

CHAPTER 4

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

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

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

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

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

The Argentine press and the dictatorship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Figure 4.3: ‘Who lives at home?’ *Billiken*, issue 2879, 17 March 1975. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



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

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

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

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

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

Censorship, literature and the *Billiken* 'island'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

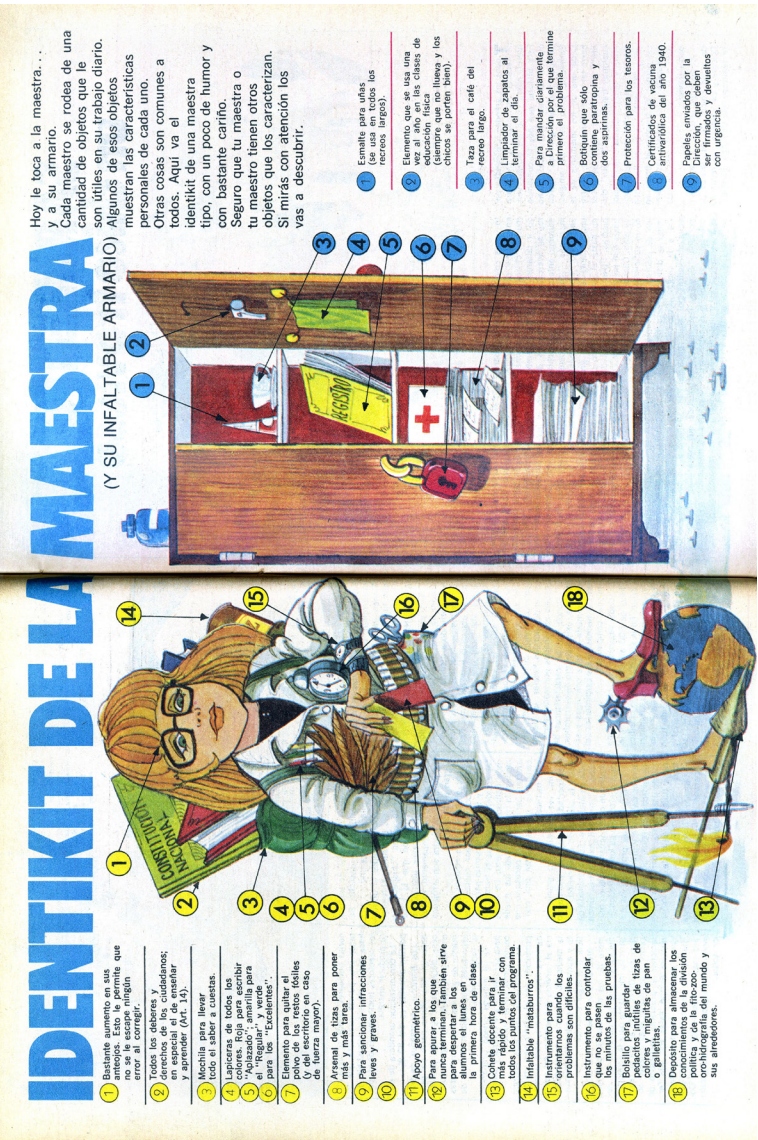


Figure 4.7: 'Identikit of a teacher'. *Billiken*, issue 2956, 6 September 1976. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



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

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

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

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

Patria, national sovereignty and the Malvinas/Falklands War

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[illegible]

Figure 4.11: The winning entries to the competition ‘The Argentina I know’ printed in full in *Billiken*, issue 2970, 13 December 1976. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

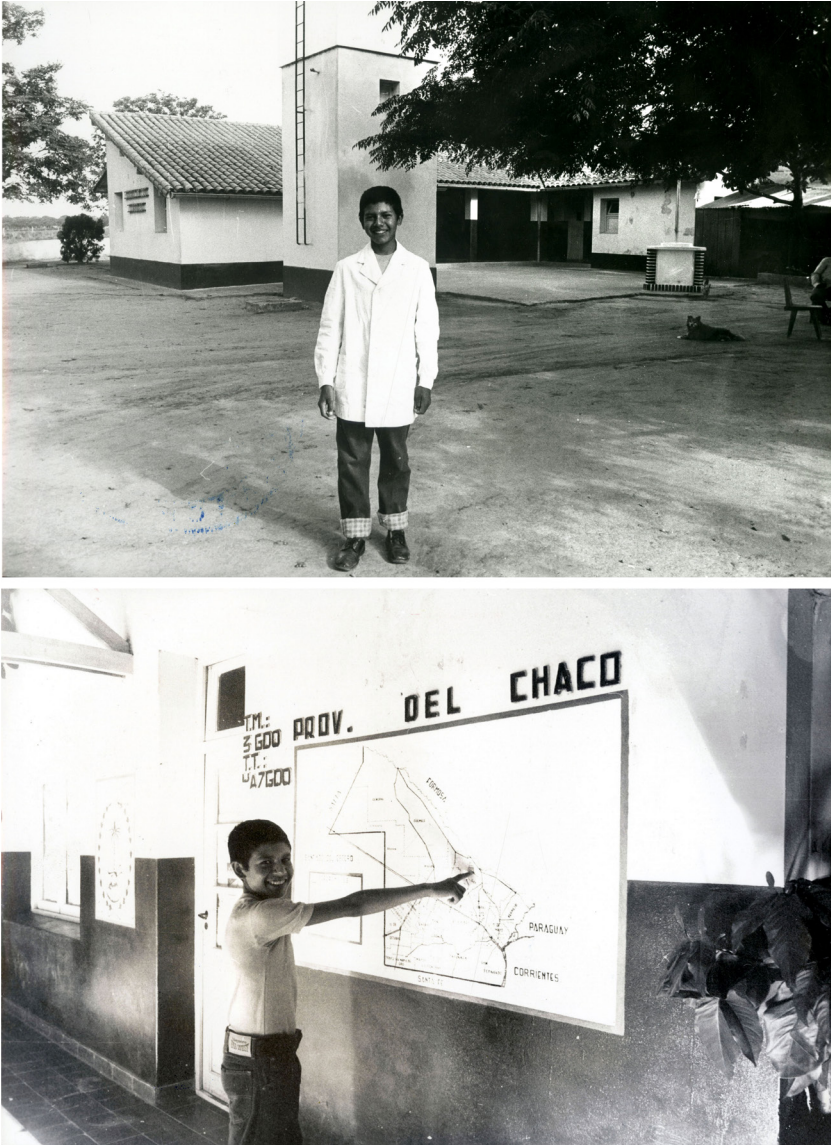


Figure 4.12: Photographs of Pedro Verón from the Atlántida archives. Different photographs of Pedro and his family were selected for publication in *Billiken*. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

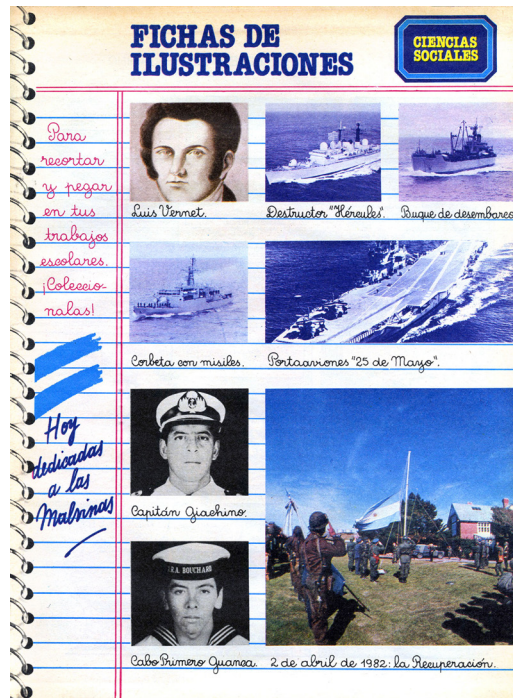


Figure 4.14: Malvinas-themed images (*figuritas*) for illustrating school exercise books. *Billiken*, issue 3250, 27 April 1982.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 4.16: “The Sinking of the Sheffield” by Robert Regalado. *Billiken*, issue 3256, 8 June 1982. ©Editorial Atlántida. Reproduced with permission.

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



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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

²⁷ Artieda, pp. 85–102.

²⁸ Academic criticism which contests the prevailing discourse of minimising, or negating, the continuous presence and contributions of Afro-Argentines includes George Reid Andrew's seminal study *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800–1900* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980) and Erika Denise Edwards's *Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law, and the Making of a White Argentine Republic* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020). Ezequiel Adamovsky has written extensively on the interplay between race and national identity, including in 'El color de la nación argentina. Conflictos y negociaciones por la definición de un ethnos nacional, de la crisis al Bicentenario', *Jahrbuch Für Geschichte Latein-amerikas*, 49.1 (2012), 343–64 <<https://doi.org/10.7767/jbla.2012.49.1.343>> and 'Ethnic Nicknaming: "Negro" as a Term of Endearment and Vicarious Blackness in Argentina', *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 12.3 (2017), 273–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17442222.2017.1368895>>. In 2023, *Billiken* interviewed Afro-Argentine teacher Marcela Lorenzo Pérez about the practice of painting faces with burned cork. Ignacio Risso, 'Pintar la cara con corcho ¿es una costumbre correcta?', *Billiken.lat*, 22 May 2023 <<https://billiken.lat/educadores/pintar-con-corcho-la-cara-para-el-25-de-mayo-es-una-costumbre-correcta/>> [accessed 27 May 2023].

²⁹ Paula Guitelman, *La infancia en dictadura: modernidad y conservadurismo en el mundo de Billiken* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2006).

³⁰ Andrés Avellaneda, 'The Process of Censorship and Censorship of the Proceso: Argentina 1976–1983', in *The Redemocratization of Argentine Culture 1983 and Beyond; An International Research Symposium*, ed. David William Foster (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1989), pp. 23–47 (p. 24).

³¹ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, its History and its Impact* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 228.

³² Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 'Subversión en el ámbito educativo (Conozcamos a nuestro enemigo)' (Buenos Aires, 1977), p. 49 <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/documentos/EL003637.pdf>> [accessed 30 January 2022]; See Pineau who argues that this pamphlet was withdrawn by the authorities because it was thought to have backfired by giving away too much information about how to organise subversive groups and too little information about how to combat subversion. Pablo Pineau, *El principio del fin: políticas y memorias de la educación en la última dictadura militar (1976–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 2006), pp. 68–69.

- ³³ Alicia Origgi, 'Entrevista con María Elena Walsh: "Fue revolucionario pensar que la poesía no debía tener contenido didáctico"', *Imaginaria*, 19 (2000) <<https://www.imaginaria.com.ar/01/9/walsh2.htm>> [accessed 17 January 2022].
- ³⁴ Graciela Montes, 'La literatura infantil argentina', in *Literatura infantil: creación, censura y resistencia*, by Ana María Machado and Graciela Montes (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003), pp. 63–71 (p. 67).
- ³⁵ Montes, p. 65.
- ³⁶ 'Decreto 3155/1977' (Boletín Oficial 19/10/1977) <<http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/normas/4853.pdf>> [accessed 30 January 2022]. See also Montes, p. 67 and Pedro César Cerrillo Torremocha and María Victoria Sotomayor Saéz, *Censuras y LIJ en el siglo XX (en España y 7 países latinoamericanos)* (Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2016), p. 299.
- ³⁷ Quoted in Laura Devetach, *Oficio de palabra: literatura para chicos y vida cotidiana* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1991), p. 43.
- ³⁸ 'Laura Devetach, un símbolo de la literatura infantil argentina', *ArInfo*, 2014 <<https://www.arinfo.com.ar/nota/08476/laura-devetach-un-smbolo-de-la-literatura-infantil-argentina.htm>> [accessed 20 January 2022].
- ³⁹ Programa Bibliotecas para armar, 'Laura Devetach: "Yo tengo la suerte de que me publican poesía. Pero no es así con la mayoría de la gente"', Bibliotecas para armar, 5 June 2015 <<http://bibliotecasparaarmar.blogspot.com/2015/06/laura-devetach-yo-tengo-la-suerte-de.html>> [accessed 23 January 2022].
- ⁴⁰ Programa Bibliotecas para armar.
- ⁴¹ Laura Devetach, 'Actualidad de la censura: Monigote en la arena', *Educación y biblioteca*, 20.166 (2008), 35–36.
- ⁴² See 'Laura Devetach, un símbolo de la literatura infantil argentina'. The title story of the collection was published in *Billiken* in issue 3076, 26 December 1978.
- ⁴³ Artieda, pp. 132–33.
- ⁴⁴ Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 'Subversión en el ámbito educativo', p. 60.
- ⁴⁵ 'Instrucciones para arruinar a su hijo' [Instructions for ruining your child], *Gente*, issue 581, 9 September 1976 and 'Si querés malograr a tu hijo' [If you want to spoil your child], *Billiken* issue 2999, 4 July 1977.
- ⁴⁶ Boletín de la SNEP N°155, noviembre-diciembre de 1980. Cited in Hernán Invernizzi and Judith Gociol, *Un golpe a los libros: represión a la cultura durante la última dictadura militar* 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2007), p. 115.
- ⁴⁷ Quoted in Carlos Büsser, *Malvinas: conflicto vigente* (Buenos Aires: Vórtice, 1999), p. 155. Interview given on Spain's national radio on 26 May 1982 and reported in *La Nación* on 6 June.
- ⁴⁸ See Julieta Vitullo, *Islas imaginadas. La guerra de Malvinas en la literatura y el cine argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2012); Rosana Guber, *¿Por qué Malvinas?: de la causa nacional a la guerra absurda* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001).

- ⁴⁹ On the 1941 reform see Matías Farías, Cecilia Flachslund and Violeta Rosemberg, 'Las Malvinas en la escuela: enseñar la patria,' *Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires*, 80 (2012), 38–49. On the impact of the declarations of sovereignty on school teaching, see Luis Alberto Romero, Luciano de Privitellio, Silvina Quintero and Hilda Sabato, *La Argentina en la escuela: la idea de nación en los textos escolares* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004), p. 101.
- ⁵⁰ See Tulio Halperín Donghi, *El revisionismo histórico argentino* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971); Michael Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Lauren Rea, *Argentine Serialised Radio Drama in the Infamous Decade, 1930–1943: Transmitting Nationhood* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).
- ⁵¹ Carbone, p. 53.
- ⁵² On Breccia see Pablo Turnes, *La excepción en la regla: la obra historietística de Alberto Breccia (1962–1993)* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2020).
- ⁵³ Circular from 26 August 1964 quoted in Farías, Flachslund and Rosemberg, p. 44.
- ⁵⁴ Romero and others, p. 141.
- ⁵⁵ 1919–1979. *Reviva los 60 años de Billiken* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Atlántida, 1979).
- ⁵⁶ Carolina Kaufmann, 'Los manuales de civismo en la historia reciente: huellas y señales,' in *Dictadura y educación*, dir. by Kaufmann pp. 121–67 (pp. 140–41).
- ⁵⁷ See, for example, articles on the economic activity in the Pampas, the Northern Andean region, and the Mesopotamian region (issues 3147, 6 May 1980; 3052, 11 July 1978; and 3150, 27 May 1980).
- ⁵⁸ *Billiken's* articles on ecological issues include one on Uruguay and Brazil's contaminated coastlines (issue 3045, 23 May 1978) and ocean pollution (issue 3073, 5 December 1978).
- ⁵⁹ Billig, Chapter 5; Romero and others, p. 139.
- ⁶⁰ On the issue of the border with Brazil in school textbooks see Romero and others, p. 144. On school textbooks' treatment of the role of the army in protecting borders see Carbone, pp. 60–63.
- ⁶¹ Carolina Kaufmann and Delfina Doval, 'La enseñanza encubierta de la religión: La «Formación Moral y Cívica», in *Dictadura y educación*, dir. by Kaufmann, pp. 169–86 (p. 174).
- ⁶² Cited in Gabriela Pesclevi, *Libros que muerden: literatura infantil y juvenil censurada durante la última dictadura cívico-militar* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional, 2014), p. 76.
- ⁶³ The second occasion in which Videla is named is in the context of him meeting the winner of the Plus Ultra competition, a young carer, Ana, from Spain (issue 3162, 19 August 1980).
- ⁶⁴ On Atlántida's *Gente* and *Somos* magazines during the war see María Paula Gago and Jorge Saborido, 'Somos y Gente frente a la guerra de Malvinas:

dos miradas en una misma editorial', in *Voces y silencios: la prensa argentina y la dictadura militar (1976–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2012), pp. 398–427.

- ⁶⁵ Agustín Daniel Desiderato, 'La movilización de los niños durante la Guerra de Malvinas. Un análisis a través de la revista Billiken y el suplemento Croniquita', in *La cuestión Malvinas en la Argentina del siglo XX: una historia social y cultural* (Buenos Aires: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2020), pp. 79–97 (pp. 80–89).
- ⁶⁶ Sandra M Szir, 'Reporte documental, régimen visual y fotoperiodismo. La ilustración de noticias en la prensa periódica en Buenos Aires (1850–1910)', 2013, 17 (p. 4).
- ⁶⁷ Michèle Martin, *Images at War: Illustrated Periodicals and Constructed Nations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 8.
- ⁶⁸ Mariano Chinelli, 'Reportaje a Roberto Regalado', *Archivo Histórico Héctor Germán Oesterheld*, 2012 <<http://archivohgo.blogspot.com/2012/10/reportaje-roberto-regalado.html>> [accessed 30 January 2022].
- ⁶⁹ References in order of their mentions: with Oesterheld, issues 2763, 25 December 1972 and 2817, 17 January 1974; with Roldán, issues 3164 and 3168, September 1980; with Morhain, issues 2954 and 2953, August 1976 and issue 2968, 29 November 1976.
- ⁷⁰ On *Operación 90* see also Guitelman, pp. 64–65.
- ⁷¹ Issues 385 to 410. See 'Falklands 25: Operation Corporate in Comics', *Downthetubes.Net*, 2007, p. 25 <<https://downthetubes.net/british-comics-reference/falklands-25-operation-corporate-in-comics/>> [accessed 2 February 2022]. On post war Argentine comics see Silvia G. Kurlat Ares, 'The Malvinas War in Argentine Memory: Graphic Representations of Defeat and Memory', in *Cultures of War in Graphic Novels: Violence, Trauma, and Memory*, ed. by Tatiana Prorokova and Nimrod Tal (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), pp. 165–87.
- ⁷² The most prominent illustration is that of Naval Captain Pedro Giachino, the first Argentine serviceman to die in the conflict and also afforded the honour of being reproduced in a *figurita*. On the construction of Giachino as martyr and hero, and the accusations of human rights abuses levelled against him see Cristian Palmisciano, 'Hoy te convertís en Héroe. La construcción de la figura heroica de Giachino', *Sudamérica*, 5 (2016), 155–78.
- ⁷³ Menéndez was later investigated for human rights violations committed during the dictatorship. Other military figures named in the series of comics include Colonel Mohamed Seineldín, who went on to lead failed uprisings against President Alfonsín in 1988 and President Menem in 1990, and Naval officer Carlos Büsser who died under house arrest in 2012 whilst awaiting trial for human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship.
- ⁷⁴ See Florencia Balle, 'Guerreras: crónicas de mujeres en Malvinas' (Thesis, UNLP, 2020) <https://repositoriosdigitales.mincyt.gob.ar/vufind/Record/SEDICI_943c024f9e54a7880dda284ca8b60e81> [accessed 17 September 2022].