

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.




Cursó ciencias y letras en la Universidad de Montevideo, y a los 17 años publicó su primera poesía, titulada "A mi madre". Desde entonces y hasta su muerte trabajó en el periodismo, siendo imposible decir en pocas líneas todos los diarios y revistas que fundó o en los que colaboró.




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.

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.

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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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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'.<sup>5</sup> For Hammond, Pearson and Holt, social legacy is the channel by which the values, beliefs and meanings associated with the family are transferred.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.'<sup>8</sup> 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.'<sup>9</sup> 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.'<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> More recently, however, the trend has been to recognise traditions as resources that can be managed or 'leveraged in innovation.'<sup>12</sup> History can also be a source of competitive advantage.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

### 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.

[Antejito 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 Antejito and Antifaz comic strip and sections that would later be expanded in *Antejito* magazine. There was only a five-week gap between the last time this page appeared in *Billiken* and the first issue of *Antejito* arriving at the newsstands. According to Omar Acosta, a García Ferré superfan and collector of all 1925 issues of *Antejito* magazine, this first issue sold out and was reprinted.<sup>17</sup> By the time the magazine *Antejito* 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 *Antejito* 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/Antejito* 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 *Antejito* 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 *Antejito* 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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

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**EL GRAN TELE-SHOW DE LA FELICIDAD INFANTIL**



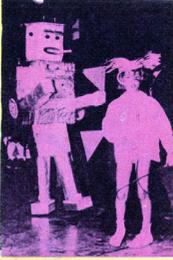
**le ANTEOJITO**

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.





**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 Anteojoitos podamos vivir en su sagrado clima de libertad. Gritemos todos juntos nuestro mejor ¡Intrínquilo-Chinguilis! para los padres de la patria.



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

**BASES DEL CONCURSO DEL MES DE MAYO:**

Adivinen... ¿Qué será?... ¡Lauchoncito 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.

**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 plazoleta, 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.



**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 Anteojoito.



¡Intrínquilo-Chinguilis! ¡U-u-u-u-u!

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

Figure 3.5: The Anteojoito 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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'.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> *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.<sup>28</sup> 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.'<sup>29</sup> 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].<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

[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'.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

*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.

©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

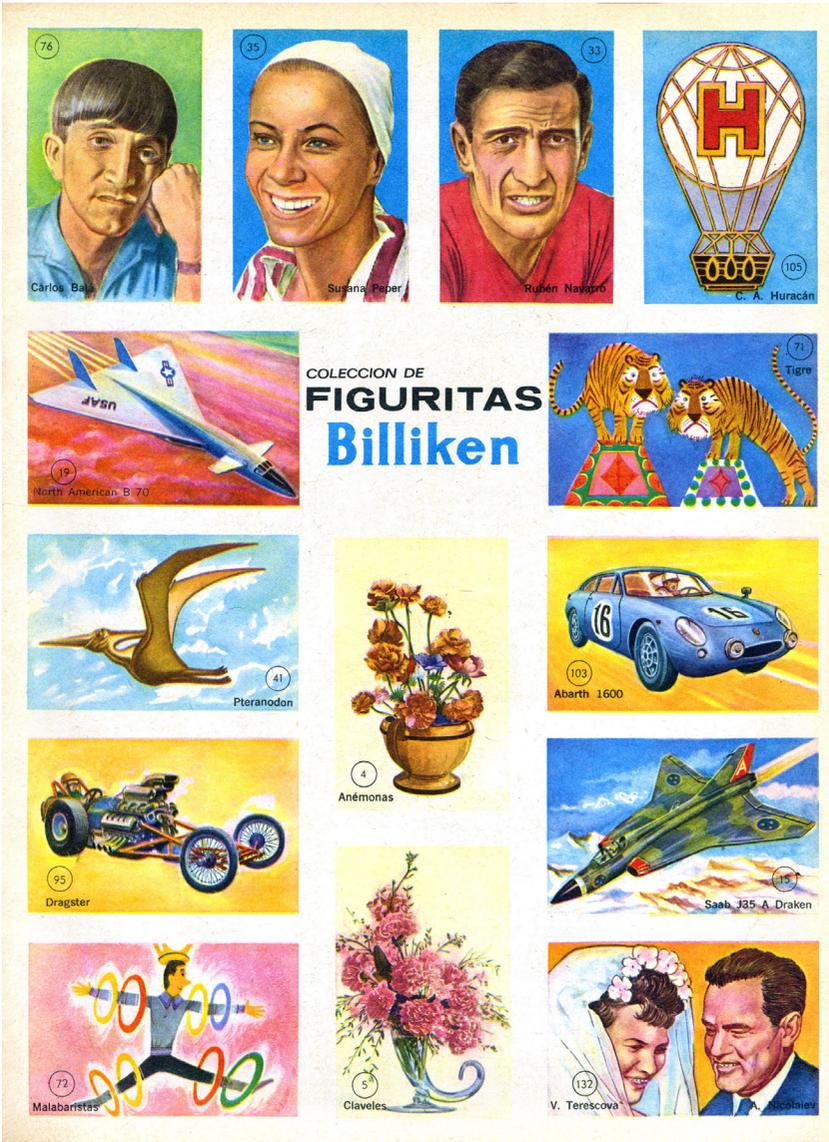
the little boy informs the children that there will be 136 *figuritas* to collect to cut out and stick in an album, starting on 16 November. Issue 2340 has the notification 'Este ejemplar contiene un album para coleccionar figuritas' [This issue contains a *figuritas* album] overlaid onto the poster 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 Constancio 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*.<sup>41</sup>

[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 3.9: *Figuritas* for use in schools. Part of the science collection. *Biliken*, issue 2239, 10 December 1962. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

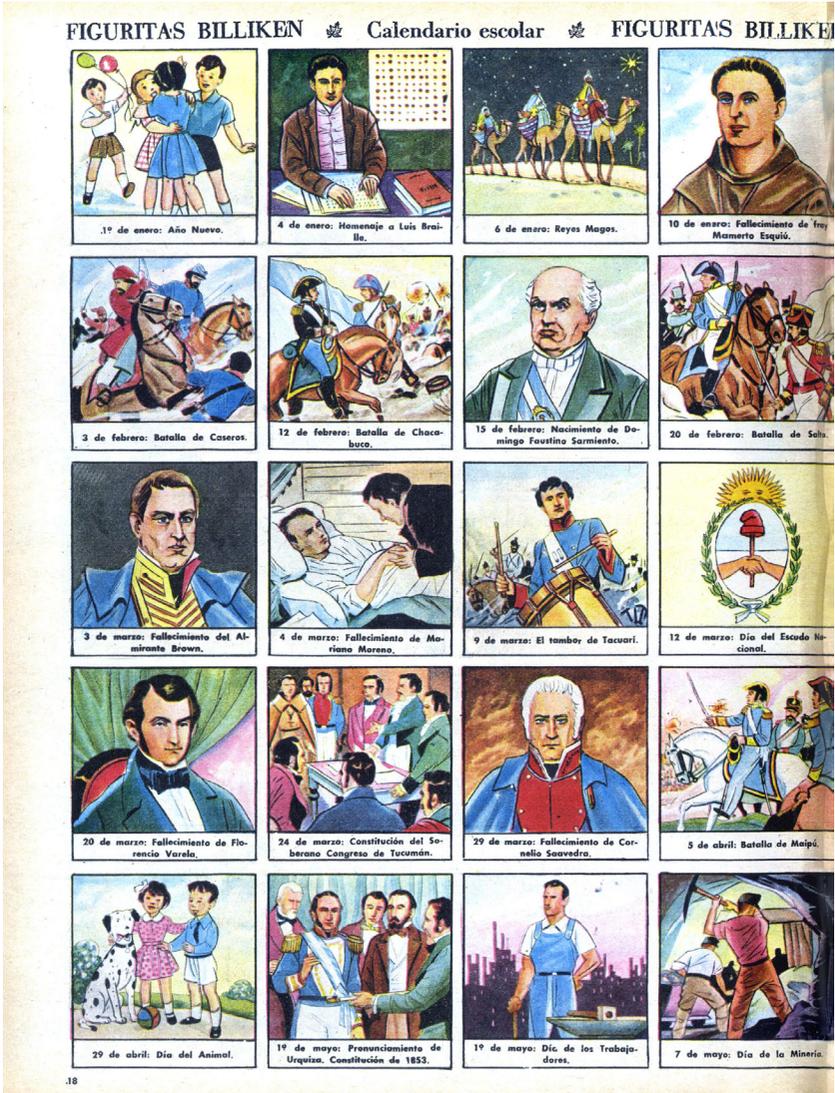


Figure 3.10: *Figuritas* for the school calendar. *Billiken*, issue 2251, 4 March 1963. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.



**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.<sup>42</sup>

*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.<sup>43</sup>

*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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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).<sup>46</sup> 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 Anteojoito 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

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- <sup>2</sup> 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.
- <sup>3</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>4</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>5</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>6</sup> Hammond, Pearson and Holt, p. 1210.
- <sup>7</sup> Jaskiewicz, Combs and Rau, p. 30.
- <sup>8</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>9</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>10</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>11</sup> See Erdogan, Rondi and De Massis, p. 21.
- <sup>12</sup> De Massis and others, p. 94.
- <sup>13</sup> 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>>.
- <sup>14</sup> Ann Swidler, 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies', *American Sociological Review*, 51.2 (1986), 273–86 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521>>.
- <sup>15</sup> 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>>.

- <sup>16</sup> 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).
- <sup>17</sup> 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.
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- <sup>19</sup> Carlos Ulanovsky, *Paren las rotativas: una historia de grandes diarios, revistas y periodistas argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Espasa, 1997).
- <sup>20</sup> Falabella, p. 215.
- <sup>21</sup> 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).
- <sup>22</sup> 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).
- <sup>23</sup> *Calculín*, issue 1883, 23 January 1956; *Chim-pan-cee*, 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.
- <sup>24</sup> 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).
- <sup>25</sup> 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)>.
- <sup>26</sup> 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>>.

- <sup>27</sup> 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).
- <sup>28</sup> 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.
- <sup>29</sup> 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).
- <sup>30</sup> 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].
- <sup>31</sup> For an analysis of the centrality of the Antejito character as a differentiating factor from *Billiken's* offering see Laura Vázquez, 'Imágenes de la niñez en Antejito y Billiken: héroes y blancas palomitas', *Revista de Historia Bonaerense*, 21 (2014), 38–46.
- <sup>32</sup> *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.
- <sup>33</sup> 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).
- <sup>34</sup> 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).
- <sup>35</sup> Martín, p. 52.
- <sup>36</sup> For examples of these in *Billiken* see issue 680, 28 November 1932, and issue 1564, 5 December 1949, respectively.
- <sup>37</sup> Jesús María Martínez González, 'Efímeros plusquam(im)perfectos. Literatura infantil y juvenil (LIJ) en los cromos españoles de la primera mitad del siglo XX', in *LIJ efímera. La perfecta imperfección de los no libros*, ed. by Jesús María Martínez González and Ramon J. Freire Santa Cruz (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2018), pp. 15–71 (p. 17).
- <sup>38</sup> 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.

- <sup>39</sup> 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.
- <sup>40</sup> John Broom, *A History of Cigarette and Trade Cards: The Magic Inside the Packet* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2018). Kindle ebook. Chapter 1.
- <sup>41</sup> 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].
- <sup>42</sup> Foster and others, p. 102.
- <sup>43</sup> Adriana Puiggrós, *Qué pasó en la educación argentina*, p. 155–56.
- <sup>44</sup> 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].
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- <sup>46</sup> Jorge Finkielman, *The Film Industry in Argentina: An Illustrated Cultural History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014), p. 148.