of Evita's death, *Billiken* placed a photograph of Evita on the title page with a caption referring to children as 'los únicos privilegiados' followed by a double spread of photographs of a recent military parade (issue 1753, 20 July 1953).

In Evita's death notice, *Billiken*'s editors arrived at a respectful and tactful accommodation of the nation's grief that did not explicitly express that Atlántida's directors and employees were amongst those saddened by the First Lady's death. As we would expect, this stood in huge contrast to the outpouring of

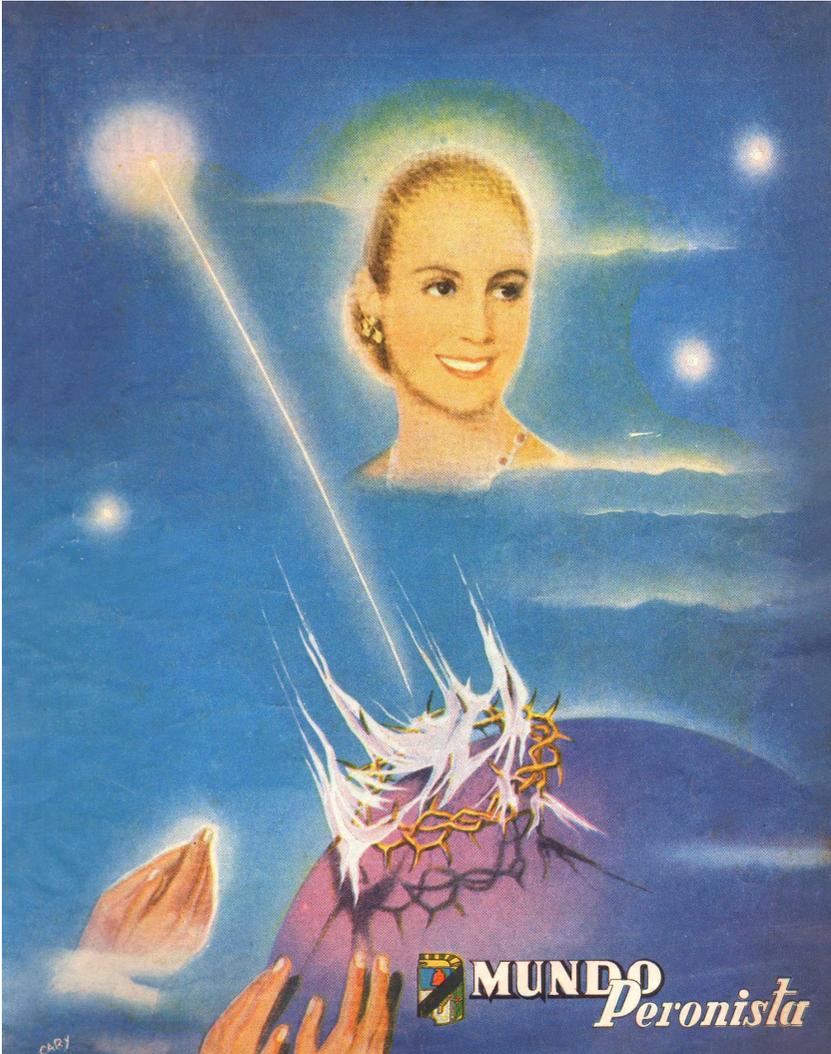


Figure 2.4: The cover of *Mundo Peronista*, issue 26, 1 August 1952. Anonymous work, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mundo_Peronista_-_Revista_n%C2%BA26.pdf.

grief in the corresponding issue of *Mundo Peronista*. All 91 issues of *Mundo Peronista* featured either Perón or Evita or both on the cover, in either illustrated versions of photographs or reproduction of portraits. Versions of Evita's portrait by Ayrinhac had been used for issues 3, 7, 9 and 25 but it appeared in issue 26 with religious imagery, in keeping with her devotees' perception of her saintliness.

In that week's 'Tu página de pibe peronista', there was, first, an acknowledgement of the reader's grief: 'La que te quiso como una madre, querido pibe, está hoy en el Cielo' [She who loved you like a mother, dear kid, is today in Heaven] and later an exhortation never to refer to Evita in the past tense, 'Porque los seres que han sembrado de actos grandes su camino jamás mueren' [Because those who have sown their way with great deeds never die]. Another passage mixes emotive language, religious imagery and the reinforcement of Justicialist discourse:

No puedes ver la corona de luz que Evita luce en estos instantes. Mucho más luminosa que todos los diamantes de la tierra ... Esa corona deben haberla hecho los ángeles con las lágrimas de dolor que ella enjugó en los ojos de los enfermos, de los viejecitos, de los niños y de los pobres (*Mundo Peronista*, issue 26, 1 August 1952).

[You cannot see the crown of light that Evita is wearing at this instant. It is much more luminous than all the diamonds of the earth ... This crown must have been made by the angels from the tears of suffering that she wiped away from the old, from children, and from the poor.]

The corresponding issue of *Billiken* and the following three issues all displayed a black mourning band on top left corner of the cover image, which was repeated on the title page. With the covers of issues 1703 and 1704 dedicated to the anniversary of San Martín's death, the following two covers would normally have been illustrated by Lino Palacio. Instead, issue 1705 depicts children sitting quietly and attentively listening to an older girl read to them, and 1706 shows a blond-haired toddler peering over the bars of his cot. The cover artists' names are not given and both illustrations are drawn in a style reminiscent of early *Billiken* covers. The incongruity of these cover images suggests that further accommodation had been made for the mourning issues, with Palacio's humorous and irreverent style deemed inappropriate.

The focus on children was maintained in *Billiken's* commemoration of the anniversaries of Evita's death, the final one occurring just weeks before Perón was deposed in September 1955. There was no moderation of the covers in these instances as all three feature Lino Palacio artwork. The second anniversary issue used for the title page the same photograph of Evita as had appeared in issue 1704 from shortly after her death (issue 1806, 26 July 1954). The caption for this depiction of Evita, surrounded by children, references all she did for 'los humildes' [the humble ones] and, in particular, 'los niños'. By focussing on

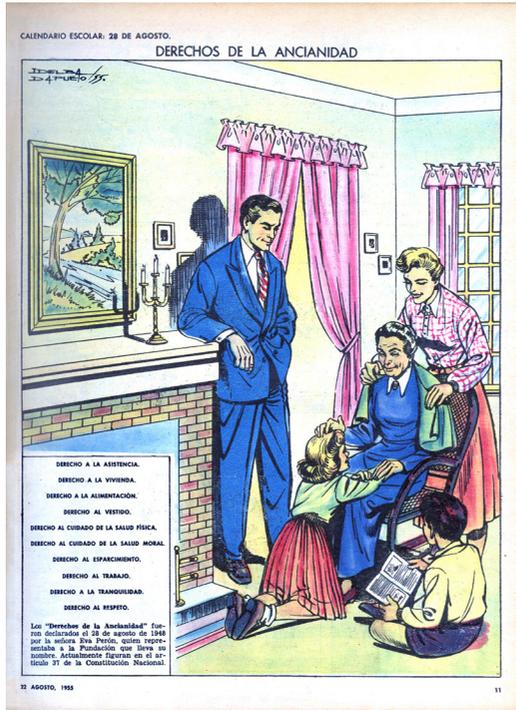


Figure 2.5: ‘Rights of the elderly’. Illustration by Idelba Dapueto, *Billiken*, issue 1862, 28 August 1955. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

children, *Billiken* was able to tailor the nature of its tributes, keeping them within the contours of a children’s magazine. A shift in this content starts to take place as early as issue 1706. In addition to the photographs of Evita’s funeral which occupied two pages, an illustrated page reproduced the ‘Derechos de la Ancianidad’ [Rights of the elderly], taken, we are told, from a speech made by Eva Perón on behalf of her foundation. Its inclusion extends Evita’s presence in *Billiken* beyond the connection with children to encompass the other vulnerable beneficiaries of welfare according to Justicialist political discourse. In doing so, *Billiken* includes more of what Girbal-Blacha terms the ‘protagonists’ of the Peronist era.⁴⁶ *Billiken*’s visual representation of the rights of the elderly from 1955 has the distinction of being drawn by Idelba Dapueto, a pioneer woman Argentine comic artist and professional illustrator.⁴⁷

By the third anniversary of Evita’s death, in 1955, she was no longer featured on the title page but her death had now passed into the ‘Calendario escolar’ [school calendar], where photographs are of Evita surrounded by children, and of initiatives for children she supported, including the Ciudad Infantil (issue 1858, 25 July 1955). Given the increase of Peronist material in *Billiken* from

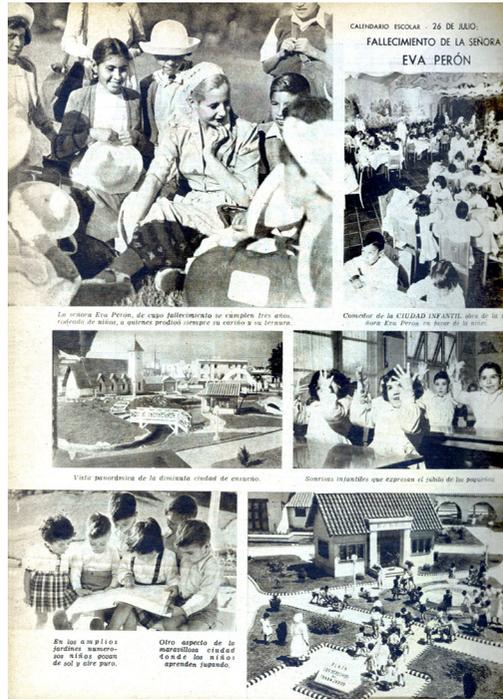


Figure 2.6: The anniversary of the death of Eva Perón integrated into *Billiken's* school calendar. *Billiken*, issue 1858, 25 July 1955.

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1953, specifically with the inclusion of material related to Perón's Segundo Plan Quinquenal [Second Five-Year Plan], it is surprising that it took until 1955 to incorporate Evita into the school calendar.

Billiken and the Segundo Plan Quinquenal (1953–1955)

The Second Five-Year Plan was approved in December 1952 and passed into the school curriculum the following year. Mónica Rein identifies the Peronisation of the education system as a two-stage process. The first 'structural and institutional' stage focussed on building schools to increase equal access to education. This is reflected in photographs of schools published in *Billiken* in 1951, with accompanying text stating that hundreds had been opened in the previous few years:

Una de las preocupaciones fundamentales del gobierno presidido por el general don Juan D. Perón es la de proporcionar a la niñez modernos establecimientos educacionales ... para que pueda cumplirse en un

ambiente feliz la educación integral de todos los niños y jóvenes que habitan en nuestra querida patria (issue 1638, 7 May 1951).

[One of the fundamental preoccupations of the government presided by General Don Juan D. Perón is that of making available modern educational establishments to childhood so that the integral education of all children and young people who inhabit our beloved country can be carried out in a happy environment.]

The building project was the groundwork for the second phase, that of ‘manifest political indoctrination’, which would last until Perón was deposed.⁴⁸ The revised school curriculum was approved in 1951 but the rewritten school reading books were available only from 1953. From 1953, school textbooks incorporated the Second Five-Year Plan and manuals instructing teachers on how best to integrate the plan into lessons were also produced. The epigraph to one such manual is a quotation from Perón: ‘Nosotros estamos dedicados a entregar a los maestros la educación de nuestros hombres, persuadidos de que, al hacerlo, estamos poniendo en manos capaces y virtuosas la formación del espíritu, del intelecto argentino, de la propia Nación’ [We are dedicated to handing over the education of our men to our teachers, persuaded that, in doing so we are placing in capable and virtuous hands the formation of the Argentine spirit and intellect, of the nation itself].⁴⁹

As Artieda and Cañete demonstrate, Peronist school reading books transmitted the message that reading and studying was essential work if children were to participate in the construction of a collective future.⁵⁰ This is reminiscent of the editorial interventions found in *Billiken* in the 1930s, examined in the previous chapter, which promoted the practice of reading to guarantee a better future. Carli also detects two stages in the Peronist approach to children as she identifies the first mandate’s focus on ‘los únicos privilegiados’ giving way to the evocation of the ‘new generation of the year 2000’.⁵¹ Embedding the Segundo Plan Quinquenal within the school curriculum was one of the strategies of a political call to children. From 1953, *Billiken*’s educational material increasingly focussed on the key Peronist dates, which had by now been incorporated into the ‘Calendario escolar’, and curriculum content related to the Second Five-Year Plan. *Billiken*’s changing treatment of Peronism’s two key dates—17 October and the reinscribed 9 July—provides a barometer for the increasing influence of the regime on the magazine.

The symbolic birth of the Peronist movement on 17 October, celebrated as ‘Día de la Lealtad’ [Loyalty Day], marked the congregation of the masses on the Plaza de Mayo on that day in 1945 to demand Perón’s release from prison.⁵² The first mention of this in *Billiken*, in 1950, signalled Peronism’s inclusion into the *Billiken* universe. It was highlighted as a commemorative date now recognised under the ‘Calendario escolar’ and was depicted with an illustration, rather than a photograph (issue 1609, 18 October). Ballent identifies

the two poles of Peronist visual aesthetics as the use of illustration typified by *Justa, libre, soberana* and the modernism of photographs.⁵³ The other commemorative volume released to coincide with the 'Año del Libertador', *Argentina en marcha* [Argentina on the move], narrates a day in the life of the Argentine government through a collection of 250 photographs with accompanying text showcasing the achievements of the past four years. According to Soria, these photographs 'se presentan como testimonios visuales de una patria que se identifica con la nueva cultura del trabajo' [are presented as visual testimonies of a country which identifies with the new culture of work].⁵⁴ Although photography has been seen as more powerful than illustration for its function as *testimonio*, in the context of *Billiken*, illustration is the visual medium with the most power and significance when chosen for a portrait of an individual. For Perón to join *Billiken's* catalogue of illustrated Great Men meant that he had gained equivalence with them. Perón was not completely assimilated into the *Billiken* pantheon of Argentina's *próceres* as no Manteola portrait was commissioned for him by *Billiken* and he never appeared on a cover. However, his appearance in illustrated form inside the magazine projects the idea of historical posterity and integrates Peronism into *Billiken's* narrative of Argentine history.

In *Billiken's* first Loyalty Day illustration, Perón and Evita are on the balcony of the Casa Rosada looking out onto the crowds in the Plaza de Mayo. The balcony, draped in the colours of the Argentine flag, mirrors the banners held by the crowd, one of which reads 'Perón cumple' [Perón delivers]. Within the crowd, a schoolteacher is one of the most prominent figures. Distinguishable because of her white teacher's smock, she appears in profile with her arm outstretched towards the balcony. The caption reads that Perón and Evita 'contemplan la gran multitud reunida en la histórica Plaza de Mayo y agradecen las demostraciones de lealtad y simpatía del pueblo, que nunca les han faltado desde el 17 de Octubre de 1945' [contemplate the great multitude gathered in the historic Plaza de Mayo and thank the demonstrations of loyalty and kindness of the people, which they have never lacked since 17 October 1945] (issue 1609, 18 October 1950). In 1951, a photograph of the crowds in the Plaza de Mayo celebrating the anniversary of 17 October 1945 shares the page with another event in the October 'Calendario escolar', namely the death of President Julio Argentino Roca, remembered for leading the so-called 'Conquest of the desert' against the Indigenous populations. This is representative of the content in *Billiken* that preceded Peronism and that would continue to be featured beyond the regime. It took decades for Roca's military 'campaign' to be re-evaluated as genocide and he was replaced, by Evita, on the 100-peso banknote in 2012.

For Loyalty Day in 1952 the illustration from 1950 is reused (issue 1713, 13 October). The corresponding issue of 1953 features Columbus on the cover and, inside, a page of two photographs depicting 17 October: one showing Perón pinning medals to worthy Peronists and, below, another captioned: 'La enorme multitude reunida en Plaza de Mayo aclama con entusiasmo las

palabras del general Perón rememorando la histórica jornada de 1945' [The enormous multitude gathered in the Plaza de Mayo enthusiastically acclaim the words of General Perón remembering the historical day of 1945] (issue 1765, 12 October 1953). This issue also features a double page of captioned illustrations organised into a grid format, framed in the top left by 'Semana de Justicialismo' [Justicialist Week] as the single day of 17 October is now amplified into a whole week in the 'Calendario escolar'. The verso of this spread has five rows of panels dedicated to 'Social Justice', demonstrating the breadth of the regime's interventions from 'Workers' Rights' to the 'Children's City' to 'Homes for the Elderly'. On the facing page, four rows of five panels each are organised under 'Economic Independence', featuring illustrations dedicated to 'Industrial Progress', 'Nationalisation of the Central Bank' and 'Nationalisation of the Railways', amongst others. Below this, two rows depict 'Soberanía política' [Political Sovereignty], with illustrations that include a couple dancing *zamba* and the caption: 'Recuperación de nuestras tradiciones. Conciencia nacional' [Recuperation of our traditions. National consciousness] and women at the ballot box: 'Voto femenino' [Women's Vote] (see Figure 2.7). The grid format of these Second Five-Year Plan curriculum pages recalls the graphic design of *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, creating a circle of borrowings and transpositions with connect *Billiken* and Peronism in terms of visual identity.

Billiken's treatment of Independence Day followed a similar pattern. On 9 July 1947 Perón declared Argentina's 'economic independence' at the same house in Tucumán where independence had been declared on the same date in 1816. The treatment of this date in *Billiken* had the potential for greater impact than 17 October because it appeared in the issue that would normally be dedicated to the original 9 July, thus reinforcing this retrospective historical legitimisation of Peronism by placing the two side by side. In 1948, 1949 and 1950, *Billiken's* July independence issues dealt with 1816 as usual, with no mention of Peronism. In 1951 the Act of Economic Independence was surrounded by illustrations representing Argentina's economic wealth in the form of crops, beef, factories, trains and ships, and a mention of Perón in the caption (issue 1647, 9 July). The representation of the Act of Economic Independence in 1952 was very similar apart from the addition of an illustration of Perón at the proclamation and a subtle change in the framing of the text (issue 1699, 7 July). This was now presented as old document, yellowed with rough edges, and is a subtler version of the same text's appearance in *La Nación Argentina. Justa libre soberana*, where the ageing of the new document reinforces its link to the original Declaration of Independence.⁵⁵

In the 1953 issue, Perón's 9 July receives special treatment in the centre-page pull-out, which features an illustration of the 1816 Declaration of Independence above an illustration of Perón on the occasion of the 1947 proclamation of Economic Independence, presenting the two events as equivalent (issue 1751, 6 July). The illustration depicting 1816 had already appeared on *Billiken's* covers, most recently in 1949, and is a version of Francisco Fortuny's 1910 painting *El Congreso de Tucumán*.



Figure 2.7: School material in honour of the week of 17 October, 'Social Justice' and 'Economic Independence'. *Billiken*, issue 1765, 12 October 1953. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 2.8: Perón's Economic Independence of 1947, represented as a continuation of the 1816 Declaration of Independence. *Billiken*, issue 1751, 6 July 1953. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

By replicating this scene in the illustration of the Peronist Act of Independence, *Billiken* reproduced the Peronist discourse that sought to legitimise the regime by placing Perón on a par with the independence statesmen. The 9 July issues of 1954 and 1955 stand out for being the only *Billiken* issues that reference both dates of independence on the cover, as well as inside (issues 1803, 5 July 1954, and 1855, 4 July 1955). In 1954 the Casa de Tucumán is framed by the dates 1816 and 1947, and in 1955 schoolchildren are decorating, with ribbon in the colours of the national flag, a blackboard illustration of the same house (Figure 2.9).

Workers' Day, 1 May, predates and postdates Peronism but, as Plotkin shows, was appropriated by the regime.⁵⁶ This date did not appear regularly in *Billiken's* school calendar until 1951 with issues around that date featuring instead the Day of the Animal (29 April) and the Day of the 1853 Constitution, also falling on 1 May (see issue 1432, 28 April 1947). In 1951, a page of photographs of, mostly, men, representing different professions (the women are a nurse and a housewife) was offered for 1 May (issue 1637). In 1952, the photographs are replaced by illustrations and in 1953, the illustrations take on the grid format used for curriculum content related to the Segundo Plan Quinquenal (issues 1689 and 1741). In 1953, the page is framed as '1 de mayo: Día de los trabajadores' but here both the Plan and the 1949 National Constitution are referenced, and the title of the page is 'Derechos del trabajador' [Workers' rights]. The Workers' Rights taken, we are told, from article 37 of the National Constitution, appear in the centre of the 1 May pages in 1954 and 1955, framed by illustrations representing different professions (issues 1793, 26 April and 1845, 25 April). In 1955, the 'Derechos del trabajador' panel is presented as a placard presented by two workers, the rural 'campesino' and the urban 'obrero' (Figure 2.10). This image is the one that most clearly evokes Peronist political posters, or 'afiches', and this image of the country and city worker side by side, set against the background of their working landscapes, is similar to one reproduced in Gené's *Un mundo feliz*. In turn, Gené demonstrates how the Peronist images of workers were reconfigured out of several existing traditions of political visual culture.⁵⁷

The illustrator of *Billiken's* 1954 Workers' Day image, Manuel Ugarte, also contributed many of the magazine's visual representations of the Second Five-Year Plan. He had been contributing to *Billiken* for several years prior to the first election of Perón, most notably in the long-running 'Nuestra historia' section. His continuing presence suggests that *Billiken* was still in charge of the production of its illustrations and was not publishing work that had not been commissioned by the magazine, even if the content of those images may have been tailored to meet government directives. His presence in *Billiken* beyond the first two Peronist governments helped to provide visual continuity in the magazine throughout the pre-Peronist, Peronist and post-Peronist periods. The reworking, in 1958, of the Workers' Day image shows how those in charge of *Billiken* were able to reassert the magazine's ideological imprints after the Perón years. Whilst the illustrations of some professions remain, the workers evoking



Figure 2.9: Schoolchildren commemorating both dates associated with 9 July. *Billiken*, issue 1855, 4 July 1955. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 2.10: Workers' Day featuring the Peronist Workers' Rights. *Billiken*, issue 1845, 25 April 1955. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

a Peronist political poster are absent. Most significant, however, is the change in the text with the Peronist Workers' Rights replaced by Constancio C. Vigil's 'Plegaria del trabajador' [Workers' Prayer] (issue 1999, 28 April 1958).

This was just one example of the continuities preserved in *Billiken* even as it published Peronist propaganda. When considering the degree of Peronist content in *Billiken* it is also important to note that key texts such as Evita's autobiography, *La razón de mi vida*, which was required reading in schools, never found their way into the magazine. Neither were the famous Peronist texts for first readers which inserted Evita into the traditional formula of 'Mi mamá me ama' replicated in *Billiken's* literacy pages.⁵⁸ Instead, Atlántida was able to preserve and promote pre-Peronist initiatives. Constancio C. Vigil's manual for first readers, *¡Upa!*, from 1934, appeared without changes throughout the period, with 1,095,000 copies published between 1946 and 1954, and 254,000 copies sold in 1952 alone.⁵⁹ Within the magazine, *Billiken's* literacy pages continued to be one of the sites of the reproduction and amplification of traditional gender-based roles within heteronormative families. The interior world of women and girls in contrast to the exterior world of boys and men, as seen in earlier pieces on family life and in the juxtaposition of the Marilú doll



Figure 2.11: Workers' Day post Perón. *Billiken*, issue 1999, 28 April 1958. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

with Borocotó's *Comeñas* character, continued throughout the Peronist era and beyond, exemplified by the contrasting pages seen in Figure 2.12. Mother cooks, cleans and takes care of the children; Father gets to leave the house. This was entirely in keeping with the representations of gender roles transmitted in Peronist school textbooks and more widely. Evita tempered her public image as a woman at the centre of power by subordinating herself to Perón in speeches. The women's right to vote, granted in 1947 and largely overlooked in *Billiken*, was presented by the regime as an extension of women's natural role as society's moral guardians.⁶⁰

Even in 1953, the pivotal year in which *Billiken* seemingly embraced the Second Five-Year Plan, the week of 17 October shared space with material dedicated to the week's other key dates. Columbus was on the cover of the corresponding week, referencing 12 October and what was then known as the Day of the Race, and the issue also acknowledged Mother's Day on 20 October (issue 1765). Similar continuities in *Billiken* undermine the notion that Peronism changed *Billiken*'s presentation of Argentina. Hollman and Lois's study on the representation of geography in *Billiken* under Peronism highlights the new Peronist decrees rendered visible in the magazine, such as the 1946 decree



Figure 2.12: Literacy pages. Left: 'Vocabulary: Mother'. *Billiken*, issue 1637, 30 April 1951. Right: 'Papá sale' [Father goes out]. *Billiken*, issue 1846, 2 May 1955. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

prohibiting maps of the Argentine territory that failed to include the Antarctic section.⁶¹ However, as their study does not consider *Billiken* before Peronism, it presents some of the material as a result of uniquely Peronist preoccupations, rather than Peronist reconfigurations of existing trends or commemorative dates. *Billiken's* showcasing of Argentina as both a country of outstanding natural beauty and a modern, industrialised nation with appropriate infrastructure predated and, indeed, succeeded Peronism. For example, *Billiken's* commemorations of the 'Día del camino' [Day of the road], established in 1925 to celebrate Argentina's modern infrastructure, featured from 1941 in the form of photographs showing long, impressive stretches of Argentine roads (issues 1141, 29 September 1941, and 1194, 5 October 1942). This sits alongside curriculum content on the economic evolution of Argentina, on innovations in aviation, and on the Argentine National Oil Company (issues 1089, 30 September 1940, 1190, 7 September 1942, and 1140, 22 September 1941).

The Peronist construction of childhood shared the belief held by previous political regimes that the child was, to use Sarmiento's words, an 'incomplete being' who could be socialised politically and shaped into a desirable future citizen. The future citizen envisaged by *Billiken* was closer to the one that had been promoted by previous regimes, and with Peronism there is a shift in the

desired political orientation of the future citizen. Nevertheless, the understanding of childhood that underpins this process represents one of the conservative continuities around which Peronism was structured. This is visible even at the level of language employed to talk about children. Perón is quoted here in *Justa, libre, soberana*: ‘He pensado siempre que la tarea del maestro no es solamente la de instruir, sino la de educar y formar el alma y la inteligencia, y *dar armas a los hombres para la lucha por la vida o en la vida*’ [I have always thought that the teacher’s job is not only to instruct, but also to educate and to form the soul and the intellect, and to *give arms to men for the struggle for life or in life*] (p. 238; emphasis mine). In *Billiken*, one of the many editorial interventions that function as advertorials for Atlántida’s books division reads: ‘Todos los niños han de preparar su inteligencia para luchar y triunfar cuando sean grandes. Pedir como regalos a padres y parientes buenos libros es pedir lo indispensable: es *armarse noblemente para la batalla de la vida*’ [All children have to prepare their intellect to fight and triumph when they are older. To ask parents and relatives for good books is to ask for the indispensable: *it is to arm oneself nobly for the battle of life*] (issue 1213, 15 February 1943; emphasis mine).

The years of the ‘primer peronismo’ were unusual in the history of *Billiken* for featuring so much political propaganda. Even so, the proportion of pages devoted to Peronist content was negligible considering that there were 480 issues of *Billiken* published during the Peronist years, each running between 33 and 40 pages. The comparison with *Mundo Infantil* also shows how uneffusive *Billiken* was in its support of Perón. Talía Gutiérrez reaches a similar conclusion when comparing Atlántida’s *La Chacra* with its Peronist, Editorial Haynes rival *Mundo Agrario*. Whilst *La Chacra* included a transcription of the Segundo Plan Quinquenal in January 1953, because this was obligatory for all publications, it omitted the speeches and commentaries found in the corresponding issue of *Mundo Agrario*. Both publications featured a combine harvester on the cover of that issue with *La Chacra* using the name of the machine as the caption in contrast to *Mundo Agrario*’s caption: ‘Perón cumple.’⁶² This suggests that *Billiken*’s practice of publishing just enough Peronist content to be otherwise left alone reflected Atlántida’s wider strategy. Unlike many publications, *Billiken* emerged from Peronism largely intact in Argentina, although paper quotas led to the curtailment of *Billiken*’s pan-Latin American expansion. After *Billiken* reappeared following its four-week break in 1949, its weekly publication continued uninterrupted throughout Perón’s first two periods of government and beyond. *Billiken*’s editors also managed to make the best of the situation capitalising, both culturally and economically, on the ‘Year of the Liberator’. Once again, this speaks to the conservative underpinnings of the Peronist regime and the consequent cultural proximity of *Billiken* to Peronism. Atlántida successfully managed its accommodation of Perón, showing just enough support to continue publishing during the regime but not so much that it was punished by the subsequent, self-proclaimed ‘Revolución Libertadora’ [Liberating Revolution] that sought to erase all traces of Perón and Eva from Argentine culture, politics and society.

Following Perón's ousting by military coup, the new regime was quick to intervene in education. In December 1955, Juan Canter, minister of education for the Province of Buenos Aires, stated the intention to: 'Volver a los principios e ideales que han sido desde los días de mayo los auténticos de nuestra nacionalidad' [Return to the principles and ideals that have been, since the days of [the] May [Revolution], authentic to our nationality].⁶³ We can look to an advertisement in *Billiken* placed by the publishing house Ángel Estrada y Cía Editores to see how this was applied to primary school textbooks. The advertisement confirmed that these textbooks had been adjusted in the light of the ministerial resolutions of September and October 1955 and, as such, were authorised for use by primary schools under the orbit of the Ministry of Education. The advertisement reports that, at that time of the 'recuperación de los valores del espíritu' [recuperation of the values of the spirit], Estrada had restored the 'original dignity' of the first edition of these books by removing political propaganda pertaining to the deposed regime. The advertisement further informs that, in accordance with the new de facto military regime, the new subject of Enseñanza Democrática [Democratic teaching] had been incorporated (issue 1893, 2 April 1956). The accompanying illustration shows a bust of Sarmiento emerging from the heavens to watch over a school. *Billiken* did not offer any declaration of support to the new regime that was comparable to the Estrada advertisement, nor any statement as to the suitability of its content. The transfer of power was registered in *Billiken* on 10 October 1955 with photographs showing the swearing in, on 23 September, of provisional de facto president Eduardo Lonardi, accompanied by his vice president and assorted generals (issue 1868). The change of regime seemingly brought nothing but business as usual for *Billiken*. If anything, *Billiken* thrived in the years following the ousting of Perón. In May 1958, *Billiken* reached its peak when it became the first publication in Spanish to sell 500,000 copies in a week (issue 2003, 26 May). Even as *Billiken* was climbing to these heights of success, the magazine was facing institutional challenges that would soon be thrown into relief by the arrival of competitor *Anteojito*.

Notes

- ¹ As of 2022, *Murzilka* held the record for the longest running children's magazine still in circulation. 'Longest Running Children's Magazine (Publication)', *Guinness World Records* <<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/longest-running-childrens-magazine>> [accessed 10 September 2022]. The claim of uninterrupted publication is repeated in Judith Gociol, 'El largo camino de *Billiken*', *El monitor de la educación*, 5. 10 (2006), 42–46. <http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/monitor/monitor/monitor_2006_n10.pdf> [accessed 22 August 2022].

- ² Pablo Sirvén, *Perón y los medios de comunicación, 1943–1955* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1984), p. 82.
- ³ Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920–1946* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
- ⁴ Marcela Gené, *Un mundo feliz: imágenes de los trabajadores en el primer peronismo 1946–1955* (Buenos Aires: FCE-Universidad de San Andrés, 2005).
- ⁵ Comments made following a presentation I gave at Atlántida on 24 July 2017. The Atlántida archives only hold copies of the first five issues of the *Grancolombiano* edition which include neither the date nor the list of countries to which it was distributed, suggesting they are mock-ups. The covers are by Lino Palacio and the Colombian educational material is overseen by Eleazar Libreros L[orza].
- ⁶ Ernesto Goldar, *El peronismo en la literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1971), p. 147.
- ⁷ Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Peron's Argentina* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), p. ix.
- ⁸ James Cane, *The Fourth Enemy: Journalism and Power in the Making of Peronist Argentina, 1930–1955* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2011), pp. 178, 194.
- ⁹ Claudio Panella and Guillermo Korn, 'Introducción', in *Ideas y debates para la Nueva Argentina. Revistas culturales y políticas del peronismo (1946–1955)*, ed. by Panella and Korn, 4 vols (La Plata: Ediciones EPC, UNLP, 2010), i, 9–13 (p. 12).
- ¹⁰ Constancio C. Vigil, '[Carta] 1942 mayo 30, Buenos Aires [Argentina] [a] Gabriela Mistral, Petrópolis, Brasil', Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile <<http://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-144148.html>> [accessed 13 September 2022]. This letter also gives a rare glimpse into the management structures of Editorial Atlántida, with Vigil commenting that his son, Aníbal, then the general manager of the publishing house, was in charge of the paper supply and that Constancio C. Vigil was no longer personally involved in such matters.
- ¹¹ Mirta Varela, 'Le péronisme et les médias: Contrôle politique, industrie nationale et goût populaire', *Le Temps des Médias. Revue d'histoire*, 7 (2006), 48–63 (pp. 53–54).
- ¹² Sirvén, p. 83.
- ¹³ Cane, p. 217.
- ¹⁴ Alicia Poderti, 'PBT: Alegre, política y deportiva. Nueva época (1950–1955)', in *Ideas y debates para la Nueva Argentina*, ed. by Panella and Korn, pp. 331–62 (p. 339).
- ¹⁵ Claudio Panella, 'Mundo Peronista (1951–1955): una tribuna de doctrina y propaganda', in *Ideas y debates para la Nueva Argentina*, ed. by Panella and Korn, pp. 281–306 (p. 283).

- ¹⁶ Plotkin, p. 188.
- ¹⁷ Gené, p. 13.
- ¹⁸ María E. Bordagaray and Anabella Gorza, 'Socialización política y de género de la infancia durante el primer peronismo a través de la revista *Mundo Infantil* (1950–1952)', in *Ideas y debates para la Nueva Argentina* ed. by Panella and Korn, pp. 255–79 (p. 260).
- ¹⁹ See Bordagaray and Gorza, p. 270 on 'Cuál será mi futuro' [What will my future be] and 'Palabras de un maestro' [Words from a teacher].
- ²⁰ María Paula Bontempo, *Editorial Atlántida: un continente de publicaciones, 1918–1936* (PhD thesis, Universidad de San Andrés, 2012), p. 280.
- ²¹ Cane, p. 194.
- ²² Little information has resulted from searches into Editorial Emilio Rodríguez. On the Compañía General Fabril Financiera see Claudio Fabián Belini and Silvia Badoza, 'Expansión y diversificación de la Compañía General Fabril Financiera durante la industrialización por sustitución de importaciones en Argentina, 1929–1958', *América Latina en la Historia Económica*, 23.1 (2016), 7–40 <<https://doi.org/10.18232/alhe.v23i1.62>>. In terms of this organisation's links to the regime, it is worth noting that it advertised in *Mundo Peronista* (issue 11, 15 December 1951).
- ²³ Bordagaray and Gorza, p. 262.
- ²⁴ The Campeonato Infantil Evita appear in *Billiken* in issues 1628, 26 February 1951; 1680, 25 February 1952 and 1732, 23 February 1953). On the centrality of the Ciudad Infantil to Evita's welfare initiatives see Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política. Vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943–1955* (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes; Prometeo 3010, 2005), pp. 161–66.
- ²⁵ The event is registered in *Billiken* in issues 1789, 29 March 1954 and 1840, 21 March 1955. María Cristina Pons, 'Cuerpos sublimes: el deporte en la retórica de la "Nueva Argentina"', in *Políticas del sentimiento: el peronismo y la construcción de la Argentina moderna*, ed. by Claudia Soria, Paola Cortés Rocca and Edgardo Dieleke (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros), pp. 49–65 (p. 53).
- ²⁶ Mónica Rein, *Politics and Education in Argentina, 1946–1962* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 74.
- ²⁷ The speech referred to in *Billiken* is published in the Ministry of Education's Communications Bulletin. See 'El General Perón inauguró el curso lectivo y la campaña sanmartiniana de alfabetización', *Boletín de comunicaciones*, Ministerio de Educación, Year 2, N° 107 (17 March 1950), 98–101. <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/monitor/Boletin-de-comunicaciones-del-ministerio/Boletin-de-com-1950-101-107.pdf>> [accessed 30 May 2023].
- ²⁸ 'Alcanzó pleno éxito la primera conferencia de Ministros de Educación de la Nueva Argentina', *Boletín de Comunicaciones*, Ministerio de Educación, Year 2, N° 111 (7 April 1950), 254–59. <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/monitor/Boletin-de-comunicaciones-del-ministerio/Boletin-de-com-1950-110-111.pdf>> [accessed 30 May 2023].

- ²⁹ Oscar Ivanissevich, '¡Volvamos a clase!', *Boletín de comunicaciones*, Ministerio de Educación, Year 2. N° 107 (17 March 1950), 96–97.
- ³⁰ The novels appear in *Billiken* as follows: issue 1280, 29 May to 1294, 4 September 1944; issue 1350, 1 October 1945 to 1368, 4 February 1946; issue 1396, 19 August to 1410, 25 November 1946; issue 1452, 15 September to 1465, 15 December 1947.
- ³¹ Luis Alberto Romero, Luciano de Privitello, Silvina Quintero and Hilda Sabato, *La Argentina en la escuela: la idea de nación en los textos escolares* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004), p. 125.
- ³² María José Punte, 'Los únicos privilegiados: rastros de las políticas sociales del primer peronismo en las obras de Osvaldo Soriano y Daniel Santoro', *Imagonautas: revista Interdisciplinaria sobre imaginarios sociales*, 1.1 (2011), 4–26 (p. 7).
- ³³ 'El General Perón inauguró el curso lectivo y la campaña sanmartiniana de alfabetización', p. 100.
- ³⁴ *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, 3rd edn (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), p. 806.
- ³⁵ On Scarzello see Vicente Gesualdo, Aldo Biglione and Rodolfo Santos, *Diccionario de artistas plásticos en la Argentina*, Vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Inca, 1988), ii, p. 802. On Ciocca see Judith Gociol and Diego Rosemberg, *La historieta argentina. Una historia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2000), p. 292. On Alvarez Boero see Rodrigo Viñuales Gutiérrez, 'Artistas gráficos en correos y telecomunicaciones', in *Arquitectura moderna y estado en Argentina: edificios para Correos y Telecomunicaciones, 1947–1955*, ed. by Adriana Collado (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL, 2013), pp. 117–20 (p. 118); 'Estampillas. Horacio Alvarez Boero', *Archivo de Ilustración*, 2019 <<https://ilustracion.fadu.uba.ar/2016/09/14/horacio-alvarez-boero-estampillas/>> [accessed 29 May 2022].
- ³⁶ Daniel Santoro, 'La construcción imaginaria de un mundo', in *Perón mediante. Gráfica peronista del período clásico*, ed. by Guido Indij (Buenos Aires: La Marca, 2006), pp. 21–23 (p. 21).
- ³⁷ Gené, pp. 13, 19.
- ³⁸ Marcia C. Veneziani, *La imagen de la moda* (Buenos Aires: Nobuko, 2007), p. 40.
- ³⁹ Santoro, p. 21.
- ⁴⁰ Claudia Soria, 'La propaganda peronista: hacia una renovación estética del Estado nacional', in *Políticas del sentimiento*, ed. by Soria, Cortés Rocca and Dieleke, pp. 31–48 (pp. 35–36).
- ⁴¹ Anahí Ballent, 'Los tiempos de las imágenes: la propaganda del peronismo histórico en los años noventa', in *Políticas del sentimiento*, ed. by Soria, Cortés Rocca and Dieleke, pp. 213–24 (p. 215).
- ⁴² *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, pp. 24–27; Soria, p. 37.
- ⁴³ *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, pp. 162–63, 197, 215, 302–3.

- ⁴⁴ Santoro, p. 22.
- ⁴⁵ 'El General Perón inauguró el curso lectivo y la campaña sanmartiniana de alfabetización', p. 101.
- ⁴⁶ Noemí M. Girbal-Blacha, 'En la Argentina peronista "los únicos privilegiados son los niños" (1946–1955). La doctrina desde la Biblioteca Infantil "General Perón"', *Historia Contemporánea*, 1. 50 (2015), 133–62 (p. 136).
- ⁴⁷ See Daniela Páez, 'Las historietistas argentinas. Trayectorias, espacios y dinámicas de trabajo desde los '40 a la actualidad', *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación*, 107 (2020), 40–74 <<https://doi.org/10.18682/cdc.vi107.4202>>.
- ⁴⁸ Rein, p. 6.
- ⁴⁹ Ministerio de Educación. Dirección General de Enseñanza Secundaria, *Cuadernos para la Escuela Media* (Buenos Aires, 1953).
- ⁵⁰ Teresa Laura Artieda and Hugo Cañete, 'Escenas de lectura en los textos "peronistas" (1946–1955)', in *La lectura en los manuales escolares: textos e imágenes*, org. by Roberta Paula Spregelburd and María Cristina Linares (Buenos Aires: UNLu; UNNE, 2009), pp. 159–77 (p. 163).
- ⁵¹ Sandra Carli, *Niñez, pedagogía y política: transformaciones de los discursos acerca de la infancia en la historia de la educación argentina entre 1880 y 1955* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2002), p. 258.
- ⁵² See Plotkin, p. 39.
- ⁵³ Ballent, 'Los tiempos de las imágenes' p. 217.
- ⁵⁴ Soria, p. 32.
- ⁵⁵ *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre, soberana*, p. 139.
- ⁵⁶ Plotkin, p. 39.
- ⁵⁷ Gené, Lámina X, folleto s.f. n.p.
- ⁵⁸ On Peronist literacy textbooks see Emilio J. Corbière, *Mamá me mima, Evita me ama: la educación argentina en la encrucijada* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999), pp. 97–98.
- ⁵⁹ Roberta Paula Spregelburd and Susana Vital, 'Yo aprendí a leer con el libro "¡Upa!"; in *La alfabetización de un siglo a otro: desafíos y tendencias*, coord. by Roberto Bottarini and Roberta Paula Spregelburd (Buenos Aires: UNLu, 2009), pp. 205–25 (pp. 210–12).
- ⁶⁰ Marifran Carlson, *¡Feminismo!: The Woman's Movement in Argentina* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2014), pp. 183–200 <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sheffield/detail.action?docID=1835812>> [accessed 12 September 2022].
- ⁶¹ Verónica Hollman and Carla Lois, 'Imaginarios geográficos y cultura visual peronista: las imágenes geográficas en la revista Billiken (1945–1955)', *Geografia em questão*, 4.2 (2011), 239–69.
- ⁶² Talía V. Gutiérrez, 'El peronismo y el agro. La revista *Mundo Agrario*, 1949–1955', in *Ideas y debates para la Nueva Argentina*, ed. by Panella and Korn, pp. 167–97 (p. 180).

- ⁶³ Quoted in Myriam Southwell, 'Algunas características de la formación docente en la historia educativa reciente. El legado del espiritualismo y el tecnocratismo (1955–1976)', in *Dictaduras y utopías en la historia reciente de la educación argentina (1955–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1997), pp. 105–55 (p. 115).

CHAPTER 3

The *Billiken*–Anteojito Rivalry, Printed Ephemera and Military Events (1956–1975)

In the period between the ousting of Juan Domingo Perón and the military coup of 1976, *Billiken* maintained weekly publication against a tumultuous political backdrop. There were two further military coups and a dozen different heads of state during this time, some very short-lived and others who undertook contrasting attempts at educational reform. *Billiken* maintained its engagement with the outside world that had started in earnest under Peronism and did not revert to the approach taken in the early decades when it had operated outside of space and time. In the years following the 1955 coup, it became increasingly common to see coverage of national events in *Billiken*, such as the military parades for the Independence Day celebrations on 9 July. This coverage featured photographs of de facto president General Aramburu, of the ‘Revolución Libertadora’, in 1956 and 1957 (issues 1909, 23 July 1956, and 1959, 22 July 1957) and of President Arturo Frondizi in 1958 (issue 2012, 28 July 1958). Frondizi had been elected after brokering tolerance from the military and support from the Peronists. His appearances in *Billiken* show an outward-looking Argentina with articles on visits from the presidents of Italy, Mexico and the USA, and on the exhibition ‘Argentina en el tiempo y en el mundo’ [Argentina in time and in the world], which showcased Argentina’s contemporary relevance and future potential (issue 2135, 12 December 1960). Frondizi’s final appearance in *Billiken*, a report on his speech for the 150th anniversary of the creation of the national flag and in which he talked about the importance of democratic institutions, was published on 26 March 1962, just three days before his ousting by military coup (issue 2202).

The many interrelated challenges faced by *Billiken* over the timeframe considered in this chapter had less to do with the changing political climate, however, and more to do with institutional and market factors. From *Billiken*’s

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peak in May 1958, reaching a weekly paid circulation of 500,000, figures declined relatively slowly, only dipping to an average below the 100,000s from 1975. The transformation of the media landscape with the arrival of television is usually correlated to the global decline in magazine sales. Conversely, in the case of the United States, Magill states that there was a 47.6 per cent rise in the number of magazines between 1963 and 1974, with a 43 per cent increase in circulation. What had changed were the types of magazines being sold, with high-profile closures such as, in 1969, that of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the publication that had unwittingly provided *Billiken* with its first cover illustration. Magill argues that general mass circulation magazines lost out to speciality magazines with advertisers favouring television and blames boards of directors made up of 'aging conservatives' who could not keep up with the times.¹ This was not the case of Editorial Atlántida, which remained an entrepreneurial venture beyond the life of the founder. Overall, Atlántida made forward-looking decisions that sought to meet the challenges of the era, most notably through the launching of the current affairs magazine *Gente y la actualidad* (better known as *Gente*) in 1965, and a move into television in 1971, when the company acquired 14 per cent of Channel 13. This first attempt was short-lived, however, as television channels were expropriated under the presidency of Isabel Perón in 1974.² During the period covered in this chapter, the treatment of *Billiken* lacked the same entrepreneurial energy found elsewhere the organisation.

In the years following the death of founder Constancio C. Vigil in 1954, many pages in *Billiken* were dedicated to reflecting on and cementing his legacy regardless of how interesting this may or may not have been to *Billiken*'s readers. Conversely, those in charge of *Billiken* were slow to capitalise on public interest surrounding the Space Race by including this as a content theme. The appearance of rival publication Manuel García Ferré's *Anteojito* magazine, in 1964, jolted *Billiken* into action, inspiring several strategic endeavours and content-level changes that may not have been undertaken had *Billiken* been allowed to coast along, competitor-free. As an answer to *Anteojito*, *Billiken* reached back into the history of printed ephemera with the launching of *figuritas* [picture card] albums, and into Atlántida's own archives, with a reboot of Constancio C. Vigil's El Mono Relojero character. These strategies leveraged tradition as a resource and mirror patterns of activity found in studies of multigenerational family firms. With *Billiken*'s proximity to the 1976–1983 civic-military dictatorship the subject of much academic enquiry, this chapter delves into the magazine's lesser-known involvement with the previous dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970). By the time of *Billiken*'s fiftieth anniversary, the magazine was very much part of the establishment, with those responsible going to great lengths to partner with both the educational and military authorities as a way of growing and maintaining readership. During the timeframe covered in this chapter, *Billiken* entered its phase of maturity and of market leadership, reached its peak and began its inevitable decline.

Memorialising the founder

In the year preceding the ousting of Perón, in 1955, *Billiken* had been going through its own process of change with the death of Atlántida and *Billiken*'s founder, Constancio C. Vigil. Much was made of the fact that he died at the age of 78 at his desk in Atlántida, committed to his company to the end. In *Billiken*, Vigil's death was announced in a black-banded additional first page in a format identical to that used for the announcement of Evita's death two years earlier (issue 1816, 4 October 1954). Whilst the tone of the passage regarding Evita's death had been distant, respectful formality, the caption under Vigil's photograph had much more in common with the tribute paid to Evita in the children's page of *Mundo Peronista*, seen in the previous chapter. Vigil was imagined as continuing to guide children as he looks down on them from heaven, and children were exhorted to honour his memory through their behaviour. In *Mundo Peronista*, Evita's death notice reported that Evita, who loved all children as a mother, was now in heaven wearing her crown of light, and was someone who had 'sembrado de actos grandes su camino' [sown [her] way with great deeds]. Vigil, according to his death notice in *Billiken*, had dedicated, with love and to all children, his 'siembra maravillosa' [wonderful sowing]. In 1955, just two weeks after registering the change of political power, *Billiken* reported on events commemorating Vigil on the first anniversary of his death. A crowd in the portico of Recoleta cemetery was shown witnessing the unveiling of a plaque in Vigil's honour, and employees gathered on the helical staircase at Atlántida's building on Azopardo Street for the presentation of Pablo Tosto's monument to Vigil. This sculpture, placed in the entrance hall, featured a bronze plaque with Vigil's face in profile and two reliefs depicting 'El sembrador' and 'Cultura espiritual' with the legend 'El Erial que sembré queda sembrado' [The Fallow Land that I sowed remains sown]. 'El Erial' was in reference to Vigil's book of the same name. 'El sembrador' was also the title of Luis Villaronga's biography of Vigil, first published in 1939 in Puerto Rico, a volume that so fully and committedly transmits Vigil's ideology that it was probably commissioned as part of Vigil's legacy-building strategy.

Following Vigil's death and Perón's ousting, Vigil's enduring presence in *Billiken* was used to fill the space in *Billiken* previously occupied by Perón. In 1961, *Billiken*'s prize for school attendance restored the pre-Peronist national discourse whilst simultaneously inserting Vigil into this, putting him on a par with the nation's founding fathers. The commemoration of 150 years since Sarmiento's birth presented the perfect opportunity to reaffirm this former president's place as the nation's teacher after he had been sidelined by Perón and replaced by San Martín in the Peronist literacy campaign. In a speech commemorating the anniversary and published in *Billiken*, Jorge Luis Borges, who was famously anti-Peronist, claimed that all Argentines are indebted to Sarmiento, whose oeuvre did not solely consist of the volumes from his pen but also the country itself: 'esta patria en que vivimos, esta pasión y este aire' [this



Figure 3.1: The inauguration of the monuments to Constancio C. Vigil, one year after his death. *Billiken*, issue 1870, 24 October 1955.

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VIDAS ILUSTRES

CONSTANCIO C. VIGIL

PRIMER ANIVERSARIO DE SU FALLECIMIENTO

Constancio C. Vigil nació en Rocha, Uruguay, el 4 de septiembre de 1876 y falleció en Buenos Aires el 24 de septiembre de 1954. Escritor de talento, hizo de la pluma el arma más poderosa para luchar por la verdad, el bien, la justicia, la paz y la tolerancia entre los pueblos, y desde el libro y el periodismo difundió esos supremos ideales. Observador sagaz, pensador y filósofo, veía en todas las criaturas de la naturaleza un soplo divino y por eso las amó con ternura y comprensión. Generoso defensor de los humildes, de los niños y de los que sufren, su fecunda existencia fué una siembra constante en beneficio de la humanidad.




Era hijo de don Constanancio C. Vigil, abogado y periodista de reconocido prestigio, y de doña Ventura Old. Cuando tenía nueve años falleció su madre, quien le dejó un imborrable recuerdo de belleza y ternura, y a los trece perdió a su padre, del cual heredó su valor, energía e inquebrantable amor a la justicia.

Su abuela materna, mujer de viva imaginación y perspicacia, y su abuela paterna, caracterizada por su espíritu de orden y justicia, firme voluntad y claro criterio, tuvieron gran influencia en el desarrollo de la personalidad de Vigil, que desde joven demostró su pasión por los nobles ideales y su gusto por las letras.




En 1918 fundó la revista "Atlántida", que fué la piedra angular de la "Editorial Atlántida", empresa que materializó los sueños de Vigil. Sucesivamente aparecieron "El Gráfico", "Billiken", "Para Ti", "La Chacra" y "El Gopher Argentino", publicaciones que vinieron a llenar una necesidad en los diversos sectores sociales.



"Hay más espíritus que tierras sin cultivar", leyó un día, y porque tenía mucho que sembrar escribió "El Erial", su obra máxima. Este libro, desde su aparición, en 1915, tuvo gran acogida por la profundidad de sus conceptos y la belleza de su forma, desprovista de inútiles artificios, y ha sido vertido a numerosos idiomas.



Vigil veía en cada niño la esperanza de un futuro promisorio para la humanidad y por eso se dedicó a escribir para ellos páginas llenas de ternura y enseñanza. Entre ellos "Marta y Jorge", "Alma nueva", "Mangochito", "Cartas a gente menuda" y "Dpa". Híjulo éste que es todo un símbolo: la voz del pequeño que anhela subir y pide ayuda.



Para llevar el espíritu de los niños al mundo prodigioso de la fantasía, Vigil escribió sus "Cuentos", en los que se descubren también un propósito moralizador y alegría fresca y sana. "La Hormiguita Viajera", "Misia Pepa", "El Manchado" y muchos otros son personajes que tienen hoy profundas raíces en el alma infantil.



"Enseñanzas de Jesús", "Vida espiritual", "Reflexiones cristianas", son otras de las obras de este hombre que exaltó siempre la dignidad humana y no omitió sacrificios para hacer del Nuevo Continente tierra de paz y fraternidad. Mercedo, pues, es el calificativo de "Apostol de la Paz" con que se lo llama en toda América.

19 SEPTIEMBRE, 1955

25

Figure 3.2: 'Illustrious lives': Constanancio C. Vigil joins the pantheon of Great Men. *Billiken*, issue 1866, 9 September 1955. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

homeland in which we live, this passion and this air]. Referencing Sarmiento's infamous claim never to have missed a day of school, *Billiken* was to award a prize to all children who could prove, by the end of the school year, a perfect attendance record, in homage to Sarmiento, 'gran maestro de América' [great teacher of America]. The prize itself was named not after Sarmiento but after Constancio C. Vigil. And the prize, awarded to thousands of children, was a book written by Vigil (issue 2148, 13 March 1961).

The memorialising of Vigil was not limited to the casting of his image in bronze to watch over his domain but also formed the basis of strategic decisions taken about *Billiken*. Atlántida was still a family business, managed by Vigil's sons, with Carlos Vigil still retaining the directorship of *Billiken* that he had inherited in 1925. As ever, the lack of business records makes it impossible to determine the level of day-to-day involvement of Carlos Vigil in the running of *Billiken*. Furthermore, for most of the timeframe considered in this chapter, no staff page was published. Photographs of institutional events published in *Billiken* are a key resource for identifying members of *Billiken*'s permanent staff, and for piecing together the roles held by different family and non-family members within the management. Analysing *Billiken*'s changing content within the wider context of the challenges facing the magazine, and using the body of organisational culture research concerned with understanding family firms, reveals how those in charge of *Billiken* were in constant negotiation with the past as they took steps to build the magazine's future.

The institutional memorialising of Vigil from the second half of the 1950s prepared the ground for increased external validation throughout the 1960s. External *homenajes* [tributes] to Vigil were fed back regularly into *Billiken*, with issues featuring articles on the inaugurations of libraries, classrooms and schools bearing Vigil's name. Officially, Editorial Atlántida placed the number of such inaugurations at over three thousand across Latin America. It is difficult to imagine that these articles were envisaged as being entertaining for child readers. They were aimed, rather, at parents or teachers, constantly reaffirming *Billiken*'s status as a long-standing, trustworthy publication. In 1959, the guest list for the inauguration of an exhibition to mark the fortieth anniversary of *Billiken* confirmed the magazine's status and the esteem in which it was held. The president of the National Council of Education was present alongside Jorge Luis Borges in his role as director of the National Library (issue 2081, 30 November 1959). *Billiken*'s longevity, the memorialising of the founder, and the emphasis on continuity of his legacy through Constancio C. Vigil's heirs all contributed to the magazine's standing. The theme of family legacy ran through the speech given by Arturo Capdevila, the writer and long-term *Billiken* collaborator, at the exhibition's inauguration. Capdevila cast *Billiken*'s director, Carlos Vigil, as the 'buen hijo y excelente continuador' [good son and excellent continuator] who had the honour of celebrating his father's noble successes and bore the responsibility to continue to get it right. He continued that Carlos, and the other heirs, had the burden and privilege of carrying on Constancio C. Vigil's legacy. The legacy itself

can be understood as one of the many bequests left by Vigil to his family. These can be grouped together as a set of assets, divided into interrelated categories of the material, biological, social, historical and cultural, and spanning the tangible and the intangible. These first three are considered by Hammond, Pearson and Holt as shared legacies that emerge within a family and are taken as a starting point for examining the management and operation of a family firm.³

In the Vigil family's case, the material assets included the company, Editorial Atlántida, incorporating the different magazine titles and the books division, the building on Azopardo Street that the company had occupied since 1925, and the wealth accumulated over the years of a successful commercial enterprise. The biological assets included the bloodline and the Vigil name, preserved by family members who perceived the value in bearing it. Unlike most of the Spanish-speaking world, in Argentina a single surname, that of the father, has until recent years been the convention. Being in possession of two surnames commonly signified belonging to a notable, landowning family and the desire to preserve a historically important surname that would otherwise have been lost through the female line. The Vigil surname was retained through the female line, as seen in the case of Lucía Terra Vigil, photographed unveiling a plaque naming a classroom after her grandfather (issue 2165, 10 July 1961). Constancio C. Vigil's daughters Leticia and Elodia did not join their brothers Aníbal, Carlos and latterly, and temporarily, Constancio, in leading the firm. Both, however, married men who would become 'adopted' by the family as 'non-blood heirs' in a pattern Hammond, Pearson and Holt observe in other family firms as a key element of succession planning.⁴ Leticia married Jorge Terra, who became Atlántida's manager of the printing presses, and their son, Jorge Terra Vigil, would later become Atlántida's president. Elodia's husband, Alfredo Vercelli, was the vice president of the board of directors at the time of her death. Elodia's obituary in *Billiken* describes a life path encouraged elsewhere for *Billiken*'s girl readers. As the bearer of a pure and noble soul, we are told, this selfless (*abnegada*) mother placed her home and her children at the centre of her life whilst also pouring her kindness into worthy causes (issue 2611, 26 January 1970). Elodia and Alfredo's son, another Alfredo, also worked in Atlántida. The Vercelli Vigil family became associated with the books division, and the Terra Vigil family with the systems area, with the two direct male descendants, Carlos Vigil's son, Constancio, and Aníbal Vigil's son, Aníbal, going on to manage the core, and more prestigious, area of the magazines themselves. The cousins Aníbal and Constancio were in charge of Atlántida during the dictatorship of 1976 to 1983. Members of the next generation were already in management positions in the family firm before it was sold to the Mexican media giant Televisa in 2007.

Collectively, the family members benefitted from the social assets bequeathed by the founder, including the status they derived from their connection to Constancio C. Vigil, whose illustriousness was externally verified and celebrated. The term 'socioemotional wealth' is used to account for the ties of family

members to the family firm, defining it as the 'non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family's affective needs, such as identity, the ability to exercise family influence, and the perpetuation of the family dynasty'.⁵ For Hammond, Pearson and Holt, social legacy is the channel by which the values, beliefs and meanings associated with the family are transferred.⁶ Vigil also bequeathed historical and cultural assets spanning the intangible (the perceived values of *Billiken*, its identity and its traditions) and the tangible (the stock of existing products, such as Vigil's children's stories and their original characters; the knowledge and experience of how the magazine built its readership; the different strategies to overcome periods of difficulty; and a bank of tried and tested resources, both in terms of content and collaborators to create that content).

We cannot know the extent to which storytelling around Constancio C. Vigil's 'entrepreneurial legacy' took place privately, within the family, as part of the 'strategic education, entrepreneurial bridging, and strategic succession' that Jaskiewicz, Combs and Rau identify as necessary to foment transgenerational entrepreneurship.⁷ Publicly, the story of Constancio C. Vigil was not promoted as that of an enterprising immigrant who created an opportunity in an emerging industry. Instead, the notion of *Billiken* as a beacon of moral and spiritual values that had been established by Constancio C. Vigil, and perpetuated throughout his lifetime, was reproduced by his heirs. In the issue celebrating *Billiken's* fortieth anniversary, Vigil's message from 15 years earlier was reprinted. In this, he stated that *Billiken*, and all his efforts, had been dedicated to children's happiness: 'nunca se calculó con vil afán de lucro. Se hace *Billiken* como para los propios hijos, más con el corazón que con las manos' [it was never calculated with the vile motive of profit. *Billiken* is made as if for one's own children, more with the heart than with the hands]. Accompanying this, and printed under a large photograph of Vigil, was the message to parents published intermittently in the 1920s and 1930s guarding against moral panic with the reassurance that everything that *Billiken* published had been vetted from a moral and religious point of view and was guaranteed not to be harmful to easily excitable children (issue 2079, 16 November 1959).

In Capdevila's speech at the inauguration of the 1959 anniversary exhibition, Vigil's commercial acumen in naming his magazine after Florence Pretz's international and, at the time, wildly popular Billiken figure was eroded.

[B]ajo el nombre buscadamente trivial de BILLIKEN, como se llamaba a cierto idolillo sonriente que el comercio de menudencias había puesto de moda y que la plácida ingenuidad de la gente miraba como un amuleto, hizo Vigil un símbolo. Símbolo que se fue revistiendo de sentido creador. Símbolo de la felicidad del niño, constituida por livianas disciplinas y cariñosas invitaciones al ingenio.

Ir de la pequeñez a la grandeza es el signo que casi siempre nos dejan como bellísima peculiaridad los elegidos (como, viceversa, ir a la grandeza a la pequeñez fue siempre el camino de los que yerran

la senda). Y Vigil desde la trivial pequeñez del concepto de un simple idolillo llegó a la amplia concepción de todo un símbolo de educación feliz para nuestros niños.

[With the trivial name of BILLIKEN, as a certain smiling idol was called, which had become fashionable in the small goods trade and which the people, with placid naivety, regarded as an amulet, Vigil made a symbol. A symbol that gradually took on a creative meaning. A symbol of the happiness of the child, made up of light disciplines and affectionate invitations to ingenuity.

Going from smallness to greatness is the sign of a beautiful peculiarity that the chosen ones almost always leave us (as, vice versa, going from greatness to smallness was always the way of those who take the wrong path). And Vigil, from the trivial smallness of the concept of a simple idol came to the broad conception of a whole symbol of happy education for our children.]

In this presumably unwitting metatextual ponderation on the invented tradition that Vigil built around the invented tradition of the Billiken figure as the ‘God of Things as They Ought to Be’, Capdevila dismissed Pretz’s creation without naming her. The original sin of plagiarism, committed in the naming of the magazine, was omitted from the creation narrative of this morally and spiritually upstanding publication. In this speech, the consumers, whom Capdevila insults as placidly naïve, are the same type of consumers who went on to buy *Billiken* and co-constructed and perpetuated, through transgenerational transmission, the meanings Capdevila attributed to *Billiken*. Capdevila overlooked the participation of *Billiken*’s readers in this process and saw Vigil as solely responsible for *Billiken*’s success, identifying the founder’s actions as responding to a higher calling, rather than being driven by entrepreneurial vision, networking, hard work and business acumen (issue 2081, 30 November 1959).

With Constancio C. Vigil taking centre stage in the anniversary issue, other pages focussed on the events of the previous 40 years to emphasise *Billiken*’s longevity. The only future focussed content was a central *lámina* on the ‘Conquest of space’. In the advertisement for the anniversary issue, this was given top billing as ‘el tema más apasionante de nuestros días’ [the most exciting topic of our time] (issue 2078, 9 November 1959). Over the following decade, the Space Race and the Moon landing provided *Billiken* with content across all sections of the magazine. The theme was brought into comics and stories with an increase in science fiction, and in educational material with an increase in science resources linked to space. Those in charge of *Billiken* had been slow to catch on to this as a theme of interest for its readers, however. The magazine only mentioned the launch of Sputnik once (issue 1973, 28 October 1957) and overlooked Laika’s flight. Contemporaneous reader drawings submitted to the competition run by the La Campagnola jam company show how the exploration

of space was capturing children's imaginations, however. The winning entries of this drawing competition, which had been running for several years, were published in *Billiken* in a sponsored page. Together, the drawings form a corpus of children's production drawn to fit a commercial objective and published after being mediated by adults. The drawings were wide-ranging in theme, but all incorporated the required product placement. We see cowboys ride across the plains in search of the jam and castaways stranded on desert islands with only the jam for company. The jam appeared as the preferred choice of populations understood as far-flung and exotic, with caricatured drawings of Africans and Asians reminiscent of the representations found in popular adventure stories. Some young artists reproduced the gender conventions of the era, with mothers baking cakes made with the jam, and class structures, with maids serving cakes to elegantly turned-out ladies. The drawings selected for publication were those that reflected the contents of *Billiken*, its interests and world view.



Figure 3.3: Children's entries to the Dulce la Campagnola competition published in *Billiken*.

Left: Running home from school because Mother has bought La Campagnola jam. Issue 1921, 8 October 1956.

Top right: 'The satellite is also carrying La Campagnola jams.' Issue 1984, 13 January 1958.

Bottom right: 'First voyage to the moon with La Campagnola jams.' Issue 1994, 24 March 1958.

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It was only in 1958, following the publication of children's drawings of a jam satellite and an astronaut travelling to the moon with a case of La Campagnola, that *Billiken* increased its content on space exploration (issues 1984, 13 January and 1994, 24 March). The episode marked a shift: in the late 1950s, *Billiken* was starting to lose its identity as a pioneering, innovative market leader and was starting to turn into a publication that was reactive, not proactive, and one that struggled to keep up with the times and, crucially, with its readership.

In the years immediately following Vigil's death, *Billiken* was unchallenged by comparable competitors and was primarily concerned with protecting and transmitting the founder's legacy to shore up its position. It was only following the arrival, in 1964, of *Anteojito* as a direct competitor to *Billiken* that Atlántida started to put in place a strategy for its children's magazine. The adopted strategy, of looking to the past for a way forward, was not necessarily incompatible with the wider Atlántida entrepreneurial trajectory. In organisational culture research, tradition is a wide-ranging concept used to tie together understandings of family firms, identity, legacy and decision-making, particularly in terms of debates surrounding risk aversion versus innovation. As De Massis and his colleagues state, 'tradition involves accumulation of know-how, symbolic and cultural content, and micro-institutions of practice handed down across generations and contributing to shaping the identity of individuals, organizations and territories.'⁸ Another definition, offered by De Massis, Erdogan and Rondi, is that traditions are 'shared beliefs, rituals, practices and legacy [which] help family firms persist over time.'⁹ In the case of *Billiken*, there was a strongly performative aspect to the creation of traditions, centred on institutional narratives as the founder took on what Dacin, Dacin and Kent classify as the 'custodial role of organizer', playing 'a lead role in establishing the tradition through stage setting and/or frame building'. In their custodian framework, the heirs are 'carriers' with vested interests, actively engaging in bringing traditions through to the contemporary context. Traditions can serve 'as material that organizational actors assemble and deploy to support desired identities, images, memories, and boundaries.'¹⁰ The idea of boundaries relates to the perception that the prevalence of traditions can be constraining, and that the desire prevalent in family firms to preserve intangible and tangible legacies can lead to risk averse and conservative decision-making.¹¹ More recently, however, the trend has been to recognise traditions as resources that can be managed or 'leveraged in innovation.'¹² History can also be a source of competitive advantage.¹³ Seen in this light, *Billiken's* historical and cultural assets bequeathed by Vigil helped to build the magazine's material and social assets. Together they constituted a pool, or, to use Ann Swidler's analogy, a 'toolkit', of resources and practices that the heirs were able to draw from and mobilise by actively repurposing them.¹⁴

The reaction to competitor *Anteojito*

Ten years passed from the death of Constancio C. Vigil to the launch of *Billiken's* most significant competitor, *Anteojito*, on Thursday, 8 October 1964. In 1952, Constancio C. Vigil had given *Anteojito's* creator, the Spanish-born Manuel García Ferré, his first break, buying his *Aventuras de Pi-Pío* comic for *Billiken*, where it ran until March 1960. In parallel, García Ferré had been setting up his own production company and developing the characters *Anteojito*, a small, orphaned boy with outsized spectacles (*anteojos*) that serve as a visual metaphor for his outsized intellect and whose name could be roughly translated as Little Glasses, and *Antifaz*, his uncle, named after his Zorro-style mask, in the role of unauthoritative adult sidekick. For Mariel Falabella, the character *Anteojito* is 'un interlocutor, un *partenaire* de lectura, con cuerpo infantil' [an interlocutor, a reading partner in the body of a child] who mediates between the reader and the magazine.¹⁵ The readers were 'Anteojitos', and *Anteojito* was one of them, but smarter. As a high-performing schoolchild to be emulated, his knowledge justified his readers following him, and him instructing them. In 1959, *Anteojito* and *Antifaz* started appearing in publicity shorts for Channel 9 in an innovative animated jingle format that advertised different products over the course of a two-minute cartoon with narrative progression based on García Ferré's characters offered in subsequent instalments.¹⁶

Although all published references to the Saturday morning TV show *El Club de Anteojito y Antifaz* state that it began on Channel 9 in 1964, content in *Billiken* places the first transmission as occurring in April 1963. The characters *Anteojito* and *Antifaz* made their magazine debut in *Billiken* in the form of a regular advertorial page for the show. This page was announced with a photograph of 'our collaborator' García Ferré, flanked by his characters and captioned: '*Anteojito y Antifaz, los famosos y simpáticos personajes de la televisión, contarán sus andanzas a partir del próximo número de Billiken*' [Anteojito and Antifaz, the famous and likeable TV characters, will recount their adventures from the next issue of *Billiken*] (issue 2308, 6 April 1964). In the first of these pages dedicated to *El Club de Anteojito y Antifaz*, there is a photograph of Alejandro Romy, general manager of Channel 9, cutting *Anteojito* and *Antifaz's* first birthday cake (issue 2309, 13 April 1964).

The advertorial page appeared 10 times in *Billiken* over 21 weeks between 13 April and 31 August 1964, with a full-page advertisement for the TV show appearing in the other weeks. The introduction to this new page read:

Llegan *Anteojito y Antifaz* a todos los lectores de *Billiken*. Semanalmente: noticias, comentarios, juegos, entretenimientos y todas las grandes primicias del programa infantil más tierno, sano y divertido de la televisión argentina (issue 2309, 13 April 1964).



Figure 3.4: García Ferré's *Aventuras de Pi-Pío* ran from 1952 to 1960 in *Billiken*. This later version incorporates the character Pe-te-te. *Billiken*, issue 2086, 4 January 1960. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

[Anteojito and Antifaz have come to all *Billiken's* readers. Weekly: news, commentary, games, entertainment and all the big scoops on the most tender, healthy and fun show on Argentine television.]

At the foot is the reminder: 'Amiguitos, hasta el domingo a las 11 Hs. En Canal 9' [Little friends, until Sunday at 11am. On Channel 9]. As well as providing publicity for the TV show through photographs of the programme's regular contributors and of the excited children who formed part of the studio audience, dressed up in masks or outsized glasses, the page in *Billiken* featured the first Anteojito and Antifaz comic strip and sections that would later be expanded in *Anteojito* magazine. There was only a five-week gap between the last time this page appeared in *Billiken* and the first issue of *Anteojito* arriving at the newsstands. According to Omar Acosta, a García Ferré superfan and collector of all 1925 issues of *Anteojito* magazine, this first issue sold out and was reprinted.¹⁷ By the time the magazine *Anteojito* was launched, the TV show had grown a community of fans, poised to follow the adventures of García Ferré's original characters in print format thanks to the pages in *Billiken*, which had effectively acted as a trailer for a competing publication.

Recollections vary in the accounts as to why García Ferré and *Billiken* parted ways. In Editorial Atlántida's institutional memory, this was framed as a betrayal by a trusted member of the *Billiken* family. This is grounded in the notion that García Ferré was supposed to be developing content based on his original characters for *Billiken* and that the setting up of a rival magazine came as a surprise to his former colleagues. This seems partly predicated on the incorrect assumption, or false memory, that García Ferré was on *Billiken's* permanent staff, as opposed to being a regular collaborator. The alternative version from the García Ferré camp, compiled by Omar Acosta from interviews and speeches at fan events given by García Ferré in the last decades of his life, is that, having viewed the late Constancio C. Vigil as a mentor, García Ferré went to see his son Carlos to offer him first refusal to publish *Anteojito* magazine. Carlos Vigil turned him down, however, stating that Atlántida was only interested in developing products related to Constancio C. Vigil's original characters. Both versions of the story are couched in the *Billiken/Anteojito* rivalry, which, for generations of readers, defined both magazines.

Whilst there is a dramatic appeal to the notion that the future of *Billiken* was decided by a single meeting between two men behind closed doors, it is reasonable to assume that a potential partnership was negotiated over several months, at least during *Billiken's* promotion of the *Anteojito* TV show. Two of the advertorial pages in *Billiken* reveal the reciprocal nature of the arrangement as they feature photographs of the newsgirl Biki, 'la canillita de *Billiken*', who visited the programme each week to recite poems. In one photograph she is clearly holding a copy of *Billiken* magazine. Biki seems to be a character created solely for insertion in the *Anteojito* TV show as she does not appear elsewhere in *Billiken*. This character is one of several short-lived attempts to personify *Billiken*

magazine but she is the only girl character tasked with this, and the *canillita* is more normally associated with boys. The choice of a girl was perhaps intended to differentiate this character from the *Anteojito* TV show's boy protagonist. The figure of the *canillita* in *Billiken*, which I have written about elsewhere, harks back to earlier decades of the magazine, recalling an old-fashioned childhood, and rooted in a time when founder Constancio C. Vigil was still alive.¹⁸ Beyond providing evidence of mutual product placement, Biki's presence suggests that, by inserting a quaint, old-fashioned representation of the editorial world into the televisual world, *Billiken*'s editors were staking claim over the print domain but that they had perhaps not yet fully grasped how revolutionary the televisual medium was to become, the challenge it would bring to the magazine industry, and the threat that *Anteojito* magazine would pose when established outside of the framework of collaboration with *Billiken*. It is also possible that García Ferré chose to publish *Anteojito* magazine independently of *Billiken* because it made more commercial sense. *Anteojito* was published by Editorial Julio Korn, a rival to Atlántida, which published the women's magazine *Vosotras* and the sports magazine *Goles*, as well as entertainment magazines *Radiolandia*, *Antena* and *TV Guía*. Julio Korn was one of the investors in Channel 9.¹⁹

On the first cover of his magazine, *Anteojito* joyfully bursts through a page depicting the characters of the *Club de Anteojito y Antifaz* TV show arranged in comic strips. With arms outstretched as if to embrace the reader, *Anteojito* announces the arrival of *Anteojito* magazine as a print market disrupter in dialogue with the world of television. As Falabella notes, the price of the publication appears inside a shape that mimics that of 1960s TV sets, referencing the context of the magazine's founding.²⁰ In early issues, a drawings tutorial page appeared with the title 'TV Dibujando' [TV drawing] and presented the sample drawing in a TV screen-shaped frame. *Billiken* had previously been integrating TV references, particularly in comic strips such as *Aventuras de Lauchín*, with each grid framed as in a TV screen (issue 2247, 4 February 1963). These comics did not have any televisual counterpart, however, so this allusion to the televisual medium is not the same as the transmediality exhibited by *Anteojito* magazine when referencing the televisual iteration of *Anteojito/Anteojito* in print. This transmediality is also visible in *Anteojito*'s page dedicated to the character Patricia, the Good Fairy of the Woods, portrayed in the TV show by Patricia Scaliter, in a page that mixes photographs of Scaliter in character with illustrations, blending the TV show with the magazine.

In 1964, *Anteojito* magazine was one element in García Ferré's burgeoning character-led universe in which different original characters traversed each other's storylines and across print, television and merchandising. As Accorinti notes, when setting out the multimedia universe for his characters, García Ferré took Disney and Hanna-Barbera as external references for companies that pursued animated shorts, animated feature films and merchandising.²¹ In 1972, García Ferré would pursue the US model further, making his first feature film starring *Anteojito* and *Antifaz*. García Ferré pioneered an early example of

EL CLUB DE



por GARCIA FERRE

ANTEOJITO Y ANTIFAZ

EL GRAN TELE-SHOW DE LA FELICIDAD INFANTIL



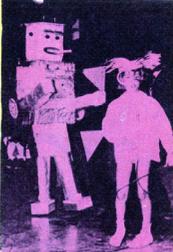
le ANTEOJITO

TODOS LOS ESCOLARES DEL PAIS SON "SOCIOS HONORARIOS" DEL CLUB. AQUI VEMOS A LOS ALUMNOS Y PROFESORES DE LA ESCUELA Nº 15 DEL CONSEJO ESCOLAR XV EN UNA AUDICION.



ACEITUNA NEGRA

El gran violinista pirata, que con su música maravillosa encanta a los "piratas locos", para quedarse con todo el botín.



TRUKU, con su cerebro electrónico, obedece las órdenes que su genial amo, Formulín, emite por un micrófono especial.



LOS "CHUF-CHUF" DE ANTEOJITO

HACE 154 AÑOS, EL 25 DE MAYO DE 1810, UN grupo de hombres valientes e idealistas nos dio una patria grande, noble y hermosa, para que todos los Anteojos podamos vivir en su sagrado clima de libertad. Gritemos todos juntos nuestro mejor ¡Intrínquilo-Chinguilis! para los padres de la patria.



MI INFANCIA EN EL RECUERDO

Hace muchos años, siendo yo niña, salí a pasear una tarde con mi madre. Cuando llegó el tranvía que esperábamos para ir al zoológico, el guarda me ayudó a subir, pero no sé por qué causa el tranvía arrancó y mi madre quedó en la plazuela, sin poder ascender. Al darme cuenta de que estaba sola comencé a gritar desesperadamente. Me sentí perdida en el mundo. Nada calmaba mi llanto, y al ver que a medida que el tranvía se alejaba mi madre se hacía más chica... comprendí que ella era lo más grande del mundo.

Lilia de Paoli
Sarandí 31 - Cap. Fed.

Esperamos vuestras colaboraciones. La correspondencia debe ser dirigida a "CLUB DE ANTEOJITO", VIAMONTE 723, 8º piso, CAPITAL FEDERAL, Y FIRMADAS CON EL NOMBRE VERDADERO O CON SEUDÓNIMO.

BASES DEL CONCURSO DEL MES DE MAYO:

Adivinen... ¿Qué será?... ¡Lauchonito o lauchoncita? Escriban a "CLUB DE ANTEOJITO Y ANTIFAZ", Canal 9, Castex 3945, Capital Federal.

¡FUERZA!... ¡FUERZA!...

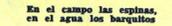


"La prueba de fuerza", divertido entretenimiento con la participación del público presente.

BIKI



Nuestra querida canchita, la simpática Biki, nos visita todos los domingos en el CLUB DE ANTEOJITO Y ANTIFAZ.



En el campo las espigas, en el agua los barquitos



y en el medio de mi pecho un retrato de Anteojo.



¡Intrínquilo-Chinguilis! ¡U-u-u-u-u!

AMIGUITOS, HASTA EL DOMINGO DE 11 A 12 HORAS EN CANAL 9

Figure 3.5: The Anteojo TV show advertised in *Billiken*. Biki the newsgirl (lower left corner) holds up a copy of the magazine. *Billiken*, issue 2315, 25 May 1964. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

‘transmedia intertextuality’ at a time that predates the coining of the term, in 1991, by Marsha Kinder to describe phenomena such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, which boasted coordinated marketing across TV shows, films, toys and video games. An even earlier example of this strategy can again be found in the US with the Lone Ranger. The character started life on the radio in 1933 and incorporated product licensing as it expanded to comic books, novels and film serials over the character’s first decade.²² Although *Billiken* had been an early adopter of intertextual marketing strategies, with *Billiken* advertising books published by Editorial Atlántida and offering content based on the Marilú doll, García Ferré took this much further through the incorporating of television. The success of García Ferré’s empire can chiefly be attributed to the appeal of his original characters, their narrative connectedness across the different elements of the *Anteojito* universe, and their use in product advertising and merchandising. In the early 1960s, *Billiken*’s only original characters were from Vigil’s 1920s stories. They had not yet been updated and *Billiken* lacked the infrastructure necessary for replicating García Ferré’s formula. To add to the sense that this was a missed opportunity for *Billiken*, some of García Ferré’s characters had first appeared in *Billiken* through the *Aventuras de Pi-Pío* comic (Calculín, Superhijitus and an early version of Pe-te-te) and in six stand-alone comics, each featuring one character (Calculín, Chim-pan-cee, Ta-te-ti, Pinchapua, Ico and Tijerita) published in the 1950s.²³ That each of these comics only appeared once is perhaps indicative of the notion that *Billiken* did not want to develop García Ferré’s original characters.

Anteojito magazine itself, as a constituent part of García Ferré’s growing universe, did not propose a radically different offering from *Billiken*. In terms of *Anteojito*’s graphic identity, there was little to distinguish it from *Billiken*, a position also taken by Verónica Carman, who focusses on the graphic design of the magazines.²⁴ Over time, many of *Billiken*’s regular collaborators moved over to *Anteojito*, including illustrators Norma B. de Adam, the first woman to illustrate *Billiken*’s covers, and Hugo Csecs, who later became the background artist for García Ferré’s animated feature films. *Billiken*’s lead editor, Elba Teresa Cosso, also went on to join *Anteojito*, intensifying the visual and editorial similarity between the two magazines. Alongside *Anteojito*’s original content, much of which had been debuted in the promotional page in *Billiken*, there was plenty of content familiar to *Billiken*’s readers. *Anteojito* republished *Aventuras de Pi-Pío* and, from issue 3, Vidal Dávila’s *Ocalito y Tumbita*, which had first appeared in *Billiken* in 1942. Fola’s *Pelopincho y cachirula*, published continuously in *Billiken* from 1947, moved to *Anteojito* in 1970. In the early issues, *Anteojito* replicated sections drawn from the *Billiken* archives such as ‘Para los más chicos’ [For the smallest ones] and organisational patterns, such as leading with a short story. The practice of using the materiality of the magazine for interactive play also featured, with board games, jigsaws and models of buildings and aeroplanes to assemble, all long-standing features of *Billiken*. *Anteojito*’s offering

later branched out to include plastic covermount gifts, prompting *Billiken* to upgrade its cardboard models for plastic toys. Most significantly, from March 1965, with the start of the school year, *Anteojito* followed *Billiken* by aligning itself to the school calendar, including educational content and leading with anniversaries of historic dates.

Billiken was the model for *Anteojito*, because, as we have seen, it established the pattern and identity for children's magazines in Argentina. If we were to apply the industry life cycle here, by the time *Anteojito* entered the market, the industry of Argentine children's magazines was in its 'mature' phase. According to Low and Abrahamson, new organisations entering established, mature industries with high levels of competition tend to adopt conservative strategies, drawing on the knowledge gained by existing organisations.²⁵ This modelling of *Anteojito* on *Billiken*, and the combination of these imitative characteristics with *Anteojito*'s significantly innovative elements, follows a recognisable pattern adopted by new organisations. Institutional isomorphism can refer to administrative and structural similarities between organisations, which, as Johnson states, 'may be due not to efficiency considerations but instead to mimetic behaviour intended to maximise legitimacy'.²⁶ In 1977, in what is now considered a landmark article, Meyer and Rowan theorised that new organisations incorporate existing myths and ceremonies into their founding structures, because of a perceived link between modelling and legitimacy, and an observed link between increased legitimacy and increased likelihood of survival.²⁷ *Anteojito*'s operational and structural modelling on *Billiken* is evident both at the level of its visuality and of its cultural and ideological positioning.

Anteojito carried over *Billiken*'s ideological imprints when it came to the magazines' construction of the child reader. García Ferré's mission statement in the first issue's opening page could almost have been taken from the pages of *Billiken*, and from the pen of Constancio C. Vigil, had it not been for the tendency for similar statements in *Billiken* to be addressed directly to the reader. Here, García Ferré addresses not his readers but their parents, teachers and uncles (in reference to Antifaz). In this statement, García Ferré gives life and an autonomous identity to *Anteojito* whilst explaining that the magazine is one of the many manifestations of the character: 'Anteojito ha querido elegir, para salir a la vida en su forma de revista, un día de primavera. Cuando se lo preguntamos, no supo explicarnos el motivo. Será porque ANTEOJITO es un niño, y los niños sienten antes de pensar' [Anteojito chose a spring day to come to life in his magazine form. When we asked him about it, he couldn't explain why. Maybe because ANTEOJITO is a child, and children feel before they think]. It is *Anteojito*'s intuition that has led him to perceive a connection between springtime and the definition offered of *Anteojito*'s own childlike 'essence' takes up the Vigil sowing metaphor: 'pureza ... milagro de la vida nueva ... alegría y siembra para el mañana' [purity, miracle of new life, joy and sowing seeds for tomorrow]. In this statement, García Ferré confirms that *Anteojito* represents an adult's idealised version of a child: he is vivacious, optimistic, kind; he

has healthy curiosity and also faith in adults. This focus on children's 'essence,' or nature, is reminiscent of the New School pedagogical currents, which recuperated Rousseau by emphasising children's natural tendency towards benevolence, and which enjoyed a brief resurgence from 1963 to 1966 under the presidency of Arturo Umberto Illia.²⁸ Indeed, the moment of *Anteojito*'s founding would have allowed for greater championing of children's creativity and agency. A quotation from President Illia, published in *Billiken* in an illustrated pull-out pamphlet entitled 'Mi Patria,' emphasises respect for children's autonomy:

Los niños constituyen un mundo excepcional creado en gran medida por ellos mismos y no sujeto a cánones convencionales. Esto es primordial conocer, y para orientarlos tanto afectiva como racionalmente, es indispensable tratarlos con las máximas consideraciones, respetando su prodigiosa imaginación, su fantástica inventiva, sus infinitas creaciones.

Quien no alegra a un niño comete una grave omisión y quien no lo atiende debidamente, una imperdonable irreverencia (issue 2388, 18 October 1965).

[Children constitute an exceptional world created largely by themselves and not subject to conventional canons. It is essential to know this, and in order to guide them both affectively and rationally, it is indispensable to treat them with the utmost consideration, respecting their prodigious imagination, their fantastic inventiveness, their infinite creations.

Whoever does not make a child happy commits a serious omission and whoever does not take care of him properly, commits an unforgivable irreverence.]

In García Ferré's vision, children are instinctive, innocent and irrational; they are not fully equipped to participate in this discussion or make their own decisions. As such, he excludes them from the reading contract established here between the adults who create the magazine and children's parents and educators, the former reassuring the latter that this magazine is: 'un instrumento eficaz y digno que los ayude a desarrollar todas esas capacidades, y que, al tiempo que les arranca la carcajada sana y espontánea, vaya ennobleciendo su alma y alimentando su inteligencia' [an effective and dignified instrument to help them develop all these skills, and which, while eliciting healthy and spontaneous laughter, will ennoble their souls and nourish their intelligence]. Children are here seen as being in a state of transition towards adulthood, following normalist principles that see children as 'incomplete beings.' The puericulture of the early 20th century is evoked with the use of 'heathy' (healthy laughter derived from 'contenidos sanos' [healthy content]) and this also recalls the advertisement, in *Billiken*, for the *Anteojito* and *Antifaz* TV show in which the programme is described as 'sano'.²⁹ The reassurance of 'healthy content' is familiar, from the *Halfpenny Marvel*'s guarantee of 'healthy' stories to combat

the penny dreadfuls in the Britain in the 1890s to *Billiken's* oft repeated promise not to include content harmful to excitable children.

Another section that underscores the conservative and traditional underpinnings of *Anteojito* is 'Mi infancia en el recuerdo' [Childhood memories], a page about childhood, not for children, written by adults and illustrated by Hugo Csecs. García Ferré expected adults, as well as children, to be reading this magazine and provided content for them from the outset. *Billiken* regularly published reader submissions in the form of letters, stories, poems and drawings and, whilst these would have been mediated by adult editors, up to this point *Billiken* had never solicited contributions from adults. This page focusses not on novelty and innovation but on nostalgia, and can be seen as an attempt to compensate for *Anteojito's* lack of history by encouraging the transfer of the feelings of nostalgia normally associated with *Billiken* onto *Anteojito*.

Despite the formal similarities between *Billiken* and *Anteojito*, readers experienced them differently and the rivalry between the two magazines impacted on that experience. Writing in 2001 at the time of *Anteojito's* closure, Argentine writer Rodrigo Fresán stated that it would have been appropriate for *Billiken* to disappear alongside its rival as the two magazines were different sides of the same coin. On the differences between the magazines he wrote: 'Durante mi lejana infancia, la de Constancio C. Vigil era prolija, burguesa, bastante desabrida, perfecto material de lectura para chicos que querían ser los mejores alumnos ... La de García Ferré ... era caótica, alucinada, decididamente psicótica' [During my distant childhood, Constancio C. Vigil's magazine was neat, bourgeois, rather dull, perfect reading material for children who wanted to be the best pupils. García Ferré's was chaotic, astonishing, decidedly psychotic].³⁰ Today, an online post on either magazine will still, inevitably, elicit comments about the other framed within the question: were you team *Anteojito* or team *Billiken*? For many, the answer is given knowingly as way to reveal a family's social class and/or politics. Team *Anteojito* denotes coming from a working-class and/or liberally minded family, whereas *Billiken* retains its association with the middle classes and conservatism. Where families could afford to buy both magazines, *Anteojito* is remembered as the fun magazine that children wanted to read, and *Billiken* as the one that was useful for school.

Notwithstanding these perceptions, *Anteojito* promoted the same construction of childhood as *Billiken* and came to include just as much educational content. *Anteojito* did not represent a profound departure from *Billiken* in terms of how it addressed its child readers, how it understood them and how it manifested that within the pages of the magazine. The key differentiating factor was that, in *Anteojito*, these messages were transmitted through García Ferré's original, funny, irreverent and imaginative characters.³¹ As *Anteojito's* roster of original characters embedded within a growing transmedia universe was so central to the magazine's success, it is surprising, perhaps, that *Billiken's* immediate response to its new competitor was not in dialogue with either of these aspects. Instead, *Billiken* returned to the principles of the magazine's first decade and to strategies of reader engagement that fostered guaranteed sales

through the building and growing of a community of readers. *Billiken*'s 1960s strategies are reiterations of tried and tested formulae rooted in reconfigurations of existing material and ideas. The first initiative, the *figuritas* album, is evocative of the tension between tradition and innovation that characterises *Billiken*'s response to the challenge posed by *Anteojito*.

Figuritas: the cataloguing and collecting of printed ephemera

Billiken's 1964 *figuritas* album blended the tradition of collecting print ephemera with the established periodicals sales technique of competitions and serialisation and was in keeping with *Billiken*'s style of education through entertainment. *Figuritas*, or *cromos* in Spain, are related to trade cards and sticker books. *Billiken*'s *figuritas* were generally printed on paper, not card, and were mostly not self-adhesive until the 1990s. *Figuritas* were selected from the 'toolkit' of print culture that *Billiken*'s editors were able to draw on at this time. They offered a reliable method of encouraging sales, rooted in the history of printed ephemera, whilst providing a platform for delivering content about current topics of interest, such as the Space Race and sports stars. The curation and cataloguing of these topics followed on from the established practice of anthologising of visual and textual material seen in the collections of *láminas* and the volumes in *Biblioteca Billiken*. It is difficult to pinpoint the first use of the term 'figuritas' to describe this type of print ephemera in Argentina but, as *Figuritas* was the name of the Argentine children's magazine founded in 1937, the term would have been well established by then. A quotation from *Figuritas* magazine shows how these images formed part of the visual nation-building corpus that also included the *láminas* for classroom walls:

Esas figuritas que llenan tu cuaderno de recortes, esas figuritas que miras con deleite, esas figuritas que sin saberlo tú, querido niño, van entrando en tu cerebro, por los ventanales de tus ojos ... ya que sabiamente elegidas, solamente podrían actuar para hacerte cada vez más bueno, cada vez más sano, cada vez más estudioso.³²

[Those *figuritas* that fill your scrapbook, those *figuritas* that you look at with delight, those *figuritas* that enter your brain, dear child, through the windows of your eyes without you even realising ... because wisely chosen, they could only act to make you even more of a good person, even healthier and even more studious.]

This type of printed ephemera has a long history in the print culture of both Europe and the Americas. The *aleluya* of Spain (*auca* in Catalan) is one of the points of origin for both *figuritas* and comics (*tebeos* in Spain; *historietas* in Argentina) and, arguably children's magazines themselves. These loose, folded sheets (*pliegos*) are linked to the pamphlets and chapbooks (*folletines* and *pliegos*

de cordel) that form part of the history of magazine publishing and, like the contents of British penny dreadfuls or US dime novels, were initially produced for a wider public and not specifically for children. *Aleluyas* were derived from illustrated prayer cards, or holy cards (*estampitas*), which were thrown from balconies down to Easter Week processions, to the cry of 'Aleluya'.³³ By the end of the 18th century, 'aleluyas' was the generic name given in Spanish to sheets of images that generally measured 30cm × 40cm with 48 images in eight rows of six vignettes, as the themes diversified to incorporate fables, history, geography, and biographies of Great Men.³⁴

According to Martín, each sheet of *aleluyas* included one theme, sometimes with a one-word caption, and the images were generally numbered. From 1840, the text below the images increased, and was often in verse, most commonly a rhyming couplet. Some *aleluyas* then moved away from the cataloguing of themes and incorporated a narrative progression, combining the reading of words and images with themes that could be considered educational and so facilitating their use as a tool for early literacy. Whilst most historians of printed ephemera in Spain concur that the *aleluya* is a precursor to Spanish comics, Martín shows how the *aleluya* format was also adopted by Spanish children's magazines in the first decades of the 20th century.³⁵ Comics in *Billiken's* early years were organised in rows of captioned vignettes, following the European (Spanish and Franco-Belgian) style as opposed to the US style, which integrated text and image more concretely with the innovation of the speech bubble. Many of *Billiken's* comics were taken from European publications but graphic narratives created for *Billiken*, such as 'Nuestra historia', illustrated by Manuel Ugarte, and E. de Arévalo's adaptations of famous works of literature, also followed this pattern.³⁶ Although García Ferré's *Aventuras de Pi-Pío* was presented in the US style with speech bubbles, he combined different print traditions elsewhere. In the later *Anteojito y Antifaz* comic, he used both US-style speech bubbles and captions in verse, recalling the *aleluyas*. García Ferré's stand-alone *Ico* comic in *Billiken* was presented in the European picture broadsheet tradition, featuring numbered vignettes instead of a grid format.

The link to *figuritas* comes from the practice of cutting up the *aleluyas* to play with them as a precursor to the pre-cut cards known as *cromos*. *Cromos*, or chromos in French and English, take their name from the chromolithographic printing technique of the 19th century. Towards the end of the century, these prints were increasingly collected and preserved in albums, following trajectories established by similar examples of printed ephemera such as picture broadsheets (France's *images d'Épinal* and Germany's *Bilderbogen*), with other printed cards still destined for play and deterioration.³⁷ In parallel and across Europe, advertising trade cards emerged, with prints forming the lid of matchboxes or inserted into cigarette packets. Parisian department store Le Bon Marché issued chromolithographed cards from the mid-1850s and, from 1872, Liebig's Extract of Meat Company produced cards as promotional

giveaways. These became well-known throughout Europe, the US and South Africa, due to the company's international expansion.³⁸ When researching the popularity of advertising trade cards in the US, Ellen Gruber Garvey found that this peaked in the 1880s, with mainly children and adolescent girls compiling them in scrapbooks.³⁹ In all areas, the cards branched out from product advertising taking a similar thematic approach to the earlier broadsheets. In the UK context, John Broom cites card series produced on the Boer War as sparking a new tendency towards featuring contemporary events.⁴⁰

Billiken bore the traces of this transnational, interconnected history of print culture and printed ephemera beyond its narrative graphic content. *Figuritas* had been included under different names and in different formats in *Billiken* magazine many years before the publication of the first *figuritas* album. Echoes of the thematic *aleluyas* can be found in pages of captioned collections of images presented in grids: 'Grandes Novelistas' [Great Novelists] (issue 1173, 11 May 1942), 'Benefactores de la humanidad' [Benefactors of Humanity] (issue 1543, 11 July 1949)—all men except Marie Curie—and 'Patricias Argentinas' [Argentine patrician women] (issue 1926, 19 November 1956), notable for its focus on women and recalling the collage included in Antuña's civic morality school book of 1904.

Although these images were not intended to be cut out, readers could have chosen to do so, creating *figuritas* from pages presented in a format reminiscent of *aleluyas*. Advertisements in *Billiken* showed trade cards circulating in different formats. For example, Manon biscuits came with cards (*estampas*) featuring scenes from the 'exemplary' lives of Argentina's founding fathers (see issue 1598, 31 July 1950, 'Vida ejemplar de San Martín'). Before the word 'figuritas' was used in *Billiken*, they appeared as 'motivos ilustrados' [illustrated motifs], such as in the double spread illustrated by José Clémen in 1956 (issue 1896, 23 April). 'Motivos' is the word also used for illustrated Vigil messages made for cutting out and turning into pictures to be displayed (issue 1977, 25 November 1957). The first instance in which *Billiken* uses the word 'figuritas' for its own production is in December 1957 for one of the ludic sections illustrated by D. Valle for a 'juego original' [original game] of 'parejas figuritas' [figuritas in pairs], where the individual images are to be cut out and matched up with one another (the baby with the milk, the pen with the ink, etc.) (issue 1978, 2 December 1957).

Billiken's announcement of the *figuritas* album and competition is made in issue 2338 on 2 November 1964, less than a month after the first issue of *Anteojito* magazine was launched. In a sequence of black and white line drawings, a group of children gather around a boy wearing a hat fashioned from the pages of *Billiken*. The boy is smaller than the other children but possessing of superior knowledge, just like the *Anteojito* character. He announces loudly that: '*Billiken* está preparando un concurso monstruo con figuritas' [*Billiken* is preparing a monster competition with *figuritas*]. In the following week's advertisement,



Figure 3.6: 'Argentine patrician women'. *Billiken*, issue 1926, 19 November 1956. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 3.7: Illustrated passages by Constancio C. Vigil arranged for cutting out. *Billiken*, issue 1977, 25 November 1957.

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the little boy informs the children that there will be 136 *figuritas* to collect to cut out and stick in an album, starting on 16 November. Issue 2340 has the notification 'Este ejemplar contiene un album para coleccionar figuritas' [This issue contains a *figuritas* album] overlaid onto the poster style Lino Palacio cover in anticipation of the style adopted in the post-Palacio period, when covers became used as an advertising space for the contents of the magazine. The album itself, a pull-out from the magazine with its own cover, includes the titles of the different sections—Aircraft Models, Floral Decorations, Extinct Animals, The Circus, Sporting Greats, Popular Idols, Sporting Colours, Racing Cars and the Conquest of Space—and empty rectangles with numbers indicating where each *figurita* is to be placed. The complete list of 500 prizes serves as advertising for the sponsors who have provided them and includes footballs, toys, bicycles, radios, a television, the complete collection of *Biblioteca Billiken*, and a year's subscription to *Billiken* (issue 2344, 14 December 1964). Entrants must send the coupon printed in *Billiken* to Atlántida by 25 March 1965 and, if selected, must produce the completed album. *Anteojito's* own *figuritas* album appears to have been rushed out in response to *Billiken's*. The first 10 *figuritas* appeared, with no prior advertising, in issue 7 on 19 November, the same week that *Billiken* published the album. The categories were announced as National Heroes, Scientists, Writers, Musicians, Discoveries, Inventions, Sportspeople, Jungle Animals, and Radio, Theatre and TV Artists. Unlike *Billiken's* *figuritas*, *Anteojito's* included the dotted line between each image, indicating where to cut. The album itself was announced as coming soon and in full colour, presumably to differentiate it from *Billiken's* plain-looking blue-and-white one.

For *Billiken*, it is the taking part, and not just the winning, that counts. By collecting all the *figuritas* that appeared over the next 13 issues, 'Billiken les ofrece la oportunidad de actualizar, ampliar conocimientos y obtener valiosísimos premios' [*Billiken* offers you the opportunity to get up to date, increase knowledge, and win prizes of great value]. The selections reflect not quite the 1960s zeitgeist but rather the personalities and themes that *Billiken's* editors thought that children should have knowledge of to be 'up to date'. They also represent an updating of the catalogues of role models offered within the magazine and in *Biblioteca Billiken*, and a broadening out from historical Great Men, and the occasional great enough woman, to contemporary figures to be imitated and admired. The 'Popular Idols' selection celebrated the stars of TV, cinema and radio, recognising the 'incremento incesante' [incessant rise] of non-print-based mass communication. Most of these idols were Argentine, including the comedian Alberto Olmedo and TV and radio personalities Brizuela Méndez and Cacho Fontana, with Dick van Dyke, Charlie Chaplin, the Three Stooges and the fictional Lassie and Timmy representing the international cohort. Notes on the 'Sporting Greats' page explain that these athletes have been chosen not just for their skill but also for their moral values. These athletes believe in the proverb 'Mens sana in corpore sano' and, because of this, have attained

true sporting greatness. The inclusion of such notes is in keeping with *Billiken*'s approach to promoting learning through play whilst reassuring parents of the educational value of the album. The gender imbalance found elsewhere in *Billiken* is replicated here. The singer Violeta Rivas is the only woman featured in the Popular Idols section, and there are only two women amongst the Sporting Greats: Argentines Susana Peper (swimming) and Norma Baylon (tennis). The only other woman appearing in the *figuritas* can be found in the Conquest of Space section, where Valentina Tereshkova is afforded half of a *figurita* and is pictured alongside her cosmonaut husband. There is nothing in Tereshkova's illustration to reflect her profession as engineer and cosmonaut, or her status as the first woman to fly in space. Here, she is depicted wearing a wedding veil.

The 1964 *figuritas* album was a resounding success, with one million entrants in the draw for 500 prizes (issue 2361, 12 April 1965) and queues around the block for free entry to the prize-giving party held at the Buenos Aires concert venue Luna Park and which provided entertainment from TV personalities including Alberto Olmedo in character as Capitán Piluso (issue 2368, 31 May 1965). For the rest of the decade, *Billiken* ran a yearly *figuritas* album and competition culminating in an event with prizes. The *figuritas* collectable albums extended well beyond that, a notable example being the 1986 World Cup sticker album celebrating Argentina's triumph and the greatness of Maradona's performance (issue 3471, 22 July 1986). This was an important marketing opportunity for *Billiken*, particularly as Panini sticker books had not yet arrived in Argentina. When readers think of *figuritas* and *Billiken*, these albums are not what spring to mind, however. *Billiken* is remembered for its educational *figuritas*, tailored to topics covered in the school year and made specifically for inclusion in school exercise books. They became so significant because they were adopted, en masse, by schoolteachers and became a regular, if not required, addition to homework projects, further consolidating *Billiken*'s identity as an educational tool.

It is impossible to determine whether it was *Billiken*'s idea to make the *figuritas* more educational, linking them to anniversaries in the school calendar to encourage their use in schools, or whether teachers and schoolchildren began to use them to illustrate schoolwork and *Billiken* responded by theming them around topics for use in the classroom and in homework. *Billiken* took rather a long time to develop its own educational *figuritas* considering that precedents existed, however. An advertisement for Editorial Norte's 'figuritas escolares', complete with convincing arguments for their usefulness, appeared in *Billiken* in 1958. These *figuritas* were illustrated by Raúl Stevano, who would shortly be commissioned by Atlántida to illustrate new editions of Constanancio C. Vigil's stories, and were grouped into themes (here *motivos*, or motifs) including National Symbols, *Próceres* and Domestic Animals. This use of *figuritas* must have been a relatively new idea in 1958 because the advertisement explains, separately, to the three relevant parties—children, mothers and booksellers—

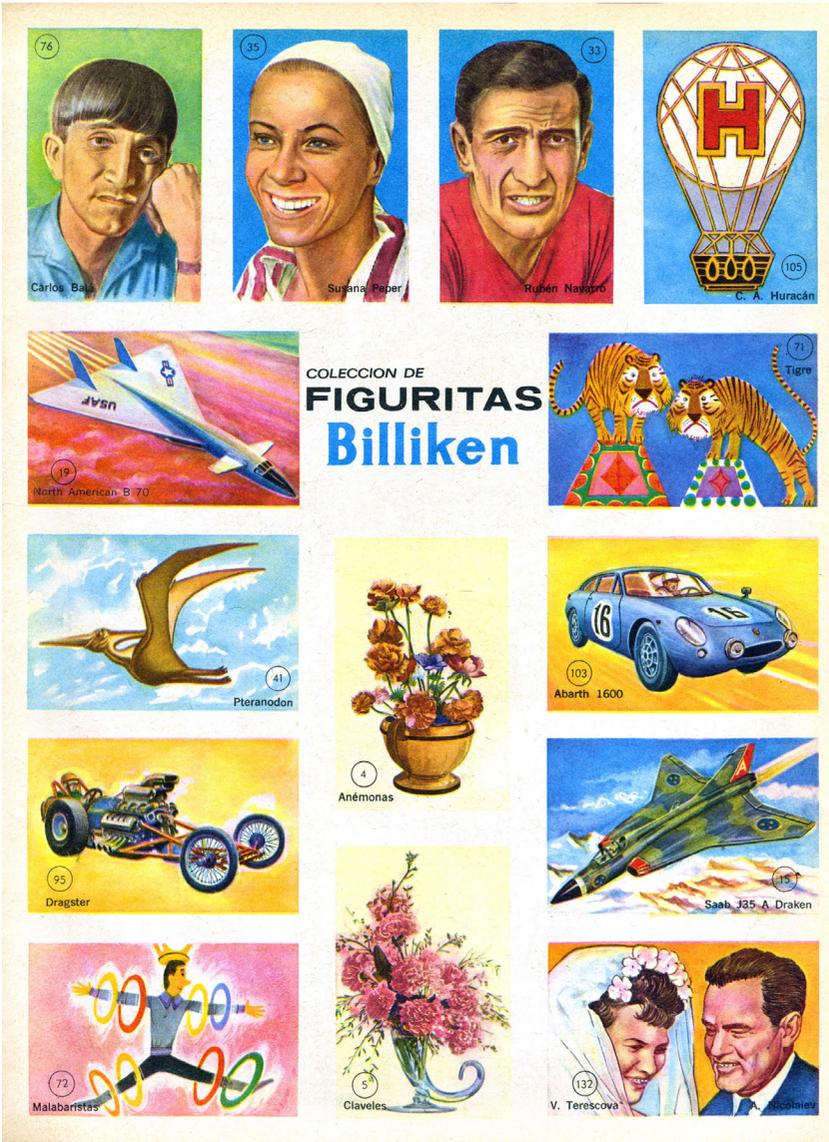


Figure 3.8: An instalment of *figuritas* for the 1964 album, featuring cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova (lower right corner). *Billiken*, issue 2342, 30 November 1964. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

the rationale behind them. The ‘pibes’ [kids] are told how these beautiful, full-colour *figuritas* will look wonderful in their school exercise books and that they can be played with and collected. The mothers, addressed here respectfully and in the singular ‘señora madre’, are told that these *figuritas* have been designed for their children’s school exercise books so that they can learn through play on cold winter days. The convenience of the product is highlighted to the book-seller (‘señor librero’) as all the *figuritas* come packaged according to theme so can be easily organised to facilitate the sales process. Overall, the advertisement emphasises the ludic, educational and commercial advantages to this product, which seeks to appeal both to children and to the adults who mediate between them and consumer products.

Billiken first featured educational *figuritas* for the start of the school year in 1960, with the suggestion to use them for illustrating homework (issue 2097, 21 March). These were not provided in grids, however, and each image was accompanied by its silhouette to cut out carefully and use as a model to colour in or draw around. In 1962, school *figuritas* were still being presented as a novelty in an advertisement for *Billiken*’s forthcoming new school content, which included *figuritas* based on school themes for use in homework (issue 2236, 19 November). The use of *figuritas* also reinforces the cyclical nature of *Billiken* as it moves through the school year, acquiring new generations of readers. Some readers report inheriting old issues of the magazine from older siblings or cousins, keeping them as an archive from which to harvest any previously unused pictures. When writer Eduardo Sacheri was interviewed about *Billiken* he identified the practice as a childhood ritual:

La leía [*Billiken*] y la usaba en la escuela. La típica: las habían usado antes mis hermanos: las revistas más nuevas las usábamos para leer y las viejas para recortar. Estaba la pila de revistas y vos ibas buscando: 25 de mayo, 9 de julio, la que necesitaras ... pero era un rito frecuente. Seguro que en lo de mi vieja debe quedar algún cuaderno mío de la primaria con recortes de *Billiken*.⁴¹

[I read it [*Billiken*] and used it at school. The typical thing: my siblings had used them before: we used the newer magazines for reading and the old ones for cutting out. There was a pile of magazines and you would look for: 25 May, 9 July, whatever you needed ... but it was a frequent ritual. I’m sure there must still be an exercise book of mine from primary school with cuttings from *Billiken* in my mum’s house.]

For Argentines growing up from the 1960s to the late 1990s, the educational *figuritas* are indelibly linked to the memory of *Billiken*. The practice of cutting out and sticking *Billiken*’s *figuritas* (‘recortar y pegar’) became associated with memories of school and was a determining factor in *Billiken*’s continuing relevance until internet searching for images eventually outperformed the *figuritas*’ usefulness.



Figure 3.10: *Figuritas* for the school calendar. *Billiken*, issue 2251, 4 March 1963. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 3.11: Completing a *figuritas* album. Cover illustration by (Vladimiro) Fuis. *Billiken*, issue 2601, 17 November 1969. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

Partnering with the military and educational establishments

The 1964 *figuritas* album was a pivotal moment for *Billiken* as it set the tone for a new, post-*Anteojito* phase focussing on reader participation through competitions and events. These, in turn, provided the opportunity for *Billiken* to cultivate closer links with national authorities. In 1967, reader participation was extended to sports events reminiscent of the *Campeonatos Evita* of the previous decade. This began with a football competition, announced in a new sports news page, 'Billideportes', as the *Campeonatos Escolares de Fútbol* [School Football Championships] (issue 2448, 12 December 1966). Swimming and athletics tournaments were also held in 1967 and, by the end of the year, the 'Billideportes' page was retitled 'Campeonatos Escolares Billiken' to reflect the branching out from sport to include a writing competition. The swimming and athletics tournaments, which continued throughout the decade, were high-profile events that generated interest in the local press and commercial

sponsorship, with companies providing prizes and goody bags to entrants. Competitions generated content for the magazine, with photographs of winning teams and instructions for future competitions, and the chance for readers to see their name or team photograph in print incentivised them to buy the magazine.

The competitions were also the focal point of *Billiken*'s links to the military and national educational authorities, which peaked under the Onganía dictatorship. *Billiken*'s cultivating of links to the Onganía regime can be seen not just as a manifestation of ideological proximity but also as a commercial strategy. Foster and others consider the rhetorical history of the kind employed in *Billiken* in the repeated retelling of a company's values derived from the founder. They argue that this is not just useful as a symbolic resource that can be used internally but that it is most effective when deployed outside of the company:

By connecting a firm's history to broader social and cultural values shared by external stakeholders, at the level of the community or the nation-state, narrative accounts of a firm's history may be used to appropriate the legitimacy of broader socio-cultural institutions. When a firm can appropriate or borrow the legitimacy of related or proximate social institutions and incorporate it into its identity or brand, this can create a substantial and sustainable competitive advantage.⁴²

Billiken's competitions afforded the possibility of aligning the magazine to the regime whilst appropriating the perceived legitimacy of the National Education Council. The official associations with the military and educational authorities began in 1967 when *Billiken*'s writing competition was held in honour of the XXI Aeronautics and Space Week. Children were asked to write a piece either about a journey by plane or about a comic character featured in *Billiken*. *Billiken*'s lead editor, Elba Teresa Cosso, and *Billiken* contributor Joaquín Gómez Bas were joined on the judging panel by representatives of the National Education Council and members of the Aeronautics and Space Week's organising committee, two of whom held a military rank (issue 2484, 21 August). The prize was a vinyl record of 'Argentine Marches and Anthems' recorded by the Air Force's band (issue 2492, 23 October 1967).

The following year marked the peak of *Billiken*'s military connections, with events organised with, or sponsored by, all three branches. The art competition was a joint endeavour with the Argentine Navy. Children were tasked with colouring in line drawings adapted from Emilio Biggeri's series of historical Argentine ships, published in *Billiken*. This artist was a naval captain, and his studio was located in the historical studies department of the Navy Command Centre (issue 2508, 5 February 1968). The 45 winners, who each received a set of *láminas* with the portraits and biographies of Argentine naval heroes, all attended a prize-giving ceremony on the frigate 'Sarmiento'. The judges

included the technical inspector for art of the National Education Council (issue 2516, 1 April 1968).

The following competition in the Schools' Championships was linked to the army and commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Maipú. Entrants were primary schoolchildren tasked with writing a short composition about the battle itself and its importance in the Wars of Independence. They were judged on the content of their work, their spelling and their handwriting for the chance to win an atlas, an encyclopaedia or a year's subscription to *Billiken* (issue 2512, 4 March 1968). As a symbol to promote the competition, *Billiken* chose the drummer boy El Tambor de Tacuarí, as a 'niño héroe, ejemplo de nobleza y valentía' [child hero, example of nobility and bravery]. The intention was to connect children to the commemoration of these historic events: 'Seguros estamos de contribuir, de este modo, a cimentar en los pequeños lectores de nuestra patria un sentimiento que no deberá faltar nunca en el hombre del mañana: el orgullo de ser argentino' [We are sure that in this way we will contribute to cementing in the young readers of our country a feeling that should never be lacking in the man of tomorrow: the pride of being Argentine] (issue 2511, 26 February 1968). Elba Teresa Cosso was joined by representatives from the National Education Council and members of the organising committee of Army Week on the judging panel. They selected the final five winners in each of two age categories and 10 honourable mentions after 400 volunteer teachers made a pre-selection of the thousands of submissions received. These thousands of entries were sent in by schools which had run their own internal pre-selection, taking the number of participants into the millions. We are told that participation was so high because both the national and provincial education authorities had made space for the writing of these compositions in their school calendars. The volunteer teachers had undertaken the pre-selection at the army headquarters, organised by the army's head of community relations.

On the facing page, more military personnel are pictured, this time from the Air Force. The occasion is the planning of *Billiken's* Aerial Festival for the latest *figuritas* album prize-giving. The theme of this album was 'Conquista del cielo / Historia de la aviación mundial' [The conquest of the skies/ History of world aviation]. The festival, held on 4 May 1968, featured an Air Force fly-past, a military dog agility display, and entertainment from an Air Force band. That same year, the swimming tournament had the support of National Education Council, as well as several government departments, and the athletics tournament was supported by the Ministry of Social Welfare and the head of the army's physical education division (issues 2544, 14 October 1968, and 2539, 9 September 1968). *Billiken* rounded off the year by launching a crossword competition for the XXII Air and Space Week and with a stand at the first Air and Space Exhibition, inaugurated by Onganía (issue 2550, 25 November 1968).

The involvement of the National Education Council in the organisation of the *Campeonatos Escolares Billiken* was an official stamp of approval for the magazine. *Billiken*'s initiation of a more formal relationship with this national educational body in the run-up to the magazine's fiftieth anniversary was facilitated, no doubt, by *Billiken*'s identification with education and its long-standing publication of educational material, even though this had never previously been officially endorsed. It is notable that the first concerted attempt by *Billiken* to cultivate more formal links with the National Education Council came under a repressive regime that was in conflict with the teaching body. Adriana Puiggrós characterises the 'Revolución Argentina' dictatorship as 'profundamente conservadora y con una impronta franquista' [profoundly conservative with a Francoist stamp]. Universities and trade union activity were repressed, and the democratic pedagogical experiments of the Illia government were shut down.⁴³

Billiken supported the regime's proposed reforms, increasing the space devoted to photographs of visits to different types of schools, and placed greater emphasis on technical and vocational education. The purpose of the first exhibition of handicrafts of the capital's schools was, we are told, to develop creativity but also to help children find their vocation. The caption reads: 'Manos infantiles que se adiestran para un futuro de trabajo' [Children's hands training for a future of work] (issue 2540, 16 September 1968). Opportunities for secondary level education were highlighted in a piece directed at seventh-graders about to leave primary school. Different options were presented ranging from three more years of schooling to then decide between the *Bachillerato* (orientated towards obtaining eventually obtaining a university degree) and the *Magisterio* (putting them on a teacher-training track), to vocational options. These included national technical schools (mechanics, carpentry, graphic arts for boys, or dressmaking, cooking and interior design for girls), and also agricultural schools (issue 2547, 4 November 1968). In keeping with the rest of the magazine, these pages were all addressed to children. Even though there had long been the tacit assumption that parents and teachers were also reading *Billiken*, the section 'Actualidad docente' [Teaching news], launched in May 1967, was the first initiative that directly addressed an adult reader and further sought to formalise *Billiken*'s credentials as an educational reference point.

'Actualidad docente' [Teaching news], providing 'Asesoramiento para todos los problemas del docente' [Advice for all teachers' problems], was published until mid-1971. It was the work of Marta de Buono de Baibiene and María Marta Garabato, both introduced as 'Doctoras'. Their titles appear to be used as the honorific bestowed upon lawyers, as opposed to indicating medical qualifications or the holding of doctorates. Beyond *Billiken*, the authors co-wrote a book on school cooperatives and Garabato wrote a 1965 manual containing legal information on the Teachers' Statute. De Buono de Baibiene is described by Viviana Usubiaga as a lawyer, teacher and specialist in education

who became director of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1982.⁴⁴ On their aspirations for this page, the authors reflect that, even though their readers are primarily teachers, they hope that parents will find answers to questions they may have, and that it may give children cause to think if they happen upon it (issue 2662, 18 January 1971). The writers are aware of their dual task in this section: their vocation for education and their desire to translate it 'journalistically' for their readers (issue 2515, 25 March 1968). Space was reserved each week for answering teachers' specific questions and concerns alongside varied editorial content. This encompassed practical information regarding the teaching profession such as salaries, lists of training courses and guidance on annual teacher evaluations. Other articles gave specific classroom advice on teaching techniques, modern maths and lesson planning, or were concerned with broader pedagogical questions and child psychology. The column reported on conferences and seminars attended, and teaching news from around the world, as well as providing information and comment on the proposed, and ultimately rejected, 1968 Astigueta educational reform.

'Actualidad docente' merits attention as *Billiken's* most direct link to the teaching profession and for the window it opens onto the educational debates at the time. The instalments that address families—or, rather, mothers—as opposed to teachers provide valuable insights into debates surrounding the role of parents in children's development, and a yardstick against which to measure progress, or lack thereof, of women's perceived roles in society, 30 years after the Marilú doll was first marketed to 'little mothers'. A piece about children taking on chores at home begins by painting a picture of a typical family: mother, father, son and daughter. The mother is in the kitchen making lunch with the daughter, whilst father and son are outside washing the car. The authors emphasise the importance of teaching children how to carry out domestic tasks so that they become self-sufficient, and to inculcate in them a sense of pride in a job well done. After all, 'siempre es conveniente y necesario que las niñas ... ¿y por qué no los varones? ... sepan coser un botón o hacerse un plato de comida' [it is always convenient and necessary for girls ... and why not boys? ... to know how to sew on a button or make a plate of food]. This momentary questioning of the status quo is undermined in the same article, which underscores that, whereas boys may benefit from such domestic capabilities, for girls this is indispensable. The mother of the story recognises 'que debe asignar responsabilidades a la niña dentro del hogar, y que desde ahora ella debe tener participación en la vida cotidiana, al mismo tiempo que va aprendiendo a realizar tareas de mujercita' [that the girl should be given responsibilities within the household, and that from now on she should be involved in daily life, as well as learning how to perform the tasks of a little woman] (issue 2505, 5 February 1968).

An article that recounts a parents' meeting reinforces the idea that teachers are qualified to offer parenting advice. In this meeting, a teacher intervenes to 'orientate' a mother who has expressed that she loves each of her five children equally and treats them all the same. It is impossible, the teacher says,

for parents to love all their children in the same way, because of the inherent differences in children according to their gender: ‘Generalmente, a las mujercitas se las quiere por la ternura que inspiran; a los varones, por su agilidad, por su independencia, por sus travesuras’ [Generally, little women are loved for the tenderness they inspire; boys for their agility, their independence, their mischief] (issue 2523, 20 May 1968). Another article states that these ‘little women’ are being prepared for their lives as mothers in which they will take ultimate responsibility for their children, just as their own mothers currently do. Children, as mothers know, spend 93 per cent of their time at home until they are seven years old, and mothers must make the most of that time to: ‘educar, modelar, construir y formar en su hijo un caudal maravilloso de educación y cultura’ [educate, model, build and form in her child a marvellous wealth of education and culture] (issue 2514, 18 March 1968).

Within the pages of ‘Actualidad docente’, there is some tentative recognition that women’s lives are changing. Evidence of this can be seen in the increase in women drivers, not just amongst single women but also amongst mothers: ‘índice elocuente no solo de la superación del sexo en las actividades cotidianas, sino también afirmación de que las mujeres de hoy no limitan su función de madre a las comidas y al vestuario de la ropa’ [an eloquent indication not only of the overcoming of gender in everyday activities, but also affirmation that today’s women do not limit their role as mothers to providing food and clothing]. As women drivers will be exposed to the ‘law of the jungle’ of the roads, they will have to learn how to drive well, keep calm and not respond to insults. Even whilst driving, they must remember that they are still a role model for their children, future drivers themselves. The piece recognises driving as part of the duties of modern motherhood:

La madre siempre ha significado aquello ponderable, en abnegación, ternura y espíritu de sacrificio. A través de los años, ella debió cocinar a la perfección, ser modelo y ejemplo. Este siglo le ha exigido a la mujer muchas cosas, tantas que para no perder esa imagen de madre hasta debe ser una buena conductora.

[Mothers have always stood for the thought-provoking notions of selflessness, tenderness and a spirit of sacrifice. Throughout the years, they have had to cook perfectly, to be a role model and an example. This century has demanded many things from women, so many that in order not to lose that image of a mother, they must even be good drivers.]

The authors advocate for fellow drivers to show respect to women who drive, encouraging them to remember that:

esa mujer es el legado de la buena señora, cuya sabiduría consistía en quedarse en casa y que ésta, la mamá de ahora, es la tierna mujer que conduce un coche y que no puede ni debe romper su imagen, porque la

cacerola se ha convertido en un volante de cuatro velocidades. ('Madres al volante' [Mothers at the wheel], issue 2630, 8 June 1970).

[that woman is the legacy of the good lady, whose wisdom was to stay at home, and this, the mother of today, is the tender woman who drives a car and who cannot and must not lose her image now that the saucepan has become a four-speed steering wheel.]

In these pages, the writers of 'Actualidad Docente' support the notion that the school system, as an agent of the state, has authority over family life. Once again, *Billiken* is positioned as a mediator between home and school life and between families and the state.

From 1968, the medal awarded to winners across the different branches of the *Billiken* School Championships depicted the image from *Billiken*'s first cover, reinforcing the magazine's longevity and creating a visual connection between *Billiken* and the official educational and military institutions co-sponsoring or co-organising the events. *Billiken* entered its fiftieth year having consolidated its place at the heart of Argentina's cultural life, with official national recognition, and with ample evidence that contemporary children were actively engaging with the magazine's events and ephemera, if not with the content of the magazine itself. For its quaintly named 'Bodas de Oro' [Golden Wedding] celebrations, *Billiken* deployed legacy as an asset whilst emphasising the magazine's place in, and connection to, contemporary culture and society. The anniversary event—the 'Gran Festival Infantil'—held at Luna Park in November 1969 placed the focus firmly on entertainment. Headlined by popular children's television star Carlos Balá, it featured musicians, clowns, the staging of plays and the prize-giving for the winning schools of the 'Bodas de Oro' athletics tournament (issue 2599, 3 November 1969). *Billiken*'s special anniversary edition blended nostalgia with continued relevance, a duality encapsulated in the extendable cover, which, four months after the moon landing, took the magazine's issues on a journey through space, with the caption '50 years devoted to childhood'.

The fiftieth anniversary message replicated the fortieth anniversary message by including the same two key quotations. It opened with an excerpt from Constancio C. Vigil's twenty-fifth anniversary message, in which he stated that *Billiken* was made more with the heart than with the hands and closed with the *Billiken* guarantee of morally and spiritually edifying content, originally from the 1930s. The text also included, for the first time in *Billiken*, a reflection on the historical context of the founding moment, outlining the ideological and commercial imprints that had persisted through time:

Billiken surgió como la expresión práctica de un propósito de pacificación espiritual que era preciso inculcar en la mente de los niños nacidos en la época de gravísima perturbación moral de la posguerra y para reafirmar los derechos de la infancia a tener una publicación exclusiva y no sólo en un rincón en los periódicos.



Figure 3.12: The cover of *Billiken*'s fiftieth anniversary special edition. *Billiken*, issue 2599, 3 November 1969. © Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

[*Billiken* emerged as the practical expression of a purpose of spiritual pacification that needed to be instilled in the minds of children born in the time of very serious post-war moral turmoil and to reaffirm the rights of children to have their own exclusive publication and not just a corner in newspapers.]

The message continued by insisting that *Billiken* was still culturally relevant and had kept pace with the times, always offering content that was 'lo más moderno y apropiado' [the most modern and appropriate]. We are told that the nostalgic content of old covers and comics, reproduced in the anniversary issue, are there to show key points in *Billiken's* trajectory and to justify the claim to have been, and to continue to be, 'la revista de los niños'. Children themselves are not addressed in this message, however. The management thanks all the adults involved: the parents and teachers who have made comments and suggestions, the staff and collaborators who create *Billiken*, the agents, distributors and sellers, and 'todos cuantos se sintieron identificados con *Billiken*' [all those who have identified with *Billiken*]. The letters pages in and around the anniversary issue were overwhelmingly given over to publishing contributions from adults writing in with their memories of the magazine. The letters were filtered by the editors who had the power to shape the discourse and select anecdotes and memories for printing that contributed to the sense of generational continuity of the moral values and spiritual principles upon which *Billiken* was founded. After 50 years of publication, *Billiken* had arrived at the future envisaged by Constancio C. Vigil and projected through *Billiken's* first anniversary messages. In this self-fulfilling prophecy, the readers' memories had become aligned to the institutional discourse.

Amidst all the strategies employed following *Anteojito* magazine's arrival on the market, those in charge of *Billiken* took their time to address the main differentiating factors between *Billiken* and *Anteojito*. *Anteojito's* roster of original characters and their presence on television were the two ingredients that made *Anteojito* so much more appealing to children. *Billiken* flirted only briefly, and belatedly, with the idea of developing an original character to rival *Anteojito*, launching the *Aventuras de Billikín* comic by Carlos Garaycochea in 1968 (from issue 2519, 22 April). Taking an invented diminutive form of *Billiken* for the character's name, *Billikín* led other sections of the magazine, such as 'Los por qué de *Billikín*' [The whys of *Billikín*], mirroring *Anteojito's* use of its protagonist across different sections. By the end of the year, however, the Japanese comic *Ultraman* was being marketed as *Billiken's* most significant acquisition (issue 2552, 9 December 1968). From 1971, with *Atlántida* having acquired 14 per cent of Channel 13, *Billiken* was used to promote the channel's children's TV programmes *El Zapato Roto* and *El Clan de Mac Perro*, in both cases through themed supplements included with the magazine (from issue 2662, 18 January 1971, and issue 2674, 12 April 1971, respectively). The credits of the *Mac Perro* supplement specified that this was a stand-alone product with no

input from the *Billiken* staff. It was directed by Mac Perro's creator, Carlos Costantini, with the editorial director named as Eugenio J. Zoppi. Maria Perego's Topo Gigio was another character featured on Channel 13 and in *Billiken* comics and covers (issue 2683, 14 June 1971).

In parallel, *Billiken*'s editors started to reach into the magazine's back catalogue and the 'toolkit' left by Constancio C. Vigil, which included the original characters he first developed for short stories in the 1920s. Over the years, the stories had been repacked in new editions with new illustrations: Raúl Stevano took over in the 1960s from the Spanish-born Federico Ribas, who illustrated Vigil's works for the 'Biblioteca Infantil Atlántida' [Atlántida Children's Library] in the 1940s and who, in turn, had taken over from the original illustrator, French artist Asha. Although the core plots of the stories were changed as they were adapted to different formats including comics, theatre productions and TV shows, Vigil's characters retained their visual identities with each new illustrator and in each new iteration. El Mono Relojero was consistently depicted wearing a fez, and La Hormigueta Viajera with the polka-dot skirt stereotypically associated with representations of Afro-Argentines in school commemorations of May Week. In 1969 *Billiken* published an advertisement for the theatre production of *La Hormigueta Viajera*, then in its sixth year, showing an unnamed Afro-Argentine actor in the title role (issue 2589, 25 August 1969). When El Mono Relojero first appeared in a comic for *Billiken*, the advertisement acknowledged that it was 'about time' that *Billiken*'s readers had a Vigil character comic. With illustrations signed by Fernández Branca (Oscar Fernández and Daniel Branca) and a script by Kike Sabella Rosa, this first iteration of the comic gave way to the more well-known version written by Enrique Pinti. Pinti, who went on to become a renowned actor and comedian, had previously helped to adapt Constancio C. Vigil's characters, including writing the play adaptation of *Misia Pepa* performed at the Luna Park festival in 1969 (issue 2599, 3 November). In an interview, Pinti later recalled the significant length of time taken by the Atlántida management to decide upon selecting El Mono Relojero as the character to promote identification with *Billiken*, even once they had recognised the need for such a character.⁴⁵ Finally, in 1973, El Mono Relojero gained his own 'good night' segment used to mark the end of the channel's children's programming, 35 years after he was first animated in a short film by Quirino Cristiani. This had been Argentina's first animated film with optical sound, and Cristiani was a pioneer animator responsible for the world's first animated feature film with sound (*Peludópolis*, in 1931).⁴⁶ Once again, there is a sense of missed opportunities and of a truncated innovative trajectory when examining the sweep of *Billiken*'s history.

Billiken's proximity to the educational authorities waned in the aftermath of the 1969 'Bodas de Oro' celebrations, roughly coinciding with the ousting of Onganía in June 1970. The only contemporary political events featured within the pages of *Billiken* in the run-up to the coup of 1976 were the



Figure 3.13: An advertisement for the return of Constancio C. Vigil's character El Mono Relojero. *Billiken*, issue 2725, 3 April 1972. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

assassination of General Aramburu by the left-wing Peronist guerrilla organisation the Monotoneros, in 1970, and the death of Perón (issues 2638, 3 August 1970, and 2845, 22 July 1974, respectively). There were no pages dedicated to inaugurations or photographs of living heads of state throughout this tumultuous period. *Billiken* returned briefly to operating under its own logic and in its own space and time during a rapidly evolving political situation that saw Perón return from exile and the rise of the right-wing death squad the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance, under the presidency of his widow, Isabel Perón. Amidst the upheaval, uncertainty and crisis, El Mono Relojero provided consistency in *Billiken*. The character was transplanted into *Billiken's* cycle of the school year, much in the same way as the Anteojo character had been integrated into his magazine on the covers of issues that led on anniversaries of historic events. El Mono Relojero appeared, grinning, on nearly every cover of *Billiken* between 1973 and March 1976, in white overalls in March for the start of the school year, dressed as a *granadero* in August to



Figure 3.14: El Mono Relojero teaching about San Martín. *Billiken*, issue 2796, 13 August 1973. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

celebrate San Martín and showing a portrait of Sarmiento to schoolchildren in September (issue 2784, 21 May 1973, to issue 2932, 22 March 1976). The coup of 24 March 1976 was not registered in *Billiken* and the beginning of Atlántida and *Billiken*'s most controversial era went unremarked in the pages of the magazine.

Notes

- ¹ Frank N. Magill, *Chronology of Twentieth-Century History: Business and Commerce*, 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), ii, pp. 964–65.
- ² On televisión see Gustavo Bulla, 'Televisión argentina en los 60: La consolidación de un negocio de largo alcance', in *Mucho ruido, pocas leyes. Economía y políticas de comunicación en la Argentina (1920–2004)*, ed. by Guillermo Mastrini (Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2005), pp. 113–34.
- ³ Nathan L. Hammond, Allison W. Pearson and Daniel T. Holt, 'The Quagmire of Legacy in Family Firms: Definition and Implications of Family and Family Firm Legacy Orientations', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 40.6 (2016), 1209–31 (pp. 1214–15) <<https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12241>>.
- ⁴ Hammond, Pearson and Holt, p. 1217. On succession planning see Peter Jaskiewicz, James G. Combs and Sabine B. Rau, 'Entrepreneurial Legacy: Toward a Theory of How Some Family Firms Nurture Transgenerational Entrepreneurship', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30.1 (2015), 29–49 (p. 44) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.001>>.
- ⁵ Luis R. Gómez-Mejía and others, 'Socioemotional Wealth and Business Risks in Family-Controlled Firms: Evidence from Spanish Olive Oil Mills', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52.1 (2007), 106–37 (p. 106) <<https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.52.1.106>>.
- ⁶ Hammond, Pearson and Holt, p. 1210.
- ⁷ Jaskiewicz, Combs and Rau, p. 30.
- ⁸ Alfredo De Massis and others, 'Innovation through Tradition: Lessons from Innovative Family Businesses and Directions for Future Research', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 30.1 (2016), 93–116 (pp. 95–96) <<https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2015.0017>>.
- ⁹ Irmak Erdogan, Emanuela Rondi and Alfredo De Massis, 'Managing the Tradition and Innovation Paradox in Family Firms: A Family Imprinting Perspective', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44.1 (2020), 20–54 (p. 21) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258719839712>>.
- ¹⁰ Tina M. Dacin, Peter A. Dacin and Derin Kent, 'Tradition in Organizations: A Custodianship Framework', *Academy of Management Annals*, 13.1 (2018), 342–73 (pp. 358, 343) <<https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0122>>.
- ¹¹ See Erdogan, Rondi and De Massis, p. 21.
- ¹² De Massis and others, p. 94.
- ¹³ See William M. Foster and others, 'History as Social Memory Assets: The Example of Tim Hortons', *Management & Organizational History*, 6.1 (2011), 101–20 (p. 102) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744935910387027>>.
- ¹⁴ Ann Swidler, 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies', *American Sociological Review*, 51.2 (1986), 273–86 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521>>.
- ¹⁵ Mariel Falabella, 'Anteojitos y Billikines, contrato de lectura (1964–1983)', *La Trama de la Comunicación*, 14 (2010), 203–20 (pp. 210–11) <<https://doi.org/10.35305/lt.v14i0.16>>.

- ¹⁶ Luis Ormaechea, ‘Una frontera que más que separar, une’, in *Imágenes compartidas: cine argentino, cine español* (Buenos Aires: CCEBA, 2011), pp. 355–69 (p. 360).
- ¹⁷ Argentina’s Circulation Verification Institute (IVC) only holds records for *Anteojito* from 1965 when it sold an average of 169,873 per issue. In 1968, the first year for which the IVC has figures for *Billiken*, the average sold copies per issue was 141,984. In the same year, the figure for *Anteojito* was 242,951. My thanks to Nancy Campos for providing these figures.
- ¹⁸ Lauren Rea, ‘The Newsboy’s Good Deed: *Billiken* Magazine’s Construction of Argentine Childhood In 1942’, *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 12.1 (2019), 68–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2019.0004>>.
- ¹⁹ Carlos Ulanovsky, *Paren las rotativas: una historia de grandes diarios, revistas y periodistas argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Espasa, 1997).
- ²⁰ Falabella, p. 215.
- ²¹ Tamara Accorinti, ‘Una infancia en mil películas, un modelo en mil países. Mil intentos y un invento (Manuel García Ferré, 1972)’, in *30–50–70: conformación, crisis y renovación del cine industrial argentino y latinoamericano*, ed. by Ricardo Manetti and Lucía Rodríguez Riva (Buenos Aires: EFL, 2014), pp. 331–46 (pp. 334, 341).
- ²² Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) <<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1525/9780520912434/html>> [accessed 3 June 2022]; Avi Santo, *Selling the Silver Bullet: The Lone Ranger and Transmedia Brand Licensing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).
- ²³ *Calculín*, issue 1883, 23 January 1956; *Chim-pan-see*, issue 1890, 12 March 1956; *Ta-te-ti*, issue 1895, 16 April 1956; *Pinchapua*, issue 1984, 13 January 1958; *Ico*, issue 2010, 14 July 1958; *Tijerita*, issue 2079, 16 November 1959.
- ²⁴ Verónica M. Carman, ‘El diseño editorial y la infancia. Las revistas *Humi*, *Billiken* y *Anteojito*, 1982–1984’ (unpublished master’s thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2019).
- ²⁵ Murray B. Low and Eric Abrahamson, ‘Movements, Bandwagons, and Clones: Industry Evolution and the Entrepreneurial Process’, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 12.6 (1997), 435–57 (p. 437) <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(97\)00001-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(97)00001-3)>.
- ²⁶ Victoria Johnson, ‘What is Organizational Imprinting? Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Founding of the Paris Opera’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 113.1 (2007), 97–127 (p. 104) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/517899>>. See also Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, ‘The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields’, *American Sociological Review*, 48.2 (1983), 147–60 (p. 152) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>>.

- ²⁷ John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83.2 (1977), 340–63 (pp. 340–45).
- ²⁸ Sandra Carli, 'The New School Movement in Argentina', *Paedagogica Historica*, 42.3 (2006), 385–404 (pp. 390–97). On Illia see Adriana Puiggrós, *Qué pasó en la educación argentina: breve historia desde la conquista hasta el presente* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 2018), p. 153.
- ²⁹ On medical notions regarding children's 'nature' see María Adelaida Colán-gelo, 'El saber médico y la definición de una "naturaleza infantil" entre fines del siglo XIX y comienzos del siglo XX en la Argentina', in *Infancias: políticas y saberes en la Argentina y Brasil. Siglos XIX y XX*, ed. by Isabella Cosse and others (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2011), pp. 101–21 (p. 112).
- ³⁰ Rodrigo Fresán, 'Por el camino de Antejito', *Página/12*, 13 January 2002, <<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/6-54-2002-01-13.html>> [accessed 14 September 2022].
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- ³² *Figuritas*, issue 105, 15 July 1938. Quoted in Mónica Demarco, 'Constitución del espacio literario en la escuela de la Argentina Moderna: El caso de la revista *Figuritas*', in *La lectura en los manuales escolares*, org. by Spregelburd and Linares, p. 144.
- ³³ Carmen Ortiz García, 'Papeles para el pueblo. Hojas sueltas y otros impresos de consumo masivo en la España de finales del siglo XIX', in *Palabras para el pueblo: aproximación general a la Literatura de Cordel*, 2 vols, coord. by Luis Díaz G Viana (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), i, pp. 145–90 (p. 182).
- ³⁴ Antonio Martín, 'Las aleluyas, primera lectura y primeras imágenes para niños (siglos XVIII–XIX)', *CLIJ. Cuadernos de literatura infantil y juvenil*, 18.179 (2005), 44–53 (p. 49).
- ³⁵ Martín, p. 52.
- ³⁶ For examples of these in *Billiken* see issue 680, 28 November 1932, and issue 1564, 5 December 1949, respectively.
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- ³⁸ Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator and Historian* (London: The British Library, 2000), pp. 97, 195.

- ³⁹ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 18, 26.
- ⁴⁰ John Broom, *A History of Cigarette and Trade Cards: The Magic Inside the Packet* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2018). Kindle ebook. Chapter 1.
- ⁴¹ Euhén Matarozzo, 'Eduardo Sacheri, el escritor que ganó un Oscar con El secreto de sus ojos, también es profesor de historia', *Billiken.lat* <<https://Billiken.lat/interesante/eduardo-sacheri-y-su-pasion-por-la-historia-argentina-el-lado-menos-conocido-del-escritor-que-gano-un-oscar-con-el-secreto-de-sus-ojos/>> [accessed 12 September 2022].
- ⁴² Foster and others, p. 102.
- ⁴³ Adriana Puiggrós, *Qué pasó en la educación argentina*, p. 155–56.
- ⁴⁴ Marta de Buono de Baibiene and María Marta Garabato, *Las cooperadoras escolares* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Víctor Lerú, 1969); María Marta Garabato, *El Estatuto del Docente actualizado y comentado* (Buenos Aires: Norte, 1965); Viviana Usubiaga, 'Museo y puestas en escena de imágenes y escritos sobre la guerra de las Malvinas', *Revista Afuera*, 15 (2015) <http://hdl.handle.net/11336/60193> [accessed 22 September 2022].
- ⁴⁵ Enrique Pinti, *Conversaciones con Juan Forn* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1990), pp. 118–20.
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CHAPTER 4

Dictatorship, Censorship and War in *Billiken* (1976–1983)

‘You can show children from all over the world the truth about our country.’ Embedded in two otherwise unremarkable issues of *Billiken* in 1978 is the magazine’s most explicit endorsement of the dictatorship that had been installed by military coup in March 1976. *Billiken*’s readers are instructed to help their mothers send out the postcards from *Para Ti*, ‘the magazine your mother reads’. The *Para Ti* postcards ‘Argentina toda la verdad’ [Argentina, the whole truth] initiative is one of the most emblematic examples of Editorial Atlántida’s promotion of, and attempts to legitimise, the military regime. Atlántida was complicit with the dictatorship, putting its publications, in particular *Para Ti*, *Gente* and *Somos*, and its access to a mass readership, at the service of the regime.¹ *Billiken*’s incorporation of *Para Ti* reinforces the children’s magazine’s place as part of the Atlántida ‘family’ and the imagined link between the readerships of these two magazines. Here, mothers and their children are co-opted into telling the wider world about ‘who we are and how we live’ to combat an alleged campaign of disinformation: ‘You will have heard lately about a campaign that exists in Europe against our country. Huge lies are being told about us.’

This page, published on 29 August 1978 and repeated the following week, is the one instance in which *Billiken* explicitly calls children to action in support of the 1976–1983 civic-military dictatorship. *Billiken* was not apolitical and, from the time of the first Peronist government onwards, there was no sense of political content being inappropriate or out of place in this children’s magazine. As ‘future citizens’, *Billiken*’s readers were viewed as political beings who must play their part in the ongoing nation-building project. For the military regime also, children were the future, envisaged as the leaders of the year 2000.² Until the treatment of the Malvinas/Falklands war in 1982, *Billiken*’s political content

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Figure 4.1: 'Help your mother to send out the *Para Ti* postcards.' *Billiken*, issue 3079, 29 August 1978. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

about, and in support of, this dictatorship was surprisingly scarce considering the precedent of *Billiken's* proximity to the Onganía dictatorship, examined in the previous chapter. Considering the support given to the 1976–1983 dictatorship by Atlántida's other magazines, more explicit military propaganda within *Billiken*, in the style of the *Para Ti* postcards page, might have been expected. Instead, what *Billiken* overwhelmingly provided in the early years of this dictatorship was a continuation of the conservative world view it had been promoting for decades, and that was, at that point in time, aligned with the world view promoted by the military regime. This chapter takes the *Para Ti* page as a starting point to explore Editorial Atlántida's support of the 1976–1983 military dictatorship in the context of the Argentine print media's different responses to the regime. The link between *Para Ti* and *Billiken*, and between mothers and their children, provides the opportunity to analyse the gender roles promoted in the magazine that underpin *Billiken's* world view of the ideal family, citizen and child. *Billiken's* literary content under the dictatorship uncovers a nuanced approach to the censorship imposed by the regime. At the same time, the educational content follows curriculum reforms to increase the focus on national sovereignty in the lead-up to the Argentine recuperation of, or invasion of, the Islas Malvinas, or Falkland Islands.

The Argentine press and the dictatorship

On 24 March 1976, a military Junta led by the Generals Jorge Videla (army), Emilio Massera (navy) and Orlando Agosti (air force) ousted Isabel Perón in Argentina's sixth and final coup d'état of the 20th century to initiate what they referred to as a 'Proceso de Reorganización Nacional' [Process of National Reorganisation]. This civic-military dictatorship was in power until 1983. The early years of this period of state terrorism, under Videla, the first de facto president during the regime, were the most brutally repressive as the military sought to eliminate elements of society they considered to be subversive. The *Para Ti* postcards are just one example of Atlántida's apologist strategy when dealing with the dictatorship, and this magazine's editorial line should be considered in tandem with those of *Gente*, *Somos* and *El Gráfico* in particular.

The headline articles from the morning after the coup, compiled in *Decíamos ayer*, demonstrate widespread press support for the military's actions.³ Saborido and Borrelli list the reasons for the press's initial support including a shared perception that Argentina was living through a chaotic situation that required drastic action and a restoration of order.⁴ Media industry owners were also keen to protect their interests from 'extremist' violence and Knudson sets out the range of financial arrangements through which the press was co-opted, from the preservation of revenues from government advertising to bribes paid to individual journalists.⁵ According to María Alejandro Vitale, in the aftermath of the coup, newspapers and magazines sought to exonerate the military, presenting the coup as an inevitable consequence of Isabel Perón's government and failing to acknowledge the role played by the armed forces, rendering them invisible. Vitale's analysis also shows the press's general avoidance of the terms 'coup' and 'revolution' in favour of 'replacement', 'interruption', 'collapse', 'change' and 'substitution', and places Atlántida's *Gente* magazine at the extreme end of lexical mitigation of the coup.⁶ An open letter to Videla published in *Gente* read: 'Comprendimos que no era una "revolución militar" o un "golpe" sino una convocatoria a un país nuevo' [We understood that it was not a 'military revolution' or a 'coup' but a call for a new country].⁷ Even within what Duhalde characterises as a 'coro de épica exaltación' [choir of epic exaltation] of the dictatorship, he identifies *Gente* and *Para Ti* as being at the vanguard of the gutter press as they competed to see which one could be the more servile to the regime.⁸

Beyond financial incentives, there was real risk to individual journalists who did not toe the military's line and 112 journalists are listed as 'disappeared' during the regime.⁹ Many others went into exile, including Robert Cox, editor of the English-language *Buenos Aires Herald*, which was the only newspaper to issue reports of disappearances, kidnappings or missing persons. *Herald* staff writer Andrew Graham-Yooll took refuge in the UK in my home city of Sheffield. In 2014, a commission of Atlántida workers unveiled a commemorative flagstone in homage to their colleagues who were disappeared during the

dictatorship. These were the *Gente* journalists Ernesto Luis Fossati and Marcelo Ariel Gelman; *Gente* editor Enrique Walker; staff writer for the Atlántida magazine *Argentina* Mario Waldino Herrera; press worker Heraldo Juan Marucco; and Héctor Germán Oesterheld, writer in *Gente* and *Billiken* best known for his comic *El Eternauta*. The Atlántida commission released the following statement:

manifestamos nuestro más enérgico repudio a la complicidad que mantuvo esta empresa con la dictadura. Nos produce un profundo rechazo saber que desde revistas como *Gente*, *Para Ti* y *Somos*, se armaron operaciones de prensa en connivencia con los genocidas.¹⁰

[we express our most forthright repudiation of the complicity that this company maintained with the dictatorship. We are deeply repulsed to learn that magazines such as *Gente*, *Para Ti* and *Somos* set up press operations in collusion with the perpetrators of genocide.]

Atlántida was no longer in the hands of the Vigil family by the time this statement was released, having been sold to Mexico's Televisa in 2007.

These disappearances show that no print media company, even Editorial Atlántida, was beyond the reach of military repression. However, the extent of Atlántida's collusion suggests that the Vigil family's motivations exceeded self-preservation. The corpus of Atlántida military propaganda is so extensive that it cannot fully be taken account of here and compilations of key articles can be found in *Decíamos ayer* and in Varela-Cid's *Los sofistas y la prensa canalla*.¹¹ Atlántida's own non-digitised press archive provides a partial selection of articles from the publisher's magazines. These include the *Somos* opinion pieces authored by Aníbal C. Vigil (1936–1994, grandson of Constancio C. Vigil), which supported the de facto government in principle but held it increasingly to account, suggesting it had not gone far enough to fulfil its objectives.¹² Atlántida's sports magazine *El Gráfico* lent a popular, man-of-the-people angle to Videla at the time of Argentina's hosting of the World Cup, publishing photographs of him in the national team's changing room (*El Gráfico*, issue 3063, 20 June 1978). An interview in the presidential office was afforded to *El Gráfico*'s director, Héctor Vega Onesime, and executive director, Constancio Vigil (1936–2023, another grandson of the founder), to find out 'cómo se ve desde la perspectiva del gobierno nacional el saludable fenómeno vivido por los argentinos' [how the healthy phenomenon experienced by Argentines is viewed from the national government's perspective] (*El Gráfico*, issue 3065, 4 July 1978). *Para Ti* further humanised Videla, with photographs taken on a Sunday at the presidential residence sharing copyright with *Paris Match* ('Jorge Rafael Videla en familia: el hombre, el esposo, el padre, el abuelo, el presidente' [Jorge Videla with his family: the man, the husband, the father, the grandfather, the president], *Para Ti*, issue 2953, 12 February 1979). The caption to the article reads: 'Más allá del protocolo y las ceremonias oficiales, lejos de las obligaciones que le impone la conducción del país. Con su esposa, sus

hijos y sus nietos. Toda la calidez que se esconde detrás de su responsabilidad de hombre público' [Beyond protocol and official ceremonies, far from the obligations imposed by the leadership of the country. With his wife, children and grandchildren. All the warmth hidden behind his responsibility as a public man].

The two most famous cases of Atlántida's complicity with the regime are those of Alejandrina Barry and Thelma Jara de Cabezas. Barry's parents were killed in Uruguay in a kidnapping operation led by a task force from the illegal detention and torture centre ESMA.¹³ *Gente, Para Ti* and *Somos* all published variations of the same article with the same photographs of two-year old Alejandrina stating that she had been abandoned by her terrorist parents.¹⁴ The second case resulted in long-running legal proceedings, with *Para Ti*'s managing editor, Agustín Bottinelli, becoming, in 2014, the first Argentine journalist to be prosecuted within the context of investigations into human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship. The indictment was revoked the following year. Aníbal C. Vigil, who oversaw both *Para Ti* and *Gente*, and was the executive director of Editorial Atlántida at the time, had died in 1994. Bottinelli was accused of editing an interview given by Thelma Jara de Cabezas, misrepresenting her as repentant mother of a subversive. In reality, Jara de Cabezas, a member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, was a detainee at the ESMA. She was taken to a hair salon to ensure that her appearance did not betray her illegal detention and then placed in front of a journalist and photographer from Atlántida in a cafe. The resulting article was part of a campaign to discredit reports of disappearances.¹⁵ For Cora Gamarnik, in both cases Atlántida's magazines formed an essential part of the 'psychological action' designed by the armed forces in their 'fight against subversion'.¹⁶

Subversion, the 'Argentine being' and the 'Argentine way of life'

The editorial around the *Para Ti* postcards campaign was very clear about the link between the 'subversives' and the attack on the Argentine way of life. *Para Ti*'s editor, Lucrecia Gordillo, wrote that the subversives: 'buscan levantar las banderas de la violencia y llevarnos hacia el mundo comunista. Es que no estamos frente a un ataque a un país; estamos frente al ataque de un sistema, a un modo de vida, a un modo de ser y de pensar' [seek to raise the flags of violence and take us to the communist world. We are not facing an attack on a country; we are facing an attack on a system, on a way of life, on a way of being and of thinking] ('Por qué hicimos las tarjetas' [Why we made the postcards], issue 2930, 4 September 1978). The fight against subversion was prioritised in Videla's first televised address to the nation on 30 March 1976: 'Combatiremos sin tregua a la delincuencia subversiva en cualquiera de sus manifestaciones hasta su total aniquilamiento' [We will relentlessly combat subversive delinquency in any of its manifestations until its total annihilation]. The speech linked subversion to anti-national sentiments but offered no definition of who, or what, could

be considered subversive: 'Nuestra generación vive una crisis de identidad que se manifiesta en un permanente cuestionamiento de los valores tradicionales de nuestra cultura y asume, en muchos casos, las concepciones nihilistas de la subversión antinacional' [Our generation is experiencing an identity crisis that manifests itself in a permanent questioning of the traditional values of our culture and assumes, in many cases, nihilistic conceptions of anti-national subversion]. The motivation of the armed forces in seizing power was, according to Videla, not just to restore order but to set the nation back on its true course by restoring Argentine values. He issued a call to 'recuperar la esencia del ser nacional' [recuperate the essence of the national being], a being that, in a circular logic, was only defined in terms of being in opposition to the 'subversives'.¹⁷

As Vitale demonstrates, the concept of the 'ser argentino' or 'ser nacional' used to justify the 1976 coup had previously entered the media discourse to justify the coup of 1943 and was subsequently employed in favour of the 1966 coup.¹⁸ In conversation with foreign journalists in 1977, Videla evoked the concept in tandem with that of the 'estilo de vida argentino' [Argentine style of life]:

La Argentina es un país occidental y cristiano ... porque viene de su historia. Nació cristiana a través de la conducción española, heredó de España la cultura occidental y nunca renunció a esa condición sino que justamente la defendió. Es por defender esa condición de occidental y cristiana como estilo de vida que se planteó esta lucha contra quienes no aceptaron ese sistema de vida y quisieron imponer otro distinto' (quoted in *Gente*, issue 648, 22 December 1977).

[Argentina is a Western and Christian country ... because it comes from its history. It was born Christian through Spanish leadership, it inherited Western culture from Spain and never renounced that condition but rather defended it. It is by defending this Western and Christian condition as a way of life that this struggle has arisen against those who did not accept this system of life and wanted to impose a different one.]

The *Gente* write-up of the interview included the following definition of terrorism given by Videla: 'El terrorista no sólo es considerado tal por matar con un arma o colocar una bomba, sino también por activar a través de ideas contrarias a nuestra civilización' [Terrorists are not only considered terrorists for killing with a gun or planting a bomb, but also for activating through ideas that are contrary to our civilisation]. *Gente*, however, omitted the mentions of subversion, as reported in *La Prensa*:

en este tipo de lucha no solamente es considerado como agresor el que agrede a través de la bomba, del disparo o del secuestro, sino también aquél que en el plano de las ideas quiera cambiar nuestro sistema de vida a través de ideas que son justamente subversivas; es decir subvierten valores, cambian, trastocan valores.¹⁹

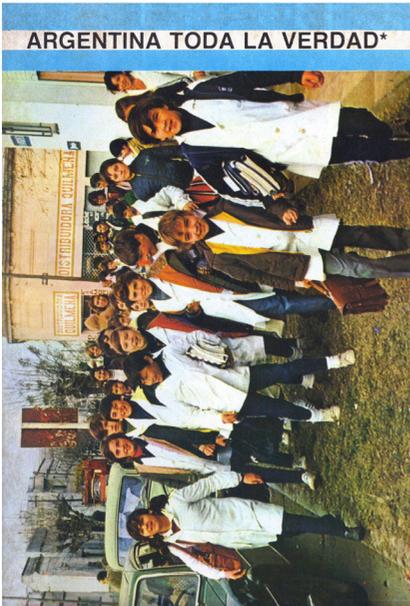
[In this type of struggle, it is not only he who attacks by means of bombing, shooting or kidnapping who is considered an aggressor, but also he who wants to change our system of life through ideas that are precisely subversive, i.e. to subvert values, change and disrupt values.]

The fight against ‘subversion’ was potentially limitless and justified only by the threat, or mere suggestion, of the existence of ‘subversion’. The notion of who could be considered subversive was expansive and purposefully vague so that it could potentially encompass any kind of political activity; student and trade union mobilisations were equated with the acts of terrorism perpetrated by the left-wing guerrilla.²⁰ Estimates of those tortured and murdered during the dictatorship are indefinable precisely because of the silence and secrecy around which the ‘Proceso’ operated in the absence of judicial process, open conflict and bodies to bury. Over 500 clandestine detention centres, such as the ESMA, were established in police stations, military buildings, schools, hospitals and factories.²¹ *Nunca más* [Never again], the CONADEP report of 1984, was only able to document around 9000 disappearances, less than a third of the number estimated by human rights organisations. During the dictatorship, the press amplified the discourse around the existence of ‘subversives’ and the need to rid the country of them, whilst not reporting on the actions taken on these targets. The rhetoric around the ‘ser nacional’ and the defence of traditional values from subversive ideas eclipsed the human rights abuses.²²

Whilst military speeches did not define in precise terms what the Argentine way of being and way of life was, *Atlántida’s* magazines help to flesh out the concept. The *Para Ti* postcards’ messages all begin with the phrase ‘The war in Argentina is now over’. The images portray the triumphant return of the ‘Argentine way of life’, represented by workers in factories, pedestrians shopping on Florida Street and supermarkets with fully stacked shelves. Children, as the future of the *patria*, feature prominently in these messages of peace and economic prosperity. The translation of the top postcard in Figure 4.2 reads:

The war in Argentina is now over. Coming out of any school you can see the fresh face of our future. We fought for them. We won for them. They deserve this climate of peace, cordiality, progress that reigns among us today. Subversion, coming from books, from some ignoble teachers, from children’s associations had also lodged itself in our primary schools. Our children used to learn the language of violence before anything else. We had to fight there, also, for the return of the peace we craved for our children] (*Para Ti*, issue 2930, 4 September 1978).

The postcards were part of the drive to change Argentina’s reputation abroad in the year it hosted the World Cup and were in response to a so-called ‘Anti-Argentine campaign’ led by Argentine exiles and supported by international human rights organisations and the foreign press.²³ *Para Ti* provided addresses for suggested



(destinatario)

Nombre

Domicilio

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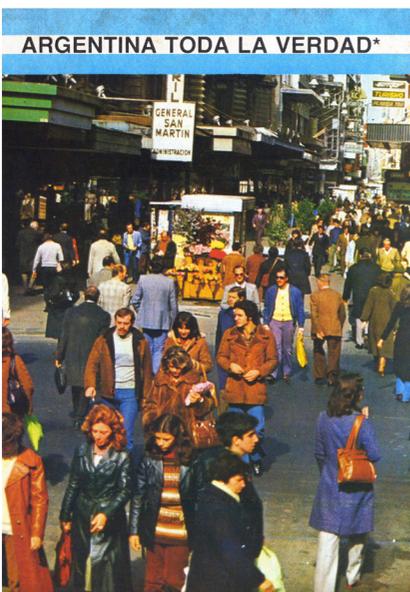
Argentina toda la verdad*

* Alumnos de una escuela primaria de Buenos Aires.
First grade pupils of a school in Buenos Aires.
Elèves d'une école primaire à Buenos Aires.

La guerra ya terminó en la Argentina. A la salida de cualquier colegio se puede ver la cara fresca de nuestro futuro. Por ellos luchamos. Por ellos ganamos. Ellos merecen este clima de paz, de cordialidad, de progreso que hoy reina entre nosotros. La subversión a través de los libros, de algunos profesores innoables, de asociaciones infantiles, se había encarnado también en las escuelas primarias. Nuestros hijos aprendían antes que nada el idioma de la violencia. También allí tuvimos que luchar para que volviera la paz que ansiamos para nuestros hijos.

Remitente

Revista PARA TI



(destinatario)

Nombre

Domicilio

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Argentina toda la verdad*

* Un día cualquiera en la calle Florida.
Any day in Florida street.
Une journée quelconque dans la rue Florida.

La guerra ya terminó en la Argentina. La calle Florida, la vía comercial más importante de la ciudad, ofrece esta imagen a diario. Símbolo de un país que progresa en paz, que está en camino de reactivar su economía, sanear su administración. Egrimiendo mentiras, los que nos condenan olvidan la imagen triste de esta calle, las vidrieras vacías que produjo la inmoralidad instalada en el poder, la inflación galopante, la especulación que enriquecía a unos pocos en desmedro de muchos. Pero eso pasó. Ganamos la guerra. En paz, poco a poco, nuestro país se va normalizando.

Remitente

Revista PARA TI

Figure 4.2: 'Argentina, the whole truth'. Examples of the *Para Ti* postcards. *Para Ti*, issue 2930, 4 September 1978. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

recipients, including the president of the United States, Amnesty International, *Paris Match* and the BBC. The postcards ran for four weeks and occupied the space normally reserved for recipes, a half page that could be cut out of the magazine and filed away: ‘Desde ya pedimos disculpas por privarlas durante cuatro números de las Fichas de Cocina, pero realmente estamos convencidas de que vale la pena’ [We apologise for depriving you of four issues’ worth of recipe cards, but we are really convinced that it is worth it] (issue 2926, 7 August 1978).

The journalists and media personalities who endorsed *Para Ti*’s efforts included Mirtha Legrand, one of Argentina’s leading media personalities, who hosted Lucrecia Gordillo on her iconic TV programme, in which she interviewed celebrities and politicians over lunch. When hosting Gordillo, Legrand emphasised the emancipatory nature of the *Para Ti* campaign: ‘Me parece espléndida la iniciativa. Es un signo de que el periodismo femenino está cambiando. *Para Ti* demuestra que la mujer está cada vez más integrada, más activa en los problemas de su país y en la búsqueda de soluciones’ [I think the initiative is splendid. It is a sign that women’s journalism is changing. *Para Ti* is demonstrating that women are becoming more integrated, more active in their country’s problems and in the search for solutions] (issue 2929, 28 August 1978). By co-opting cooking pages for a political call to action, the postcards were framed as an appropriate and welcome branching out for women from the domestic sphere. The comparison, and contrast, with the most iconic image of women’s political participation at that time is inescapable. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo performed domesticity in the public sphere as they circled the square outside the Casa Rosada, demanding to know the whereabouts of their missing children who had been disappeared by the regime.

We can also look to *Billiken* for representations of the Argentine ‘way of life’ and ‘way of being.’ For decades, *Billiken* had been constructing a representation of an Argentine way of life in which families were middle class with a father who went out to work and a mother whose primary responsibilities were attending to the needs of the children, her husband, and the home. A consistency of representation of the ideal family organised along defined gender roles can be traced from the early decades of the magazine to the period in question and beyond and is often linked to the didactic impulse of encouraging children towards model behaviour. As we have seen, these scenes appear in literacy pages, in school material describing life at home, and in advertisements. Typical examples from the 1970s paint a remarkably similar portrait of family life to that found in the ‘Life at home’ school material from 1938 and shown in Chapter 1. In ‘¿Quiénes viven en casa?’ [Who lives at home?] the father fixes things and the son learns by watching him. The mother cooks, washes the dishes, does the laundry and cleans the house. The daughter helps her mother ‘y jugando, jugando va aprendiendo a ser una mamá’ [and playing, playing, learns how to be a mother], recalling the construction of girls as future mothers seen in *Marilú* and in the Lino Palacio covers of the 1940s.



Figure 4.3: 'Who lives at home?' *Billiken*, issue 2879, 17 March 1975.

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Similarly, a showcase of children's production in which pupils from a Buenos Aires school sent in pictures and text to complete the sentence 'Living in a family is like' (sample answer: a carousel full of happy children) has the following editorial introduction: 'La familia es papá volviendo del trabajo, mamá que nos hace el postre más rico' [Family is father coming home from work, mother who makes us the most delicious dessert] (issue 3086, 6 March 1979). These depictions of the roles within an ideal family share the pages of the magazine with material dedicated to the world of work, divided along gender lines. Whilst men occupy a wide range of professions, women are only ever nurses, teachers or dressmakers (see issue 2861, 11 November 1974). The message from *Billiken* is not that women do not or should not work but rather that mothers do not or should not work.

In the late 1970s, these depictions of the ideal family started to take into account mothers entering the workplace. An article on the day in the life of a mother reads almost as a caution to those who would argue that a woman's place could extend beyond the home. A boy finds his mother's to do list: 'hacer compras, lavar ropa, dejar comida hecha para la noche, barrer, ir al trabajo' [do the shopping, wash the clothes, leave the evening meal ready, sweep up, go to work]. This, then, is the result of advances in women's participation in society: women who work outside of the home will now have two jobs as they continue to undertake the lion's share of domestic duties. The scene closes with an underscoring of family values, which are not only consistently heteronormative but also reaffirm the notion that couples can only constitute a family if they also have children:

Cada uno a su trabajo. Papá a la oficina. Mamá en la casa y después a su trabajo. Los chicos van a la escuela. En los días de semana, el momento de la reunión familiar es la cena. No hay apuros. Hay ganas de contar lo que cada uno vivió en el día. Hay planes para el día siguiente. Hay mamá. Hay papá. Hay hijos. Hay familia ('Un día en la vida de mamá' [A day in the life of mother], issue 3087, 13 March 1979).

[Everyone goes to work. Dad to the office. Mum at home and then off to work. Kids go to school. On weekdays, the time for the family to get together is over dinner. There is no rush. There is a desire to talk about the day's experiences. There are plans for the next day. There is a mother. There is a father. There are children. There is a family.]

The promotion of the nuclear family and traditional values is not unique to *Billiken* but rather replicates and amplifies ideas found in school textbooks and reading books.²⁴ The families depicted in *Billiken* and in these textbooks are always of white European descent, contributing to the construction of what Teresa Laura Artieda has called a 'nosotros blanco' [we, white people], set in contrast to the Indigenous other.²⁵ When Indigenous communities appeared in *Billiken* they were generally written about in the past tense as if they no

longer existed. In later years, the representation of Indigenous communities in *Billiken*, although inconsistent, did begin to acknowledge the contemporary existence of Indigenous populations, their diversity, and the challenges faced by them. Meanwhile, the practice of writing about Indigenous populations in the past tense persisted in some officially distributed school materials until at least 2020.²⁶ Such representations had been part of the conservative and authoritarian nation-building currents of the 1930s that sought a return to Hispanic and Catholic traditions. This had echoes in the 1976–1983 dictatorship, with the emphasis on the return to the 'ser nacional'. For Artieda, the 'symbolic disappearance' of the Indigenous populations in the national consciousness was linked to the idea that they were no longer present in society precisely because they were considered to be representative of a remote and primitive culture that had been transplanted by a superior one.²⁷

In another example of *Billiken's* participation in discourses that sought to homogenise the population, the contemporary existence of Afro-Argentines was consistently negated. This population existed in the magazine only in a historical sense, and specifically to ambient stories about colonial times for issues focussing on May Week and the Day of the May Revolution. Representations of enslaved Africans, smiling as they carried out their tasks, became part of material that broke down colonial society according to social hierarchy and occupations. In *Billiken*, these representations started in 1946, once the pattern of the school calendar had fallen into place, and followed the integration of Afro-Argentine roles into the plays and re-enactments that formed part of the ritualised school commemorations of the May Revolution. With this, the representation of Black people shifted from the caricatures taken from US graphic culture and found on *Billiken's* early covers and towards a more contextually specific stereotyping that linked the Afro-Argentine population to the past. Young girls are shown as maids accompanying their high society *criolla* mistresses to Mass, older women wash clothes in the river or sell *empanadas*, and young boys are lamp lighters.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, such representations were frequently offered by Norma B. de Adam, who signed as Norma and was one of the illustrators who took over from Lino Palacio. In contrast to Palacio's funny and irreverent images, Norma's gentle, naïf style helped to project an idea of historical harmony that elided the divisions of race, class and power. As the advertisement for Rasti, Argentina's answer to Lego, reproduced in Figure 4.5, demonstrates, these representations were circulated and enacted beyond *Billiken*. By reissuing these representations year after year and amplifying them to its mass readership, *Billiken* contributed to their instalment in the national consciousness. The cover from 1979, shown in Figure 4.6, depicts the practice of integrating blackface, achieved with burned cork, into the dressing up for performances to commemorate the events of May 1810, illustrating how ingrained this practice was. At the time of writing, whilst some schools in Argentina continue this



Figure 4.4: An Afro-Argentine lamp lighter at work. In the background is the Cabildo, site of the May Revolution. Illustration by Norma. *Billiken*, issue 2522, 18 May 1968. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 4.5: ‘Rasti goes to school’ for May Week. ‘It is a joy to evoke our history. A joy to recreate the atmosphere of yore. Its characters. Its customs. And then to take the result of this imagination to school.’ Advertisement in *Billiken*, issue 2627, 18 May 1970. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 4.6: Dressing up to commemorate the May Revolution. The girl, dressed as an empanada seller, has her face painted with burned cork. *Billiken*, issue 3096, 15 May 1979. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

practice, it is increasingly recognised as racist and is being re-evaluated as part of a wider movement to acknowledge the sustained and current existence of Afro-descendant populations in the country.²⁸

Paula Guitelman, in her analysis of *Billiken* in 1976, 1977 and 1978, points to specific examples of how *Billiken* under the dictatorship constructed and promoted a conservative world view that was in line with the regime. Alongside observations about gender and race, Guitelman identifies *Billiken's* content about science, technology and the 'progress' of mankind as in keeping with the regime's technocratic impulse.²⁹ All of this is, indeed, present in *Billiken* under the dictatorship. But, as previous chapters have shown, these themes all represent continuities from previous years. Even the changes that Guitelman identifies before and after March 1976, arguing that some of the entertaining elements are stripped away as the magazine becomes more serious, occur because the magazine switches from the summer holidays issues to back-to-school mode, as it did every year around that time, and not because of an identifiable 'before' and 'after' the coup. *Billiken* did not fundamentally change in response to the dictatorship because it did not have to: it was a symbol of the Argentina the military was trying to restore. It is perhaps because of *Billiken's* natural compatibility with the culture and values promoted by the regime that *Billiken* included less pro-military propaganda and fewer direct mentions of the regime than might be expected from a magazine that formed part of Editorial Atlántida. Because *Billiken* and Atlántida were already on side, it would not

have been necessary for the regime to intervene in *Billiken* to the extent that, we imagine, the Peronist government had to in order for *Billiken* to publish pro-Peronist content.

Guitelman accepts that the content of the magazine during these years may not have differed that much from before the onset of the civic-military dictatorship but argues that the context in which the magazine was read is relevant. Neither Guitelman's nor my study covers the reception of the magazine and it remains to be seen how children read *Billiken* during these years and whether their readings were influenced by the political moment. It is certain, however, that as researchers we read the content of *Billiken* under the dictatorship differently. For example, in a piece on Journalists' Day, published in *Billiken* on 7 June 1976, a vignette entitled 'Un oficio peligroso' [A dangerous profession] catches the eye (issue 2943). The piece cites a UN study of the world's 20 most dangerous professions, with journalist coming in second place: 'Esto se debe no solo a que el periodista es un meterete que anda por todas partes sino también a que su profesión lo obliga a comer a deshoras, dormir mal, sufrir tensiones nerviosas, fumar mucho, beber demasiado café y vivir para su trabajo. ¿Qué te parece?' [This is due not only to the fact that the journalist is a busybody who puts his nose in everything, but also that his profession forces him to eat at odd hours, sleep badly, suffer nervous tensions, smoke a lot, drink too much coffee and live for his work. What do you think about that?]. This could, of course, just be an observation about journalists and bad diets, and could have read as such at the time. Reading it for a research project, however, with the knowledge that by June 1976 the disappearance of journalists, including one Atlántida worker, was already under way, invites a consideration of the potential subtext.

Censorship, literature and the *Billiken* 'island'

The conservative continuities in *Billiken*'s content, published against the backdrop of Atlántida's support of the regime, did not mean that the magazine and those who worked there were unaffected by the civic-military dictatorship. All of *Billiken*'s content would have been subjected to scrutiny. Censorship operated at many levels under the dictatorship: literature, theatre performances and cinematic production, as well as the press, were all curtailed, making direct criticism of the regime impossible. There was never an official government agency for censorship in Argentina and Avellaneda argues that 'this being everywhere yet nowhere' only served to increase the hold of the regime.³⁰ Censorship succeeded in blocking the publication of works that were considered subversive, and other works in print were publicly removed from book shops. As an indication of the consequences of this for the publishing industry, Rock states that the production of books in Argentina fell from 31.5 million in 1976 to 8.7 million in 1979.³¹ Children's literature was an area of concern for the censors because it was material to which future citizens were exposed.

The pamphlet 'Subversión en el ámbito educativo: conozcamos a nuestro enemigo' [Subversion in education: let us know our enemy], published by the Ministry of Education in 1977, warns of a 'notorious Marxist offensive' in the area of children's literature that helps children 'a no tener miedo a la libertad, que los ayuden a querer, a pelear, a afirmar su ser. A defender su yo contra el yo que muchas veces le quieren imponer padres o instituciones' [not to be afraid of freedom, to help them to love, to fight, to affirm their sense of self. To defend their self against the self that parents or institutions often want to impose on them].³²

Whilst the pamphlet does not give specific examples of this 'subversive' literature, it can be understood as referring generally to the new tendencies in children's literature that came about in the 1960s. In this decade, Argentine children's writers overturned preconceptions of what 'good' children's literature constituted by uncoupling it from didactic drivers. A leading figure, now consecrated as one of Argentina's best loved children's writers, was María Elena Walsh, whose stories, songs and poems were full of imagination, fun, wordplay and nonsense, and were unconstrained by the need to deliver a moral message. It was, according to an interview Walsh gave in 2000, 'revolutionary' in the 1960s to produce work for children that was not for use by teachers or linked to the school curriculum.³³ According to Graciela Montes, Walsh's background in music and poetry, rather than education, set her apart. Montes, herself a leading figure in the world of children's literature, identifies Laura Devetach and Elsa Bornemann as important children's authors whose work, from the mid-1960s, was in tune with currents of social engagement and protest.³⁴

In the texts quoted above, both Walsh and Montes refer to Constancio C. Vigil's stories as an example of the old-fashioned, moralistic and didactic literature that authors from the 1960s had rebelled against. In Walsh's interview she recalls: 'A mí me gustaron algunos cuentos de él [Vigil] pero creo que los rechacé después muy rápidamente por la parte didáctica y moralista. Era un autor muy popular, muy en circulación' [I liked some of his [Vigil's] stories but I think I rejected them very quickly because of the didactic and moralistic component. He was a very popular author, very much in circulation]. Montes terms Vigil's books 'de un estilo algo lacrimógeno ... que a los niños de la década del '40 no parecían disgustarles' [of a somewhat lachrymose style ... that the children of the 1940s did not seem to dislike].³⁵ In Atlántida's push to promote Vigil's stories in the 1960s and early 1970s, as part of the strategy in response to *Anteojito*, *Billiken* was rowing against the tide. Intriguingly, *Billiken* then changed tack around the time of the coup, dropping *El Mono Relojero* as the magazine's cover star just at the point at which the quaint stories of Vigil's characters would have found favour with a reactionary regime in favour of didactic and moralising children's literature. From March 1976 onwards *Billiken* became more open to engaging with products of children's and popular culture without necessarily tying these into Atlántida products. Television programmes were

increasingly promoted, alongside articles on popular figures such as tennis star Guillermo Vilas and the Beatles. It was also within the repressive climate of the dictatorship that *Billiken* finally arrived at the ‘revolution’ in Argentine children’s literature that had started in the 1960s.

In an issue from August 1976, in a cultural review section featuring recommendations for books, TV programmes, records, films and theatre productions, two books stand out: Elsa Bornemann’s *Un elefante ocupa mucho espacio* [An Elephant Takes Up a Lot of Space] (1975) and Laura Devetach’s *La torre de cubos* [The Tower of Cubes] (first published in 1964). Both books would go on to be banned by the civic-military dictatorship, in 1979 and 1977, respectively, becoming the two most emblematic cases of censorship of children’s literature. Even though neither book had been banned at the time they were featured in *Billiken*, their inclusion in one of Atlántida’s publications shows an ideological misalignment or a failure to anticipate the type of literature deemed acceptable for promotion, highlighting the arbitrary nature of censorship. Bornemann had been a contributor to *Billiken* in the early 1970s and was, at the time of the publication of *Un elefante ocupa mucho espacio*, a recognised and celebrated author. A 1977 decree, signed by Videla himself, banned this book on the basis that it exhibited ‘una finalidad de adoctrinamiento que resulta preparatoria a la tarea de captación ideológica del accionar subversivo’ [a purpose of indoctrination that is preparatory to the task of ideological recruitment of subversive activities]. The decree cites the objectives of the Military Junta to justify the decision, pointing to the re-establishment of the values of Christian morality, of national tradition and of the dignity of the ‘ser nacional’.³⁶

Following the inclusion of Devetach’s *La torre de los cubos* in *Billiken*’s August 1976 review section, an excerpt was used as revision material for the language curriculum area as the end of the school year approached (issue 2966, 15 November 1976) and the book was recommended the following year for Book Day (issue 2996, 13 June 1977). Devetach’s first story for *Billiken* was published under her married name, Laura D. de Roldán (‘¡Chau escuela!’ [Good-bye school!] Issue 2968, 29 November 1976). From then, Devetach’s stories appeared regularly until 1982 and her name, with her own surname, appeared on the staff page, first as ‘collaborator’ and later as ‘cronista’ [chronicler] until May 1983. The initial ban on the use of *La torre de los cubos* in educational settings was put in place by the Ministry of Education of Santa Fe province in May 1979 with the prohibition then extending to other provinces. The Santa Fe decree (Resolution 480/79) stated that the analysis of the book had found: ‘graves falencias tales como simbología confusa, cuestionamientos ideológico-sociales, objetivos no adecuados al hecho estético, ilimitada fantasía, carencia de estímulos espirituales y trascendentes’ [serious shortcomings such as confusing symbolism, ideological-social questioning, inadequate aesthetic aims, boundless fantasy, lack of spiritual and transcendent stimuli]. It continued that some of the stories in the book had been found to deal with unacceptable

themes: 'aspectos sociales como crítica a la organización del trabajo, la propiedad privada y al principio de autoridad enfrentando grupos sociales, raciales o económicos con base completamente materialista, como también cuestionando la vida familiar' [social aspects such as criticism of the organisation of work, private property and the principle of authority confronting social, racial or economic groups on a completely materialistic basis, as well as questioning family life]. The decree stated that the decision to ban the book was taken with the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Culture in mind, citing the duty of said ministry to:

velar por la protección y formación de una clara conciencia del niño; Que ello implica prevenir sobre el uso, como medio de formación, de cualquier instrumento que atente contra el fin y objetivos de la Educación Argentina, como asimismo velar por los bienes de transmisión de la Cultura Nacional.³⁷

[to watch over the protection and development of a clear conscience in children; ... this implies preventing the use, as a means of instruction, of any instrument that infringes upon the aim and objectives of Argentine education, as well as to watch over the transmission of assets of national culture.]

In a 2014 radio interview, Devetach explained that, following the banning of her book, publishing houses rejected her work. When asked how she was able to continue her career as a writer, she answered: 'Entré a trabajar como freelance en *Billiken*. Si bien la editorial Atlántida, era afín de la dictadura, la revista era como una isla. Había un equipo de gente muy bueno. Yo llevaba la página de lengua' [I started working as a freelancer at *Billiken*. Although the publishing house, Atlántida, was sympathetic to the dictatorship, the magazine was like an island. There was a very good team of people. I was in charge of the language page].³⁸ In a later interview, when asked whether there was any censorship in the publication of stories in *Billiken*, Devetach replied: 'No, porque *Billiken* era una especie de isla en la editorial. Era un equipo hermoso el de la revista. Mucha gente linda. No nos jorobaban para nada' [No, because *Billiken* was a kind of island in the publishing house. There was a beautiful team working at the magazine. A lot of lovely people. They didn't bother us at all].³⁹ The island metaphor, reminiscent of Manuel Puig's use of the same in the novel *El beso de la mujer araña*, as a utopic space removed from the dictatorship, is used here to distinguish *Billiken* from Editorial Atlántida. Devetach offered further insight into the freedom that *Billiken* had within the publishing house, recalling the conversation she had with Aníbal C. Vigil after the national decree banning *La torre* was published.

Me dijo que yo era comunista y eso no podía ser. Contesté que él sabía cómo eran esas cosas, que lo único que yo hacía era escribir cuentos, tenía un libro que había sido premiado en Cuba. Quizá por ahí venía el problema. Me retrucó que le habían dicho que yo tenía un cuento en el

que me ponía en contra de los empresarios. Que es ‘La planta de Bartolo’. Entonces le pregunté si lo había leído. Como me dijo que no, le pedí que lo buscara, porque era un libro muy popular que tendría que estar en la biblioteca o en el archivo de la editorial ... Me paré para irme, y dije con muy pocas pulgas: ‘Señor Vigil, como usted ve, no como chicos, no como empresarios, no tengo armas. Billiken anda bien ahora porque Ud. tiene un excelente equipo’. Se rio un poco, sorprendido. Me dijo que por esa vez pasaba, pero que no volviera a aparecer como comunista en ninguna parte. Así quedó aquella historia.⁴⁰

[He told me that I was a communist and that wasn't acceptable. I replied that he knew how these things worked, that all I did was write stories, I had a book that had won an award in Cuba. Maybe that was where the problem came from. He replied that he had been told that I had a story in which I was against businessmen. That is ‘La planta de Bartolo’ [Bartolo's Plant]. So I asked him if he had read it. When he said no, I asked him to look for it, because it was a very popular book that should be in the publishing house's library or archive ... I stood up to leave, and I said bluntly: ‘Mr Vigil, as you can see, I don't eat children, I don't eat businessmen, I don't have any weapons. *Billiken* is doing well now because you have an excellent team’. He laughed a little, surprised. He told me that this time he would let it go, but for me not to turn up as a communist anywhere again. That was the end of that story.]

The reference here to having won a prize in Cuba was to her second book, *Monigote en la arena*, a collection of stories that had received the Premio Casa de las Américas, from Cuba, in 1975. The association with Cuba marked Devetach out, and the other books that won that year went on to be banned in Argentina. As *Monigote* had not been published in Argentina, it could not be banned so the censors went after *La torre de los cubos* instead.⁴¹ With her editorial position in *Billiken* unaffected by the controversy, Devetach continued to have freedom over what to publish within the magazine, to the extent that she started to publish the stories of *Monigote en la arena* without alerting anyone to the fact that they came with endorsement from Cuba.⁴²

Within *Billiken*, the role of literature was also reformulated on a structural level to give the appearance of complying with the regime's view of literature but without having to change the content. The short story included for entertainment purposes was rebadged under the curriculum area ‘Lengua’ [language]. As the same roster of authors was published, this was simply an exercise in rebranding and gave the appearance of having increased the number of pages dedicated to curriculum content. Extracurricular literature in *Billiken* existed in two places at this time. The first was in a recommendations page with summaries of books published by other publishing houses. The title of the section, ‘Leer para crecer’ [Reading to grow], emphasised literature's usefulness in the formation of future citizens. Literature in *Billiken* published

purely for entertainment, with no curricular or developmental framing, was limited to what were considered 'classic' stories from authors including Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, Emilio Salgari and Arthur Conan Doyle. These had already appeared in previous decades in *Billiken*, with different adaptations and illustrations, reinforcing the cyclical nature of this magazine, which revisited the same content for each new generation. This timelessness, or time loop, co-existed with content that anchored *Billiken* in the current moment. The literary content in *Billiken* under the dictatorship reinforces the plurivocal and often contradictory nature of *Billiken*, which spilled over the confines of the Vigil family leadership. In particular, the case of writer and *Billiken* collaborator Laura Devetach demonstrates that the magazine's response to the dictatorship was far more nuanced than either the prevailing academic analysis or the inclusion of the *Para Ti* pages would lead us to believe. The dictatorship years are some of the richest in terms of *Billiken*'s literary content, featuring contributors, such as Ema Wolf and Gustavo Roldán, who are also considered to be leading figures in Argentine children's literature. Also part of *Billiken*'s 'island' was Beatriz Ferro, a long-standing *Billiken* contributor who also appeared on the staff page as an advisor to the management. Artieda identifies Ferro's *Un libro juntos* as a book that surprisingly managed to evade censorship during the military regime given that its progressive representation of Indigenous peoples and advocacy for cultural diversity ran counter to the prevailing ideology.⁴³

There are other, small, glimmers of deviation from the customary conservative narratives that could be evidence of subtle acts of resistance by individuals or groups of individuals operating from within *Billiken*'s 'island'. These run counter to the critical consensus that *Billiken* presented a closed and incontestable world view that did not invite questioning, debate or creativity. A story from *La torre de los cubos* inaugurated the section 'A este cuento le falta el final', in which children were invited to engage in creative writing as they finished off the story ('Mauricio y su silbido', issue 2967, 22 November 1976). Content that fostered independent thinking included a 1976 special issue with 100 questions and answers, and an advertisement for the following week's issue, 'El Billiken para pensar' (issue 2961, 11 October 1976). The 'Billiken to make you think' issue led with content requiring reader participation and creativity—enigmas to solve, maths puzzles, stories to complete, guessing games and interesting questions (issue 2962, 18 October 1976). From August 1977, advertisements for Atlántida's books division featured Susan [sic] Kirtland's *Easy Answers to Hard Questions*. In December 1976, an issue called 'Para curiosos' [For the curious] included a piece on great inventors, a regular occurrence in *Billiken*, but this time linking their achievements to curiosity ('Por ser curiosos fueron grandes inventores' [They were great inventors because they were curious], issue 2977, 13 December 1976). There was even a challenge to gender norms hidden within a piece on questions and answers. Alongside 'Do giants exist?'

and ‘What are freckles?’ is the question ‘Do men cry?’ The answer: yes, they do, and it is acceptable to do so:

Pero como la educación que reciben los varones y las chicas es bastante diferente en lo que se refiere al entrenamiento para soportar el dolor físico y psíquico, es más difícil que los hombres lloren. Sin embargo no está mal, no se es por eso menos hombre que otro que ‘se las aguanta’ (issue 2961, 11 October 1976, emphasis in the original).

[But because boys and girls are brought up quite differently in terms of training in the endurance of physical and psychological pain, it is more difficult for men to cry. However, it is not a bad thing, it does not make you any less of a man than someone else who ‘puts up with it.’]

This example, lost in *Billiken*’s systematic reinforcement of normative gendered behaviour, and these issues which prioritise creativity and curiosity are clustered around the beginning of the dictatorship and were not sustained beyond 1977. It was not just the threat of censorship that dissuaded those working in *Billiken* from publishing material that ran counter to the spirit of the era, however. *Billiken*’s treatment of the Day of the Teacher in September 1976 was criticised by teachers themselves, resulting in *Billiken* later issuing an apology. The first offending article ‘¿Tu maestro es así?’ [Is your teacher like this?] poked fun at different teacher stereotypes, from the overly strict teacher to the overly relaxed supply teacher. It included a dose of gender stereotyping, with the women teachers being too chatty, too distracted or rushing around. The second article was the light-hearted ‘Identikit of a teacher’, which made a refreshing change from representations of the *Señorita*, the young, attractive ‘mother at school’ that *Billiken* had predominantly featured on this day for decades. In this image, the motherly tenderness typical of the *Señorita* is replaced with a no-nonsense readiness. This teacher is equipped for everything in an image that conveys order and chaos in equal measure (issue 2956, 6 September 1976, Figure 4.7.).

The following month *Billiken* issued an apology in a double-page open letter to Argentine teachers. It opens by stating that *Billiken* has, for 57 years, been providing teachers with the material they need, working ‘junto a ustedes en la ardua y difícil tarea de formar a nuestros niños’ [together with you in the arduous and difficult task of educating our children]. The letter references the many complaints *Billiken* received from teachers following the offending issue and recognises that there was a ‘dosis excesiva en lo que creíamos humor natural’ [overdose of what we thought was natural humour] and that the team had not thought sufficiently about how this would be interpreted by children and their teachers. The excuse offered for this lapse in judgement recalls Devetach’s island metaphor:

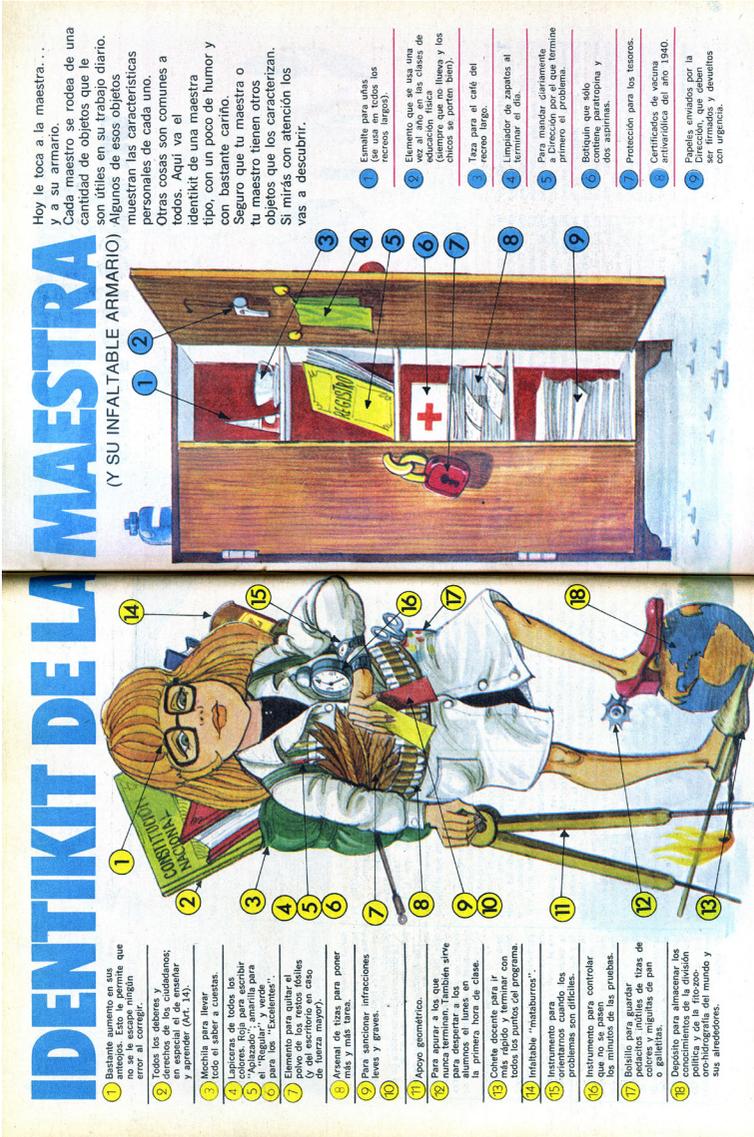


Figure 4.7: 'Identikit of a teacher'. *Billiken*, issue 2956, 6 September 1976. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

A veces se suelen cometer errores de este tipo cuando, ubicados en nuestra sala de redacción y tratando de llegar a nuestros lectores con ternura y buen humor, nos olvidamos [*sic*] que fuera de nuestro ámbito existe un mundo sacrificado y difícil—*sobre todo hoy*—al que hay que defender y apoyar (emphasis mine).

[Mistakes of this kind are sometimes made when, sitting in our news-room and trying to reach our readers with tenderness and good humour, we forget that outside our environment there is a difficult world of sacrifice—*especially today*—that needs to be defended and supported.]

The closing paragraph reaffirms *Billiken*'s commitment to teachers in language much more in line with what would have been expected of an establishment publication at this time. There is an acknowledgement of *Billiken*'s actions as 'dangerous,' and a promise to 'ustedes, maestros de nuestra Patria' [you, teachers of our homeland] to always uphold and defend the work and image of the Argentine teacher (issue 2962, 18 October 1976). It is likely that Atlántida management was also behind this apology as the Day of the Teacher issue had attracted the disapproval of the Ministry of Education. An article from *La Opinión* reports on a communiqué sent by the ministry, which criticised *Billiken* for having published:

una imagen irreverente del maestro argentino, a través de dibujos que son o que tienden a ser una muestra de las carencias, con la intención evidente de inducir a pensar que no existe nada bueno, mostrando por el contrario una crítica mordaz y destructiva.

[an irreverent image of the Argentine teacher, through drawings that are, or tend to be, a demonstration of deficiencies, with the evident intention of inducing one to think that there is nothing good, showing on the contrary a scathing and destructive criticism.]

The article defends *Billiken*, refusing to recognise the ministry's characterisation of the pages in question and instead describing them as combining 'la admiración, el afecto ... con una amable y leve cuota de humor' [admiration, affection ... with a gentle, light touch of humour] (*La Opinión*, 23 September 1976). The *Billiken* team learned their lesson and the Day of the Teacher in 1977 reverted to the traditional celebration of the profession. On the cover a young teacher embraces a boy who has brought her flowers. Inside, in a comic-style piece called 'Del aula, con cariño' [From the classroom, with affection], also illustrated by Carolina Parola with words by Beatriz Ferro, the teacher cries with emotion as the children run in to wish her well on her special day. The issue also returns to the safe ground offered by the founder, publishing Constancio C. Vigil's 'Plegaria al maestro' [Prayer for the teacher] (issue 3008, 5 September 1977).

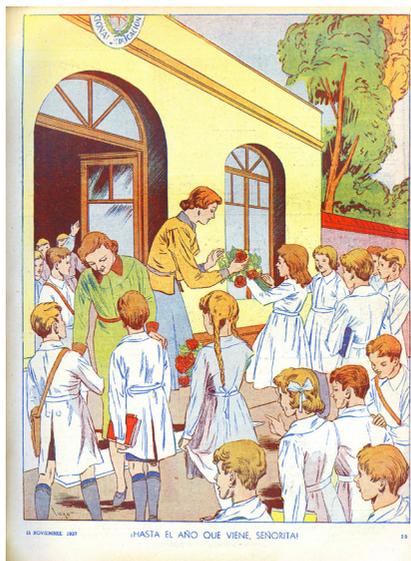


Figure 4.8: An early example of *Billiken's* traditional representation of the female teacher as *Señorita*. Illustration by Carlos Lugo. *Billiken*, issue 939, 15 November 1937. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 4.9: The continuation of representation of the *Señorita* in the 1960s. Illustration by Norma. *Billiken*, issue 2486, 6 September 1967. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 4.10: A return to the traditional depictions of the *Señorita* following the disruptive 1976 issue. Illustration by Carolina Parola. *Billiken*, issue 3008, 5 September 1977. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

In 1977, pressures on teachers had intensified as they were identified as the ‘custodios de nuestra soberanía ideológica’ [custodians of our ideological sovereignty] in the Ministry of Culture and Education’s pamphlet on subversion.⁴⁴ Also on the front line of defence of the ‘ser nacional’ were parents, addressed, in this example, not via official communiqués but via *Gente* magazine, as an effective way of transmitting the regime’s ideology to a mass audience. *Gente*’s open letter to Argentine parents, signed by ‘A friend’, is anything but friendly in tone. Parents are warned that the war against subversion is not over and that they must be vigilant about what their children are doing, the company they keep and even the words they use before it is too late. If parents fail to recognise the signs of their children being hypnotised by the enemy and their children end up in the morgue (a threat made three times in the piece), parents will only have themselves to blame. The question to parents ‘¿Usted sabe lo que lee su hijo?’ [Do you know what your child is reading?] is an allusion to the question repeated on television propaganda: ‘¿Sabe Usted dónde está su hijo ahora?’ [Do you know where your child is now?] (‘Carta abierta a los padres argentinos.’ *Gente*, issue 595, 16 December 1976). *Billiken*’s content was never as explicit but there was a point of dialogue with *Gente* as both magazines published different versions of the same warning to parents about the moral and social consequences of failing to bring children up properly.⁴⁵ Whilst this stopped short of any mention of subversion, it is notable that *Billiken* took the very rare step of

labelling the page as exclusively for mothers and fathers. *Billiken* was not fully employed as a mouthpiece for the regime's internal war against subversion. Instead, it skirted around the edges of the issue, linking to it via association, and dialogue with, *Para Ti* and *Gente*.

Within *Billiken*, Atlántida's associations with the dictatorship were played down. Invernizzi and Gociol cite a bulletin published by the Superintendency of Private Schools from November 1980 inviting participation in the celebrations of *Billiken*'s sixtieth anniversary. The event, held at River Plate Stadium, was to be organised by Atlántida with the collaboration of the Army High Command to mark the end of the educational campaign 'El niño, la escuela y el ejército' [The child, school and the army], and also the four-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the City of Buenos Aires.⁴⁶ When this event was advertised in *Billiken*, it was presented simply as a party to celebrate the magazine's anniversary and there was no mention of its connection to this wider content or to the army (issue 3176, 25 November 1980). A decade earlier, such an event would have provided *Billiken* with pages of content in the form of photographs from the day. In the weeks following the event, however, it is not mentioned. The support that *Billiken* gave to the military regime was more explicit during the Falklands/Malvinas War and in the run-up to the conflict, with content which mirrored and amplified the regime's rhetoric around national sovereignty.

Patria, national sovereignty and the Malvinas/Falklands War

Billiken's coverage of the Malvinas/Falklands War stands out as being the most thorough and content-heavy response to contemporary events during the period of the civic-military dictatorship. It is difficult to classify all the Malvinas content as being pro-dictatorship propaganda, however, because of the place that the Islands occupied at the time of the conflict, and continue to occupy, in the Argentine national consciousness. This paradox is best explained by an often-cited pronouncement made on Spanish radio, during the war, by Argentine writer and intellectual Ernesto Sabato, who would go on to lead the commission that produced the *Nunca Más* report: 'Opositores a la dictadura militar, como yo, estamos luchando ... por extirpar el último resto de colonialismo. No se engañen en Europa. No es una dictadura la que lucha por Malvinas, es la Nación entera' [Opponents of the military dictatorship, like me, are fighting ... to extirpate the last remnant of colonialism. Don't be fooled in Europe. It is not a dictatorship that is fighting for Malvinas, it is the whole nation].⁴⁷ There was broad consensus that the recuperation of the Islands in the name of Argentine sovereignty was a 'just cause', a legitimate course of action even when undertaken by an illegitimate regime.⁴⁸

In 1982, the regime, mired in economic crisis, was failing. The newly installed head of the Junta, Leopoldo Galtieri, was able to use recuperation of the Islands as a cause to unite the nation because the link between Malvinas and national sovereignty had steadily been forming in the national imaginary in the previous

decades. It was only in the 1940s that *Billiken* started to mention the Islas Malvinas with any regularity, mirroring the appearance of the Islands in school textbooks following the 1941 reform and coinciding with the armed forces' strategy of extending the Argentine territory in the South Atlantic and in Antarctica through military occupations, declarations of sovereignty, and the drawing of new maps.⁴⁹ The increased relevance of the Islands in the 1940s stemmed from the revisionist currents of the 1930s when intellectuals such as Carlos Ibarguren and Julio and Rodolfo Irazusta railed against Britain's increasing economic influence in Argentina and advocated the protection of national interests in the face of European imperialism.⁵⁰ The revisionist intellectuals sought to overturn the prevailing view of 19th-century federalist leader Juan Manuel de Rosas in the history taught in schools, and reinforced by *Billiken*, which condemned him as a brutal tyrant, and instead championed him as the strong leader who put Argentina's interests first, no matter the cost.

Billiken's treatment of Malvinas demonstrates continuity before, during and after 'el primer peronismo', underscoring the place of the Islands in the national imaginary, which transcended political divisions. In 1954, *Billiken* offered a comic-style double-page spread illustrated by Manuel Ugarte that opened with the statement 'Las Islas Malvinas pertenecen a la República Argentina, y por derechos históricos, como por sus características geográficas, integran el territorio nacional' [The Malvinas Islands belong to the Argentine Republic, and by historical rights, as well as by their geographical characteristics, they are part of the national territory]. The history of the Islands is presented in illustrated, captioned vignettes narrating events from 1600. Here we see that Manuel Vicente Maza, minister of foreign affairs under Juan Manuel de Rosas, formally initiated Argentina's claim over the Islands in 1833. The following vignette jumps ahead to the time of publication, placing Perón in the story: '[Perón] ha reafirmado en todo momento los indubitables derechos argentinos a las islas Malvinas, cuyos habitantes son considerados ciudadanos argentinos' [[Perón] has at all times claimed the undisputed Argentine rights to the Malvinas Islands, whose inhabitants are considered Argentine citizens] (issue 1799, 7 June 1954). In 1956, in an equivalent piece also by Ugarte, the introductory claim is repeated word for word and the history of the Islands is presented in near identical fashion to 1954, just with the removal of Perón (issue 1902, 4 June 1956). The cover of the *Billiken* 1965 'extraordinary' issue dedicated to the Malvinas depicted the raising of the Argentine flag in the Islands in 1820. This special issue, which went on to examine Argentina's claim to sovereignty from a historical and geographical point of view, set the tone with José Pedroni's emotive poem 'Las Malvinas' with lines such as 'Cautiva está y callada. Ella es la prisionera/ que no pide ni da' [She is captive and silent. She is the prisoner/ who asks for nothing and gives nothing] (issue 2369, 7 June 1965). With the inclusion of this poem, *Billiken* was not just reacting to content published within officially endorsed school materials but was identifying and driving the cultural narrative to accompany the political agenda. Carbone identifies the presence of this poem only in later school textbooks in 1971, 1978 and 1981.⁵¹

The 1965 special edition is complemented by information on the Islands, with a focus on the flora and fauna. Most of the interior illustrations are by Alberto Breccia, a regular *Billiken* collaborator and considered to be one of Argentina's most important illustrators and comics artists.⁵² The illustrations of birds are those of Lachaud de Loqueyssié commissioned for *Billiken* decades earlier. This demonstrates the resourcefulness with which the issue was put together using new and existing material and highlights the profound connection that *Billiken* has to the history of illustration in Argentina (issue 2369, 7 June 1965). This issue follows on from a circular sent out to school directors in August 1964 that identified teachers and children as key carriers of government messaging. The circular confirmed the requirement for all news related to Argentina's diplomatic advancements regarding the UN's C-24 Special Committee on Decolonisation to be communicated by all teachers to all pupils. Furthermore, teachers of history, geography, civic instruction and democratic education were instructed to dedicate 10 minutes of their classes to:

insistir ante los alumnos sobre los irrenunciables derechos que nos asisten sobre las Islas Malvinas y hacer que también ellos se sientan consustanciados con la situación y lleven a sus respectivos hogares ese mismo sentimiento, que debe abarcar a toda la población de la República.⁵³

[to insist with the students on the inalienable rights that we have over the Malvinas Islands and to make them also feel committed to the situation and to take that same feeling to their respective homes, which should cover the entire population of the Republic].

From 1976, ideas of national sovereignty were reinforced throughout the school curriculum with the theme of the national territory and its boundaries extending out from geography to be included in textbooks on *Civismo* [civic studies], reinforcing notions of national unity and justifying military action.⁵⁴ In *Billiken*, there was an increase in the frequency of material related to Argentina's claim on the Islands, in feature articles and in posters such as one in October 1976 that displayed the text 'Islas Malvinas. Tierra argentina en medio del mar' [Argentine land in the middle of the sea] (issue 2962, 18 October). The magazine also mapped out the Argentine territory in different ways, with increased attention paid to different provinces, such as the 'literary map', which showed, region by region, 'our' country through its 'great writers' (issue 2965, 8 November 1976). Also in the year following the coup, *Billiken* actively fostered country-wide patriotic engagement through the writing competition 'La Argentina que yo conozco' [The Argentina I know], jointly sponsored by the National Savings and Insurance Bank when this was still nationally owned (issue 2965, 6 September 1976). The winner of the youngest age group, Jorge Sirugo, a pupil in the first grade of a private school in Buenos Aires province, wrote: 'La Argentina que yo conozco es la palabra patria que ya se [sic] escribir' [The Argentina I know is the word homeland which I already know how to write].

The winner in the final category, Pedro Verón, from the north-eastern province of Chaco, also wrote about his part of the country:

Es apenas un rinconcito del Chaco y el camino que me lleva a la Escuela 205 a pie todos los días pasando por la larga picada de casi 2 km que se me oscurece cuando en el invierno salimos a las 5.15 y tengo que atravesarla muy de tardecita.

Del resto sólo tengo noticias por lo que me cuenta el maestro en la escuela y por los libros que leo en los grados. Pero igual estoy contento, porque soy argentino y pueblo una región muy apartada en donde todavía no ocurren cosas como en las zonas de mucho progreso, donde las personas son muy inteligentes (issue 2970, 13 December 1976).

[It is just a little corner of Chaco and the road that takes me to School no. 205 on foot every day, passing the long 2 km long road that gets dark when we leave at 5.15 in the winter, and I have to cross it very late in the afternoon.

I only know about the rest from what the teacher tells me at school and from the books I read in the classroom. But all the same I'm happy, because I'm Argentine and I'm from a very remote region where things still don't happen like in the areas of great progress, where people are very intelligent.]

The showcasing of children's writing and artistic production fluctuated over time in *Billiken*. During these years, the magazine published children's letters that showed the extent of *Billiken's* reach throughout Argentina and, indeed, in different Latin American countries. It was rare, however, for a child outside of Buenos Aires (city or province) to receive such prominence in *Billiken*. It was rarer still for a child of Indigenous, rather than European, descent to be featured. From an interview with Pedro published the following month in *Billiken*, readers learned that he was the best pupil in his school and that he wanted to finish his education and later work as an employee in Resistencia, the capital of Chaco province, rather than on the family's smallholding. The introduction to the interview is paternalistic, presenting Pedro and his family of seven siblings as an example to follow, emphasising the hardships suffered, such as having to walk two kilometres to go to school, and the progress that can be made from collective hard work with the older siblings now working in town. Here, family unity and diligence are co-opted as patriotic values that should ideally extend to every corner of the nation, even the poorest and most remote regions, as exemplified by Pedro Verón (issue 2975, 17 January 1977).

The winning entries to the 'Argentina I know' competition were later republished in a 1979 publication sold separately to commemorate *Billiken's* sixtieth anniversary, where they sit alongside a rather different take on the *patria* offered by Ernesto Sabato.⁵⁵ For this anniversary publication, contemporary



Figure 4.12: Photographs of Pedro Verón from the Atlántida archives. Different photographs of Pedro and his family were selected for publication in *Billiken*. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

cultural figures had been asked to contribute their childhood memories of *Billiken*. Painter Antonio Berni's submission recalled his photograph appearing in *Billiken* when he was 15 and linked memories of the magazine to childhood adventures and the swapping of *figuritas*. Sabato's response offered a profundity and a melancholy discordant with the self-congratulatory and legacy-affirming nostalgia of the supplement, and of any other previous anniversary commemorative publications. The piece begins with reflections on how Sabato came to understand Argentina's history through the visual representations offered by *Billiken* and its associated printed ephemera:

Arrastrado por estas fragmentarias memorias, me veo copiando en el pizarrón, con tizas de colores, una lámina de *Billiken*, aquella en que Belgrano hace jurar la bandera en el cruce del río Salado ... No sé si porque el dibujo y los colores fueron mi primera forma de sentir (¿de imaginar?) la realidad, recuerdo aquel pizarrón y aquel día. Acaso también por eso mismo siempre he pensado a la patria a través de aquellos candorosos cuadros, con sus paraguas del 25 de mayo ... con sus granaderos azul y grana peleando en San Lorenzo.

[Dragged back by these fragmentary memories, I see myself copying on the blackboard, with coloured chalk, a *lámina* from *Billiken*, the one in which Belgrano makes the oath to the flag at the crossing of the Salado River ... I don't know if it is because drawing and colours were my first way of feeling (imagining?) reality that I remember that blackboard and that day. Perhaps that is also why I have always thought of the homeland through those guileless paintings, with their umbrellas on 25 May ... with their blue and scarlet grenadiers fighting in San Lorenzo.]

The examples offered here of the national story as told and visualised by *Billiken* encompass the images of the founding fathers, the *próceres*, in *figuritas*, representing the values for which they are known: 'con los próceres de atributos para siempre estampados junto a las líneas punteadas de la Expedición al Alto Perú: la "ímpetuosidad" de Moreno, la "calma y prudencia" de Cornelio Saavedra' [with the heroes whose attributes were forever imprinted next to the dotted lines of the Expedition to Upper Peru: the 'impetuosity' of Moreno, the 'calm and prudence' of Cornelio Saavedra]. At the time this piece was published, these images, their content and their nation-building message were not just relics of Sabato's childhood but were still very much in circulation in *Billiken*. Portraits of Sarmiento, Belgrano and San Martín still graced their respective covers in illustrations by contemporary artists such as Roberto Regalado, which were not dissimilar to those drawn by Manteola in the 1940s. The corresponding educational supplements provided resources complementary to official school textbooks that promoted the *próceres* as role models and national archetypes, in another example of how *Billiken*'s long-standing patterns of content slotted seamlessly into the world view promoted by the civic-military dictatorship.⁵⁶

Sabato's piece then deconstructs his own nostalgic musings and, in doing so, makes pronouncements that contest the prevailing discourse. He reflects that, as we become older, we realise that the world is imperfect and life is more complex than the dichotomy between heroes and villains, justice and injustice, and truth and lies that are the work of the dreams of children and, he adds, sometimes of men. The realisation, he continues, comes that reality is comprised of a horrible mixture of justice and injustice, of truth and lies: 'Sí, ya habíamos aprendido que ni San Martín era el más grande general de la historia, ni Maipú una gigantesca batalla ... ya resignadamente comprendíamos que todo era más feo que la leyenda de nuestra infancia' [Yes, we had already learned that neither was San Martín the greatest general in history, nor Maipú a gigantic battle ... we had already resignedly understood that everything was uglier than the legend of our childhood].

Sabato proceeds to expose the reality behind the images of the *próceres*, so effectively propagated by *Billiken*, to show the hardships and frailties which make their achievements all the more valuable. He paints an alternative picture of General Belgrano from the one he drew on the school blackboard, here not in a resplendent uniform swearing the oath to the flag but defeated in the Battle of Vilcapugio and retreating in the snow with a starving army. In the description of Belgrano's final journey, in a modest coffin to Santo Domingo church, Sabato introduces another independence figure, but one long forgotten and who would return to the public imagination only decades after the publication of this piece. He imagines La Capitana, an impoverished elderly woman, watching Belgrano's humble funeral cortege without realising that it was that of the general whom she served. He does not name La Capitana in the piece but this is a reference to the Afro-descendant soldier María Remedios del Valle.

No sabía, nunca lo sabría, que sobre aquel cajón venía la bandera que ella también había jurado al cruzar aquel río que en ocasiones entreveía en sus brumas de vieja derrotada; tampoco sabría que ese cajón llevaba el cuerpo deforme de su general, muerto murmurando algo que todos los argentinos alguna vez murmuramos, aunque sea en el silencio de nuestras conciencias: ¡Ay, patria mía!

[She did not know, she would never know, that on that coffin was the flag to which she had also pledged allegiance when she crossed that river that she sometimes glimpsed in the mists of an old defeated woman; nor would she know that that coffin carried the deformed body of her general, who died whispering a lament that all Argentines have whispered, albeit in the silence of our consciences: Oh, my homeland!]

Sabato's extraordinarily disruptive intervention challenges both the absolutist world view propagated by the military, and the version of Argentina's history that *Billiken* shared with the civic-military dictatorship. His introduction of notions of discontent, lamentation and troubled consciences further suggest

that the piece can be read as an example of the technique of displacement that some writers adopted to talk about the dictatorship in the context of repression and censorship. Sabato does this whilst simultaneously dismantling the entire visual apparatus that *Billiken* had spent the previous 60 years constructing, all in the magazine's own commemorative anniversary publication.

Sabato's intervention was exceptional, also because it is not representative of *Billiken's* content during these years. The majority of *Billiken's* content that focussed on the nation was less concerned with culture and values and paid more attention to work and commerce, focussing mainly on the provinces' industries and man's role in successfully exploiting natural resources.⁵⁷ During these years, *Billiken* maintained an uneasy balance between promoting economic and technological advancements with concern for the national environment. In 1978, *Billiken* reported how Chaco's virgin forest, known as El Impenetrable, was being successfully 'dominated' and 'conquered' to become 'useful' to man in a provincial and national government initiative that hoped to double the province's cattle raising and grow agriculture by 30 per cent (issue 3051, 4 July 1978). Two years later, El Impenetrable was recalled in the past tense and linked to the Indigenous population, creating a dialogue with the archaising and primitivising of this population found in school textbooks: 'Había una vez un lugar en el Chaco que era muy poco conocido ... Sólo se internaban los indios, algunos cazadores, y los criollos del lugar' [Once upon a time there was a place in the Chaco that was little known ... Only the *indios*, some hunters, and the *criollos* of the place used to go into it]. *Billiken* sent Gustavo Roldán, children's writer and husband of Laura Devetach, to Chaco for this report, in which he emphasised the progress made as the local population now had access to doctors and schools. He also reported that his concern, that El Impenetrable's natural ecosystem would be destroyed in the name of civilisation and progress, was unfounded, thanks to the creation of a natural reserve (issue 3147, 6 May 1980). Just two issues later, *Billiken* dedicated a special week to the protection of the national environment (issue 3053, 18 July 1978), later winning a prize for the magazine's pro-environment content. The prize is also evidence of a formal connection between *Billiken* and the dictatorship as it was linked to a campaign led by the subsecretary of environmental organisation. This was part of the Secretariat of Transport and Public Works and the organisational structure demonstrates the lack of priority given by the de facto government to environmental matters (issue 3104, 10 July 1979).⁵⁸

The idea that natural resources are for man to exploit is reinforced by the repeated use of 'nuestro/nuestra' [our] in these articles, employing what Billig calls the 'the deixis of homeland'. Critics including Luis Alberto Romero have noted the presence of this in school textbooks also with the effect that the 'other' is transformed into something alien to the national community.⁵⁹ There is another nation-building impulse here also: these articles are directed at readers who are imagined as being in Buenos Aires and other big cities, and who need to be taught about the rest of the country and reminded that

everything, from the Pampas to the Patagonian icefields, is ‘ours’, a discourse into which ‘nuestras Islas Malvinas’ fitted seamlessly. An advertisement for the map of Argentina that came free with the following week’s issue reads: ‘¡Chicos! ¿Escalamos nuestras montañas y navegamos nuestros ríos?’ [Children! Shall we climb our mountains and navigate our rivers?] (issue 3140, 18 March 1980). The Indigenous populations, when acknowledged as still in existence, are integrated into the nation uneasily through the prism of being ‘ours’. *Billiken* reported on a market exhibition, supported by the Municipality of Buenos Aires and the State Secretariat of Culture, which brought Indigenous artisans to the department store Harrods, the epitome of upper-middle-class Buenos Aires. The article, titled ‘Aprendiendo de nuestros artesanos’ [Learning from our artisans], which named Alejandro Chaile and Vicente Centeno as visiting Chané artisans from the province of Salta, was complimentary about their skills and creations, and encouraged the children reading it to learn from them: ‘Si te animás, a lo mejor vos también podés llegar a ser un artesano’ [If you are motivated enough, perhaps you too can become a craftsman] (issue 2978, 7 February 1977). Even as *Billiken* acknowledges contemporary Indigenous culture, and legitimises these artisans’ work, the use of ‘our’ here is less about inclusion and bringing the country together and more about domination and ownership.

In 1973, a decree had instituted 10 June as the Day of Reaffirmation of Argentina’s Rights over the Malvinas Islands, the Islands of the South Atlantic and the Antarctic Sector. In 1978, the Day of National Sovereignty provided an opportunity for an article about the importance of securing the national territory right up to the frontiers, ensuring that border populations identified as Argentine and that those bordering with Brazil did not incorporate Portuguese into their language, and reminding the readers that the territory also included the Beagle Channel, the Islas Malvinas and the Argentine Antarctic (issue 3070, 14 November 1978).⁶⁰ The article ends by preparing the terrain for the military campaign to reclaim the Islands: ‘El gobierno y el pueblo argentinos ya saben que la soberanía no sólo debe proclamarse sino también ejercerse’ [The Argentine government and people already know that sovereignty must not only be proclaimed but also exercised]. This discourse around national sovereignty was also responding to concrete political events, such as the Beagle Channel arbitration. In March 1978, *Billiken* published a photograph of Videla with Chilean dictator General Pinochet, captioned as the Argentine and Chilean authorities who are seeking a peaceful solution, but not named. In a foreshadowing of the rhetoric later to be employed in the Malvinas/Falklands War, the article states Argentina’s position now that the country had rejected the ruling that three disputed islands belonged to Chile:

La soberanía argentina debe ser defendida firmemente y todos los habitantes de esta tierra tenemos la obligación de estar enterados de que allá en el Sur hay un territorio que, a pesar de los numerosos dichos

y entredichos, nos pertenece tanto política como históricamente (issue 3036, 21 March 1978).

[Argentine sovereignty must be firmly defended and all of us who inhabit this land are obliged to know that there in the South there is a territory that, in spite of the numerous claims and counterclaims, belongs to us both politically and historically.]

In 1979, the assembly of the Federal Council of Education approved a recommendation for increasing content related to national sovereignty across all educational levels, with topics including Argentina's presence in the South Atlantic and the Spanish heritage of the Malvinas included across the subjects of geography, history, and civic and moral education.⁶¹ In the wake of this recommendation, a *Billiken* issue from May 1980 is a good example of how the magazine engaged with the nation-building impulse that was later galvanised in the public support for the recuperation of the Islands. The issue opens with a feature on Argentina's development of atomic energy before moving on to the economy of Mesopotamia, describing existing gains in forestry, cattle ranching and rail infrastructure, and future plans for a hydroelectric plant. The introduction reads:

Antes eran solo tres provincias aisladas del resto del país. Pero el empeño del hombre de la Mesopotamia y su sabiduría para cultivar donde había que hacerlo ... fueron premiados con puentes y túneles que integraron esta zona al resto del país (issue 3150, 27 May 1980).

[Before, they were only three provinces isolated from the rest of the country. But the determination of the Mesopotamian man and his wisdom to cultivate where necessary ... were rewarded with bridges and tunnels that integrated this area with the rest of the country.]

The issue also includes an advertisement for the focus on Malvinas the following week. The headline 'Llegamos a las Islas Malvinas' [We've arrived at the Islas Malvinas], accompanied by an illustration of children in an aeroplane flying over Puerto Argentino, presents the magazine's content as way for Argentine children to travel to and get to know this part of their country. The same issue also coincides with the Day of the Army on 29 May and includes a page on this, as had been normal practice for *Billiken* issues published around this date, regardless of whether a military government was in power. The caption of the lead photograph states: '*Nuestro* ejército tiene la misión de asegurar la paz dentro del territorio argentino' [*Our* army has the mission to ensure peace within the Argentine territory] (emphasis mine). The main text seeks to legitimise the army by evoking the 1810 May Revolution and the founding fathers, who understood that words were not enough but that force and fighting were necessary, and so instigated the first version of what would become the army. The other two photographs show the army taking part in social and

humanitarian actions, with captions stating that it provides emergency support during national disasters and helps with the building of schools. This issue, which contains a great deal of content aligned to initiatives linked to the de facto government, along with the explicitly pro-military Army Day page, also contains a story by Laura Devetach. The story ends with an invitation, by Agustina, for children to write in with their compositions based on the story. Agustina was also Laura Devetach and this was the pseudonym she used to differentiate her involvement as a staff member of *Billiken*, looking after weekly pages such as ‘De todo un poco’, from her stories published under her name. In interviews, Devetach explained that she chose Agustina as an anagram of ‘angustia’ [anguish], to reflect her feelings at the repression she suffered with the censorship of her work.⁶²

Billiken’s drive to take in the entirety of the nation and present it to the readership, fostering a sense of belonging beyond one’s own city or province, was in keeping with government-led initiatives of the time, which involved taking future citizens around the country so they could experience the extent of their territory. A rare occasion when Videla is mentioned by name in *Billiken* is for one such initiative, in an article about a 1977 competition: ‘El comandante en jefe del Ejército, teniente general D. Jorge Rafael Videla, dispuso otorgar a los egresados de las escuelas primarias un premio a aquellos alumnos que se hayan distinguido por su aplicación, compañerismo y conducta ejemplar’ [The commander in chief of the army, Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, decided to grant an award to those students who had distinguished themselves for their application, comradeship and exemplary conduct] (issue 2995, 30 May 1977).⁶³ Two hundred children will win the ‘Leopoldo Lugones’ prize consisting of a month-long trip all over the country, with destinations highlighting Argentina’s industrial and technological advancement (the Atucha Nuclear Complex, the subfluvial tunnel of Hernandarias) and encompassing more traditional expressions of patriotism (Rosario’s Monument to the Flag). In January 1980, *Billiken* interviewed some of the 5000 students from schools in Buenos Aires who had participated in the civic-military operation ‘Argentinos Marchemos Hacia las Fronteras’ [Argentines, let us march to the frontiers], organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture together with the National Gendarmerie. The students travelled to the outer reaches of the territory, to visit communities in border towns and ‘apadrinar una escuela [y] estrechar vínculos de amistad con los chicos’ [adopt a school and strengthen bonds of friendship with the children]. In their interviews, the students repeat the tropes seen in *Billiken*’s articles about Chaco’s El Impenetrable and the interview with Pedro Verón. They are taken aback by the ‘purity’ and generosity of the people they meet, despite the extreme poverty in which they live; the communities are an example to the nation. The article ends with a quotation taken from the diary of one of the students upon his return: ‘Pero esta historia no termina aquí, solamente es el prólogo de algo que se está gestando en todo el país ... Ese algo, quizás sea algún sentimiento nacionalista, no sé. Quizás sea que nos estamos sintiendo un poco más argentinos’ [But this story does not end here, it is only the prologue of something that is brewing all over the country ... That something, maybe it is

some nationalist feeling, I don't know. Maybe it's that we're feeling a little more Argentine] (issue 3131, 15 January 1980). *Billiken's* nation-building content was aligned to initiatives led by the de facto government and can be understood as an endorsement of the military regime's actions and ideology. The magazine's focus on nation-building through covering all the space of 'our' territory and focussing on man's domination over 'our' national resources was not exclusive to the years of this civic-military dictatorship but it progressively increased in the run up to April 1982. The Malvinas/Falklands War fitted seamlessly into *Billiken's* content due to this prior focus on national sovereignty.

On 2 April 1982, Argentine forces mounted amphibious landings in Stanley and overpowered the small British garrison. The governor of the Falklands surrendered and was sent to Montevideo en route back to Britain. The following day, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced that a task force would be sent and the first ships sailed from Portsmouth on 5 April. The British response ultimately included 38 warships, 77 auxiliary vessels and 25,948 soldiers, sailors and marines. On 10 April, thousands of Argentines from all political walks of life gathered in the Plaza de Mayo to hear Galtieri's speech from the Casa Rosada, including the famous line 'si quieren venir, que vengan, les presentaremos batalla' [if they want to come, let them come, we'll give them a fight]. On 12 April, Britain established a 200-mile Maritime Exclusion Zone around the Islands, with most of the British ships reaching it by 2 May.

It was not until 20 April that *Billiken* published an advertisement announcing that the following week's issue would contain Malvinas content. This was the first of five Malvinas issues. The first presented the content through the prism of school, linking the Malvinas to the magazine's strap line, 'Todo lo que te piden en la escuela' [Everything they ask you for at school]. The cover illustration depicts a boy and a girl in white school overalls carrying their books and that week's free gift, a map displaying the full extent of the Argentine territory (issue 3250, 27 April 1982). In the four issues published in May 1982, the only mention of the Malvinas is in a page dedicated to Navy Day: 'El 2 de abril de 1982, cumpliendo con su misión de defender la soberanía nacional, la Armada, junto con el Ejército y la Fuerza Aérea, recuperó las Islas Malvinas, que se hallaban bajo la dominación inglesa' [On 2 April 1982, fulfilling its mission to defend national sovereignty, the Navy, together with the Army and the Air Force, recovered the Malvinas Islands, which were under British domination] (issue 3252, 11 May). The page about Army Day two issues later does not mention the conflict. The text regarding the origins of the army is mostly taken from the same page published two years earlier but here is updated to reflect the change in the enemy from internal 'subversives' to international aggressors. The reference to the army keeping internal peace is replaced with a reference to guarding against enemy attacks and protecting national sovereignty (issue 3254, 25 May 1982).

In June 1982, *Billiken* published a series of four 'extraordinary' Malvinas issues with collectable supplements called 'Las Malvinas son argentinas' (issues 3255,



Figure 4.13: ‘Las Malvinas: Everything they ask you for at school’. *Billiken*, issue 3250, 27 April 1982. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

1 June; 3256, 8 June; 3257, 15 June (one day after the Argentine surrender); and 3758, 22 June). The delay in offering Malvinas content must have been out of choice and not for technical reasons. After all, 30 years earlier, *Billiken* had been able to react swiftly to the death of Eva Perón, taking only a little over a week to acknowledge her demise. Furthermore, *Billiken* had existing material on the history of the Malvinas and geographical and natural aspects of the Islands that could have been quickly repurposed and republished, and the magazine’s editors also would have had access to new material from within Editorial Atlántida. On 8 April, *Gente* published exclusive photographs of the British surrender on 2 April and proclaimed that the only journalists to witness this event were from that magazine (*Gente*, issue 872).⁶⁴

In *Billiken*, the advertisement for the first of the four Malvinas special issues reads: ‘Saber más sobre la historia ... para comprender mejor el presente que estás viviendo’ [Know more about history ... to better understand the present you’re living through] (issue 3254, 25 May 1982). For this, *Billiken* provided a complete package of content along the lines of other ‘extraordinary’ issues with school material on the historical and geographical contextualisation of the conflict presented attractively with illustrations supplemented by miscellanea from

Devetach's 'De todo un poco' page, as well as song lyrics, poems and printed ephemera. The school *figuritas* (at this point called 'fichas de ilustraciones', or sheets of illustrations) were Malvinas-themed, and Luis Vernet, the first military and political commander of the Malvinas, was added to the select number of founding fathers afforded the honour of a pull-out poster in an illustration by Roberto Regalado that recalled the style of Raúl Manteola.

Desiderato, analysing the issues of *Billiken* during the conflict, notes the 'malvinisation' of the different contents typical of the magazine and sees these as cultural resources employed for the 'mobilisation' of children as part of the war effort.⁶⁵ All of *Billiken's* Malvinas issues also offered a visual digest of the key stages of the conflict, broken down into different episodes, and presented as a comic drawn by Roberto Regalado. Regalado's visual rendering of a selected number of highlighted episodes in the conflict was in dialogue with the visual war reporting of the illustrated press in the 19th century. Szir states that wars gave periodicals the opportunity to 'atraer lectores reforzando de esta manera un sentimiento colectivo homogeneizado' [attract readers and thus reinforce a homogenised collective sentiment].⁶⁶ Of course, unlike readers of *El Mosquito*

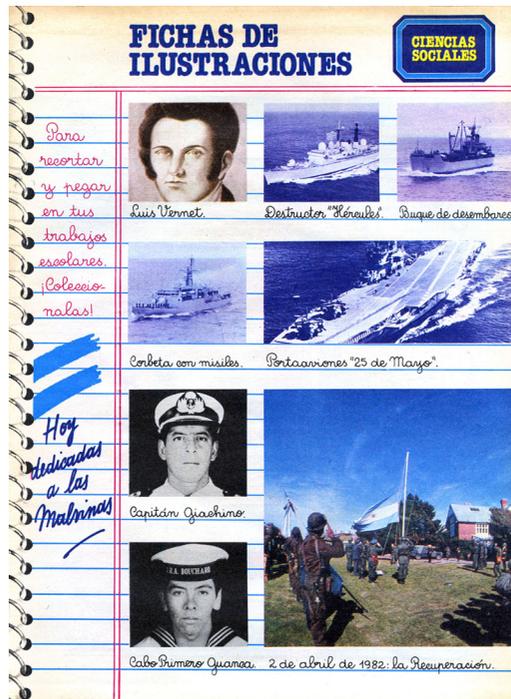


Figure 4.14: Malvinas-themed images (*figuritas*) for illustrating school exercise books. *Billiken*, issue 3250, 27 April 1982.

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in 1865, who had to wait until publication day for their only source of information on developments in the Paraguayan War, Regalado's readers had access to radio and television reports. There was, however, still a reporting lag in seeing these events reproduced in *Billiken*. Regalado's comics also recall other characteristics of the war reporting of the 19th-century illustrated press as defined by Michèle Martin: the visual reporting of war for entertainment and spectacle, the use of images to convey information to illiterate readers (or, in this case, children learning to read) and the employment of visual representations and symbols for the dissemination of contents which related to the notion of national identity.⁶⁷

The readers of Roberto Regalado's Malvinas comics were familiar not only with the medium of comics but also with his style of illustration. Regalado, originally from the Canary Islands, was a long-term contributor to *Atlántida*, having started working for the publishing house in 1962. He became the Art Director for *Para Ti* and illustrated covers and interior pages for other *Atlántida* magazines.⁶⁸ For *Billiken*, Regalado collaborated with different scriptwriters, creating comics with H.G. Oesterheld such as 'Primero en Marte' and an adaptation of Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. He worked with Gustavo Roldán on adaptations of stories including Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Salgari's *Sandokan* and, in August 1976, with Jorge Claudio Morhain on historical episodes on Pearl Harbor, Orélie-Antoine de Tounens, the self-proclaimed 'King of Patagonia,' and aviator Charles Lindbergh.⁶⁹



Figure 4.15: An adaptation of a story belonging to Emilio Salgari's *Sandokan* series of pirate adventure novels. Text Gustavo Roldán and illustrations Roberto Regalado. *Billiken*, issue 3173, 4 November 1980.

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Regalado's 1976 retelling of Argentina's first Antarctic expedition, with text by Andrés Vidal, was the most relevant antecedent for the Malvinas comics as it fitted into the magazine's promotion of national sovereignty and military values. Running at five double-page spreads, the comic encompasses military glory, in the depiction of the parade afforded the returning heroes, didactic content, delivered in the form of a man in the crowd explaining the significance of the event to his son, and patriotic symbolism with the raising of the Argentine flag over this newly incorporated territory (*Operación 90*, issue 2949, 19 July 1976).⁷⁰ Immediately prior to the Malvinas issues, Regalado had collaborated with Roldán on a series of comics depicting 'Hechos reales', or true stories, depicting male adventurers in foreign lands (issues 3236, 19 January, to 3243, 9 March 1982). Regalado's Malvinas comics prioritise images over text and have few speech bubbles. They present a varying layout, sometimes with panels of different sizes and sometimes with text captioned over a much larger image. Using primary colours, Regalado focusses on ships, planes and high-tech weaponry, with plenty of explosions and firepower. In terms of the relationship between text and image, and the glorifying of weapons and their power of destruction, Regalado's Malvinas comics are visually similar to the *Fight for the Falklands* series published in the UK's *Battle Picture Weekly* after the war, from 18 September 1982 to 12 March 1983, although only the *Battle* covers were in colour.⁷¹

Regalado's first Malvinas comic, *Operativo 'Azul'* (issue 3250), mixes informative descriptions of the amphibious landings with emotive language exalting the Argentine combatants' bravery: 'Mientras, un nutrido tiroteo en la residencia del Gobernador Hunt puso a prueba el valor argentino. Era imperante desalojar el foco de resistencia' [Meanwhile, a heavy firefight at Governor Hunt's residence tested Argentine courage. It was imperative to dislodge the focal point of resistance]. Images of fighting are overlaid with onomatopoeia, a visual device associated with comics, and the illustrations include a representation of the exclusive *Gente* photograph showing the surrender of the British troops, creating links to the wider Atlántida media apparatus. A final page depicting 3 April ends with illustrations of the four Argentine casualties arranged over a backdrop of the coast and around an unfurled Argentine flag. The section of the page is captioned '¡Misión cumplida!' [Mission accomplished!] and ends with: 'Mientras se izaba nuevamente la bandera argentina en la tierra reconquistada ... el país estallaba en miles de banderas unidas en un solo grito: ¡VIVA LA ARGENTINA!' [While the Argentine flag was once again raised in the reconquered land ... the country exploded in thousands of flags united in a single cry: VIVA LA ARGENTINA!].⁷² Regalado's next instalment, *La batalla de las Islas Malvinas*, two double-page spreads depicting 1 May, the first day of the war, contain more graphic representations of battle, with aircraft blown to pieces mid-flight in an hour by hour run down of the action (issue 3255). The comic also reports an anecdote from a despatch from TELAM, the official

news agency, that had been widely published. A telephone call from Admiral Woodward demanded the Argentine surrender, to which Malvinas Governor Menéndez replied: ‘¡Eso de ninguna manera! ¡Si estamos ganando! Traigan al principito y vengan a buscarnos’ [No way! We’re winning! Bring the little prince and come and get us!]. The ‘little prince’ was the Argentine nickname for Prince Andrew, who was stationed on the aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible*.⁷³

Regalado’s final three instalments are all double spreads representing key dates of the conflict. They are visually impactful with informative details about the events presented alongside rallying cries such as ‘¡Vamos argentinos!’ and ‘¡Viva la patria!’ The visual impact of seeing the complete scene at once is only achieved by detaching the centre-page pull-out posters: a photographic scene depicting 2 April, Regalado’s portrait of Luis Vernet, and illustrations of Argentine aircraft. Regalado’s depiction of the sinking of HMS *Sheffield* on 4 May ends with a rallying cry placed against a backdrop of the Argentine flag and next to an illustration of Margaret Thatcher, who is said to have been ‘perturbed’ upon receiving the news (issue 3256, 8 June). This is an illustration, not a caricature, and elsewhere the Argentine triumph is celebrated without demonising the enemy. The inclusion of a quotation from British journalist John Witherow, who saw the explosion from HMS *Invincible*, humanises the enemy: ‘Fue una visión pavorosa, impresionante y trágica que se grabó a fuego en la memoria de todos los que fuimos testigos’ [It was a terrifying, breathtaking and tragic sight that burned itself into the memory of all of us who witnessed it].

The contents page for the next issue announces that Regalado’s comic will feature the sinking of the ARA *General Belgrano* outside the exclusion zone on 2 May: ‘Para que sepas lo que sucedió lo relatamos en forma de historietas este hecho que fue calificado en todo el mundo como un acto de traición que avergonzó al pueblo inglés’ [So that you know what happened we will relate, in the format of a comic, this event that was described all over the world as an act of treason that shamed the English people] (issue 3257, 15 June). The comic ‘El General Belgrano hundido a traición’ [The General Belgrano sunk by treachery] relates that, following impact, the crew sang the national anthem on deck before abandoning ship. The survivors waited up to 40 hours to be rescued from the life rafts and the comic ends with their heroes’ welcome at the aeronaval base. A quotation from Captain Galassi laments the leaving of their dead at sea, and the comic closes with a summary of the casualties and ‘¡Viva la patria!’ three times in speech bubbles designed to replicate the Argentine flag.

Just as *Billiken* started featuring the conflict at a late stage, it also finished featuring it two weeks after the Argentine surrender. The final issue, published on 22 June, offers the last of the promised three special supplements. Instead of directly acknowledging the end of the war, *Billiken* returned to the founder, publishing Constancio C. Vigil’s ‘Plegaria por la paz’ [Prayer for peace] printed against a photographic backdrop of the sea. Regalado’s final instalment returns

to the Argentine success on 1 May, focussing on the Pucará aircraft known as ‘Los invisibles’ and following the mission from the point of view of Lieutenant Daniel Jukic. The glory of victory on that day is tempered by an illustration of Jukic, based on a photograph, and the statement that he was on the list of missing combatants. The closing message is not ‘¡Vamos Argentina!’ but ‘¡Fuerza Argentina!’, with ‘fuerza’, which literally means ‘force’, used here in the sense of encouragement and raising of spirits. The issue’s cover is insensitive and in bad taste. The importance of the war has diminished and there is a brisk return to business as usual (or play as usual), with that week’s free gift taking precedence, in terms of size and position, over a photograph of a scene from one of the Islands. The title and caption of the photograph, ‘Las Malvinas son argentinas’ and ‘Último suplemento’ [Final supplement] are in the same typeface and size as the description of the free gift, an extendable eraser. In the illustration by Alberto De Piero, the eraser is wrapped around a character from the comic *Dany y Pompón*. This cover is emblematic of the stance taken by *Billiken* following the war, with *Billiken*’s readers being offered no explanation as to the outcome of the war and no reflection on the defeat.

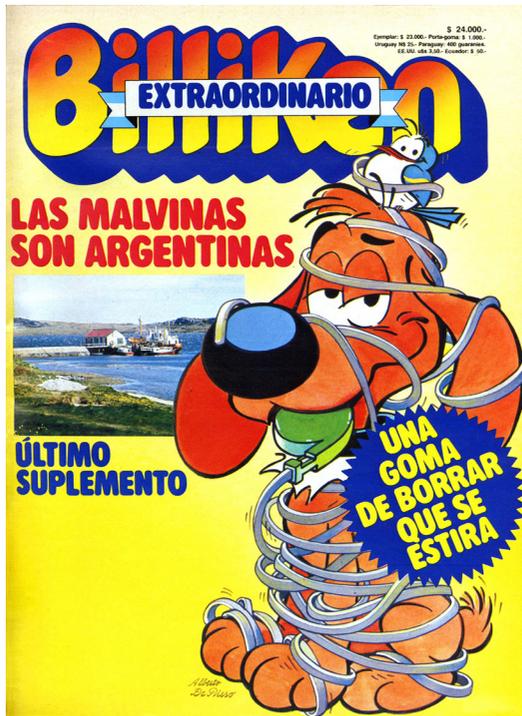


Figure 4.17: *Billiken*’s final Malvinas issue cover. *Billiken*, issue 3758, 22 June 1982. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

Regalado's comics are in the vein of *Billiken's* content, which was directed primarily at boys. As we have seen, *Billiken's* imagined reader for most of its history was the 'default male', with girls sometimes offered a special page or supplement dedicated exclusively to them. The supplement closest to this time period was 'Chicas' [Girls], which ran in the summers from 1972 to 1977, offering hairdressing and fashion advice, housework tips and cooking recipes, designed to give girls a reason to buy the magazine when school content was not being published. When reader Horacio Martín wrote in to complain that boys did not have a section of the magazine exclusively dedicated to them and their interests, as the girls enjoyed with 'Chicas', the reply defended *Billiken's* offering for boys, making the point that the majority of the magazine's content was 'absolutely' of interest to boys and that there were fewer pages that girls would be interested in (issue 2772, 26 February 1973). In *Billiken's* Malvinas issues, the war, in all its glory and tragedy, would be presented as an entirely masculine endeavour save for the mention of Margaret Thatcher. Across all of *Billiken's* Malvinas content, there are no references even to the traditionally ascribed roles of women at war, such as wives supporting their men from home, and bereaved mothers taking pride in their sons' patriotic sacrifice. Whilst all combatants on both sides were men, the only three civilian casualties, due to friendly fire, were all women. The non-combatant roles that Argentine women did play in the war in medical and technical support are absent, and indeed have only been recognised in recent years.⁷⁴ Regalado's comics effectively balance the excitement of war, played out with the ultimate in boys' toys, with the honour of martyrdom, reaffirming nationalistic pride whilst preparing boy readers for potential future sacrifice. Of the 649 Argentine soldiers who died in the conflict, 273 were conscripts on compulsory military service: young men of 18 to 20 years old.

In the aftermath of the war, *Billiken* persisted in showing support for the concept of compulsory military service. A page badged as school content, under Social Sciences, gave the historical reasons for military service, summarised the current arrangements and underscored the vital nature of the practice: 'las circunstancias actuales de emergencia nacional señalan en qué medida es importante, fundamental, el buen cumplimiento de esas tareas militares' [the current circumstances of national emergency show how important, how essential, is the proper fulfilment of these military tasks]. These tasks, the text continues, provide vital training and equip young men, should the moment arise, to take up arms in the defence of national sovereignty 'con eficacia y convencimiento patriótico' [with effectiveness and patriotic conviction]. The recent war is only alluded to and the casualties unmentioned. Instead, the text mentions the 'hermoso ejemplo de nuestros soldados' [the beautiful example of *our* soldiers] (issue 3260, 6 July 1982, emphasis mine). The military defeat of a military government already mired in economic crisis precipitated the transition to democracy. *Billiken* never offered an announcement about the end of the dictatorship,

moving seamlessly from the pro-Malvinas content of 1982 to an increased focus on civic education by the end of the year.

Notes

- ¹ To contextualise the mass readership, a 1974 advertisement in *Billiken* to attract potential advertisers stated that Atlántida was selling more than one million copies per week across *Para Ti*, *Gente*, *Billiken* and *El Gráfico* (issue 2856, 7 October 1974).
- ² María Florencia Osuna, “El hombre del año 2000”. Actores, discursos y políticas hacia la infancia durante la dictadura (1976–1980), *Sociohistórica*, 40, 2017, e030 <<https://doi.org/10.24215/18521606e030>>. On education under the 1976–1983 dictatorship see Pablo Pineau, ‘Reprimir y discriminar. La educación en la última dictadura cívico-militar en Argentina (1976–1983)’, *Educación en Revista*, 51 (2014), 103–22.
- ³ Eduardo Blaustein and Martín Zubieta, *Decíamos ayer: la prensa argentina bajo el Proceso* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1998).
- ⁴ Jorge Saborido and Marcelo Borrelli, ‘Introducción’, in *Voces y silencios: La prensa argentina y la dictadura militar (1976–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2012), pp. 4–15 (p. 5).
- ⁵ Jerry W. Knudson, ‘Veil of Silence: The Argentine Press and the Dirty War, 1976–1983’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 24.6 (1997), 93–112 (pp. 100–101).
- ⁶ María Alejandra Vitale, ‘Memoria y acontecimiento. La prensa escrita argentina ante el golpe militar de 1976’, in *Los estudios del discurso: nuevos aportes desde la investigación en la Argentina*, coord. by Patricia Vallejos Llobet (Bahía Blanca: EdiUNS, 2007), pp. 165–84 (p. 169).
- ⁷ Published in *Gente*, 8 April 1976 and cited in Vitale, pp. 173–74.
- ⁸ Eduardo Luis Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino: quince años después, una mirada crítica* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1999), pp. 97, 119.
- ⁹ ‘Proyecto Desaparecidos: Periodistas detenidos-desaparecidos en Argentina’ <<http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/victimas/listas/periodistas.html>> [accessed 25 February 2022].
- ¹⁰ Tomás Eliashev, ‘Nunca más un periodismo servil a los represores’, *Marcha*, 25 March 2018 <<https://www.marcha.org.ar/nunca-mas-un-periodismo-servil-los-represores/>> [accessed 16 January 2022].
- ¹¹ Eduardo Varela-Cid, *Los sofistas y la prensa canalla* (Buenos Aires: El Cid, 2000).
- ¹² See, for example, ‘Se salvó al enfermo; falta curarlo... definitivamente’ [The sick one has been saved. Now he must be cured... definitively] *Somos*, issue 130, 16 March 1979).
- ¹³ Escuela Mecánica de la Armada [Navy Mechanics’ School]. This is now a museum and site of memory.

- ¹⁴ 'Los hijos del terror' (*Somos*, 30 December, 1977), 'Alejandra [sic] está sola' (*Gente*, 5 January 1978), 'A ellos nada les importaba Alejandra [sic]' (*Para Ti*, 16 January 1978).
- ¹⁵ Ignacio de los Reyes, 'La increíble "entrevista falsa" que quiso cambiar la historia de Argentina', *BBC Mundo*, 23 December 2014 <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/12/141218_argentina_falsa_entrevista_parati_irm> [accessed 15 September 2022].
- ¹⁶ Cora Gamarnik, 'La imagen de la "subversión": cómo se construyó la imagen del enemigo (1976–1979)', *Sudamérica*, 7 (2017), 19–52 (p. 35).
- ¹⁷ *Cadena nacional: primera comunicación de Jorge Rafael Videla tras el golpe de Estado*, Archivo histórico RTA, 1976 <<https://www.archivorta.com.ar/asset/cadena-nacional-primer-discurso-de-videla-30-03-1976/>> [accessed 2 March 2022].
- ¹⁸ Vitale, p. 179.
- ¹⁹ *La Prensa*, 18 December 1977. Cited in Andrés Avellaneda, *Censura, autoritarismo y cultura: Argentina, 1960–1983*, Vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1986), pp. 162–63.
- ²⁰ See Hugo Vezzetti, *Pasado y presente: guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002), p. 71.
- ²¹ Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP), *Nunca Más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1984).
- ²² Cristina Micieli and Myriam Pelazas, 'Tanatopolítica, ser nacional y guerra preventiva en la Argentina (1976–1983), a través de las revistas *Evita Montonera*, *Estrella Federal*, *Extra*, *Carta Política* y otros documentos', *De prácticas y discursos*, 3.3 (2014), 1–23 (p. 5) <<https://doi.org/10.30972/dpd.33790>>.
- ²³ See Marina Franco, 'La "Campaña Antiargentina": La prensa, el discurso militar y la construcción de consenso', in *Derecha, fascismo y antifascismo en Europa y Argentina*, ed. by Judith Casali de Babot and María Victoria Grillo (Tucumán: Universidad de Tucumán, 2002), pp. 195–225.
- ²⁴ See Graciela M. Carbone, 'Manuales de educación primaria: entre la clausura y la búsqueda de intersticios', in *Dictadura y educación. Tomo 3: Los textos escolares en la historia argentina reciente*, dir. by Carolina Kaufmann (Salamanca: FahrenHouse, 2018), pp. 33–81 (pp. 60–61).
- ²⁵ Teresa Laura Artieda, 'Lecturas escolares sobre los indígenas en dictadura y democracia (1976–2000)', in *Dictadura y educación*, dir. by Kaufmann, pp. 83–120 (p. 128).
- ²⁶ See María Espósito's article 'Ser aborígen hoy', *Billiken* issue 4058, 17 October 1997. On school materials see the technical report from the Project on Diverse Childhoods and Educational Inequalities in Post-Pandemic Argentina/Proyecto Infancias diversas y desigualdades educativas en Argentina a partir de la pandemia, *Infancias, diversidades y pueblos indígenas. Análisis*

de las plataformas digitales y materiales pedagógicos elaborados en Argentina en 2020 para la continuidad educativa escolar durante la pandemia de COVID-19 (University of Sheffield and Red DDHH del CONICET, 2021) <<http://doi.org/10.15131/shef.data.19154393>>.

- ²⁷ Artieda, pp. 85–102.
- ²⁸ Academic criticism which contests the prevailing discourse of minimising, or negating, the continuous presence and contributions of Afro-Argentines includes George Reid Andrew's seminal study *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800–1900* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980) and Erika Denise Edwards's *Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law, and the Making of a White Argentine Republic* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020). Ezequiel Adamovsky has written extensively on the interplay between race and national identity, including in 'El color de la nación argentina. Conflictos y negociaciones por la definición de un ethnos nacional, de la crisis al Bicentenario', *Jahrbuch Für Geschichte Latein-amerikas*, 49.1 (2012), 343–64 <<https://doi.org/10.7767/jbla.2012.49.1.343>> and 'Ethnic Nicknaming: "Negro" as a Term of Endearment and Vicarious Blackness in Argentina', *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 12.3 (2017), 273–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17442222.2017.1368895>>. In 2023, *Billiken* interviewed Afro-Argentine teacher Marcela Lorenzo Pérez about the practice of painting faces with burned cork. Ignacio Risso, 'Pintar la cara con corcho ¿es una costumbre correcta?', *Billiken.lat*, 22 May 2023 <<https://billiken.lat/educadores/pintar-con-corcho-la-cara-para-el-25-de-mayo-es-una-costumbre-correcta/>> [accessed 27 May 2023].
- ²⁹ Paula Guitelman, *La infancia en dictadura: modernidad y conservadurismo en el mundo de Billiken* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2006).
- ³⁰ Andrés Avellaneda, 'The Process of Censorship and Censorship of the Proceso: Argentina 1976–1983', in *The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture 1983 and Beyond; An International Research Symposium*, ed. David William Foster (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1989), pp. 23–47 (p. 24).
- ³¹ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, its History and its Impact* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 228.
- ³² Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 'Subversión en el ámbito educativo (Conozcamos a nuestro enemigo)' (Buenos Aires, 1977), p. 49 <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/documentos/EL003637.pdf>> [accessed 30 January 2022]; See Pineau who argues that this pamphlet was withdrawn by the authorities because it was thought to have backfired by giving away too much information about how to organise subversive groups and too little information about how to combat subversion. Pablo Pineau, *El principio del fin: políticas y memorias de la educación en la última dictadura militar (1976–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 2006), pp. 68–69.

- ³³ Alicia Origgi, 'Entrevista con María Elena Walsh: "Fue revolucionario pensar que la poesía no debía tener contenido didáctico"', *Imaginaria*, 19 (2000) <<https://www.imaginaria.com.ar/01/9/walsh2.htm>> [accessed 17 January 2022].
- ³⁴ Graciela Montes, 'La literatura infantil argentina', in *Literatura infantil: creación, censura y resistencia*, by Ana María Machado and Graciela Montes (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003), pp. 63–71 (p. 67).
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- ⁵⁴ Romero and others, p. 141.
- ⁵⁵ *1919–1979. Reviva los 60 años de Billiken* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1979).
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- ⁵⁸ *Billiken's* articles on ecological issues include one on Uruguay and Brazil's contaminated coastlines (issue 3045, 23 May 1978) and ocean pollution (issue 3073, 5 December 1978).
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- ⁶³ The second occasion in which Videla is named is in the context of him meeting the winner of the Plus Ultra competition, a young carer, Ana, from Spain (issue 3162, 19 August 1980).
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- ⁷² The most prominent illustration is that of Naval Captain Pedro Giachino, the first Argentine serviceman to die in the conflict and also afforded the honour of being reproduced in a *figurita*. On the construction of Giachino as martyr and hero, and the accusations of human rights abuses levelled against him see Cristian Palmisciano, 'Hoy te convertís en Héroe. La construcción de la figura heroica de Giachino', *Sudamérica*, 5 (2016), 155–78.
- ⁷³ Menéndez was later investigated for human rights violations committed during the dictatorship. Other military figures named in the series of comics include Colonel Mohamed Seineldín, who went on to lead failed uprisings against President Alfonsín in 1988 and President Menem in 1990, and Naval officer Carlos Büsser who died under house arrest in 2012 whilst awaiting trial for human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship.
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CHAPTER 5

Billiken's Long Decline (1983–2019)

The period discussed in this chapter saw political upheaval and huge social change in Argentina, as well as transformations in *Billiken* at the institutional level. The rationale for covering such a long period in just one chapter rests with *Billiken's* content, which began to lack the richness of the previous years and does not lend itself to such detailed analysis. Over this timeframe, *Billiken* became a brand that contained, as one element, a magazine, at the same time as Editorial Atlántida became a major multimedia corporation. *Billiken's* growth beyond the magazine to encompass an ever-increasing proliferation of supplements, collections and spin-off products recalls the etymology of magazine as a storehouse. *Billiken* was more than it had been and, simultaneously, less than it had been, as both the *Billiken* brand and the *Billiken* magazine were progressively emptied of, or distanced from, the narratives, values and content that had previously anchored the magazine and given it meaning.

This chapter looks at *Billiken's* long decline against the backdrop of a changing political landscape, the increased polarisation of society, and the changes in education policy as they map on to the transition to democracy, the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín, the neoliberalism of Carlos Saúl Menem's years in office (1989–1999), and through to the celebrations of the bicentenary of independence under Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president from 2007 to 2015. During this time, Constancio C. Vigil's descendants briefly turned Atlántida into a media giant before selling out to Televisa in 2007. The convergence between politics and corporate interests was reflected in *Billiken* at the same time as the site of activity and innovation was relocated away from the magazine and towards its associated products. *Billiken's* provision of educational material, the representations of traditional gender roles, and the transmission of the narrative of Argentine history linked to the school year offer some continuities even as technology, linked to the rise of globalised culture, emerged as both a threat and an opportunity.

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From Alfonsín to Menem: neoliberalism, globalisation and education

During the transition to democracy, contemporary reflections on Argentina's political realities were present in *Billiken* but have to be actively sought out in amongst the articles, covers, comics and advertisements dedicated to the *Smurfs*, *Pink Panther*, *Sarah Kay* and the *Annie* film. *Billiken's* first approach to the transition came from within the magazine's school content in September 1982, at a time at which Leopoldo Galtieri's successor, Reynaldo Bignone, was still attempting to postpone calling elections. A piece entitled 'Congress: Senators and Deputies' and catalogued under Social Sciences states that democracy is the government of the people via elected representatives, chosen freely by citizens through universal suffrage and a secret ballot (issue 3271, 21 September 1982). Two issues later, the social sciences content was dedicated to the vote: 'un derecho que es un deber' [a right which is a duty]. The text explains that elections have been called after seven years of military government, and that this will be the first time in 10 years that Argentines will go to the polls. As newspapers, magazines, radio and TV programmes all have started to talk about 'candidates', 'electoral registers' and 'suffrage', the article promises a refresher course on the practice of voting, and illustrates it with a simplified voting model that uses invented candidates with surnames taken from confectionary items (issue 3273, 5 October 1982).

Billiken's embracing of the democratic process was in keeping with the enthusiastic mood of wider society. The lifting of the ban on political parties resulted in a boom in party enrolments to the extent that one in every three eligible voters was a member of a political party. Luis Alberto Romero writes about society 'celebrating the novelty' of democracy, which was now seen as a priority.¹ From September 1983, over five issues, *Billiken* provided a space for children to learn more about the upcoming elections with a series on the history of political parties. The lede read:

Todos los días escuchás hablar en tu casa o por la tele de elecciones. ¡Qué lío! ¿No? Para aclarar tus dudas, desde esta semana te vamos a contar cuáles son los partidos que se presentarán a las elecciones del 30 de octubre y qué piensa cada uno (issue 3323, 20 September 1983).

[Every day you hear about elections at home or on TV. It's a mess, isn't it? To clear up your doubts, starting this week we will tell you which parties will run in the elections on 30 October and what each one thinks.]

These pages synthesised the parties' election platforms but did not offer any context to help children make sense of them. For example, the first item on the MID (Multipartidaria) Party was to demand an explanation (from whom is not

clarified) about the problems suffered by the country over the proceeding years, specifically about the people disappeared for political reasons, the economic crisis and the Malvinas War. The focus on political parties only finished in November, with the election already having taken place on 30 October. Whilst children had been encouraged, by means of a footballing analogy, to take an interest by creating their own league table in advance of the elections to then see if their predictions were right, *Billiken* offered no post-election analysis and published no articles about the new president, Raúl Alfonsín from the Radical Party (issue 3325, 4 October 1983).

Alfonsín's government sought to rebuild civil society and Argentina's international standing, with a focus on democracy, human rights and peace. The authoritarian practices and discourses within the education system were overturned and efforts were concentrated on a programme of mass literacy. According to Carli, '[s]e plantea una promesa reconstructiva en los discursos de Alfonsín que incluye a los niños como destinatarios y como objeto de una reparación histórica' [a reconstructive promise is presented in Alfonsín's speeches that includes children as recipients and as the object of a historical reparation].² In the main educational initiative of the Alfonsín period, the Pedagogical Congress, discussions focussed on what education should be but no concrete measures emerged.³ Under Alfonsín, family law was modernised: in 1985, women gained *patria potestad*, or joint legal custody, over their children, and divorce was legalised in 1987. Despite the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons bringing to light the details of the human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship, the military held fast to its claim that they had won the 'war against subversion'. In holding the military to account, Alfonsín, a staunch defender of human rights even during the *Proceso*, took a cautious approach, recognising that the military was still a state institution. This resulted in the 1987 Ley de Obediencia Debida [Law of Due Obedience], which held that the abuses committed by the lower ranks were as a result of carrying out orders, and the Ley del Punto Final [Full Stop Law], which established a 60-day deadline for the initiation of new prosecutions.⁴ The political reality of the return to democracy was not discussed in *Billiken*, nor was any reflection on the dictatorship offered at this time. The main trace of the Alfonsín years in *Billiken* is in the price on the cover, which appeared in the Austral currency between June 1985 and December 1991, introduced as an attempt to halt inflation and stabilise the economy.

Civic education continued to feature in *Billiken* in preparation for the 1989 elections and, in November 1988, *Billiken* published an invented, illustrated interview with an avuncular Alfonsín, who patiently explained the democratic process to two budding child reporters (issue 3593, 21 November 1988). Hampered by economic and political problems, Alfonsín's presidency could not fulfil the hopes placed in it by civil society, which had so enthusiastically rallied around the return to democracy. The transfer of power, scheduled for

10 December 1989, was moved up to 8 July when Alfonsín resigned in recognition of his administration's inability to continue to govern amidst spiralling hyperinflation and food riots. *Billiken's* readers were offered better preparation for the 1989 presidential elections than they had been in 1983. Material under the banner of 'Democratic Education' included a focus on each of the presidential candidates published in weekly instalments, and comics by children's writer María Brandán Aráoz illustrated the voting process. Also differing from the previous elections was the attention paid to the winning candidate, Carlos Saúl Menem. Menem entered *Billiken's* pantheon of Great Men right from the time of his inauguration. Readers were treated to a pull-out poster of Menem photographed in his presidential sash flanked by the article: 'Aventuras de Carlos, el presidente', which offered three snapshots of Menem's life: naughty child, intrepid youth and accomplished sportsman (Figure 5.2).

The appearance of Menem's illustrated childhood in *Billiken* was reminiscent of the magazine's retelling of the childhoods of Argentina's founding fathers in the 1920s and analysed by Mirta Varela.⁵ Whereas the childhoods of these 'illustrious men' were filled with noble deeds to inspire children to greatness, the piece on Menem recounts anecdotes such as when he threw all his mother's saucepans into the local stream. The section on the new president's childhood then links to his political pledges to children. We are told that he wants to improve education and children's access to technology and that his chosen minister for education has promised to listen to children's demands. The article also recalls that one of Menem's campaign phrases was 'los únicos privilegiados son los niños' [children are the only privileged ones]. The phrase is divested of its political and historical meaning here, just as when *Billiken* used it in Evita's obituary. For Menem, this phrase was no more than a useful evocation of his Peronist political identity.

A former governor of La Rioja province, Menem had emerged as the leader of the 'renewal' movement within an increasingly fractured Peronism. He was also a revisionist Peronist, however, tracing his political lineage back to General Juan Manuel de Rosas, an association that Perón had judiciously rejected in favour of placing himself within the lineage of General José de San Martín. Menem founded a *rosista* society and, as president, repatriated Rosas's body from Southampton, England, in 1989. The section in the article entitled 'Carlos, the intrepid' alludes to Menem's self-styled gaucho image by recounting his crossing of the Andes on horseback in 1974. This episode is described by Gabriela Cerruti, in her biography of Menem, as a mixture of personal quest and publicity stunt undertaken to demonstrate the need for a mountain pass to Chile.⁶ More than identifying with the gaucho, contested but persistent symbol of Argentine national identity, Menem styled himself as a *caudillo*, evoking the strongman federalist leaders who wielded power in the provinces in the 19th century, or the 'barbarians' to Sarmiento's 'civilisation'. He specifically identified with the La Rioja *caudillo* Facundo Quiroga, whose life formed the basis for

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AVENTURAS DE CARLOS, EL PRESIDENTE

CARLOS, EL NIÑO TRAVIESO

Carlos tenía 6 años, era travieso y le gustaba jugar a escondidas. Un día robó la bicicleta de su papá. Un día, cuando se acercó a su casa, Carlos se encontró con un hombre que le dijo que él era el presidente de la Nación. Carlos se asustó mucho y se fue corriendo. Pero cuando volvió a casa, descubrió que el hombre era su papá. Carlos se dio cuenta de que había estado jugando una broma.

MENEM Y LOS CHICOS

Le gustan mucho los chicos. El mismo recuerda con mucho cariño cuando los primeros años escolares iba a la Escuela Normal de Menem. Él mismo recuerda con mucho cariño cuando los primeros años escolares iba a la Escuela Normal de Menem. Él mismo recuerda con mucho cariño cuando los primeros años escolares iba a la Escuela Normal de Menem.

EL SUPER DEPORTISTA

Carlos se convirtió en un gran jugador de fútbol. Él mismo recuerda con mucho cariño cuando los primeros años escolares iba a la Escuela Normal de Menem. Él mismo recuerda con mucho cariño cuando los primeros años escolares iba a la Escuela Normal de Menem.

• LÁMINA BILLIKEN PARA COLECCIONAR

• LÁMINA BILLIKEN PARA COLECCIONAR

• LÁMINA BILLIKEN PARA COLECCIONAR

Figure 5.2: 'Adventures of Carlos, the president'. *Billiken*, issue 3628, 24 July 1989. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

Sarmiento's foundational text, and used this to manifest his populist credentials. Civantos argues that Menem, as the son of Syrian Muslim immigrants, also evoked Sarmiento's comparison of the gaucho to the Arab, finding therein a way of negotiating his own identity as Argentine.⁷ The other half of the *Billiken* piece concentrates on Menem as a 'super sportsman': champion basketball player, football fanatic, tennis player, pilot and racing car driver (issue 3628, 24 July 1989). According to Hyland, Menem as sportsman was another example of his appropriation of the symbols of the nation, which facilitated 'positioning himself as the embodiment of Argentine masculine virility'.⁸

Billiken's article not only gave the new president positive coverage, with the focus on sport and youthful adventures tailored to making him appealing and relatable to children, but also reproduced Menem's construction of the political persona he had been cultivating for years and had employed in his election campaign. Another facet of Menem's public image, not aligned to the traditional Peronist base, was that of the Ferrari-driving playboy who rubbed shoulders with the jet set, tapping into fantasies of the aspirational middle classes who could read about his exploits in *Para Ti* and *Gente*. Menem, ever seduced by the proximity to international stardom, permitted Alan Parker to film Madonna as Evita from the balcony of the Casa Rosada in the 1996 film of the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical. This musical, with its anti-Peronist stance, has still never been professionally staged in Argentina and the casting of Madonna was met with anger in Peronist circles. Constancio Vigil, a director of *Atlántida* and a grandson of the original founder, brokered the first meeting between Menem and Madonna.⁹ Menem had built his base using the popular press and, as *Atlántida* published the country's highest-selling magazines, the Vigil family was an important ally.

Romero describes how Menem transformed the presidential residence of Olivos into a 'court' with a coterie of hangers-on and became the 'caretaker of the spoils of office, which he distributed generously'.¹⁰ Corruption in Menem's Argentina became so endemic that it was shrugged off with the phrase 'roban pero hacen' [they steal but they get things done], unlike the opposing Radical Party, thought to be honest but unsuited to power.¹¹ By 1990, Constancio Vigil was within the circle of Menem's friends, playing tennis with the president twice a week and even having a car space reserved for him outside the Casa Rosada, according to an unflattering article in *Noticias*, a news magazine published by rival media company Perfil.¹² *Atlántida* and the Vigil family benefited from the economic policies of the Menem era. The neoliberal programme of austerity and capital restructuring, proscribed by the IMF and the World Bank and known as the Washington Consensus, was the response to hyperinflation and economic collapse. It entailed opening up the economy to foreign competition and eliminating state intervention. The State Reform Law of 1989 permitted private ownership of state assets and overturned a previous law that had prohibited print media companies and limited companies from holding

radio and television licences. As Vialey, Belinche and Tovar state, '[i]t was precisely the need to forge agreement with the media owners so that they would not question his neo-liberal policy that encouraged Carlos Menem's government to change and make more flexible the media and telecommunication regulatory framework'.¹³

In 1990, *Telefé* (Televisión Federal S.A.) beat five other bids to win the licence for the state-owned TV channel Channel 11. The Vigil family held 28 per cent of the shares of this group: 14 per cent via Editorial *Atlántida* and 14 per cent via *Enfisar S.A.*, a company held by Constancio and Aníbal C. Vigil together with another cousin, José Vercelli.¹⁴ The following year, Channel 11 boasted the highest TV audience, boosted, according to Wainberg, by the *Atlántida* magazines promoting Channel 11's stars, to the detriment of those whose programmes were shown on other channels.¹⁵ In 1990, the *Noticias* article reported that questions were being asked about the relationship between Constancio Vigil and Menem. It also included Constancio Vigil's stock reply to accusations that the *Atlántida*-led bid won the licence because of their friendship, claiming that it was simply because *Telefé* had offered 50 per cent more than other bidders. The article concludes by remarking how peculiar it was that the pages of *Gente* and *Somos* had hardly mentioned Menem's separation from his wife, Zulema, even though it was making headlines across the world, and even though *Atlántida*'s magazines earned 90 per cent of revenue in sales, as opposed to advertising.

Previous chapters have examined how *Atlántida* leveraged the legacy of the founder, Constancio C. Vigil, to bolster the legitimacy of *Billiken*. This self-fulfilling process contributed to the creation and maintenance of the founder's legacy, placing him, if not quite within the national imaginary, then certainly within journalistic, cultural and educational circles. The barely concealed scathing nature of the *Noticias* article was centred on the idea of a moral decline having taken place in *Atlántida*, and of the grandsons' failed custodianship of their grandfather's legacy. Constancio C. Vigil, the article argues, may have published a photograph of Eva Perón in *Atlántida* magazine in a magnanimous gesture after Perón lifted the publishing house's paper quota but it would be difficult to find in his conduct the same opportunism exhibited by his sons and grandsons. In February the following year, a further *Noticias* article exploring Constancio Vigil's friendship with Menem pointed out that Vigil's Mercedes was registered to *Atlántida* employee Juan Carlos Albarracín, who, as a disabled person, was exempt from paying import duties.¹⁶ By April 1991, Constancio Vigil was being prosecuted for this and resigned from the boards of *Atlántida* and *Telefé*, using *Atlántida*'s magazines to publish his apology.¹⁷ In April 1997, Constancio Vigil was convicted in the case of the registration of his Mercedes and received a two-and-a-half-year suspended prison sentence, as well as a ban on engaging in business activities for two years. This was upheld by the Supreme Court of Justice in November 2000.¹⁸

The introduction of the Ley de Convertibilidad [Convertibility Plan] of 1991, which pegged the peso to the US dollar, led to an initial brief reduction in

poverty levels. Following the 'tequila effect' of the collapse of the Mexican peso in 1994, however, wages fell and unemployment and poverty rose.¹⁹ This led to a reorganisation of society in which sectors within the middle classes became the 'new poor', competing for resources and opportunities with the 'structurally poor'.²⁰ *Billiken* was always made for the middle-class children whose families, imagined as white and heteronormative, could afford to buy it, and the *Billiken* of the 1990s was no exception. In 1992, the level of poverty was mentioned in *Billiken* as part of the 'Extra' page featuring news items. A vignette cites a report, published in *Clarín* newspaper, stating that there are 15 million Argentines unable to buy food, and that 65 per cent of the inhabitants of Greater Buenos Aires are living in poverty. This piece of information is presented in the context of interesting miscellanea, given the same billing as other news about yerba mate production, a Greenpeace protest in Venice, and an Argentine runner coming second in the London marathon (issue 3799, 2 November 1992). *Billiken's* readers were not imagined as the children who would be left behind in the new social structures of winners and losers under neoliberalism.

The early years of Menem's first government coincided with an international re-evaluation of the place of children within society and the concept of childhood. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified in Argentina in 1990 and incorporated into the new constitution in 1994. The 1919 law concerning Patronage of Minors was only lifted in 2005, however, so two conflicting constructs of childhood held concurrent legal validity: the old model of children subject to the state and the new one of children as active subjects with rights.²¹ Furthermore, the UN Convention was incorporated into political campaigns and government publications but the economic model adopted by the Menem government did not create the conditions necessary for any of the pronouncements to be translated into action. Vergara del Solar, Llobet and Nascimiento see this as characteristic of neoliberal economies across Latin America, stating that 'the implementation of the CRC has been hampered by a confrontation between a universalistic approach to rights and states with diminished capacity to provide such rights'.²²

Under the Menemist reforms, the funding of education was transferred from the central government to the provinces and the City of Buenos Aires, with the National Education Ministry reduced to a planning unit designing minimum curriculum requirements.²³ Public schools faced cutbacks to teachers' salaries, support programmes and, in 1997, stipends for teachers to purchase classroom materials.²⁴ Adriana Puiggrós lists some of the outcomes of the failing education system during the Menem years: increased rates of desertion, four million illiterate Argentines over the age of 14, the failure to equip students with the technological education necessary for the navigation of the contemporary world, and the increasing social pressures put on schools that detracted from their educational remit. Rather than sites of learning, schools became refectories, servicing the basic needs of the most disenfranchised sectors of society.²⁵ The focal point of teachers' demands was a white tent erected in front of Congress for a hunger strike that galvanised public support. The 'Carpa Blanca'

strike lasted for 1003 days and involved 1380 teachers.²⁶ It ended only after the passing of a law in December 1999 guaranteeing that federal spending on education would increase to 6.6 per cent of GDP.²⁷ Families who could afford to do so pulled their children out of the failing public school system and placed them in private schools. The number of private schools rose to meet demand, exacerbating existing inequalities.

The public (state) school system had been established to turn out useful future citizens for the nation and Carli argues that by understanding the system solely through its homogenising and disciplinary intent, the democratising impulse behind it, which sought to give all children the same opportunities, can sometimes be overlooked.²⁸ The 1993 Federal Law of Education maintained the homogenising principles in two of the rights that framed the law: 'La concreción de una efectiva igualdad de oportunidades y posibilidades para todos los habitantes y el rechazo a todo tipo de discriminación' [The realisation of effective equality of opportunities, and possibilities for all inhabitants and the rejection of all forms of discrimination] and 'La equidad a través de la justa distribución de los servicios educacionales a fin de lograr la mejor calidad posible y resultados equivalentes a partir de la heterogeneidad de la población' [Equity through the fair distribution of educational services in order to achieve the best possible quality and equivalent outcomes from the heterogeneity of the population].²⁹ In reality, the reconfiguration of education within the logic of the market indicated a profound shift in the concept of education, and a break from the impulses behind its initial nation-building function. Arias argues that the reform 'sought a dual model in which people with average and high incomes would be able to have high educational standards whereas the rest of the population would not get adequate training for the labor market'.³⁰ As the gulf between rich and poor widened, some of the richest sectors of society accumulated even more wealth. For the wealthy, the Menem period was characterised by conspicuous consumption, facilitated by the rise of the shopping mall. That these are called *shoppings* in Argentina highlights the aspirational value of the English language for those whose kudos was measured in trips to Miami and the enrolment of their children in private bilingual schools. The rise of exclusive gated communities, known as *countries*, gave the wealthy security whilst effectively segregating them from the rest of society, their only contact with people outside of their social milieu being with their domestic staff.³¹ The local context within which *Billiken* was made, distributed, bought and read during the Menem years was increasingly influenced by the global context.

The rise of technology had an impact on the production and consumption of children's culture, and the market-led globalisation of children's culture was encouraged by the same neoliberal policies that had enabled Atlántida to become a major player within the new multimedia landscape. Reflecting on the 1980s onwards, García Canclini argues that the growing prominence

of the cultural industries in public life coincided with an imbalance between local production and local consumption, accelerating the globalisation of cultural products. He also identifies the concurrent processes of privatisation, transnationalisation and the retreat of the state from taking accountability for public interests in social life.³² This created the conditions for the rise of what Steinberg calls 'Kinderculture', or 'corporate children's consumer culture', which 'commodifies cultural objects and turns them into things to purchase rather than objects to contemplate'.³³

Billiken's increasing promotion of commercialised children's culture during the timeframe considered in this chapter should be seen as part of a continuum that runs from the transnational consumer culture promoted in the first decades of *Billiken* to the corporatised, globalised culture of the neoliberal 1990s, and is underpinned by *Billiken's* dual construction of children as both modern consumers and future citizens. *Billiken* was transnational from the outset: the name and the first cover illustration were taken from the US, and the early publication of translated comics and stories was part of the era's transatlantic circulation of texts. A key point in the development of *Billiken's* insertion into globalised culture came in the 1970s with the integration of founder Constancio C. Vigil's characters into international comics, peaking in 1975 with 'La historieta del año' [The comic of the year], in which Vigil's El Mono Relojero and La Hormigueta Viajera joined Batman and Robin, Superman, the Pink Panther and Dany y Pompón (originally from the Belgian comic *Boule et Bill*) in a 'super comic' adventure (issue 2917, 8 December 1975). The tradition of translated literature continued from 1986 with the publication of the 'Choose Your Own Adventure' book series, first published in the US a decade earlier. This series became the Atlántida books division's most innovative children's offering and was in print for several decades (issue 3494, 30 December 1987). *Biblioteca Billiken* was relaunched in 1999 with new editions of the same titles but under the title *Nueva* [new] *Biblioteca Billiken*. Traces of the book buying campaigns of the 1930s remained: the equation of reading with a successful future life as a productive citizen persisted until at least 2003 when Atlántida's children's books division was branded as 'Atlántida mini' and with the slogan: 'para un mañana mejor, niños que leen hoy' [for a better tomorrow, children who read today].

Billiken had always existed within Atlántida's wider corporate ecosystem and the parent company expanded in the 1990s, becoming, for a time, one of the most powerful media companies in the country. From the 1980s, the visibility given to popular culture external to *Billiken* increased with more cover photographs and articles on films, TV shows and bands featuring a mixture of national and international stars. In the 1990s, the magazine promoted products in which Atlántida had a direct interest, for example the *Chiquititas* TV series shown on Telefé. The free gift for the first issue of 1996 was a *Chiquititas* annual and the stars of the show regularly graced the cover (issue 3964, 1 January 1996). A spin-off *Chiquititas* monthly magazine followed, published

by Atlántida as one of 150 licensed products related to the series.³⁴ In 1996, Atlántida began publishing the comic magazine *Mickey Total*, which it licensed from Disney. These were product magazines, part of larger, brand-driven trans-media universes, with a precursor to these types of magazines from within the *Billiken* 'universe' being *Marilú* from the 1930s.

Even as *Billiken* reflected the changing consumer landscape, it was identified, and promoted as, an educational magazine, as opposed to a product magazine. Some nationally generated content was retained in *Billiken* magazine, such as the comic *Piberío* by Jorge Mejjide (Meiji). *Billiken* also linked itself to two towering figures of Argentine (children's) culture: María Elena Walsh and Quino's *Mafalda*. María Elena Walsh never wrote specifically for *Billiken*, but some of her stories, plays and poems occasionally featured in the magazine, with the original publisher acknowledged. One issue in 1992 boasted a board game based on a Walsh character as a giveaway (issue 3802, 23 November 1992). Quino's *Mafalda* comic had started in 1964 as a newspaper comic strip with the title character, a four-year-old girl, offering sharp, humorous reflections on social changes and political events.³⁵ In 1997, by which time *Mafalda* was long established as an Argentine cultural icon, *Billiken* started to publish a *Mafalda* comic (from issue 4029, 31 March 1997). The only original contribution that *Billiken* made to the publication of this Argentine cultural icon was that the pages were colourised.

Alongside the promotion of popular consumer culture, *Billiken* orientated its offering around what these children would need to flourish in a globalised and technologically-driven world. The Federal Law of Education of 1993 included technology and computer science along with maths, literacy and natural sciences as the 'saberes considerados socialmente significativos' [knowledge considered to be socially significant] but most public schools lacked the facilities and equipment to translate policy into practice.³⁶ That same year, *Billiken* ran a *figuritas* competition, the first prize for which was an IBM, the second a Sega Mega Drive, and the third an English-language cassette-based course. By 1995, content on computing was provided on a regular basis offering tips, troubleshooting and answers to readers' questions, with the implicit assumption that if readers did not already have access to their own computer, their life trajectories would inevitably intersect with this technology. The content on computing was placed within the main *Billiken* magazine and, as such, did not form part of *Billiken*'s explicitly educational offering, which, from 1989 was collected in separate supplements such as 'Cuadernos de investigación' [Research notebooks, 1989], 'Sabe todo (Tu revista para el cole)' [Know-it-all. Your magazine for school, 1990–1994] and 'Los grandes temas escolares' [The big school subjects, 1996]. The cover from 1996, depicted in Figure 5.3, shows how the main *Billiken* magazine had become a container for other products, with more and more content diverted from the main magazine. In addition to the long-established



Figure 5.3: ‘The best school material’. *Billiken*, issue 2976, 25 March 1996. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

free gift, there were four supplements including school material, a games and puzzles supplement, and *Billy*, for pre-schoolers.

In 1994, with *Billiken* celebrating ‘75 años con los chicos y en la escuela’ [75 years with children and in school], some school content was integrated back into the main magazine, with pages badged as belonging to different school subjects. In addition, a collectable illustrated school encyclopaedia was launched for the start of the school year, with a ring binder and plastic dividers provided with the first instalment (issue 3868, 28 February 1994). The contents of the encyclopaedia were not provided as a supplement but as individual hole-punched pages that followed no discernible plan or structure and were labelled as ‘para ayudarte en tus tareas’ [to help you with your homework]. The encyclopaedia did not map on to the school curriculum following the units of basic content established in the Federal Law, but was adjacent to it, offering topics including Language, Maths, Famous People from Universal History, Democratic Education, Argentina, Ecology, The Universe, and Plants, Trees and Flowers. The encyclopaedia was a reworking of a strategy that *Billiken*’s editors had used before in

combining educational material with serialisation and collectability, first seen in the *fichero* of the 1960s, which followed the success of the *figuritas* collection by grouping school material onto collectable index cards. The main novelty of the 1994 initiative was that the plastic folder offered a more sophisticated solution for preservation than had been afforded by the *fichero*'s cardboard index card holder that children had to assemble themselves. Children's comments were published in *Billiken* as a way of validating this material. This was heavily mediated self-promotion but nevertheless offers concrete examples of how *Billiken*'s curriculum-adjacent reference material was being used. Silvina (12 years old) read the 'Famous People from Universal History' as if they were stories, Mercedes (nine) reported using the natural sciences material for her homework and said that her teacher was impressed, and Alejandro (10) was planning to use the ecology material for his class newspaper (issue 3897, 19 September 1994).

The 'Billikenised' version of the curriculum presented in the 1994 encyclopaedia allowed the magazine to reuse and recycle themes and materials that had been a feature of the magazine for decades, both inside and outside of the educational content. Of note is the 'Famous People from Universal History' as the latest in a long line of similar series with features on luminaries such as Galileo Galilei and Marco Polo popping up as part of a similar collection every few years. In the years preceding the encyclopaedia, the frequency of such series had increased. A 'Grandes Hombres' [Great men] comic-style series ran intermittently for a year from March 1989 and featured a wide spectrum of men from different time periods including Galileo, Magellan, Jacques Cousteau and Walt Disney. The title was modified to 'Grandes personajes' [Great characters] to accommodate Mother Teresa before reverting back to the original title (issue 3658, 19 February 1989). This was an improvement on the *Biblioteca Billiken* Green book series, in which Marie Curie had been included under 'Grandes Hombres' in 1938. In 1983, Gabriela Mistral and Argentine sculptor Lola Mora had been included as honorary men in an illustrated double spread of 'Men of Latin America' (issue 3328, 25 October 1983). The more inclusive title of the series in 1993 did not lead to more representation of leading women. The cast of characters featured in the 'Grandes personajes' series included Galileo, James Cook, Le Corbusier, Marco Polo and astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins (from issue 3825, 3 May 1993). An illustrated Marie Curie next appeared in the 1995 collectable encyclopaedia under 'Personajes de la historia universal' but had to share space with her husband who appeared in a vignette entitled 'Un gran amor' [A great love], recalling the 1964 *figuritas* album in which Valentina Tereshkova shared space with her husband and her marital status was used to contextualise her achievements (issue 3912, 2 January 1995). The trend reached its zenith in 1996 in the series 'Grandes Hombres de la Patria' [Great Men of the Homeland], which combined *Billiken*'s focus on key dates in Argentine history with the supplement trend, packaging a patriarchal nation-building discourse in a collectable format (from issue 3984, 20 May 1996).

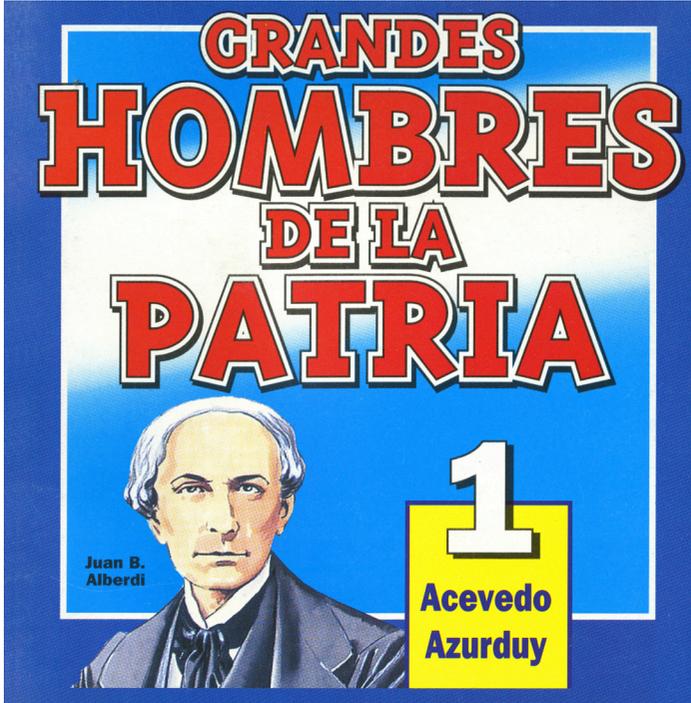


Figure 5.4: ‘Great Men of the Homeland’ supplement included with *Billiken*. Issue 3984, 20 May 1996. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

In 1995, the supplement offer retained these curriculum-adjacent, serialised principles but with a narrower focus. Two supplements were offered: a Bible in a serialised children’s adaptation and an English teaching supplement. *Billiken’s* selling point was that the magazine’s role was to complement, not substitute, the education given in schools, underpinned by the ethos of *Billiken* being a bridge between school and home, and one of the key actors in a rounded, integrated education:

Comienza un año escolar con sueños, proyectos y desafíos. En cada etapa nueva de la vida es fundamental contar con el respaldo de quienes nos quieren: los papás, los abuelos, los compañeros, los maestros... ¡y *Billiken!* (issue 3922, 13 March 1995).

[A school year begins with dreams, projects and challenges. In every new stage of life it is essential to have the support of those who love us: parents, grandparents, classmates, teachers... and *Billiken!*]

Neither supplement represented new content for *Billiken* but they were spotlighted together for the first time, collectively identified as: 'nuevos e importantes materiales para hacer más eficaz y completo el apoyo que brinda a todos los chicos en la escuela' [new and important materials to make the support [*Billiken*] provides to all schoolchildren more effective and comprehensive] (issue 3920, 27 February 1995). The following week, a self-congratulatory article reflected on the success of the supplements and underscored their value: 'Sabemos que La Biblia es una obra indispensable para la formación de todas las personas ... El inglés es, sin duda, una herramienta fundamental para desenvolverse en el mundo de hoy' [We know that the Bible is an essential work for the formation of all people ... English is, without a doubt, a fundamental tool for getting by in today's world] (issue 3922, 13 March 1995).

Billiken's first English teaching content had started in 1960 in the context of Argentina's opening up to the world under President Frondizi (from issue 2108, 6 June). Atlántida had previously published religious material for children, from Constancio C. Vigil's *Las enseñanzas de Jesús*, first published in 1944, to *La Biblia contada a los niños*, a children's adaptation of the Bible by Biblioteca *Billiken* regular Angela Simonini de Fuentes, which was on its thirteenth edition by 1995. Within *Billiken*, Christmas and Easter generally featured religious



Figure 5.5: Left: The free Bible and English courses announced on the cover of *Billiken*, issue 3921, 6 March 1995. Right: The initiatives are proclaimed 'a great success'. *Billiken*, issue 3922, 13 March 1995.

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content. This departure from the secular founding principles of public schooling stemming from Law 1420 of 1884 highlighted the decision for *Billiken* to not fully integrate with the school curriculum. The 1995 serialised Bible was by far the most sustained religious content linked to *Billiken* and reflected changes in the law. The Catholic Church had played a prominent lobbying role at the time of the Pedagogical Congress and, although the 1993 Federal Law of Education did not go as far as this contingent had hoped, it enabled Catholic perspectives to be integrated into schools. According to Torres, in his analysis of a publication edited by the council of Catholic Education, the key factor was the inclusion of the word 'integral' in the definition of the formation offered by the education system included in Article 6 of the Federal Law. As Torres explains, this implied: 'en una lectura amplia, la inserción de la dimensión religiosa –explicitada también en la ley– como elemento antropológico constitutivo de los sujetos de formación' [in a broad reading, the insertion of the religious dimension—also explained in the law—as a constitutive anthropological element of the subjects of education].³⁷

The inclusion of the Bible supplement showed that *Billiken* was still engaging with, and responding to, changes in education policy even though the formal links with teachers and policy had long been discontinued. This engagement was, of course, in alignment with the Catholic orientation of *Billiken's* owners and, in November 1995, *Billiken* proudly announced that the magazine had been awarded a prize by the Christian Family Movement for the publication of the Bible, 'para reconocer y testimoniar a hombres, mujeres e instituciones que trabajan a diario por la unión de los argentinos' [to recognise and bear witness to the men, women and institutions that work daily for the unity of Argentines] (issue 3958, 20 November 1995). The 1995 supplements offer a good illustration of the duality that had always been at the heart of *Billiken*—a desire to embrace the future as long as it was underpinned by traditional, conservative values.

The promotional images for the supplements, seen in Figure 5.5, showed a nuclear family, represented through both photographs and illustrations, with parents fully engaged in their children's learning and making use of this valuable educational material at home. More representations of family life could be found, as ever, in *Billiken* in illustrated scenes labelled as pertaining to the school curriculum. Now badged under Social Sciences, Miguel Ángel Milanese's scenes from 1989 showed some updating of the gender assigned roles within the family from previous decades. In 1989, the father and son tackle the car washing and lawnmowing whilst the mother and daughter tend to the flowers. The mother, then seen arranging flowers, is a part-time teacher and sometimes writes poems. We are not given the occupation of the father, the main breadwinner who works outside of the house all week—reminiscent of the 'Papá sale' literacy page of 1955—but, whereas in the 1970s such a father would have been shown reading the paper whilst the mother cooks, this

father cooks on Saturdays. He does, however, make a mess in the kitchen (issue 3609, 13 March 1989). In the equivalent piece published the following year, both parents work outside of the home during the week. On weekends, the father likes to cook and busy himself with electrical jobs, and the mother helps the children with their homework (issue 3664, 2 April 1990). In 1995, Milanese again shows a family from the point of view of the jobs assigned to each family member. The father makes breakfast before he goes to work so that the mother can tend to the new baby. The siblings get along, with the girl helping her brother with his maths homework, taking on the role of little teacher. In return, he helps to fix her bicycle as 'de esas cosas no entiende' [she doesn't understand these things]. The mother's work inside the house is emphasised, with the children only realising how much she did when she was ill for a few days ('La familia: entre todos nos ayudamos' [The family: we all help each other], issue 3921, 6 March 1995).

Milanese's Social Sciences family page of 1993 was published for Mother's Day and showed two alternative models of motherhood: 'No es Batichica ni la Mujer Maravilla, pero hay que ser flor de heroína para ser mamá. Algunas son como la de Leandro, otras como la de Noelia. Y la tuya ¿cómo es?' [She's no Batgirl or Wonder Woman, but you have to be a heroine to be a mum. Some of them are like Leandro's, others like Noelia's. And yours, what's she like?]. Leandro's mother is a traditional housewife and Noelia's is in the vein of the mother from 1979 who works inside and outside of the house. This mother works as a secretary, takes the children to school, does the shopping, and cooks whilst the father sets the table. Although the page's caption presents the two versions neutrally, a criticism of the working mother can be inferred through a comparison of the final frames. Leandro's mother reads the children a bedtime story, which, as *Billiken* has spent years emphasising the value of books and reading and parents' involvement in their children's development, we can understand as a positive action. In Noelia's house there is no reading, however. The family watches television in the evenings and her mother once even fell asleep in front of the TV. The implication is that the demands of modern working motherhood are perhaps proving too much (Figure 5.6).

Mother's Day affords an annual opportunity for depictions of mothers who are consistently shown as affectionate, patient, hard-working and devoted to their families. The level of activity of mothers beyond the family varies. In 1991, an 'Identikit of a modern mother' shows a woman outside, on the go, not at home cooking or having a cup of tea brought to her on Mother's Day. The identikit format, the same one that had got *Billiken* into trouble with teachers in 1976, once again risks offence. The mother is so busy dashing around on the school run, paying the bills, and doing household chores that she is distracted and careless. She has watered a plastic plant, forgot to put the shopping away and has the car keys that Dad has been looking for in her pocket. Being a 'modern mother' here means the mother taking time for herself. Accoutrements such as the *Para Ti* magazine under her arm, the novel she has been trying to

CIENCIAS SOCIALES

LA FAMILIA

El día de mamá

LA MAMÁ DE LEANDRO

 <p>En casa, mamá es la primera que se despierta. Le cota unos mates a papá antes de ir al trabajo. Después se levanta despierta. A veces remiégala porque remolonea en la cama, pero cuando voy a la cocina ya está con una sonrisa preparando mi desayuno y la mamadera para mi hermanito.</p>	 <p>Mientras estoy en el colegio, mamá hace las cosas de casa. Limpia, cocina, lava la plancha, compra los libros que necesito para el colegio. Santi, que es medio liero. Bueno, yo también ensucio. Por eso, desde hace unos meses comencé a ayudarla ordenando mi cuarto. Pago en algo, ¿no?</p>
 <p>Mamá, mi hermana Jimena y yo nos vamos de excursión. Mamá me presta un abrigo y me prepara las viandas, mientras nosotros guardamos las carpetas y los libros en la mochila. Vamos caminando juntas hasta la estación. Allí nos despedimos, pero mamá me da un beso y me asegura que me va a cuidar.</p>	 <p>Cuando sale del trabajo, mamá no vuelve directamente a casa. Antes hace las compras "a las comiditas", como dicen ellas. Después me lleva a la tienda de plantas y les dedica un tiempo a sus plantas. Nosotros aprovechamos para comarte todas las cosas que nos pasaron en el día.</p>
 <p>Má trabaja en una oficina, es secretaria. Después de trabajar, mamá me ayuda con los deberes. Cuando hay algún caso, siempre se hace un ratito para charlar con nosotras por teléfono. También habla con Maita, la chica que nos cuida. A veces la llamo yo solo para mostrarle un beso, y ella se pone supercontenta.</p>	 <p>A Jimena le gusta más cocinar, así que la ayuda a mamá con la cena. Papá y yo ponemos la mesa. Después de comer, nos sentamos a jugar. Después de jugar, mamá me ayuda con los deberes. Después de eso, mamá y yo nos vamos a dormir. Un día mamá se quedó dormida en el sillón y entre todos la llevamos suavemente hasta el dormitorio, sin que se despertara.</p>

No es Patricia ni la Mujer Maravilla, pero hay que ser flor de hierona para ser mamá. Algunas son como la de Leandro, otras como la de Noelia. Y la tuya ¿cómo es?

LA MAMÁ DE NOELIA

Figure 5.6: Different models of motherhood for Mother's Day. *Billiken*, issue 3848, 11 October 1993. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

finish for six months, and the chunky mobile phone she uses to chat with her friend are implicit contributing factors to her lack of focus on the running of the family and household (issue 3744, 14 October 1991). By 2005, the 'madre' [mother] has been replaced by the more informal 'mamá'. This modern mum has got it together to become the epitome of a woman who has it all. In this new identikit she is super-fit, capable and organised. She is on the move, juggling the demands of work and family, whilst dressed in a gym kit. Her identity as a mother is central to her accomplishments: she is always on the phone organising work issues, pyjama parties, her social life with her friends, and calling her children to tell them she misses them. In her overflowing handbag are photographs of her children to proudly show to other people. She is defined by the love she puts into everything she does for her children, as depicted by a halo of floating hearts all illustrated to represent these doting actions. A car key dangling from one heart symbolises her ferrying her children around to birthday parties. There is a heart with a chef's hat for when she cooks for her children, and one with a maid's frilly apron to represent her lovingly cleaning and tidying her children's bedrooms (issue 4473, 21 October 2005). There is no visual representation of her work outside of the home in this identikit and work appears as a modern lifestyle accessory that is afforded less priority than her gym membership.



Figure 5.7: An image of traditional motherhood for Mother's Day. *Billiken*, issue 4005, 14 October 1996. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 5.8: 'Identikit of a modern mother'. *Billiken*, issue 3744, 14 October 1991. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

IDENTIKIT DE UNA MAMÁ MODERNA

Trabaja, te cuida, te ayuda con la tarea, va al gimnasio, sale con amigas.
Así son las madres de ahora...



Figure 5.9: 'Identikit of a modern mum'. *Billiken*, issue 4473, 21 October 2005. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

From the end of the Vigil era to the Televisa years

Motherhood may have modernised but it was still, according to *Billiken*, the ideal destiny of young girls. The magazine's long-standing discourse around children's future potential and the default male in the imagery of the future citizen was revived from the time of Aníbal C. Vigil's death in 1994. The grandson of Constancio C. Vigil, son of Aníbal and cousin of Constancio, Aníbal had founded *Gente* magazine in 1965 and had been the executive director of *Gente*, *Para Ti* and *Billiken* during the dictatorship. By the time of his death, he had added director of *Telefé* to his portfolio. The familiar discourse of the father/founder, the institutional narrative of *Billiken's* *raison d'être* and approach to children, is preserved in the article entitled 'Adiós a un señor que te quiso mucho' [Goodbye to a gentleman who loved you very much]. Recalling the 1989 Menem article, Aníbal's love for children and his love of sport were evoked to generate proximity to the readers. Aníbal was presented as the heir to the founder:

Billiken fue fundada hace muchísimos años por su abuelo, y Aníbal llevó adelante los buenos propósitos que convirtieron a la revista en tu compañera inseparable dentro y fuera de la escuela. Los dos creían con mucha firmeza que la mente y el espíritu de un chico debían crecer tanto como su cuerpo, que sólo el saber y la educación forman hombres de bien, y que hay que pasar por este mundo con bondad, respeto por el prójimo, sentido de justicia y amor por todo lo que nos rodea: los animales, las plantas, el agua, el aire (issue 3884, 20 June 1994).

[*Billiken* was founded many, many years ago by his grandfather, and Aníbal carried on his good intentions that turned the magazine into your inseparable companion inside and outside of school. They both firmly believed that a child's mind and spirit should grow as much as his body, that only knowledge and education can form good men, and that we must go through this world with kindness, respect for others, a sense of justice and love for everything that surrounds us: animals, plants, water, air.]

Pablo Colazo had been the operational director of *Billiken* for some time but, in the wake of Aníbal's death, took on more visibility. Colazo actively engaged in the preservation of *Billiken's* foundational imprints when opening and closing his 1994 anniversary message, using founder Constancio C. Vigil's message from 1944 in which *Billiken's* spiritual credentials are elevated and the 'vile pursuit of making money' rejected. *Billiken*, Colazo writes, may be 75 but it is still young, a childhood companion of readers as it had been for their parents and grandparents. The maintenance of the *Billiken* legacy is projected into the future: 'Nuestro mayor deseo es que cada uno de los chicos que nos leen [sic]

se convierta en un hombre de bien; y que cuando crezcan y sean padres, aquel *Billiken* que fue amigo de su infancia lo sea también de sus hijos' [Our greatest wish is that each one of the children who read us becomes a good man; and that when they grow up and become parents, the *Billiken* that was their childhood friend will also be their children's friend] (issue 3907, 28 November 1994). In 1997, Colazo emphasised continuity in *Billiken's* educational credentials when promoting an English course, now in the 'audio-visual' format of a cassette and book. He wrote that *Billiken's* dedication to providing such material has been a feature of the magazine's philosophy since 1919: 'De esa línea recta, constante, permanente, no nos hemos apartado jamás' [We have never deviated from this straight, constant, permanent line] (issue 4026, 10 March 1997).

The duality in the construction of children was also retained in these promotional discourses, with children evoked both as future citizens and agentic, active co-creators of meaning. Marketing materials for the English course read: 'Lo mejor es aprender inglés de chicos para no tener problemas cuando seamos grandes' [It is best to learn English as children to avoid problems when we grow up] (issue 4025, 3 March 1997). A collectable book on Argentina features stickers so that children can be 'partícipes directos y activos del proyecto' [direct and active participants in the project]. This recalls children's active participation in making and remaking the *patria* in the cardboard models of key historical sites, but it is the first time that this interaction with the materiality of the magazine and its associated products is explicitly linked to the formation of patriotic sentiments. The presentation of this product also encourages identification of the nation with *Billiken* whilst employing a discourse reminiscent of founder Constancio C. Vigil:

Este libro fue pensado con el corazón. Con el deseo de que padres e hijos, maestros y alumnos lo disfruten juntos, en esa corriente de afecto que genera el interés compartido. Para amar más lo que conocemos, y conocer mejor lo que amamos (issue 4036, 16 May 1997).

[This book was written from the heart. With the desire that parents and children, teachers and students enjoy it together, in that current of affection that generates shared interest. To better love what we know, and to know better what we love.]

In these messages, Colazo positioned himself in his role as director of *Billiken*, as the first non-sanguineous heir to Constancio C. Vigil, and as the custodian of the legacy. Colazo's custodianship came to an end less than a year after this message was published, when he left *Billiken* in February 1998.

The event that signalled the beginning of the end for *Billiken* as a print magazine was the launch of rival magazine *Genios* on 2 March 1998, published by Clarín and directed by Pablo Colazo. Atlántida launched a plagiarism suit against Clarín alleging that *Genios* was a copy of 'Mega', an editorial project

under development by the *Billiken* team, and that Colazo, along with other former *Billiken* employees, had taken the idea to Clarín. In an interview given shortly after his house had been vandalised and graffitied with 'traitor', 'thief' and 'give back what you took', Colazo insisted there had been no wrongdoing and stated that the first issue of *Genios* had sold out, with a print run of 400,000.³⁸ It was not until 2008 that Clarín was found guilty of unfair competition and ordered to pay Atlántida nearly 30 million pesos. Since launching with the slogan 'La revista de los niños', *Billiken* had passed through several others including 'Todo lo que te piden en la escuela', 'Una aventura apasionante', 'Siempre con vos' and 'Tan inteligente como vos' [Everything they ask you for in school, An exciting adventure, Always with you, As intelligent as you are]. *Genios*'s slogan was simply, 'La revista para los chicos de hoy' [The magazine for the children of today], implying that alternatives such as *Billiken* and *Anteojito* were now old-fashioned. *Billiken* had, in fact, been modernising under Colazo's leadership and his final appearance in the staff page as director, on 6 March, heralded the back-to-school offer of an interactive encyclopaedia. The collectable offering was comprised of a paper supplement ('Supercole') and a floppy disk with educational material ('Superclick'). The first disk contained printable *figuritas* ready for use in school exercise books in an example of using tradition as a source of innovation (issue 4078, 6 March 1998). *Genios* was so damaging to its rival's market share, not only because of its novelty but also because of its superior distribution model. It was sold as an optional add-on to the Monday issue of *Clarín* newspaper, whereas *Billiken* still relied on sales from news kiosks.

In response to the arrival of *Genios*, those in charge of *Billiken* doubled down on the legitimising discourse of longevity—much as their predecessors had done after the arrival of *Anteojito*—but with particular emphasis on the links to education. This was competitively relevant because *Genios* still followed the pattern, established by *Billiken* and later followed by *Anteojito*, of aligning itself to the school year. *Genios* was an educational, or edutainment, magazine, not a product magazine like the ones linked to specific TV shows or offering purely entertainment content. From the end of July 1998 until the end of the year, *Billiken* displayed its educational credentials in a sticker on the cover: 'Declarada de interés educativo por el Ministerio de Cultura y Educación' [Declared of educational interest by the Ministry of Culture and Education] (issue 4100, 31 July 1998). More accolades came in the year of *Billiken*'s eightieth anniversary, including a declaration of interest from the National Senate and the Presidential Secretariat of Culture, as well as recognition from the City and Province of Buenos Aires. These were proudly listed in the anniversary edition of the magazine, although the main commemorative publication was available to purchase in a stand-alone book.³⁹

Billiken and *Anteojito*'s sales followed annual patterns with issues relating to key patriotic dates, with the issue closest to 25 May, the Day of the May

Revolution, regularly providing the peak. The success of the launch issue in March, for the start of the school year, would generally predict the success of the magazine for the rest of the year, hence the serialisation of supplements and collections. With a new competitor on the scene, *Billiken* invested heavily in its 1999 launch package and offered what was billed as the best school material ever given away by a magazine. This comprised a school rucksack, a collectable school encyclopaedia and a *Biblioteca Billiken* 'for the family' book collection, with one book provided every week. The slogan of the package was: 'Todo el programa escolar desarrollado en forma didáctica para los chicos del futuro' [The entire school curriculum developed in a didactic way for the children of the future]. The back-to-school package was offered in conjunction with Telefónica, which by then was in business with Atlántida. In March 1998 Atlántida had sold 60 per cent of its shares, retaining 40 per cent of the new entity AtCo (Atlántida Comunicación) together with CEI Citicorp Holdings (30 per cent) and Telefónica Internacional (30 per cent).⁴⁰ The resulting media conglomerate was rivalled only by Grupo Clarín and held several radio stations and TV channels, the cable television transmitter Cablevisión, one landline, one mobile telephone company and two internet providers.⁴¹ The group also held the Editorial Atlántida magazines, with the notable exception of *El Gráfico*, which passed to Carlos Ávila's Torneos y Competencias. In December 1999, it was reported that the majority of AtCo was to be sold to a division of the Spanish telecommunications giant Telefónica, with the Vigil family retaining Editorial Atlántida.⁴²

Billiken's 1999 back-to-school package did win back some readers, with the average sales per issue in 1998 at 75,745, rising to 134,511 in 1999. The slogan of the collectable encyclopaedia was '100 questions for the children of 2000'. The generation of 2000, evoked by Perón and later by the civic-military dictatorship, had finally arrived, but their magazine of choice was no longer *Billiken*. In the year 2000, sales fell to 69,770 and never recovered, declining steadily to fewer than 30,000 from 2015. *Genios* became Argentina's bestselling children's magazine, pushing *Billiken* into third place behind *Anteojito*. It was, however, *Anteojito* that failed to survive the combination of the 2001 crisis and the arrival of *Genios*, closing in December 2001 after 37 years. News articles reporting on *Anteojito*'s closure quoted figures from October 2001 for the weekly average of copies sold, provided by the Argentine Circulation Verification Institute: *Genios* 72,673, *Anteojito* 33,300 and *Billiken* 26,757.⁴³

The impact of *Genios* on *Billiken* was seen in a modest attempt to update its visuality, particularly through the use of montages of photographs and illustrations on the cover. The return of El Mono Relojero as cover star, integrated into the patriotic anniversaries and the cycle of the school year in 2001 and 2002, can also be understood as a response to the arrival of a new competitor, in that it repeated one of the strategies employed following the launch of *Anteojito*. The first time El Mono Relojero had been adapted for the magazine, in the early 1970s, was an indication of an integration approach to innovation, classified by Erdogan, Rondi and De Massis as 'reinterpreting traditional



Figure 5.10: El Mono Relojero returns as cover star. *Billiken*, issue 4246, 7 May 2001. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

products and production through innovation’ and one of four strategies for managing the tradition/innovation paradox which these authors plot onto a matrix.⁴⁴ In 2001, the return of El Mono Relojero no longer counted as innovative and within the aforementioned matrix would be a ‘revival’ of an existing tradition.

Atlántida was committed to investing in content for children and adolescents, and innovation was still taking place, but in other products in addition to *Billiken* such as the computing magazine *Billiken Compu* launched for the eightieth anniversary. Other new spin-off magazines were aimed at widening the age range of targetable consumers beyond *Billiken*’s primary school readership. *Para Teens*, under the wing of *Para Ti*, was for teenage girls to give them continuity of service when they were too old for *Billiken* and too young for *Para Ti*. The *Billy* supplement, featuring activities for younger readers, was discontinued and *La Valijita*, a separate magazine for pre-schoolers, launched in 2004. Meaning ‘little suitcase’ and shaped with a handle, this concept explicitly leaned into the idea of the magazine itself becoming a container for other products. Following Erdogan, Rondi and De Massis’s tradition–innovation matrix, instead of adopting an integration approach to innovation, Atlántida shifted to a ‘segregation’ approach when it came to *Billiken*. The ultimate expression of this came in 2000 when *Billiken*’s website was launched. This was managed

by the same external provider also responsible for the rest of Atlántida's digital provision, with no editorial oversight from the magazine itself and no engagement between the two entities.⁴⁵

Atlántida publicly adopted a narrative of defiant optimism about *Billiken* in the context of the ongoing legal battle with Clarín, even as *Genios* eroded its readership. A *Gente* article from 2005 states that *Billiken* had gained a 10-point market share over *Genios* the previous year, and, even though *Billiken*'s average weekly sales had dropped 47 per cent from 1997 to 56,000, this was not as great as *Genios*'s drop from a weekly average of 213,648 to 82,000 over the same time period.⁴⁶ The reduction in paid circulation across both magazines was accounted for by the increased options for children's leisure time, through TV, film and the internet. As educational (or 'edutainment') magazines as opposed to product ones, *Billiken* and *Genios* shared the problem that educational material for the completion of homework tasks could increasingly be sourced, on demand, from the internet. The *figuritas*, which had sustained *Billiken* for so long and helped to embed itself in the national consciousness, were obsolete when pictures to illustrate homework could be downloaded from the internet and printed out. Product spin-off *figuritas* or sticker albums were still relevant and, in the 2000s, the stars of these albums included characters like the Chicas Superpoderosas (the Powerpuff Girls), promoted in *Billiken* as part of the magazine's partnership with Cartoon Network (issue 4506, 16 June 2006). This partnership led to developments in content such as the elaboration of comics featuring Cartoon Network characters.

The proportion of international, as opposed to local, cultural production grew with covers and articles related to international film franchises including *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, and bands such as Green Day vying for space with Cartoon Network covers. Reflecting García Canclini's observed 'asymmetry' of local versus international cultural production in the globalised context, the landscape of national children's culture was narrowing with investment focussed on the creation of products based on existing characters, rather than the development of new ones. *Billiken* bore witness to that as it featured key examples on the cover, such as García Ferré's 1999 animated film *Manuelita*, based on the song of the same name by María Elena Walsh, and the 2004 *Patoruzito* animated film. The latter was based on the character from the comics from Dante Quintero's *Patoruzito* magazine, which ran from 1945 to 1977.⁴⁷ Other cover stars included the Argentine girl band Bandana, a homegrown product stemming from a globalised format. In 2001 Bandana had won the local version of the *Popstars* TV talent show that had originated in Australia and was made locally by the production company in which Constancio Vigil held a majority share.⁴⁸ Series two of *Popstars* was aired on Telefé, further highlighting the Vigils' prominence in the reduced circle of production and distribution of national content. Formats such as *Popstars* could be successfully rolled out worldwide because of the homogenising of global culture. Writing around this time, García Canclini states:

Sobre todo las generaciones jóvenes guían sus prácticas culturales de acuerdo con información y estilos homogeneizados, captables por los receptores de diversas sociedades con independencia de sus concepciones políticas, religiosas o nacionales. Los consumidores de diferentes clases sociales son capaces de leer las citas de un imaginario multilocalizado que la televisión y la publicidad agrupan: los ídolos del cine *hollywoodense* y de la música, pop, los diseños de pintores famosos, los héroes deportivos y los políticos de varios países componen un repertorio de signos en constante disponibilidad.⁴⁹

[The younger generations in particular guide their cultural practices according to homogenised information and styles, which can be picked up by receivers in different societies regardless of their political, religious or national conceptions. Consumers from different social classes are able to read quotations from a multi-localised imaginary that television and advertising bring together: Hollywood film and pop music idols, the designs of famous painters, sporting heroes and politicians from various countries make up a constantly available repertoire of signs.]

The years 2005 and 2006 saw a peak in *Billiken's* promotion of homogenised global consumer culture to the extent that even the covers corresponding to key dates in the school calendar did not take the lead from those dates. In 2005, the issues that would normally lead with back-to-school featured Disney actress Hillary Duff and Argentine singer Diego Torres (issues 4441, 11 March, and 4442, 19 March). The issue corresponding to the May Revolution had Argentine rock band Airbag on the cover, with patriotic material confined to the *Billy* supplement (issue 4451, 20 May 2005). In 2006, supplements on the May Revolution were issued over three weeks, but the main magazine's cover images were devoted to *Chiquititas*, *The March of the Penguins* and Airbag (issues 4500, 5 May to 4502, 19 May). Also in 2006, with supplements on Independence Day now provided in the run-up to the date itself, allowing teachers and children to prepare material in advance, the corresponding covers featuring Pixar's *Cars* and *Patoruzito 2* (issues 4507, 23 June and 4508, 30 June). The cover of the issue closest to Independence Day did not mention it and led with the *Ratón Perez* animated film, a co-production between Spain and Argentina distributed by Disney, instead of an image of the Casa de Tucumán (issue 4509, 7 July 2006). For the Day of the Teacher, Sarmiento was transplanted first by Messi and subsequently by *High School Musical* (issues 4517, 1 September 2006, and 4518, 9 September 2006). The issue around 17 November had normally led with *Billiken's* anniversary, featuring variations on an image of a cake with candles on the cover; in 2005 the cover image of the corresponding issue was Daniel Radcliffe in character as Harry Potter (issue 4477, 18 November 2005). The following year, the magazine's anniversary was not even mentioned on the cover, which featured Zac Efron (issue 4528, 17 November 2006).

In 2006, Judith Gociol interviewed Mirta Varela and Paula Guitelman for an article on *Billiken*. Even whilst sustaining their criticisms of *Billiken*, both appeared to lament somewhat the changes observed in the magazine at that time. For Guitelman, *Billiken* had modernised graphically but had become impoverished in terms of content. Varela remarked on the disappearance of the moral drivers that had been present in *Billiken* previously and, highlighting Atlántida's multimedia presence, suggested that perhaps these values had been replaced by the morality of consumerism.⁵⁰ At the time at which the Vigil family divested themselves of Editorial Atlántida, *Billiken* was the furthest it had ever strayed from its foundational imprint.

From the Televisa years to the centenary

Editorial Atlántida was sold to the Mexican media giant Televisa in 2007 for a reported 80 million US dollars.⁵¹ In 2008, Atlántida's new management commissioned an extensive market research study to inform the strategy for the future direction for *Billiken*. This point in this history of *Billiken* magazine marks a methodological and affective shift in this book's approach: I only have access to this market study because of my working relationship with *Billiken*, which exists in tandem with my role as academic researcher. The recommendations in the market study led to a change in personnel in *Billiken* and, within this, the appointment, initially as art director, of Euhén Matarozzo, my principal contact and colleague at Atlántida. My understanding of *Billiken* from 2008 onwards has been informed by conversations with him, and, over the years, with other current and former employees of the organisation, in addition to Atlántida's current directors. This study of *Billiken* has always sought to keep the archive at the centre, maintaining the focus on textual analysis, rather than undertaking an ethnographic approach by interviewing the creators or readers of *Billiken*. The informal conversations about the transition to Televisa and beyond were not undertaken for the purposes of writing this book. Rather, they came about over the course of several years of co-created activity regarding the creation of the future direction for *Billiken* around and beyond the time of its centenary: a parallel stream of activity that I sustained alongside the historical archival research. This is the point in the narrative at which the two streams of activity converge, and at which my analysis of the history of *Billiken* is more directly informed by my personal involvement, even though my first visit to the archives did not take place until 2012 and I did not begin working with *Billiken* until 2018.

The 2008 market study's focus on the comparison with *Genios* is telling, not just because this magazine had eaten into *Billiken*'s market share to become the most successful of the school-orientated, as opposed to the product-based, children's magazines but because *Billiken* was still very much focussed on print as the main support for any future reconfiguration of the brand. Whilst

the study revealed that teachers were still recommending the purchase of a school-orientated magazine for use in class, they no longer specified *Billiken*. Interviews with teachers also revealed the growing obsolescence of school-orientated magazines, partly because of the access to material offered by the internet, but also because of the repetition of texts, themes and images year after year, which discouraged regular purchasing. The study found that schools were consulting archives of magazines from previous years, with even some old copies of *Anteojito* still in use. As children themselves did not show any desire to buy the school-orientated magazines, preferring product magazines, the purchase decision-making rested with parents. Whether parents preferred *Billiken* or *Genios* depended on the values and associations they ascribed to each magazine. *Genios* was seen as the more modern, aspirational alternative that would more adequately prepare children for the future that awaited them. On the negative side, it was more consumer-orientated, with much more advertising than *Billiken*. Tradition was a major driver behind the purchase of *Billiken*. *Billiken* was positively appraised as a link to parents' own childhood memories, offering a way of reconnecting children to print culture, as an alternative to screens, and to connect childhood experiences across generations. The flip side of the nostalgia was that *Billiken* was perceived as old-fashioned: it had not kept up with the times and did not appeal to the children of the day.

Interviewees and focus group participants were asked how *Billiken* and *Genios* would be personified. The synthesis of responses underlines the alignment of tradition with being old-fashioned. If *Billiken* were a person it would be *Genios*'s grandfather, between 60 and 80 years old, or a 50-year-old man in a suit and tie. He would be a teacher, a public sector employee or a historian with a large library of books. Some respondents identified *Billiken* as an older female teacher, like the ones they had known in their childhoods. *Genios* was a female teacher, anywhere between 26 and 45 years old, or an inexperienced primary school teacher fresh out of college. Other associations for *Genios* were listed as: Bill Gates; a young, intelligent woman; Harry Potter at 28; and a 30-year-old graphic designer. This final association fitted with the most concrete proposals of the study, which outlined how *Billiken*'s graphic identity compared unfavourably to that of *Genios* and could be improved. The report places pages of the magazines side by side to illustrate respondents' comments. *Billiken*'s texts were found to be too extensive, with few resources employed to break up the text and make the reading experience more amenable. Some respondents stated that images in *Billiken* were seen as purely for illustrative purposes, whereas images in *Genios* were integrated into the text and created meaning in and of themselves. The graphics in *Billiken* were categorised as traditional with muted colours, as opposed to *Genios*'s contrasting colours and 'disruptive' typographical resources. Overall, *Billiken*'s visual presentation was found to be overly structured and undynamic. Parents appreciated *Genios*'s appropriation and improvement of content traditionally associated with *Billiken*, expressing

positive surprise that *Genios* also offered *figuritas* but noting: 'Estas figus son menos anticuadas, se renovaron' [These *figus* are less old-fashioned, they've been renewed].

The report's final recommendations as strategies for revitalising the brand were rather modest. In nearly 300 slides, only two mention the idea of moving beyond print, of adopting a multiplatform approach, and integrating social media, interactivity and content on different platforms. All of this activity was proposed in service of the print magazine, however, as opposed to advocating for a transmedia product structure. The main focus of the recommendations was concerned with how to overcome the competition from *Genios*. As *Genios* was thought of as more accessible, and aimed at a younger audience, the report identified a risk of taking younger audiences away from *Billiken*. The proposal was for *Billiken* to stay largely as it was, not risking its cultural capital by moving too far away from its identity, and to add another magazine to the *Billiken* family, *Billiken Kids*, which would bridge the gap between *La Valijita* and *Billiken*. This new magazine never materialised but steps were taken to update *Billiken*'s graphic identity, following the suggested formula of 'back to basics': 'No se trata de volver al pasado, sino de resignificar el futuro' [It's not about going back to the past, but about resignifying the future]. The new team brought in from elsewhere in the publishing house to deliver this was Gonzalo Abascal, as director, and Euhén Matarozzo, as art director. The latter, a graphic design graduate with experience working in magazines for children and young people, led the graphic transformation and took over as director two years later. *Billiken*'s new visual identity was represented by a new logo, which was meant to evoke the digital world even as the product was still resolutely tied to paper. The 'e' in *Billiken* was changed to a symbol that evoked the at sign (@), an emoji dotted the 'i', and the cloud shape was inspired by the logo for Skype, still at the vanguard of communications technology in 2009. The visual identity of the magazine was also updated with images taking a more prominent role.

The covers from 2009 onwards showed *Billiken*'s return to following the cycle of the school year. Illustrator Mauro Serafini was brought on board to implement the new concepts for the covers which portrayed the nation's illustrious men in new contexts designed to appeal to children. Sarmiento, with a magic wand and school house scarf, was reimagined as belonging to *Harry Potter*, and San Martín was drawn in a Superman pose, which recalled Alberto De Piero's Maradona cover of 1986 (issue 3471, 22 July). Belgrano was shown graffitiing the design for the flag on a wall and the Primera Junta who led the May Revolution were grouped behind an *escarapela* drawn to resemble Captain America's shield (Figure 5.11). This reimagining, and updating, of the *próceres* sought to give them renewed relevance to children.

A similar attempt at reimagining Argentina's illustrious men had previously taken place in *Humi*, the children's magazine created by the same publisher as the satirical magazine *Humor* and launched in August 1982. Even in the context

of the opening up of society during the return to democracy, *Humi's* irreverent take on the *próceres* and patriotic events through the use of humour and caricature proved beyond the pale and the magazine closed after only two years.⁵² Later, this approach did find wider societal acceptance. At the same time as *Billiken* was breathing new life into the *próceres*, as a way of breathing new life into itself, Pakapaka, the television channel operated by the Ministry of Education, was taking this further and in a more innovative way. In 2010, the year after *Billiken* started to renew its approach to its covers, the TV programme *Zamba* was launched on Canal Encuentro. The eponymous hero, a time-travelling schoolboy from Formosa in north-east Argentina, met Argentina's historical figures over several series of episodes. In *Zamba*, the *próceres* were humanised, turned from portraits and statues into living educational guides who patiently answered the schoolboy's many questions. The protagonist himself provided an important narrative link that gave coherence to the series of episodes. As the face of the brand, and an original child character with whom child viewers could identify, *Zamba* was a modern version of the Antejito character.⁵³

The state investment in *Zamba* reaffirmed the continuing importance given to teaching Argentine children about the history of their country, not just in schools, but through cultural endeavours which extended beyond the classroom. Whilst the *Zamba* series was innovative in its appealing audio-visual format, in some ways *Zamba* can be seen as a continuation of Ricardo Rojas's ideas about incorporating history into children's daily lived experiences through visits to museums and the contemplation of monuments; through to *Billiken's* early initiatives, such as historical episodes in comic strip format, designed to make the learning of history more accessible, offering a complement to more text-based school reading books; and to *Humi's* irreverent representations of illustrious men. What differed in *Zamba*, however, was the narrative of history presented. *Zamba* was one of a suite of initiatives around the bicentenary of independence that can be characterised as historically revisionist, led by a government that promoted Argentina's claim to the Malvinas Islands with renewed vigour in the lead-up to the thirtieth anniversary of the war.⁵⁴ The Museum of the Bicentenary, on the site of the old customs building behind the Casa Rosada and inaugurated by President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in 2011, presented a revisionist version of Argentine history in which a political line of succession could be drawn from Rosas to Perón to Néstor Kirchner, president from 2003 to 2007 and late husband of Cristina Fernández. The museum's gift shop sold a set of Russian dolls in the descending order of Perón, Evita, Héctor Cámpora (the president who brought Perón back from exile), Néstor and Cristina.

In Fernández de Kirchner's speech on 9 July 2008, her first Independence Day speech as president, she promoted a re-evaluation of national history:

A mí me gusta recordar la historia pero no tal vez la que siempre nos contaron, la historia del *Billiken*; a mí me gusta otra historia, la historia

de los hombres y mujeres de carne y hueso, porque nuestros próceres fueron hombres y mujeres de carne y hueso que tuvieron que enfrentar luchas y oposiciones internas y fuerzas externas terribles que no querían que se declarara la independencia de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata. Esa es la verdadera historia.⁵⁵

[I like to remember history, but perhaps not the history we have always been told, the history of *Billiken*; I like another history, the history of men and women of flesh and blood, because our heroes were men and women of flesh and blood who had to face internal struggles and opposition and terrible external forces that did not want the independence of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata to be declared. That is the true history.]

In a later speech, Fernández de Kirchner reiterated: 'hay que contar la historia no solamente de *Billiken*, hay que contar la historia como pasó' [We have to tell, not just the history according to *Billiken*, but the history as it happened].⁵⁶ Camila Perochena explains the discursive power behind Fernández de Kirchner's use of the phrase 'la historia de *Billiken*':

La frase, en su formulación simple y evocadora, sintetiza una operación política que se proyectaba con un amplio alcance. Por un lado, la batalla cultural fue una apuesta que logró, en el mediano plazo, instalar una identidad política propia para el kirchnerismo nacido de las elecciones de 2003 dentro del seno del peronismo, y una imagen de nuevo comienzo—para los prodestinatarios de su discurso político—y de punto de inflexión—para los contradestinatarios—respecto del pasado.⁵⁷

[The phrase, in its simple and evocative formulation, synthesises a political operation that was projected widely. On the one hand, the cultural battle was a bet that managed, in the medium term, to install a political identity of its own, within Peronism, of Kirchnerism born of the 2003 elections, and an image of a new beginning—for the recipients of its political discourse—and a turning point—for the counter-recipients—in relation to the past.]

Fernández de Kirchner could have talked about the history taught in schools, or *mitrista* history, or 'official' history, but instead talked of the history of, or according to, *Billiken*. The intention here was doubly disparaging in identifying *Billiken* as an exponent of the opposing conservative ideology whilst seeking to undermine that ideology by linking it to a medium directed at children. The subtext was that the history provided by *Billiken* was not just incorrect but oversimplified and unsophisticated because of the public to which it was directed. The notion of children's culture as something lesser, something minor for minors, is reinforced in Spanish through the adjective *infantil*. Fernández

de Kirchner's employment of the phrase 'la historia de *Billiken*', however disparaging the intention behind it, underscores the place of *Billiken* in the Argentine national consciousness and the acceptance of this magazine's role in the amplification and perpetuation of the national history hitherto taught in school.

At the same time at which Fernández de Kirchner was seen to be reprimanding *Billiken*, the magazine was integrating some of the revisionist elements identified with her presidency, continuing the magazine's position of following educational trends and the policies of the government of the day. The date of 20 November marks the anniversary of the Battle of Vuelta de Obligado, General Rosas's 1845 naval victory over an Anglo-French fleet. This battle was a cornerstone of the revisionist position, from the 1930s onwards, that Rosas's extreme methods could be excused by his role in defending national interests against imperialist threats. From 1974 to 1976, following campaigning by revisionist historian José María Rosa, the date had been made a national holiday before the civic-military dictatorship once again displaced Rosas from ideas surrounding national sovereignty.⁵⁸ From 2010, when the anniversary of this battle was declared the Day of National Sovereignty and a national holiday, *Billiken* incorporated it into its own school calendar. During this period, *Billiken* had increased the presence of the Rosas era in the magazine's educational content but Rosas was never afforded the honour of a *Billiken* cover. Although Rosas was never fully included in the pantheon of *Billiken*'s illustrious men, there was more willingness to align with the new revisionist currents of the bicentenary. Covers around 20 November were dedicated to the Battle of Vuelta del Obligado, integrating it into *Billiken*'s reflection of the school calendar (see Figure 5.11b) and Rosas appeared on the cover of a supplement in the collection 'Así se hizo la patria' [This is how the homeland was made] (included with issue 4707, 30 April 2010). This collection on Argentine history, first published in 2010 and updated in 2016, featured the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and, later, Cristina Fernández. For supporters of *kirchnerismo*, *Billiken* was on the 'wrong' side of history, not just for the version of history it had promoted but also because of the memory of Atlántida's complicity with the most recent military regime. This was thrown into relief by the policies of Néstor Kirchner's administration to overturn amnesty laws and prosecute the military for crimes against humanity.

Within *Billiken*'s updated presentation of history, the overwhelming sense is of the exercise of imagination in finding new ways to visually represent key dates on the covers, as opposed to the implementation of a consistent editorial line. The historical representations of Afro-Argentines in covers associated with the May Revolution largely reinforced stereotypes through caricaturised representations, of mainly Black women, shown as empanada sellers proffering goods that were 'hot' or too 'spicy' for high society gentlemen (issue 5122, 19 April 2018; see Figure 5.11a). In parallel, however, Afro-Argentine women were increasingly featured, mostly in a minor role, in covers dedicated to the 'Invasiones inglesas' [English [*sic*] invasions] of 1806 and 1807, in which the



Figure 5.11a: The *Billiken* school calendar in the final phase of the print magazine (pt 1).

Row 1 (left to right):

Back-to-school. Issue 4853, 21 February 2013.

Life in Colonial Times. Issue 5122, 19 April 2018.

The British Invasions of the River Plate. Issue 5123, 26 April 2018.

Row 2 (left to right):

The First Assembly for the May Revolution. Issue 5022, 19 May 2016.

Manuel Belgrano for the Day of the Flag. Issue 5129, 7 June 2018.

The Declaration of Independence at the House of Tucumán. Issue 5130, 28 June 2018.

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Figure 5.11b: The *Billiken* school calendar in the final phase of the print magazine (pt 2).

Row 1 (left to right):

San Martín crossing the Andes during the Wars of Independence. Issue 5131, 2 August 2018.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento for the Day of the Teacher. Issue 5088, 24 August 2017.

Columbus for 12 October. The date had been renamed Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity in 2010. Issue 4936, 25 September 2014.

Row 2 (left to right):

The Day of Tradition. Issue 5134, 1 November 2018.

The Battle of Vuelta de Obligado for the Day of National Sovereignty. Issue 5099, 9 November 2017.

The start of the summer holidays. Issue 5135, 29 November 2018.

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British unsuccessfully attempted to seize control of areas in the Spanish colony of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. The strength and success of the local resistance, unsupported by Spain, was important for the formation of the emancipatory consciousness that would lead to the May Revolution. *Billiken's* covers incorporate Afro-Argentine women into the representations of the unity of local people in supporting the militia's defence of their city at a time at which such associations were only just starting to emerge in historical revisionist currents (issues 4759, 29 April 2011, 4810, 27 April 2012, and 4966, 23 April 2015). The figure around which Afro-Argentine women's participation in the formation of the nation is centred is María Remedios del Valle, a fighter and auxiliary in Belgrano's army, previously alluded to by Ernesto Sabato in his contribution to *Billiken's* sixtieth anniversary publication. The participation of del Valle in the British invasions of the River Plate is now largely accepted as one of the landmark events in her reconstructed narrative. Although the anniversary of del Valle's death was established in Argentina as the Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture in 2013, this figure, and the participation of Afro-Argentine women in the formation of the nation, has only started to gain widespread acceptance and recognition in recent years. For example, *Zamba* featured del Valle as a character only in 2021.⁵⁹

With a dwindling circulation, the wider cultural impact of *Billiken's* reconfigured approach to the representation of historical anniversaries was limited. The cover from this period of *Billiken* that garnered most attention depicted the 'encounter' between Columbus and the Indigenous population as a friendly football match (issue 5093, 28 September 2017). The cover was for 12 October, the date marking Columbus's landing in the Americas, formerly known in Argentina as the Day of the Race and in 2010 changed to the Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity. The depiction of smiling faces and employment of a football metaphor led to fulsome criticism, as exemplified by the following quotation taken from an opinion piece by anthropologist Florencia Trentini:

Así, el 'encuentro de dos mundos' sonrientes en la tapa de *Billiken* vuelve a negar la muerte, el saqueo de recursos naturales, la evangelización, la esclavitud, las torturas y por supuesto el despojo territorial. Pero, peor aún, permite invisibilizar las continuidades de ese proceso hoy materializado en criminalización de referentes indígenas, militarizaciones de los territorios, violentos desalojos y represiones, presos políticos, desapariciones y asesinatos.⁶⁰

[Thus, the smiling 'encounter of two worlds' on the cover of *Billiken* once again denies death, the plundering of natural resources, evangelisation, slavery, torture and, of course, territorial dispossession. But, even worse, it makes invisible the continuity of this process, which today is materialised in the criminalisation of Indigenous referents, militarisation of territories, violent evictions and repression, political prisoners, disappearances and assassinations.]

Such criticism, grounded in academic analysis of historical processes, and the continuing impact of those processes on contemporary society, descended into attacks on social media accusing *Billiken* of darker motives, right-wing bias and links to the government of Mauricio Macri (president from 2015 to 2019). A statement that Nahuel Machesich, then *Billiken*'s lead editor, released on his Facebook profile was reproduced by several news outlets at the time:

La tapa no es la mejor que hicimos y la crítica es entendible, justificada y bienvenida. Hicimos la autocritica y estaremos más atentos la próxima vez ... Somos trabajadores y le erramos. No es tan difícil y no hace falta tanta paranoia intelectual ni política. No hay un señor gerente en las oscuridades de la editorial que tiene el teléfono directo con la Casa Rosada, desde donde nos imponen las ideas de derecha y fascistas para elegir los dibujos y los títulos. Fue una equivocación en el fragor de un día de cierre. No una conspiración ideológica.⁶¹

[The cover is not our best work and the criticism is understandable, justified and welcome. We have exercised self-criticism and we will be more attentive next time ... We are workers and we made a mistake. It is not so difficult and there is no need for so much intellectual or political paranoia. There is no manager sitting in a dark room of the publishing house with a direct telephone line to the Casa Rosada, from where they impose right-wing and fascist ideas on us in our choice of drawings and titles. It was a mistake made in the heat of putting the magazine to bed. Not an ideological conspiracy.]

The controversy surrounding *Billiken*'s 12 October cover, however damaging reputationally, rescued *Billiken* from obscurity even as it placed it in an unfavourable spotlight. As Trentini pointed out, many people only realised *Billiken* was still in print because of the explosive reaction to this cover online and in social media. Circulation had reduced to around 21,000 per week by this point.⁶² The cover only received widespread attention because it had been reproduced in an article published by Infobae, the digital news site launched by Daniel Hadad in 2002. The article announced the deal that Infobae had made with Editorial Atlántida/Grupo Televisa to administer the digital content of *Gente*, *Para Ti* and *Billiken*, and featured recent examples of covers of the three magazines, including the cover of issue 5093.⁶³ Atlántida's outsourcing of digital content, instead of developing its own digital brands, continued the segregation approach taken years earlier with the development and running, first, of the websites and, subsequently, of the social media accounts by external providers. Infobae never developed a website for *Billiken*. In the meantime, *Billiken*'s director was trialling new initiatives, such as the establishment of a YouTube channel and a pilot of audiovisual production based on illustrations by Milo Lockett, an artist who worked with the Atlántida books division. The company lacked the infrastructure to support and grow these initiatives, however, with the commercial department

focussed on selling pages of advertisements in the magazine with no focus on how *Billiken's* new initiatives could be commercialised.

The attempts from within *Billiken* to stem the flow of the decline proved futile when faced with the company's lack of vision for the brand, alongside the inherent difficulties brought by Argentina's magazine distribution circuit and against the backdrop of further reductions in magazine sales worldwide. Atlántida's decline was visible in the Azopardo building. In the entrance hall, a sign displaying the Atlántida brand logos alongside the Televisa logo covered the plaques in honour of Vigil and looked garishly incongruous next to the fading grandeur of the marble floors and helical staircase. In the following years, floors of offices emptied out as the company reduced in size with restructuring and sackings in 2016 and redundancies the following year with the closure of Atlántida's local editions of six Hearst Corporation magazines, including *Cosmopolitan* and *Harper's Bazaar*. In 2019, after Televisa sold Atlántida to a local private investment fund, more firings followed, leading to false reporting that *Billiken* and *Para Ti* had been shut down.⁶⁴ As *Billiken* magazine approached its centenary of publication, it was, as far as we have been able to ascertain, the first commercial children's magazine anywhere in the world to have the opportunity to reflect upon one hundred years of publication and to contemplate how to move beyond that milestone. It was doing so in the most uncertain of circumstances with a hugely diminished readership and staff, and as part of a newly conformed entity that was in the initial, tumultuous stages of a company-wide digital reinvention.

Notes

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- ⁴ Romero, pp. 261–63.
- ⁵ Mirta Varela, *Los hombres ilustres del Billiken: héroes en los medios y en la escuela* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1994).
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- ²⁸ Carli, 'Notas para pensar la infancia en la Argentina', p. 41.
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Epilogue

New Platforms and New Narratives for a Post-Print Billiken

There are two interconnected concerns when it comes to finishing this book, or, at least, two sources of procrastination that have outweighed worries about a looming deadline. First, how to close a book on the history of *Billiken* when that history is far from over and, second, how to evaluate a story of which I have formed a part. The future of *Billiken* is being made right at this moment, creating a temporally complex space in which to write these final reflections. Making sense of my own place in the most recent chapter of the history of *Billiken* is a task I have been putting off, waiting until I was back in Buenos Aires to tackle it, hoping that being surrounded by the people I have worked with over the past few years would help the process. The awareness of my own subjectivity, and of the interconnectedness of my life with this 10-year research project, was heightened recently when I was interviewed for a profile feature article for an Argentine digital news outlet. The narrative of how I arrived at *Billiken*—via a childhood visit to the theatre to see the musical *Evita*, a stint teaching English in Mendoza at the age of 18, and a friendship with Male Puig, mother of the author Manuel, which led to a PhD in serialised radio drama—is the story of my life in relation to Argentina, repackaged for Argentine readers intrigued by the story of how an ‘English’ woman ended up writing a history of their childhood magazine. As a result of this article, I have a journalistic record of my state of mind as I attempt to conclude this book. I was described as ‘intentando destrabar las últimas líneas de un proyecto que comenzó en 2012. Es la parte más compleja de la obra: asumir un protagonismo que le aterra para transmitir, en primera persona, la experiencia, el impacto, la interpelación’¹ [trying to unravel the last lines of a project she began in 2012. This is the most complex part of the work: taking on a protagonism that terrifies her in order to transmit, in the first person, the experience, the impact, the interpellation]. It is curious that the task of writing in the first person should still be so uncomfortable

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or, indeed, terrifying, given that so much of academic endeavour entails this, sometimes before writing up a single line of research. We write in the first person in research funding applications, and then in reports to funders, and increasingly, in the UK at least, evaluations of our 'research impact'. These pieces of writing, although linked to the research, develop along their own parallel but separate tracks, with their own structural logic and their own key words: reach, significance, pathways, outputs, metrics, evaluation, dissemination. Closer in nature to the industry key words offered in the introduction to this book (the job, my colleagues, the budget, the deadlines) than to the academic keywords (intermediality, precarity, ephemerality), this third set of words represents another space in which this research project and its associated activities have been undertaken. This space, grounded in notions of accountability and evaluation, became one of negotiation and mediation between the worlds of academia and industry, in a project that brought together two sets of priorities over two hemispheres, time zones and languages.

By 2018, *Billiken's* frequency of publication was decreasing. The process of leaving paper behind had begun but with no clear future plan in place. By then, I had started to collaborate on a bilingual edition of Horacio Quiroga's *Cuentos de la selva* with Atlántida's books division. This had initially been envisaged as the first of a bilingual series of *Biblioteca Billiken* and the main co-created initiative to be undertaken with Atlántida alongside the archival research project.² In parallel, conversations with *Billiken's* director Euhén Matarozzo were starting to lead to concrete ideas about what the future *Billiken* could look like as a product based around new narratives as well as delivered via new platforms. Having analysed the persistent attention paid to Great Men throughout *Billiken's* history, it was clear to me that the first of those 'new narratives' for *Billiken* should be focussed on women. *Billiken* had spent one hundred years promoting Great Men and owed historical women a debt of representation. *Billiken* never commissioned a portrait of a woman from Raúl Manteola when building its corpus of representations of Argentina's illustrious founding men in the late 1930s. Indeed, the periodical appearance of historical women within *Billiken's* pages are notable for their infrequency. Beyond occasional pages dedicated to 'Patricias Argentinas' [Argentine patrician women], the Argentine woman who most prominently featured was Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson, remembered not in the context of her personal contributions to the Buenos Aires intellectual and cultural milieu of the early 19th century but because the first performance of the Argentine national anthem was said to have been given in her home.

The lack of representation of women within the printed collections of individuals highlighted for their significant contributions to humanity had continued under Euhén's directorship. The latest contribution to *Billiken's* long-standing cataloguing of leading historical figures had arrived in the series of 20 supplements entitled 'Personas que cambiaron el mundo' [People who changed the world] (issue 4980, 30 July 2015, to issue 4999, 10 December 2015).

Despite the inclusive title, the representation of women in this collection had only modestly advanced from previous iterations. Each instalment featured five principal figures, with an additional, reduced space dedicated to another under the title ‘Ellos también’ [These too].³ There was no room for women amongst the ‘Visionaries’ (Leonardo Da Vinci, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Ray Bradbury, Julio Verne, Brian Epstein, Masaru Ibuka, Larry Page, Mark Zuckerberg) and only Amelia Earhart and Valentina Tereshkova made the ‘Adventurers’ instalment, but not as protagonists. In other instalments, an effort was made to include at least one woman, but rarely amongst the principal figures. With the focus on Great Men stretching back to the earliest years of *Billiken*—itself inspired by *mitrista* history, school reading books and book series from elsewhere—and having persisted until 2015, a series on leading Argentine women seemed the obvious point of potential collaboration for my first project with *Billiken*.

Even in 2018, a focus on women was still thought of as a potentially controversial idea within Atlántida. There was a degree of creative freedom towards the end of the Televisa tenure, however, as little management interest was paid to *Billiken*. The proposed ‘Mujeres argentinas’ collection probably would have materialised had it not been for the rise in paper costs and the cancelling of all supplement products throughout the publishing house. The initial idea of a series of supplements morphed into a planned centenary publication celebrating one hundred Argentine women at around the time of the change in ownership of the publishing house and another drastic reduction in the number of employees. Thanks largely to Euhén’s endorsement of my research, the new board of directors agreed to my continued access to the *Billiken* archives and was supportive of the proposed reorientation of *Billiken* with an increasing awareness of gender representation. As part of this renewed approach, the 2019 edition dedicated to the May Revolution featured historical women—‘Mujeres de la Patria’—for the first time (issue 5140, May 2019). The board gave the green light to the centenary book project but suggested broadening out the scope from Argentina to encompass all of Latin America to create a product more in line with the regional aspirations of the newly configured Atlántida. With no concrete plan for *Billiken*, *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas* [100 Great Latin American Women] was foregrounded as the most significant action of *Billiken*’s centenary and the initiative onto which the future of the brand was projected.

100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas was a traditional, print-based product that did not materially represent a great step forward in innovation for *Billiken*. In many ways it was a continuation of *Billiken*’s editorial practice of selecting, curating and cataloguing figures who could be seen as role models for child readers that had always been taken when compiling illustrated collections within the magazine or in supplements. As such, it had the potential to constitute a reproduction of editorial gatekeeping practices. The number of women featured in the book was significant in the story of the product—one hundred



Figure ii: ‘Women of the *Patria*’. Illustrated by Javier Basile. *Billiken*, issue 5140, May 2019. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

women because of the one hundred years of *Billiken*—yet inevitably imposed a restriction on the number of women to be included, with decisions to be made regarding whom to include and whom to exclude from the countless women, past and present, who had contributed to Latin American societies. By embarking on this project, we were potentially following the pathways laid by Constancio C. Vigil for the construction, through editorial projects, of future citizens, albeit with the very different, and disruptive, objective of contributing to the advancement of a gender-just future. Situated within the wider academic endeavour to rethink the child in childhood studies, Clémentine Beauvais draws on Sartrian existentialism to rethink the adult presence in politically committed texts for children that are ‘fundamentally future-bound and revolutionary in spirit’ and destined for a child who will, ideally, live beyond the adult:

The politically committed text for children ... posits an adult-child relationship marked by a temporal imbalance between a future-bound entity, the child, and a past-laden entity, the adult. It is marked by a symbolic distribution of powers for action between the authoritative adult presence and the child who should pick up the text’s project.⁴

The inherent futurity of *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas* also contained symbolic power in that it repositioned *Billiken* as a forward-looking brand and challenged the associations of *Billiken* with the promotion of conservative discourses.

100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas was born from the research into *Billiken*'s history, and also came into being thanks to market conditions. Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo's *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* was largely responsible for the step change in global children's publishing that lay the ground for editorial projects such as ours. The pioneer in Argentina was the cooperative Editorial Chirimbote, which published the first in the *Anti-princesas* picture book biography series, *Frida Kahlo para chicas y chicos*, in 2015.⁵ During the timeframe of our book's creation, bookshops in Argentina were increasingly dedicating space to products for children that placed iconic women at the centre: from Frida Kahlo colouring books to Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara's *Little People, Big Dreams* collection, and the Spanish-language translation of *Good Night Stories*. The normalising of this focus on women rendered our project less controversial and facilitated gaining approval from the relevant interested parties.

The project's design was informed both by the research into *Billiken*'s past editorial initiatives and by the existing offer of collections of biographies of women written for children. Within the limitation of choosing only one hundred women, we established premises for the selection, aiming to widen the catalogue of role models by seeking out lesser-known figures. As ours was the first illustrated children's book to focus specifically on women from the Latin American region, this invited moving beyond the small number of historical Latin American women, such as Kahlo and Evita, who are considered global icons and had found their way into internationally focussed collections. We took the idea of Latin America uncritically and did not enter into debates around the contested nature of the term. We decided to incorporate all Spanish-speaking nations in South, Central and North America (thereby including women of Hispanic descent from the United States) and also, despite the language difference, Brazil. The regional focus also invited the opportunity to draw attention to the connections between the women featured across time and place, presenting individual endeavours within a wider context. Notwithstanding the regard in which we hold the pioneering *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, we were keen to move away from fairy-tale tropes in the writing of the biographies and to conceptualise the endeavour as a project that was about women and for everyone.

The main criterion for selection was that the list of one hundred women should be as diverse as possible and represent different intersecting identities. Alongside attempting to achieve representation from a wide range of ethnicities, sexualities, ages, religions, social classes and political affiliations, we focussed on an even split between contemporary and historical women, and on showcasing a broad spectrum of professions and spheres of influence. Central

to our premise of selection was that we were not attempting to create a hierarchy of achievement and to decide upon a list of women to be promoted as the most impressive or inspirational or impactful, a proposition that the contemporary women featured in the book with whom we collaborated supported. Argentine virologist Andrea Gamarnik commented:

Me alegra figurar en el libro del centenario de *Billiken*, aunque soy consciente, que miles y miles de mujeres deberían estar. Mujeres que abrieron las puertas para que otras podamos tener acceso a la educación superior, que participaron en luchas sociales en forma ineludible, que rompieron con la exclusión en la política, que con su trabajo silencioso están cambiando el mundo.⁶

[I am happy to be included in *Billiken*'s centenary book, although I am aware that thousands and thousands of other women should be present. Women who opened the doors so that others could have access to higher education, who unwaveringly participated in social struggles, who broke with exclusion in politics, who are changing the world with their silent work.]

Carolina Contreras, a social entrepreneur and activist from the Dominican Republic who works to eradicate discrimination against Afro-textured and curly hair, identified the potential impact of her presence in the book: 'Mi deseo es que muchos niñas y niños vean esto y sepan que tienen adultos abogando por sus derechos, validando su belleza y celebrando su negritud' [My hope is that many girls and boys will see this and know that they have adults advocating for their rights, validating their beauty and celebrating their blackness].⁷ We consulted our combined network of friends and colleagues from across Latin America in order to incorporate different perspectives about which women we could include in the selection. We also actively searched for examples of leading women in specific fields, and sometimes from specific countries. The angle of diversity thus became, paradoxically, another exclusionary parameter in that some women were not included to avoid having too many women from the same country, or historical period or profession.

During the process of selection, Regina Solis started working alongside Euhén and me as the third key member of the team. Her arrival at the University of Sheffield as a master's student underscores the role of serendipity in the creation of this collaborative product. At the moment at which we were struggling with the selection of women from Central America, into our lives came a Guatemalan woman with an anthropology degree, journalism experience and a past career as a primary school teacher. Elsewhere, serendipity combined with pragmatism trumped process in the often chaotic pulling together of the book. Assembling the team (five illustrators, graphic designer Lisa Brande, editor Lea Loupias, and writer Ariela Kreimer to work alongside me and Regina)

was an exercise in deciding whom we knew and with whom we liked working combined with who was available within the project timescales and the available budget. The only criterion was that the majority of the team were women. Argentine illustrators Aymar  Mont and Sarah Jones together completed 80 per cent of the illustrations, with Javier Basile, illustrator of the ‘Mujeres de la Patria’ cover, and UK-based illustrators Emily Cuthbert and Ella Strickland de Souza completing the team. The experience of building this team to carry out a collaborative, creative product on a relatively tight schedule fed back into the archival research project. In concrete terms, it helped me to accept the impossibility of ever really knowing how decisions were made historically in *Billiken* and what was happening behind the scenes to influence decision-making at any given time. No amount of archival, or even ethnographic, research could hope to uncover the minutia of decision-making factors in the context of a product as vast and long-lived as *Billiken*, particularly when serendipity and pragmatism are accounted for. This realisation, coupled with the recognition of the tendency that each new round of initiatives in *Billiken*, including our own, built on and reconfigured past initiatives led to the use of frameworks from organisational and management studies. The branch of this field that deals with multigenerational family firms was pertinent for the context of the Vigil family’s ownership of Atl ntida in that the field is largely built on the observation of patterns in such organisations that transcend national contexts.

Parallel to the archival research undertaken for the purposes of writing what has aimed to be a balanced, critical account of the history of *Billiken* magazine, was another stream of activity concerned with developing the institutional narrative for the *Billiken* centenary. This was partly linked to my co-created work with *Billiken*, in that it sought to present the history in such a way as to contextualise, and prepare the ground for, the future phase of *Billiken*, of which the Great Latin American Women Project forms a part. It also involved assuming the role of ‘custodian’ of the legacy in creating narratives that appealed to those who fondly link childhood memories to *Billiken* whilst eliding the uncomfortable and negative actions and associations that this book has explored. I opened the first article I was asked to write, for *Gente*, in the January of *Billiken*’s centenary year with this quotation from Constancio C. Vigil: ‘[*Billiken*] Se hace m s con el coraz n que con las manos’ [*Billiken* is made more with the heart than with the hands].⁸ I knew that this quotation, originally from Vigil’s twenty-fifth anniversary message, had been republished in the fortieth anniversary. Only after publishing my article, and as I advanced in the research through the years of *Billiken*, did I see that it had also been used on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary, and also by Beatriz Ferro on the sixtieth anniversary, in 1979, and by Pablo Colazo on the seventy-fifth anniversary, in 1994. My unintentional reproduction of former editors’ anniversary narratives shows how these foundational imprints can persist over generations as a process that happens naturally, almost unconsciously, and not necessarily by strategic design. Beyond

revealing a lack of imagination on my part, or the general impossibility of original ideas, it also highlights the robustness of the original legacy discourse developed by Constanancio C. Vigil. It is possible to be drawn to the romanticism of *Billiken* as the manifestation of a higher calling even as we can simultaneously see behind, around and through that discourse.

These streams of activity, with their competing but parallel discourses, all converged at the *Billiken* centenary in November 2019. We did not know at the time that the centenary issue, number 5143, would be *Billiken*'s final print issue, at least in its entity as a magazine appearing at regular intervals. The cover was illustrated by Aymar  Mont, joining Norma (Norma B. de Adam), Carolina Parola and Chikie (Nelly Oesterheld) as the select number of women illustrators to draw a *Billiken* cover. It was designed to depict paper as the vehicle that would carry *Billiken* towards its digital future.

The centenary issue was far removed from the bumper anniversary editions of the past and was made by a vastly reduced team. Past anniversary issues had periodically featured photographic spreads about how *Billiken* was made, showing teams of designers, illustrators, writers, editors and photographers bustling around busy offices before stacks of thousands upon thousands of issues came out of the printing press and off to the newsstands. In contrast, the team producing the centenary issue comprised the director, one editor and one designer with me, on the other side of the Atlantic and reached via WhatsApp, providing the nostalgia-focussed historical articles. The paucity of the centenary issue did not go unnoticed by *Billiken*'s wistful fan base. A blog dedicated to the history of illustration in *Billiken* published an article on the centenary issue, the title of which can be translated as 'the pride of having been and the pain of no longer being so.'⁹ The blog post lamented the absence of a hardbacked catalogue of *Billiken*'s greatest illustration hits, such as had been produced for the eightieth anniversary, or a nostalgic tome like the reissue of *Billiken*'s first edition for the ninetieth anniversary, failing to identify that *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas* was the official centenary publication, designated as such as a forward-looking statement.

The event to mark the *Billiken* centenary was held at the National Congress of Argentina at which the Chamber of Deputies bestowed upon *Billiken* the honour of 'declaration of interest'. The esteem in which this centenary was held was further underscored by the participation of both the national minister of education and the minister of education for the City of Buenos Aires. The event also doubled as the book launch for *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas*. The following quotation from a *Para Ti* article shows Atl ntida's institutional messaging around the centenary:

En el encuentro en el Congreso qued  claro que en su centenario *Billiken* est  en plena transformaci n y construyendo su futuro, expandi ndose a nuevos soportes y generando nuevas narrativas para continuar



Figure iii: The cover of the *Billiken* centenary issue. Illustration by Aymara Mont. *Billiken*, issue 5143, October/November 2019.

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a la vanguardia de los contenidos infantiles. 'Nuestra misión es que los niños y niñas de hoy y de mañana vivan su propia experiencia *Billiken* –expresó su actual director- Y queremos que sea tan significativa para ellos como lo fue para las generaciones pasadas'.¹⁰

[At the event at the Congress it was clear that in its centenary year *Billiken* is in full process of transformation and building its future, expanding to new media and generating new narratives to continue to be at the forefront of children's content creation. 'Our mission is that the children of today and tomorrow can live their own *Billiken* experience', said its current director, 'and we want it to be as meaningful for them as it was for past generations.']

Billiken's move to digital, which began in earnest around the time of the centenary and was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been carried out against the backdrop of transformational change in Atlántida and is, at the time of writing, an ongoing process. For much of its history, Editorial Atlántida was a magazine and books publishing company with headquarters at the building on Azopardo. As of 2022, this building is being redeveloped into a tower of offices and apartments with the principal historical features to be retained: one more in a long line of historical buildings to undergo such a transformation, much to the displeasure of those who seek to preserve the city's architectural heritage. Grupo Atlántida, now a digital media company, currently operates out of a converted modernist textile factory in a gentrified suburb. Along with the new location and new branding has come a new business model, the implementation of which requires new skill sets and areas of professional expertise. The transformation can be felt at the level of the key words used around the offices: deadline, printing, distribution and readership have been replaced by search engine optimisation, community management, metrics and audience.

Within this environment, *Billiken's* post-print transformation has been taking place in tandem with the development of the Great Latin American Women Project.¹¹ This transmedia, educational project responds to two of the UN Sustainable Development Goals—Quality Education and Gender Equality—and was supported by the UK's Grand Challenges Research Fund. The funding application was submitted in February 2020, just before we realised how the global health crisis was about to change all our lives, and we implemented the project entirely remotely. Continuing the working relationship that Euhén and I had developed in coordinating *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas*, we turned the book into a transmedia platform. We built new teams to create content for children, in the form of 21 short, animated films, and content for teachers in the form of downloadable educational resources, all based on the lives and work of leading Latin American women. *Billiken's* significant corpus of existing educational material had the virtue of being accessibly written and attractively

designed but was, essentially, reference material, in the manner of *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas*. The use of either in a classroom situation would require a significant investment in time and effort on the part of teachers in order to design appropriate activities around this material. In response to this concern, we worked with a team of teachers to develop a classroom-ready product as a way of rebuilding *Billiken's* historical links with the teaching profession that my historical research had identified as central to *Billiken's* past success.

Following a pilot of resources on Quiroga's *Cuentos de la Selva*, the model for the resources developed for the Great Latin American Women Project became the model for *Billiken's* current educational offering. The resources are grouped thematically in a way that traverses the curriculum so that one topic, centred on the life or work of one woman, can be looked at from a number of curriculum areas including language, maths, social and natural sciences, and art. The aim was to show how women and their contributions can be integrated into the school curriculum to the extent that men already were. The project offers subtle ways of achieving this simply by normalising the presence of women in different professions, matching their work to areas covered in the curriculum. For example, children can learn about photosynthesis via the work of Mexican botanist and pioneering cactus expert Helia Bravo, or cover the solar system whilst learning about Ellen Ochoa, the first woman of Hispanic descent to go into space. The resources also offer opportunities to look at gender equality and intersectional identities in more depth through projects on female suffrage, the history of women's participation in scientific fields, the work of Indigenous leaders in conservation, and through artistic activities that promote cultural diversity. The animated films, which we produced in conjunction with animation studio Nuts Media, were envisaged as sparking the interest of children to know more about the women's lives. They do not adopt a documentary style but rather are based around an idea, anecdote or episode in the life of the woman. Each has a different style and original music as a visual and aural anchor to the project's commitment to diversity. We also designed an open access platform to host all the project's audio-visual and educational resources.

We created our project for all children, on the premise that gender equality is everyone's responsibility and that it is not just girls who benefit from learning about women. Since we first embarked upon this project in 2018, advancements have been made in Argentina in the area of women's rights, principally with the legalisation of abortion in December 2020. The Ministry for Women, Genders and Diversities was established and further advances in inclusionary initiatives include the implementation of a one per cent quota for trans workers in civil service jobs. The #NiUnaMenos [Not one less] movement, from 2015 onwards, has been key in driving social, political and legal change, including with the implementation of Micaela's Law, in 2019, requiring public sector workers at all levels in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government to undergo training in the issue of gender and gender-based violence. The law



100 GRANDES MUJERES LATINOAMERICANAS

COORDINADORES
LAUREN REA Y EUHEN MATAROZZO



ATLANTIDA



Figure iv: The cover of *100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas* [100 Great Latin American Women]. Illustrated children's book published for the *Billiken* centenary. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

GRANDES MUJERES LATINOAMERICANAS



Figure v: The protagonists of the transmedia, educational Great Latin American Women Project. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

was named after Micaela García, a victim of femicide at the age of 21 in 2017, a year in which one woman was killed in Argentina every 28 hours. More recent figures show only scant progress: in 2021 the figure was one woman every 35 hours.¹² In the Latin American region and beyond, the achievement of gender equality, women's economic empowerment, the eradication of violence against women and girls, and the dismantling of gender-based stereotypes that limit the horizons of all children remain urgent issues. Effecting change requires large-scale action from all sectors of society and the cultural and creative industries have a role to play as part of a much larger and multilateral agenda of direct actions. The response from these industries in recent years has been largely encouraging. It would no longer be thought of as controversial to feature biographies exclusively of women when publishing a book for children on leading Latin Americans, and, indeed, other similar volumes have followed in the wake of our book, such as Lucía De Leone's *Mujeres faro*.¹³ Projects developed around the same time as ours include Brazil's *Mulheres fantásticas*, an animated series produced by TV Globo that narrates the biographies of inspiring women from around the world, and *Científicas de Acá*, an Argentine initiative to visibilise local women scientists, which started life as a blog before later publishing the biographies in an illustrated children's book. So established is the niche of feminist children's publishing that the usefulness of such an approach that celebrates women by separating them out is starting to be contested. Furthermore, there are signs that the change seen in children's publishing will not carry through to the world of animation, and to this particular 'edutainment' niche that such stories about women occupy.¹⁴

Even as trends in children's content creation can be seen to be moving on from the championing of women's achievements, the change at the level of school curricula and availability of materials focussed on gender equality is still pending.¹⁵ In this way, the Great Latin American Women Project is a step towards the creation of an inclusive curriculum, along the lines proposed here by UNESCO:

Los currículos y los materiales didácticos que adoptan una perspectiva patriarcal suelen agravar la desigualdad de género, reforzando la dominación de las mujeres por los hombres. Los estereotipos de género están vinculados a representaciones mentales sociales. Los varones se asocian con la producción, el poder, la racionalidad y la esfera pública, mientras que las mujeres con la reproducción, la debilidad, las emociones y la esfera privada ... Un currículo inclusivo, como esfuerzo colectivo, debe incorporar y valorar una serie de fuentes y formas de conocimiento de todos los miembros y comunidades de la sociedad.¹⁶

[Curricula and teaching materials that adopt a patriarchal perspective often aggravate gender inequality, reinforcing the domination of women by men. Gender stereotypes are linked to social mental representations. Men are associated with production, power, rationality

and the public sphere, while women are associated with reproduction, weakness, emotions and the private sphere ... An inclusive curriculum, as a collective effort, must incorporate and value a range of sources and forms of knowledge from all members and communities of society.]

In the analysis of the use of the Great Latin American Women Project resources, early indications are that there are barriers to their integration into existing curricula and that they will primarily be of interest for educators to use around International Women's Day (8 March) and other specific dates such as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February) and the International Girls in ICT Day (the fourth Thursday in April). Whilst this reflects wider debates about the usefulness of such dates for advancing the gender equality agenda, in the case of Argentina the idea of the school calendar, and the linking of materials to anniversaries and key dates, is so firmly embedded that it is difficult to challenge the idea that activities that promote gender equality can feature in the classroom at any point in the year and not just in March. As this book has shown, *Billiken* played a key role in installing and amplifying the idea of the cycle of the school year through the content related to *efemérides*: key dates and anniversaries. It is ironic, then, that *Billiken's* past success in this area should now prove an obstacle to the success of its post-print flagship project.

This is just one example of the ways in which *Billiken's* past impacts its present, and of the difficulties encountered when thinking about what *Billiken* beyond print can be, and could come to mean, for children, their families, their teachers and the wider public. In the talks we gave around the time of the centenary, Euhén would often use the metaphor of the film *Avatar* to describe the challenge of having *Billiken* transcend its 'cuerpo de papel' [body of paper] and to transfer the spirit of *Billiken* across to new planes of existence in the form of different supports, experiences and platforms. One of the themes in this history of *Billiken* has been the symbiotic relationship between the material (the magazine as object, the archive, the turning of the pages) and the intangible (the creation and maintenance of a narrative legacy, and the notions of memory and nostalgia). This book has explored how *Billiken* expanded beyond the pages of the magazine from the outset, developing what we could now call a brand identity, even though the concept was not formulated as such in the 1920s. The early drive to create a community of readers through events, competitions and the fostering of *Billiken* reader committees, as well as the focus on building a legacy, all transcended *Billiken's* 'cuerpo de papel'. At the same time, the reporting on these initiatives created content for the magazine itself. Over time, *Billiken* increasingly became a container—or storehouse—for other physical products including encyclopaedias, free gifts and spin-off magazines and supplements. Can the digital transformation be seen as just the next stage in the evolution of the brand as it expands to encompass new products, services and experiences? In addition to asking what *Billiken* is beyond paper, we can also ask what *Bil-*

liken is beyond Argentina and to what extent *Billiken's argentinidad* is constituent of its identity. In today's interconnected, globalised world, there is greater potential for *Billiken* to build a presence across Spanish-speaking territories with a digital, multiplatform, transmedia product. This recalls Constancio C. Vigil's pan-Latin American foundational dream for *Billiken*, which was partially realised but not sustained.

Billiken's place in the Argentine national consciousness is driven through with notions of nation, citizenship, culture, identity, inclusion, exclusion, history, memory, tradition, preservation and aspiration. The memories and feelings associated with *Billiken* are sometimes negative and often contested. The history of *Billiken* is complex, contradictory and, at times, uncomfortable. At its best, *Billiken* celebrated the dissemination of knowledge, the encouragement of curiosity, the invitation to play, and the showcasing of high-quality work produced by talented professionals, all whilst being a commercially viable product. Can this process of transformation provide the opportunity to select, reconfigure and diversify the positive associations at the core of *Billiken*? These are just some of the questions that need to be answered if *Billiken* is to rebuild the place it once held but as a vastly different product in a vastly different world. Other challenges will include balancing the need for forward thinking innovation, anticipating the direction in which children's engagement with digital culture is travelling in offering solutions to meet a demand that has not yet been identified, with the awareness of, and sensitivity to, the ongoing realities of digital inequalities in Latin America. The major challenge for *Billiken*, if it is to preserve its main constituent identity as a children's brand, remains reconnecting with children. The magazine's waning presence in the last phase of its life has led to a generational gap in the knowledge of *Billiken's* existence, let alone in the accumulation of memories of *Billiken*. *Billiken* was always a collective endeavour, the work of heterogeneous groups of illustrators, editors, writers, translators, educational consultants, graphic designers, photographers, art directors, advertisers, teachers, purchasers, reader contributors and child readers, as well as those involved in the magazine's printing and distribution infrastructure. It will be today's children who decide whether *Billiken* can transcend its 'cuerpo de papel'. They will decide what new meanings will be ascribed to *Billiken* as it moves beyond the 'deixis of homeland', beyond an expression of the national 'we' and of 'our' national memories, to encompass more diverse understandings of what constitutes the national 'we', as well as encompassing those of us who belong outside those groupings.¹⁷ And today's children will decide whether *Billiken* can speak to them, whether it can be a product for them, and whether they can make enough of an emotional connection to it to continue the generational transmission that was always key to the perpetuation of *Billiken's* legacy. It will be today's children who determine the future of *Billiken* as they decide whether to participate in the reconfiguring and diversification of a brand that was once the world's longest-running children's magazine.

Notes

- ¹ Milton Del Moral, 'Manuel Puig, radionovelas y un libro sobre *Billiken*: la académica inglesa que está fascinada con la cultura popular argentina', *Infobae*, 22 August 2022, <<https://www.infobae.com/sociedad/2022/08/10/manuel-puig-radionovelas-y-un-libro-sobre-Billiken-la-academica-inglesa-que-esta-fascinada-con-la-cultura-popular-argentina/>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ² Horacio Quiroga, *Cuentos de la selva – Jungle Tales*, Nueva Biblioteca Billiken (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 2018).
- ³ Here, the masculine plural of 'ellos' [those] is used as the default gender and, according to grammatical rules, includes women in the same way as *Billiken*'s use of 'niños' generally denotes children as opposed to boys unless specified. Debates on inclusive language that consider whether the binary of morphological gender invisibilises girls and women were not as prominent in 2015 as they are at the time of writing.
- ⁴ Clémentine Beauvais, 'Thinking the Adult-Child Relationship with Existentialism', in *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, ed. by Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen and Daniel Thomas Cook (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 57–71 (pp. 61, 64).
- ⁵ On this editorial project see the reflections of *Antiprincesas* author and Chirimbote founder Nadia Fink, 'Cada vez más revueltas. Un recorrido feminista en el periodismo y la literatura infantil', in *De la cultura al feminismo*, ed. by Marcela A. País Andrade and Belén Igarzábel (Buenos Aires: RGC Ediciones, 2021). Kindle ebook.
- ⁶ 'Científica del Instituto Leloir en "100 Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas" de *Billiken*', *Fundación Instituto Leloir*, 25 November 2019 <<https://www.leloir.org.ar/cientifica-del-instituto-leloir-en-100-grandes-mujeres-latinoamericanas-de-Billiken>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ⁷ Carolina Contreras. Facebook post. 8 February 2022, https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=479346780338705&_rdr [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ⁸ Lauren Rea, '100 años de la revista infantil que acompañó nuestra historia' (*Gente*, issue 2789, 1 January 2019. Online version: <https://www.infobae.com/gente/lo-ultimo/2019/01/05/Billiken-os-100-anos-de-la-revista-infantil-que-acompano-nuestra-historia/>) [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ⁹ Luis Alberto, 'Centenario de *Billiken*: El orgullo de haber sido y el dolor de ya no ser', *Blog Top-Comics*, 6 November 2019 <<https://luisalberto941.wordpress.com/2019/11/06/centenario-de-Billiken-el-orgullo-de-haber-sido-y-el-dolor-de-ya-no-ser/>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ¹⁰ '*Billiken* cumplió 100 años y fue homenajeada en el Congreso', *Para Ti*, 25 November 2019 <<https://www.parati.com.ar/Billiken-cumplio-100-anos-y-fue-homenajeada-en-el-congreso/>> [accessed 22 August 2022].
- ¹¹ The project was supported by the UKRI GCRF Collective Programme [grant number AHV003267/1].

- ¹² 'Registro Nacional de Femicidios: durante 2021 se produjeron 251 víctimas letales de violencia de género en todo el país,' *Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación*, 2022 <<https://www.csjn.gov.ar/om/verNoticia.do?idNoticia=5982>> [accessed 23 August 2022]; 'Federalization of the Micaela Law (AR0091); *Open Government Partnership* <<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/argentina/commitments/AR0091/>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ¹³ Lucía De Leone, *Mujeres faro: 40 mujeres luminosas de toda América* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 2021).
- ¹⁴ 'Netflix Cancels Meghan Markle Animated Series Pearl,' *BBC News*, 2 May 2022 <<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61294978>> [accessed 18 September 2022].
- ¹⁵ Regina Solis, 'La plataforma Grandes Mujeres Latinoamericanas fomenta la igualdad de género desde la escuela primaria,' *Billiken.lat*, 2022 <<https://billiken.lat/educadores/por-que-es-importante-fomentar-la-igualdad-de-genero-en-las-aulas/>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ¹⁶ Global Education Monitoring Report Team; SUMMA; UNESCO, 'Informe de seguimiento de la educación en el mundo, 2020, América Latina y el Caribe: inclusión y educación: todos y todas sin excepción,' pp. 62–63 <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374615>> [accessed 23 August 2022].
- ¹⁷ On the 'deixis of homeland,' see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221648>> Chapter 5.

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Argentina's *Billiken* was the world's longest-running children's magazine, publishing 5144 issues over one hundred years. It educated and entertained generations of schoolchildren and came to occupy a central role in Argentine cultural life. This volume offers the first academic history of the whole lifespan of *Billiken* as a print magazine, through to its transition into a digital brand.

This volume adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to take account of the many different facets of *Billiken's* content born from a combination of ideological, commercial, political and cultural drivers. This history of *Billiken* examines the changes, contradictions and continuities in the magazine over time as it responded to political events, adapted to new commercial realities, and made use of technological advances. It explores how *Billiken* magazine not only reflected society, but shaped it through its influence on childhoods, children's culture and education, and provides an alternative window onto the history and politics of a tumultuous hundred years for Argentina.

Lauren Rea MBE is Professor of Latin American Studies at the University of Sheffield.

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