

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 'hojear' [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 Bertoní 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 Marah 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 se 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.
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- 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/].
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