ARGENTINE INTELLECTUALS AS HARBINGERS OF MODERNITY: 
THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROJECTS OF MARCOS AGUINIS

by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Marcos Aguinis (b. 1935) is an Argentine public intellectual dedicated to bringing democracy to his country by creating a participatory and inclusive public sphere. This dissertation traces the regional and global intellectual traditions upon which Aguinis draws and situates his contemporary contributions within their context. An integrated analysis of Aguinis’s civic work as Minister of Culture and of his literary oeuvre of novels, essays, and dialogues, this study elucidates the ideological conversations both “vertical” (through time) and “horizontal” (across geographic boundaries) in which Aguinis participates as he envisions his nation’s modernization. Aguinis’s overarching mission is to heal a post-colonial Argentina still shackled by a Counter-Reformation legacy of religious and social homogeneity that undermines the emergence of a diverse and democratic Latin America. In this context, this study argues that Aguinis regards Argentine society’s acceptance of his fellow Jews—an element of social, religious, and cultural diversity—as a litmus test of the country’s modernity. Recognition of Aguinis’s inspiration from and contributions to traditions of public intellectuals who define national identity provides critical insight into the global nature of modernization. In parallel, the construction of the persona of the public intellectual emerges as integral to crafting Argentina's modern identity and to engaging Argentina in a global conversation of democratization. In content and methodology, this dissertation spans the fields of intellectual history, Latin American history, literary criticism, and Jewish studies.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

I. Topic of Research

I situate the Argentine public intellectual, Marcos Aguinis, as participating in and building on a threefold tradition: the public intellectual as a global historical entity with roots in the French Enlightenment; the public intellectual in Argentina; and the activist intellectuals of Latin America and Europe who are Aguinis’s contemporaries and peers, and who likewise see themselves as global purveyors regarding the vertex of culture and politics in modern nation-states. I approach Aguinis’s literary and civic efforts as complimentary tools he has pursued toward his objective of nation building, endowed to Aguinis by virtue of all three traditions. Mine is therefore a study in intellectual history, concerned with the “vertical” (through time) and “horizontal” (across boundaries) conversations engaged in on an ideological level by the public intellectual in trying to shape his nation’s character. In this effort, my project engages in a joint analysis of Aguinis’s work as Minister of Culture and of his writings, spanning the genres of novel, essay, and dialogue.

II. Goals and Methodology

My dissertation is a study of intellectual history and its cultural and political vehicles. My project is not concerned with measuring the success of Marcos Aguinis’s democratization project, but rather with his arguments and methods for instituting it. My primary research focuses on Aguinis’s program for cultural democratization that he created as Secretary of Culture in the 1980’s, as documented in Memorias de una siembra: Utopía y práctica del PRONDEC (Programa Nacional de Democratización de la Cultura) (1990), and his literary production since then. Chapter Two presents the emergence of the Argentine public intellectual within a global context of modernization and democratization. Aguinis’s work as Minister of Culture and then
Director of PRONDEC is the subject of Chapter Three, where I approach Aguinis’s civic work as part of a platform and ideology that fueled President Raúl Alfonsín’s election to office after Argentina’s military dictatorship of 1976-1983, reflecting the President’s inclusion of public intellectuals in his government. I begin with an analysis of Aguinis’s work as Minister of Culture because the literary works that I focus on were written after this period, and reflect Aguinis’s growing frustration with the succeeding governments’ lack of incorporation of his views, which Aguinis continued to express with an unflattering conviction through the one venue still available to the public intellectual: his pen.

The second part of my dissertation engages in an analysis of Aguinis’s writings, produced after his tenure in the government. In this effort, I center my subsequent chapters on one work in each of the genres of essay, dialogue, and novel. My analysis is undertaken with a view to the cultural and political weight each literary genre carries in Argentina, and with an appreciation for how Aguinis placed his own contribution within literary contexts that enhance the cultural appropriateness of the message within each corresponding text. The key literary works by Aguinis that I study are chosen based on their advocacy for the connection between culture and politics. They are the topics of Chapters Four, Five and Six, respectively: Elogio de la culpa (1993), Las dudas y las certezas: diálogos completos (2001), and Asalto al paraíso (2002).

These chapters are organized by year of writing, but also reflect the author’s evolving mission and methodology for healing his nation. Elogio de la culpa creatively reflects Aguinis’s global and regional ideological cohort, expanding from Erasmus of Rotterdam, to Pablo Neruda and Sigmund Freud, all enlisted by Aguinis to bring the Reformation to Argentina in a distinctly Argentine and modern manner. Las dudas y las certezas: diálogos completos continues this conversation literally, with a local bishop who joins Aguinis is his program of reformation in
form and message, modeling critical thinking and conversation among diversity. The last chapter studies the public intellectual’s response to the worst terrorist attack experienced in Argentina, which targeted Jewish Buenos Airean sites. Here Aguinis shows that tolerance of violence toward Jews indicates the nation’s lack of democracy and modernity.

Through a multi-faceted study of Aguinis’s work, I seek to address questions that are likewise interdisciplinary. In so doing, I unite not only the scholarly disciplines of history and literature, but address their actual interconnectedness in Argentina. In other words, the interplay between literature, politics and culture in Argentina both reveals the workings of her national programs of modernization, and the role of public intellectuals therein. The result is an Argentine participation in the crafting of modernity, and a concurrent Argentine public intellectual’s role in being a harbinger of this global condition.

III. Historical Salience

Having turned to his pen after being disillusioned by the possibility of effecting change within a government apparatus, Aguinis became fervently dedicated to his writing. Through his literary works Aguinis labors to bring the Reformation, the precursor to the Enlightenment in Europe, to Latin America. In formulating Argentina’s local plight for modernity in these terms, Aguinis renders the Latin American project globally relevant. The result is not a study of the transfer of ideas and systems cross the Atlantic and then eventually back, but of a dynamic that makes of Argentina a contributor to the Western conversation of modernization. In this light, my work reflects a “boomerang effect” within modernity: a Latin American gaze that began focused on Europe, gives way to modern agendas conceived on Argentina’s shores. Precisely by adopting the traditional terms of engagement with modernity, Aguinis is able to subvert them. Through his

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1 Marcos Aguinis and Monseñor Justo Laguna, Las dudas y las certezas: Diálogos completos (Buenos Aires, Sudamerica, 2001), 61.
writings, Aguinis takes on the traditional markers of modernity: Reformation, Enlightenment, and democracy, but he adds questions of anti-Semitism, *mestizaje*, and racism that are endemic to Latin America. Seeking to lead the way toward a society or responsibility, diversity, and participation, through his writings Aguinis continued and refined the work that he began as Minister of Culture and director of PRONDEC. Consequently, the question driving the previous generations of intellectuals shifted from being: Has Latin America achieved Western Enlightenment, to: What can Argentina’s modernizing experience add to the ongoing global plight to achieve democratic, participatory nationhood?

The resulting analysis speaks to the public intellectual’s fervent dedication to both diagnose Argentina’s ills as well as outline a prescription for her healing from a multi-faceted local perspective that speaks to global historical processes of modernization. The psychologist turned Minister of Culture, dedicates himself to his writings with the mission of his previous two vocations intimately intact. A study of Aguinis’s literary works will reveal as much a psychologist as a public intellectual, balancing his understanding of the individual he writes for with his unwavering mission to heal the country through ideological programs defined from above. In order to better understand the significance and techniques employed by Marcos Aguinis as a self-proclaimed healer of Argentina who unites psychology, culture, literature, and politics, we must understand the context of his life’s work as a part of the complex history of the intellectual in Argentina and globally.

Hand in hand with the construction of Argentina, Aguinis has built not only an agenda for his country, but also a persona for himself, as public intellectuals are rife to do. A study of Aguinis’s opus will thus additionally lead to an understanding of how Aguinis the public
intellectual presents his own relationship to the three traditions that justify his national and international relevance.
Chapter 2. The Historical and Literary Context of the Argentine Public Intellectual

Marcos Aguinis participates, both implicitly and explicitly, in complex local and global conversations regarding the message, role, and duty of public intellectuals as intermediaries between culture and politics, and as such, between the people and the state. Before delving into Aguinis’s political agenda and the various vehicles he adopted for his evolving message, we must first understand this connection between public intellectuals, nation states, and modernization projects as part of a global mechanism that Argentina and her intellectuals joined. In this effort, this chapter will explore the emergence of both the public intellectual and the public sphere as a modern phenomenon. It will also address historical and political theories regarding the manner that ideas are transferred across boundaries and through history, which involves not simply the transference of ideas, but their adaptation according to local realities. The chapter will then engage with an analysis of the four main generations of Argentine public intellectuals and their dialogical methods and contributions to the definition of Argentine identity. I finally situate the subject of the present study, Marcos Aguinis, within this regional and global ideological context.

I. The History of the Public Intellectual in Global Context

A. Public sphere

Public intellectuals were a product of what Jürgen Habermas coined “the public sphere.” Habermas argued that it is with this cultural development that democracy and modern nation-states were born. A product of the Enlightenment, the public sphere as it emerged in eighteenth

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2 Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zur einen Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (Darmand and Neuwied, 1962). Habermas explains that the emergence of the public sphere is key to creating democratic nations.

century France (followed closely by England) saw individuals gathering in salons and coffeehouses to discuss issues of public importance, with topics dealing at first with art and literature, and turning eventually to politics and economics. Though admittedly the early “public spheres” included only the bourgeois echelon of society, the idea of extending participation and ownership of the newly emerging entity called the nation, to this previously powerless third estate, was revolutionary on many grounds.

Perhaps the most noteworthy outcome of the emergence of the public sphere was that of introducing a culture of rational criticism and debate into society. Consequently, “public opinion” became directly correlated with the birth of democracy, and paved the way for citizenship, the nation state, and ultimately, modernity itself. Along with the birth of the public sphere, came the limitations of who was permitted to participate in the national conversation. Thus emerged the double-edged sword, the sometimes-contentious relationship between the birth of both democracy and national identity, and between the “public sphere” and those who control access to it.

An entire field of scholarship responding to Habermas picked up on the noted danger inherent in pursuing nationalist policies, that unresolved contradiction between democracy and

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4 For an excellent overview both of the rise of the public sphere, and the limitations of Habermas’ approach, see James Van Horn Melton’s *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
5 Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1996). It is widely accepted that the idea of dissent and discussion, which emerged in Enlightenment Europe, was due to both the opening of markets and a separation of church and state. The resulting birth of the salons in France and the coffeehouses in England paved the way for the subsequent emergence of professional critics.
6 John F. Stitton, *Habermas and Contemporary Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 119. Even before the Enlightenment, with the advent of mass printing, the emergence of imagined communities provided what might otherwise be understood as the first public sphere, that of print.
nation-statehood, and these scholars warned that “to the extent that consensus is considered necessary to maintain order, it must engage in a war on the different and thereby become oppressive.”\textsuperscript{8} The modern nation was violent not only in limiting participation to certain members of society, but also in achieving a political consensus from the participating parties. In the process, language, the mechanism of argument, became a tool used by the few to convince the many.\textsuperscript{9} The linguistic practices that constitute modern social spheres are identified therefore not as neutral agents, but rather as a politically charged arena of contest, a means by which “to enact the struggle between the assimilated and the different.”\textsuperscript{10} John F. Stitton points out that Habermas understood this danger, and argued that the key to empowering the people was to be found in a new kind of power called “communicative power,”\textsuperscript{11} which would make of the public active participants rather than imposing on them a certain set of ideas.\textsuperscript{12}

What is most useful about Habermas’s contributions to the present study, is not that he located the birth of democracy or the modern nation-states in eighteenth century France, but that he identified the correlation between the emergence of the nation-state and public opinion, thereby sparking a wide-spread realization of the inherent disharmony between democracy and

\textsuperscript{8} Crossley and Roberts, 2.
\textsuperscript{9} Stitton, 19. Stitton explains that Habermas has been critiqued for not explaining precisely what the public sphere is supposed to do or how to the right environment for its expansion. Furthering the critique, later scholars realized that in later works Habermas did in fact “drop the normative component” he that he had advocated earlier “in favor of a more ‘fluid’ and ‘mobile’ conception of debate and discussion.” See Ken Hirshkop’s Ch. 3 in Crossley and Roberts.
\textsuperscript{10} Stitton, 110. Also, Crossley and Roberts cite Foucault (1984) who warns against the positivist approach that espouses reason as inherently good, urging society to “be vigilant of the social and historical processes involved in selecting out rules and procedures with which to regulate life.” See Crossley and Roberts, 13.
\textsuperscript{11} Crossley and Roberts, 18. Regarding the politics inherent in language, and the violent potentials therein, Mickail Bakhtin provides a “post-structuralist sensibility towards the democratic value of diverse voices being heard in the public sphere.”
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 98.
nationalism. This disharmony, unsolved in Europe, achieves exponential complications when Enlightenment ideals are adopted by the Americas, a region often more invested in “Westernizing,” or nationalizing, than democratizing. What is most fascinating for my study is how, in the process, language, and those who used it to mold nations, became powerful members of society.

**B. Public Intellectual**

Sometimes characterizing themselves as mouthpieces of the people, other times seeing themselves as architects of national identities and programs, public intellectuals have participated in processes that affect as much the emergent national, as well as a global, conception of modernity. The public intellectual depends on both the constitution and maintenance of the public sphere as a forum for reflective and critical discourse:

> Looked at historically, the idea of the intellectual is a child of the Enlightenment and the forces that supported or opposed what has come to be called modernization. The idea of progress, of social development through the application of human reason to the world, has been a central theme in the generational formation of intellectuals.

Ron Eyerman is one of many who have identified Emile Zola as the first public intellectual, claiming that the birth of this modern persona occurred with the publication of Zola’s public letter to the French government regarding its ruling in the Dreyfus affair. In this

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13 For an excellent explanation of the German conditions in the 1960’s that gave rise to Habermas’s realizations, see Melton, *The Rise*, 3 (footnote 5). Robert Holub also points out that Habermas was responding to a post-World War II Germany and thus, to a post-Holocaust legacy that not only his country, but also the world at large, had to contend with. See Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3; John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture: Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 11.


15 Eyerman 21, 23, 32. The letter was titled “Monsieur Félix Faure president de la République” and it was published in 1889 in *L’Aurore littéraire, artistique, sociale*. Eyerman recognized the
moment “the manifest of the intellectual” was born; it was then that the figure of the intellectual himself stopped being simply a teacher or journalist, and took on a *nom de guerre* with the intention to do battle with the establishment, thus becoming part of a “collective historical project.” Eyerman also notes as revolutionary the tie that then emerged between letters and politics and art and politics, as important for both local and global legacies.

Intellectuals were those who wrote or spoke out in public either as active supporters or as opponents of what they themselves identified as modernity [...]. The Dreyfus affair united political and artistic radicalism in a way which was a key to the formation of the new collective identity, the intellectuals [...]. This national generation was significant not only in France: it also marked the beginning of an intellectual tradition which would influence future generations on an almost global scale. The Dreyfus affair consolidated the new social identity around moral and political responsibility. The intellectual was not merely the politicized literary personality (with roots in the Enlightenment): he or she was also the conscience of the nation, with the duty, as well as the right, to speak out.

Building on law professor Jean-Denis Bredin’s analysis that “writers thereafter would arrogate to themselves the role of leader, projecting onto the social sphere the crises and rivalries they experienced within the republic of letters,” Eyerman furthers that the model of the politicized literary figure of the 1960’s, exemplified by Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de first intelligentsia as emerging in a tiny Russian and then Polish context in the 1860’s, as Peter the Great tried to modernize his reign from within and from above, imbuing a small cohort of the bourgeoisie who combined a certain level of education and a vision toward European culture with a group identity and national mission: “Here we see the intellectual being employed and in fact created by the ruler of his country in order to help produce a modern society along the lines of the one he so admired in France. It was hoped therefore that this selected cohort would help bring Russia out of its darkness. The global intellectual was then to take on for a time the same connotations as the intelligentsia: an identifiable group with a self-proclaimed mission to defend ‘culture’, either by doing battle with all established authority or as the defenders of ‘standards’ against those who would degrade them.” Eyerman, 23.

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16 Eyerman, 57.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 37, 58, 60.
19 Ibid., 57 (citing Bredin 1989:280).
Beauvoir, was copied the world over. If the mission of the intellectual after Zola had become that of revitalizing, modernizing, and educating his countrymen through politics, the intellectual had also acquired a public responsibility to bring about progress.

In defining the public intellectual as a contemporary figure, Edward Said advocates the Gramscian notion of the intellectual providing a counter-hegemony to a nation-state’s professed or accepted identity:

The intellectual’s role is first to present alternative narratives and other perspectives on history than those provided by combatants on behalf of official memory and national identity, who tend to work in terms of falsified unities, the manipulation of demonized or distorted representations of undesirable and/or excluded populations, and the propagation of heroic anthems sung in order to sweep all before them.

In exploring the difference between writer and intellectual, Said argues that writers tend to be more revered in society for having some sort of artistic talent, and that because of their definition as artists, they tend to be more removed from the power discourse of hegemony than are intellectuals. Perceiving distance from politics as critical to the purity of the intellectuals’ craft, for Said the question is one of cultural participation. Seeing the intellectual’s choice as one of isolated scholar versus participatory artist, he argues that the job of the public intellectual is not to offer solutions, but to contribute implicitly to the counter-hegemony by working

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20 Ibid., 60.
21 Ibid., 62 (citing Wohl 1979:130).
23 Said, 22. Said sees as unfortunate the connection between rulers and public intellectuals, and claims that their separation and the purity of the spheres is necessary. He sees his own role not as advocate, but as thinker; not as policy-maker, but as intellectual challenger of power who is to remain one step removed from those who rule.
independently as an artist.\textsuperscript{24}

Like Said, Cynthia Ozick speaks to the responsibility that contemporary public intellectuals have toward society, but she does not argue for a separation between art and politics. Instead, Ozick posits that “public intellectual” is a modern-day term for thinker that delineates an important distinction between being a private and public intellectual, the latter implying a responsibility both to one’s contemporaries and to history for what she effects and contributes.\textsuperscript{25} For Ozick, a public intellectual is therefore a thinker with a public forum and as such, is not simply a recipient of history, but an enactor of it.\textsuperscript{26} Ozick understands politics and intellectuals as morally intertwined, most importantly in moments of inhumanity. Her public intellectual is therefore not one whose influence is assumed to trickle down from a pure and isolated position of scholar, or that of a passive cultural participant:

It is not sufficient to have beautiful thoughts while the barbarians rage on. The responsibility of intellectuals includes also the recognition that we cannot live above or apart from our own time and what it imposes on us. People who are privileged to be thinkers are obliged to respect exigency and to admit to crisis.\textsuperscript{27}

By the end of her chapter on the topic in \textit{Quarrel and Quandary}, Ozick has exchanged the term “public intellectual” with that of “political intellectual,” and thus perhaps most effectively discloses the true meaning of the profession, as she understands it.

Michael Baud and Rosanne Rutten address the intellectual’s identity and role in approaching the field of public intellectuals in post-colonial societies. They refer to Antonio

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\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{24}} Said responds to Gramsci’s notion of the public intellectual’s role being one of challenging the obvious, the “ways things work,” as established by the ruling class through the “common sense” imbedded in the accepted national “ideology”.
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{25}} Cynthia Ozick, \textit{Quarrel & Quandary} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 120-121.
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{26}} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{27}} Ibid., 124-5. In her chapter on public intellectuals, Ozick also argues that contemporary public intellectuals have a responsibility to identify and chastise those who effect “the wronging.” She warns against too much politically-correctness where there can be no judgment, and explains that morality involves blame.
\end{flushleft}
Gramsci’s differentiation (alluded to above) between traditional and organic intellectuals:

Gramsci distinguished between ‘traditional’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals, in their proverbial ivory towers, perceive themselves as politically independent and autonomous, but in historical reality they defend the interests of hegemonic social groups. In contrast, organic intellectuals possess fundamental, structural ties to particular classes and demonstrate a genuine political and social engagement.\(^{28}\)

For Baud and Rutten, the organic intellectual is akin to Ozick’s public intellectual in the responsibility and ties they have to society. Edward Shils, cited in studies of post-colonial societies worldwide, argues that these categories of countries in particular have intellectuals who speak for the rest of society.\(^{29}\) Shils notes that the public intellectual is often conceived of as being a social critic at best, if not an outright heretic of society. Yet he urges his readers to be critical of the distance intellectuals often claim for themselves vis-à-vis the society they try to amend, arguing instead that public intellectuals, while making history at times, do not live outside of it:

Every work which appears inevitably has its point of departure in an existing tradition. Every productive intellectual produces his work under the influence of beliefs, forms, usages, and the ethos of procedure and production which he has received and which he in part reproduces. These form the primary tradition to which he is attached or by which he is dominated.\(^{30}\)

Building on Shils’s view of public intellectuals as products, and not simply creators, of their milieu, Eyerman furthers that these figures adopt ideals and models from the past as is

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\(^{29}\) Edward Shils initiated a field of scholarship that spoke to the global implications for colonial or post-colonial intellectuals and nations. See: Edward Shils “The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States,” in *Popular Intellectuals*, eds. Baud and Rutten.

appropriate to their current needs and perspectives.\textsuperscript{31}

This state of latency—not extinction—is made possible on the existence of differentiated sets of stocks of work which are handed down or made available to the productive, reproductive, and receptive intellectual through teachers, historians, critics, and editors, and through printed books, journals, and manuscripts made available through libraries, bookshops, and other distributive institutions.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, public intellectuals are inescapably produced by their particular historical local and global moment, and by their available intellectual resources. There emerges therefore a complicating factor in the conflict between being an independent cultural participant of society and being its mouthpiece. If one speaks for the people, does he by definition cease to be one of them? In his article “The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States,” Shils argues that post-colonial countries have intellectuals who speak for the rest of society, while the public lacks the ability or forum to represent their own voices.\textsuperscript{33} The direction of national definition therefore often remains top-down, and though the intention of intellectuals in post-colonial societies might well be directed at the masses, it is still not the masses’ own participation that is reflected in their works.\textsuperscript{34}

The oxymoronic nature of the public intellectual speaking to a public sphere, empowered by it, dedicated to widening it, and yet situated above it, is a seemingly inescapable condition of

\textsuperscript{31} Eyerman, \textit{Between Culture and Politics}, 188. Eyerman’s work adds the missing historical dimension to understanding public intellectuals as both products and producers of historical and cultural traditions. This work is considered a modern sequel to Lewis A. Coser’s classic titled \textit{Men of Ideas} (1965). Though Eyerman restricts his study to Europe, I have found his work useful in his application of Shils’s idea of understanding intellectuals within their milieus, and of studying them as historical actors.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{33} This might reflect the same semantic oxymoron as Spivak’s subalterns; that is to say, if the subaltern speak, do they not cease to be subaltern? See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in \textit{Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture}, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
third world, post-World War I intellectuals.\textsuperscript{35} Edward Said’s model of removed artist is less possible in third world countries because these societies rely on their intellectuals to lead them to their unrequited destinies. Gershoni and Jankowski explain that what sets the intellectual apart in post-colonial societies is often his self-awareness precisely as an intellectual, assuming for himself a feeling of power and responsibility to change the existing system: “it is not necessarily the success of their endeavors but rather their incessant attempts to reshape the image of their community that set intellectuals apart from the rest of society.”\textsuperscript{36} S. N. Eisenstadt, a colleague of Shils’s, notes that even in places like Latin America, where it is clear that intellectuals have “shaped new symbols of collective identity,” these symbols once entered into the society are then either taken up by the elites or an educated elite is the echelon that moves into political positions.\textsuperscript{37} Eisenstadt points out that in these types of societies where there is a connection between political and intellectual authorities, the latter often provide the necessary legitimization for the former.\textsuperscript{38}

Gershoni and Jankowski claim that after World War I, the role of intellectuals in both developed and developing nations proved the interconnectedness of the modern world, and consequently, of those who were actively envisioning and presenting national images for local

\textsuperscript{35}J.L. Talmon explains that positivism that was born of the Enlightenment gave way to modern totalitarian democracy. As such, he argued, it spoke to the dark underbelly that the Habermas’ limited sphere revealed: the exclusionary and superimposed national identity of the nation-state versus the popular platform of a truly public sphere. For more on totalitarian democracy, see the Introduction and Chapter III in J.L Talmon’s The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960).


\textsuperscript{37}S. N. Eisenstadt, “Intellectuals and Tradition,” in Intellectuals and Tradition, 17.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 8.
and global consumption.\textsuperscript{39} It is only when these intellectuals embrace their local histories and peoples that they cease to be parochial and begin to participate in a conversation about the shortcomings of the nation-state on a global scale.\textsuperscript{40} In so doing, the public intellectual in post-colonial societies stands to become relevant to “the global metropol”. \textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{C. Social Movement Theory}

Having established the birth of the public intellectual in Western Europe, and the emergence of the public sphere there, what is the connection between these markers of modernity in Europe and their Latin American counterparts? What allowed for the transfer of ideas across the Atlantic, and then of course eventually, back? How did the ideas of modernity that began in Enlightenment Europe travel to, and become adopted by, Latin America, a region whose gaze was set to Western Europe (and to her impressive offspring, the United States) for models of its own desired modernity? The field of Social Movement Theory suggests that the travel of ideas necessarily implicates their adaptation at their destination, and that globalization is better understood as transforming the local and the global reciprocally, or in what John Guidry calls a “boomerang effect”.\textsuperscript{42} In this way, globalization, instead of being an agent of oppression, can begin to address on a global scale the limitations and dangers of a restrictive public sphere.

In their work, \textit{Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture: Power, and the

\textsuperscript{39} Though Gershoni and Jankowski’s study deals with a region beyond the scope of my work, I see the evolving role and identities of public intellectuals in Latin America as participating in a global phenomenon that unites them to other post-colonial intellectuals such as those studied by Gershoni and Janowski. This is tied of course to the argument that the modernizing world is inherently globalizing as well, and that the role of the intellectual is likewise that of mediator, translator, and ambassador of both of those processes.

\textsuperscript{40} Edward Shils. \textit{The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 359. Shils is the scholar historians, sociologists, and political scientists alike begin with in the study of public intellectuals and the connections between them, society, national identity and ideas.

\textsuperscript{41} Shils, “The Intellectuals,” 371.

\textsuperscript{42} John A. Guidry et al., 14.
Transnational Public Sphere, John Guidry et al. argue:

[The creation of] a ‘transnational public sphere’ as a real as well as conceptual space”, is a product of globalization [and that] ‘action at a distance’ does not really occur from a distance. This action originates somewhere, proceeds through specific channels, does something, and has concrete effects in particular places. That action is, however, mediated by discursive relationships that are forged in a transnational public sphere. 43

Ideas do not exist in a vacuum; they are transferred, introduced and engaged by people, who are agents of history. A. G. Hopkins, in his work Globalization in World History, likewise challenges scholars to rethink the meaning of globalization, beyond simply signifying the spread of the West. Hopkins urges his readers to understand that these encounters with the West involved a significant exchange concerning cultural, political, and social aspects, 44 and emphasizes that the encounter produced a world order that was jointly, if unequally, created. 45 In extending his analysis to the twentieth century, Hopkins sees the nation-state as being achieved at “a tremendous cost to other discourse,” 46 and incorporates formerly marginalized and disposed groups, especially after the events of 1968, to allow for a better understanding of democratic pluralism. 47

Jorge Lorrain speaks to this perspective in his work Identity and Modernity in Latin America:

43 Ibid., 3.
45 Ibid., 163. Hopkins also challenges historians to focus on the cultural and intellectual results of this complicated globalization that began in the age of European imperialism, where power dynamics were so determinant, and which was more a feat of imagination than of arms.
46 Ibid. Along these same lines, scholar of Latin American intellectuals, Michiel Baud writes: “While globalization has lead to increasing internal cooperation and greater internalization of scientific data, it has failed to create a uniform context for that debate. Intellectual and political agendas and scientific traditions are still largely shaped by local conditions and global inequalities.” See Michiel Baud, “History, Morality, and Politics: Latin American Intellectuals in a Global Context,” IRSH 48 (2003): 55-78, 76.
47 Guidry et al., 15.
It is true that modernity was born in Europe, but Europe does not monopolize its entire trajectory. Precisely because it is a globalizing phenomenon, modernity is actively and not passively incorporated […] Latin American modernity is not exactly the same as European modernity; it is a mixture, a hybrid, a product of the process of mediation which has its own trajectory; it is neither purely endogenous nor entirely imposed from without, and some call it subordinate or peripheral.48

While Lorrain’s warning about Latin America’s agency in the process of adopting ideas are well placed, he touches on a much larger, and in my mind, more interesting question: that of America’s uniqueness in the negotiation of identity between her American and European aspects. As José Matos Mar states:

Through its particular and well-entrenched colonization, which bound it strongly to Europe, Latin America has gone through a process of westernization for more than 300 years. Therefore, one of its problems is that of dependence, which has resulted in an inability to link the past with the present. Such a transition would allow it to define its specificity, whose source is to be found in the heterogeneity of its ethnic and historical components, which, to a certain degree, are present in condensed form in each of the Latin American societies, in superimposed and hierarchical social and cultural strata.49

Global ideas are therefore rendered not only local; upon being imported, they gain a voice that can in turn have consequences for the metropol.

II. Latin American Public Intellectuals

“Will there ever be a Latin American discourse that is no longer centered on either the question of identity or its dismantling?”50

“It can be said without exaggeration that for the most part the Iberoamerican cultural identity has been defined by its narrative.”51

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51 Larrain, 8.
Since the days of national independence, Latin American intellectuals understood the ideals of the French Enlightenment as key to “the West’s” success in French and English Europe, and often looked to their northern neighboring United States as the fortunate inheritor of the enviable Europe, as opposed to that of backward Spain. Meanwhile, the indigenous, Iberian, and otherwise “other” elements of these nascent nations’ pasts (and presents) have been consistently in tension with the desirable nations these men envisioned.

Beginning with Simón Bolívar and Domingo Sarmiento, and continuing with José Martí and Oscar Arias, the intellectual and politics in Latin America have been inextricably and continuously intertwined since the independence movements; the definer and creator of the nation often became also (and even consequently) its leader in chief. The relationship between a national ideal and a troubled reality of post-colonial Latin America rendered a distinct Latin American public intellectual with a certain connection both to politics and to the responsibilities and programs of nation building. In this region, literature has served as the means by which to enunciate, and thereby deliver the desired product.

Literary scholar Martin Stabb argues that certain texts and genres have served in Latin America as “guest narratives” where the authors “continuously search for a key which will provide the answer, unravel the mystery, provide a cure, and allow for the desired representation of the nation-space as an organic and homogeneous whole and the ‘People as One’.”

Likewise, David Foster posits that literature in Latin America has long been used to create a dialectical confrontation between socio-ideological forces. The writings of Latin American intellectuals reflect that while these men admired the Western models, they also were managing

52 Baud and Rutten, Popular Intellectuals, 1.
53 Rosman, 24.
the hypocrisy implicit in Enlightenment ideals as key to delivering true democratic nation-states in Latin America, when they did not do so in Europe.\textsuperscript{55} Latin America’s modernization is globally salient because it provided an earlier view of the model’s inconsistent goals and processes, predating what the Habermas movement was to note in Europe over two centuries, and two world wars, later.\textsuperscript{56} The following section will serve to trace the evolution of the role and message of the public intellectual within Argentina through four generations.

\textbf{A. Four generations of Argentine Public Intellectuals}

The first generation of Argentine intellectuals includes Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851), Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1881-1888), and Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884). In broad terms, they were concerned with defining the ideal Argentina, and the aesthetic of literature came second to the political message within the text. Leopoldo Lugones (1883-1949) and Alberto Gerchunoff (1883-1949) were part of the second generation and they rephrased the search of the “ideal” to that of the “authentic” Argentina. In this effort, they embraced that which was to be unique (and of note not European) about their country, while also taking pride in their artistic contributions as writers to their nation’s cultural life. Members of the third generation, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada (1895-1964) and Eduardo Mallea (1903-1982) continued to embrace the aesthetic emphasis of the second generation, while amending the first generation’s focus on finding the authentic Argentina, to that of finding the authentic Argentine. The shift is one that entailed medical language and a healing mission. The last generation, including David Viñas (1929-2011) and Marcos Aguinis (b.1935), was the only one that advocated for popular activism

\textsuperscript{55} For further discussion about the problematic nature of the Enlightenment in promoting democracy, and especially as it is adopted to the New World, see Jayme A. Sokolow, \textit{The Great Encounter: Native Peoples and European Settlers in the Americas, 1492-1800} (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003).

and involvement in order to democratize both culture and politics. In so doing, this last generation expanded the connection between the intellectual and politics in Argentina from being a relationship of elitism and definition from above, to one of engagement with the people. The public intellectual thus, though always speaking to his people, in the last generation added a new dimension in demanding a dialectical relationship.

Proving Shils’s argument regarding traditions of intellectuals, the various generations of public intellectuals in Argentina have consistently dialogued with their preceding ones, proving to be explicitly aware of the tradition they were a part of, and placing themselves as either continuing or rectifying the preceding generations’ labor of creating Argentina. Members of the various generations of Argentine intellectuals of note share a description of “renaissance men,” trained as lawyers and doctors, and often are prolific not only as writers of essays, poems and novels, but as journalists, playwrights, and professors. Marcos Aguinis is best understood as part of this cohort, a tradition of intellectuals, participating in multiple traditions of interplay between culture and politics.

1. First Generation: Echeverría, Sarmiento, Alberdi

In broad terms, the first generation of Argentine intellectuals was concerned with defining the ideal Argentina, and the aesthetic of literature was less important than the political message within the text. Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851), Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), and Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884) led this first generation of Argentine public intellectuals. They were a cohort of thinkers and activists who worked together and fought for similar visions of Argentina, informed by Enlightenment ideals, and united in exile to further their national aims when they opposed the existing government. The first generation was responding to Argentina’s independence from Spain and the country’s establishment of physical,
population, and identity national parameters, embodied most violently and overtly in the struggle between Federalist and Unitarian influences. The intellectual elites who sought to steer politics through literature, called upon the philosophy of the French Enlightenment and on their conceptions of Western Europe and the United States, as models for Argentina’s modernization. As a result, the terms “civilization” and “barbarism” were juxtaposed, and language played a leading role in blaming the countryside, indigenous people, and the Spanish colonial legacy, for Argentina’s “backwardness”. The first generation of Argentine intellectuals desired an Argentina of the cosmopolitan city, peopled by European immigrants and defined by their culture. Comparing Argentina to the Western models they admired, these Argentines asked, “What is wrong with Argentina?” and turned to literature as a mouthpiece through which to promote the pragmatic solutions they envisioned.

Born in Buenos Aires, and educated at the Sorbonne, Esteban Echeverría can be counted as the nation’s first famous cultural renaissance man, known as a poet, fiction writer and political activist. Echeverría’s political activities in fact are considered to effectively mark the beginning of the Argentine republic. Echeverría was not a solitary figure; he formed part of a group of intellectuals who comprised the Asociación de Mayo, named after the May Revolution, which aimed to respond to the country’s social condition through literature. Favoring policies of political liberalism, Echeverría opposed Juan Manuel de Rosas’ government and fled to

57 Mar, 50.
58 For further reading on the question of Latin American cultural identity, see Saul Yurkievich’s Identidad cultural de iberoamérica en su literatura, particularly Section I. Yurkievich studies what the struggle looked like in regards to America’s gaze toward Europe as it related to search for the authentic American, la hispanidad, la latinidad, el nacionalismo, la raza, and eventually, of establishing in Argentina a counter-point to Europe as part of finding “the authentic”.
59 The May Revolution occurred in 1810 and marked the advent of Argentina’s independence, fully achieved finally in 1816. For more historical background on Argentina’s independence see Daniel Lewis, The History of Argentina (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 35-52.
Uruguay, where he continued his literary activism until his death in 1851. Echeverría is perhaps best known as the author of the essay *Dogma socialista* (1840), the poem *La cautiva* (1837), and the story *El matadero* (1871). His works are seen as a political allegory, one that Sarmiento builds upon in his most famous work *Facundo o civilización y barbarie* (1845), and which underlies the latter’s subsequent pedagogical and governmental assignments.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento achieved the most visible and prominent political role of any intellectual in his generation when he became the President of Argentina from 1868 to 1874. Sarmiento’s curriculum vitae includes the professions of pedagogue, journalist, writer, and soldier, all of which he filled in notable and high ranking positions. He also founded schools of science, agriculture, and an astronomy observatory. Pedagogy, technology and science were all to unite for Sarmiento to create the ideal nation, from what he conceived to be a disparate conglomeration of a people lacking as of yet both the history and the tools to enter the society of elite nations. In this effort, Sarmiento founded the *Sociedad Literaria* in 1838, a filial to the *Asociación de Mayo*, and the newspaper *El Zonda*. Always beginning and ending with the pen, it was through newspaper contributions that Sarmiento affected his most scathing critique of the Rosas government, a government because of which he, like Echeverría, was forced into exile. Sarmiento’s most important work is *Facundo, o civilización y barbarie*, which had far-reaching

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60 Though only published in 1871, Echeverría wrote *El matadero* between 1838-1840, while in exile in Uruguay. The work juxtaposes the European “civilized” man with the “primitive” and “barbaric” indigenous Argentine.

61 For an excellent overview of Sarmiento’s life and works, see Ilan Stavan’s Introduction to the English translation of Sarmiento’s most renowned work, *Facundo*. Sarmiento, Domingo F. *Facundo or Civilization and Barbarism* (New York: Penguin, 1998).

political, social, and cultural implications in his day and currently. In this work, Sarmiento, like Echeverría, juxtaposes the countryside and the city, the native and the immigrant, the indigenous barbaric gaucho and the European civilized gentleman.

Exile is a common fate for intellectuals in Latin America, and their role often is defined as becoming either creators or enemies of the state:

Displacement and exile often followed the defeat of political projects of construction of states and national communities, envisioned in the country of origin...These intellectuals interpreted the past at the time that they aimed to create models of the future (imagined communities, in Benedict Anderson’s terms), projecting them as if emerging from the historical and political analysis they undertook. In this manner, they contributed to the crystallization of collective imagery of the nations created out of the demise of colonial territories.

Sarmiento’s exile took him to Chile, where he began his relationship with the third protagonist of this first generation: Juan Bautista Alberdi. Alberdi, like Sarmiento, was also a writer and politician, in addition to being a lawyer. Having previously worked against the Rosista government from Uruguay, he moved to Chile in 1843. Alberdi published his seminal work, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la república Argentina* (1852) in the same newspaper Sarmiento first published his work *Facundo*: “El Mercurio.” Thereafter, Alberdi’s political influence would only grow, and in fact, the *Constitución Argentina* of 1853 was based on Alberdi’s *Bases* text. Evidencing the dialectical nature of the work of public intellectuals in Argentina, Alberdi’s *Bases* echoed Sarmiento and Echeverría’s ideologies

63 For an in depth look at the impact and implications of *Facundo* for Argentine politics and culture, see Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1996).

64 Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80-1. While in this cited section, Sznajder and Roniger speak specifically of the case of Chile, it is a statement that extends to Latin America as a whole.

65 In 1837 Alberdi published what had been intended to become his doctoral thesis, *Fragmento preliminar al estudio del derecho*, where he attempted a diagnosis of the Argentine national situation and presented possible solutions. In Uruguay Alberdi wrote two plays, which were satires about Manuel de Rosas’ caudillo-style government.
favoring European immigration, while it was disdainful of indigenous culture and society. Like Sarmiento, Alberdi too was to hold an Argentine government post, offered to the latter by President Justo José de Urquiza.66

Echeverría, Sarmiento and Alberdi were involved in the “Generación del ’37,” an intellectual movement comprised of young university intellectuals who came together in 1837 in Buenos Aires to form a literary salon.68 While the salon was initially conceived of as a forum for discussing European writers, it soon took on a local political interest (and was thereafter dissolved by Rosas). In response, Esteban Echeverría and Juan Bautista Alberdi (among others) secretly formed La Asociación de la Joven Generación Argentina, which aimed to recover the Enlightenment objectives of the May Revolution.69 Echeverría’s activities in the literary salon propelled him to be seen as a leader of his generation, having there declared that the social, cultural and economic emancipation sought by the May Revolution remained incomplete. So too, the ideas of Sarmiento and Alberdi, expressed in the salons, influenced the Argentine government elites, and were played out politically in the decades to follow. In the meantime, the newspaper was used as a means by all three to publicize their views and mobilize the masses.

The three principle members of the first generation of intellectuals traveled in similar

66 This post earned Alberdi the ire of Sarmiento. And such is the power of the intellectual that Mitre, even after leaving the presidency, worked to prevent the publication of Alberdi’s completed works in Argentina and used the newspaper “La Nación” as part of his far-reaching program to discredit Alberdi.
67 Of note, upon the ascent to power of President Bartolomé Mitre, following Urquiza’s government, Alberdi again was forced to flee the country.
68 Varela Dominguez de Ghioldi, La Generación Argentina del ’37 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Populares Argentinas, 1956).
69 Sarmiento too joined this group and shared with them the condition of exile that most of its members underwent, at least temporarily, due to their political activities. For more information on the writings and context of this generation of Argentine intellectuals, see Natalio R. Botana, La tradición republicana: Alberdi, Sarmiento y las ideas políticas de sus tiempos (Buenos Aires: Debosillo, 2005).
circles, responded to each other in their writings, and participated in groups of intellectuals that came together for the purpose of debating political and social ideas. Supported by their literary associations, these intellectuals took upon themselves the task to define the Argentine nation. In this effort, they engaged in an analysis of the existing social and material reality of Argentina, critiquing the social and economic condition of their country as brought about by Manuel de Rosas. Consequently, all three espoused the city versus countryside dichotomy and deemed the indigenous people and the Spanish colonial legacy as key causes of Argentina’s backwardness, the obstacles to overcome if Argentina was to join the ranks of the countries it admired.

The underlying assumption that these intellectuals shared was that Argentina’s national identity and destiny could be rectified, and furthermore, that the right ideology with a dedicated champion, could guide the way. In doing so, these intellectuals embodied the tie between culture and politics that was enunciated in Enlightenment Europe. With Echeverría and Sarmiento receiving their education abroad, and Alberdi dying in France, the tie was more real than simply a case of overseas admiration. Europe acted as not only the inspiration and educator, but also at times, as the haven for this American cohort of intellectuals.

2. Second Generation: Lugones and Gerchunoff

The second generation of intellectuals in Argentina rephrased the search of the “ideal”, to that of the “authentic” Argentina, embracing that which was to be unique, and of note, not European, about their country. The major players of the second generation were Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938) and Alberto Gerchunoff (1883-1950). Though their political participation was to be less paramount or impressive than that of the first generation, the link between culture

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71 Sznajder and Roniger also note that Europe served very much as a model for the newly independent Latin American states. See Sznajder, 80.
and politics remained central to these men’s literary mission and to their national stature. As did the first generation, the second came of age in a time of profound national transformation, marked by the very conditions created by the programs espoused by first generation of intellectuals: liberal economics and European immigration. Yet this group vehemently reacted against the previous generation’s admiration of Europe over Argentina, and instead promoted that which was “naturally” American. In the process, they renegotiated the public intellectual’s relationship to culture and politics, emphasizing art as a venue through which to create cultural ideals and present a collective national identity.

Leopoldo Lugones was known for being an accomplished essayist, journalist, and poet, as well as a political activist. Lugones’s *Historia de Sarmiento* (1911) most clearly evidences his engagement with the ideas of the first generation intellectuals regarding Argentine national identity. His political leanings, or rather oscillations, propelled him publicly through various ideological movements, ranging from socialism to liberalism and finally, to fascism. Lugones’s literary and political career began with journalism, and specifically, through his publications in the atheist and anarchist newspaper *El Pensamiento Libre*. He then founded a socialist group in Buenos Aires that was joined by Alberto Gerchunoff and Roberto J. Payró. Lugones’s literary activities were publicly awarded when he was granted the National Prize of Literature in 1926, a

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74 “El Payador” was conference series organized in 1913 by Lugones and held in the *Teatro Odeón*, in the presence of the current President Roque Sáenz Peña. Its proceedings were compiled and published in 1916. See Foster, Lockhart, and Lockhart, 103.
75 For a unique opportunity to understand one Argentine intellectual through the eyes of another, see Jorge Luis Borges’s work *Leopoldo Lugones* (Buenos Aires: Schoenhofs Foreign Books, 1998).
76 Lugones was expelled from the Argentine socialist party in 1903 when he backed the conservative candidate for President, Manuel Quintana.
recognition that was to grow when he went on to preside over the Argentine Writers’ Society in 1928. Lugones’s friendship with renowned modernist writer Rubén Darío allowed him access to the prestigious newspaper *La Nación*, a connection that Lugones would in turn extend to the Jewish Argentine patriot per excellence, Alberto Gerchunoff.

Alberto Gerchunoff was emphatically part of a new generation that envisioned the solution to Argentina as coming from embracing the true Argentine, and concentrated on regenerating the “ser nacional” that was bastardized by the materialism and cosmopolitanism of “el Progreso” of the first generation of intellectuals. Gerchunoff’s efforts, dictated as much by his immigrant Jewish status as by the optimism rampant in the Centennial group of intellectuals he was a part of, painted such a harmonious picture of Argentina’s countryside and the immigrant Jews it had absorbed, that others of his generation confronted him for his unrealistic optimism. Fellow Argentine leftist intellectual, writer, and journalist Roberto Payró wrote Gerchunoff a letter reprimanding him for not talking about the Jewish immigrants’ hardships, their frustrations and trials, and challenged the Jewish writer as to whether in wanting to paint such a harmonious picture of Jewish gaucho symbiosis, he did not in fact misrepresent a dangerous differing truth. Payró challenged: where were the hardships of the immigrants and their processes of adaptation? While true that Gerchunoff did not entirely gloss over the difficult aspects that he himself lived through as a Jew in the countryside, (*Los gauchos judíos* includes the scene of a Jew being killed by a gaucho, just as Gerchunoff’s father was in reality), the scene is not prominent nor does it hold any emotional weight in the work. Yet it was

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78 Many scholars have noted the inherent contradiction between gaucho and Judío. It is in fact the oxymoronic nature of the term that Gerchunoff, by placing together, aimed to overcome. See Edna Aizenberg, *Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires: Borges, Gerchunoff, and Argentine Jewish Writing*. (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2002), Ch. 1.
precisely such a truth that Payró urged his friend to allow room for, inciting Gerchunoff to not let his idealism betray reality.\textsuperscript{79}

But ambivalence often is a luxury reserved for moments of more certainty, one such moment, which \textit{Gauchos judíos} was attempting to create.\textsuperscript{80} Instead, Gerchunoff sought to paint the authentic Argentina and consequently provide a “cure” for his own status of immigration. The result would be a solution for both the Jew, the gaucho, and an Argentina uncomfortable with the waves of immigration the first generation had pursued.\textsuperscript{81} It was a subtle move, yet a dramatic one, which involved turning the Latin American Enlightenment project on its head by promoting the Argentine elements of Argentina and solving the European Jewish question of immigration in the process.\textsuperscript{82} In so doing, Gerchunoff was the first public intellectual in Argentina to attempt to renegotiate the terms of engagement from nation building, to democracy making. To admit ambivalence of belonging at this point would have rendered the work that lay

\textsuperscript{79} Leonardo Senkman, \textit{La identidad judía en la literatura Argentina} (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pardes, 1983), 33.
\textsuperscript{80} For an analysis of the work’s importance, reception, context and impact, as well as an explanation of Gerchunoff’s changing role vis-à-vis the Jewish establishment in Argentina, see Edna Aizenberg’s “Translating Gerchunoff,” in \textit{Judaica Latinoamericana. Estudios Históricos-Sociales} IV (Amilat: Jerusalem, 2001), as well as her introduction to the translation itself: Edna Aizenberg, \textit{Parricide on the Pampa? A New Study and Translation of Alberto Gerchunoff’s Los Gauchos Judios} (Vervuert: Iberoamericana, 2000).
\textsuperscript{81} According to Gerchunoff, the Argentina where Jews were as authentic as gauchos, was the American incarnation of Sepharad— the medieval \textit{convivencia} of Spain where diversity was understood to be the key to the country’s long-lived historical moment of greatness. For further explanations of the meaning of Sepharad for Argentine Jewry, and Gerchunoff’s participation in the like-minded generation of centennial writers in espousing this vision of a land of milk and honey, see Aizenberg, \textit{Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires}, 49-68; and Leonardo Senkman, \textit{La identidad judía}, 40.
\textsuperscript{82} Gerchunoff’s immigration to America was an alternate response to Zionism, one that sought in societies outside of Europe the solution to the Eastern European Jews’ fallen condition at a time of the emergence of modern nation-states, and as such, of modern nationalism. Here, in the pampas of Argentina, funded by Baron de Hirsch, Jews could be positive, contributing, authentic members of new nations. See David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr, eds., \textit{The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature} (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).
ahead as much more tenuous than Gerchunoff dared imagine. Instead, Gerchunoff dedicated himself to uniting the fate of the Jew with the identity of the country by embraced the previously rejected elements of Argentina.\footnote{Gerchunoff's work Argentina, País de Advenimiento further reflects Gerchunoff’s vision of Argentina as the country of the future. Gerchunoff’s País de advenimiento and El pino y la palmera were published posthumously in 1952.}

This generation provided a counter to renovation and progress with a spirit of tradition and recovering the hispano-indigenous past. Instead of imitating that which was foreign, they searched for their own roots and valued their land and their local scenery. In the face of a French Europeanism which was theistic and positivistic, the hispano-catholic tradition would be re-vindicated.\footnote{Senkman, 17.}

However, Gerchunoff’s own trajectory, as a Jew and a pampa man, does unequivocally belie the ambivalence of his optimistic message. Having immigrated with his family from Ukraine to Jewish enclaves in the pampas of Argentina, first Moisés Ville and then Entre Ríos, Gerchunoff moved to Buenos Aires at the age of twelve. There he was accepted into the elite literary circles of Buenos Aires, where he wrote not for Jewish newspapers, but for the prestigious La Nación.\footnote{Ricardo Feierstein, ed., Alberto Gerchunoff: Judío y Argentino. Viaje temático desde “Los gauchos judíos” (1910) hasta sus últimos textos (1950) y visión crítica (Buenos Aires: Milá, 2000).} Gerchunoff subsequently became a university professor in addition to becoming the editor of various newspapers. For decades, Gerchunoff resisted working for Jewish organizations or being marked as a spokesperson for the Jews. Yet for all of the author’s optimism in Los Gauchos Judíos, a work that is widely considered foundational to Jewish Latin American letters,\footnote{Aizenberg, “Translating Gerchunoff,” 402.} Gerchunoff only became an advocate for the Jewish cause both abroad and at home when the situation in Nazi Germany became more frightening,\footnote{By 1944, Gerchunoff concludes that the Jew can in fact not be entirely assimilated, either in Europe or in America, and that the Jew will always be a guest that no one invited (El problema judí a en la segunda posguerra, as transcribed in El pino y la palmera). See also Senkman, 241.} and when the support for
that government in Argentina grew.\textsuperscript{88}

3. Third Generation: Mallea and Martinez Estrada

The third generation, also known as \textit{La generación del ’25}, includes Ezequiel Martínez Estrada (1895-1964) and Eduardo Mallea (1903-1982).\textsuperscript{89} Echoing their predecessors, these public intellectuals saw themselves as part of an elite group aiming to diagnose what was wrong with Argentina.\textsuperscript{90} Like the previous two, the third generation of Argentine public intellectuals came of age at a time not only of profound national tumult, in this case with the national military coup of 1930 and the Infamous Decade that ensued, but also in the aftermath of the crisis of European civilization after World War I.\textsuperscript{91} In reacting to the despair in systems of governments at home and abroad, they embraced their roles as artists to an even greater extent than did the members of the second generation. Evidencing a change of focus, their contributions to society were likewise not intended as much to provide national solutions, as to understand the plight of the individual. Creating an individual with a healthy cultural identity became for the first time the focus of the nation’s intellectuals, understood as the necessary preamble to producing a desirable nation.

In an effort to bring about this healthy Argentine, the third generation built on the second generation’s embrace of the artist as rightful creator of Argentine culture while adopting the

\textsuperscript{88} Later in his career, Gerchunoff founded a Jewish newspaper \textit{Davar} and wrote for the \textit{Anti-Nazi Newspaper}. He also eventually wrote novels about issues of double loyalty, defending Jewish Argentine’s ability to be both good Jews and good Argentines (i.e., \textit{El pino y la palmera} (1952)), even if most were published posthumously.

\textsuperscript{89} Jorge Luis Borges is also a part of this generation.

\textsuperscript{90} Pilar Roca Escalante, “David Viñas o el proceso a si mismo,” in \textit{Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana} 29 (2000): 299.

\textsuperscript{91} The coup d’état was led by José Félix Uriburu against President Hipólito Yrigoyen, and marked the beginning of the Infamous Decade. This period ended with another coup in 1943, affected by the Grupo de Oficiales Unidos or GOU, the nationalist branch of the armed forces, of which Juan Perón was a member.
original question of what went wrong with Argentina. Argentine identity was now reformulated
as a medical, and in fact psychological, problem requiring a diagnosis, prognosis, and cure.
Personal demons of guilt and shame were to be countered with self-acceptance and the pursuit of
authentic evaluation. While aware of the political and social crisis of their country (and the
world), they emphasized personal healing through self-acceptance. Through literature, Martinez
Estrada and Mallea introduced a holistic approach: healing as a people was to begin with an
acceptance of the whole individual and an embrace of all that was Argentine. Literary scholar
Silvia Rosman argues that it was this generation of Eduardo Mallea and Ezequiel Martinez
Estrada that was pivotal because it reformulated the very notion of community in Argentina in a
manner that had consequences for all of Latin America.  

Ezequiel Martinez Estrada was born in 1895 in San José de la Esquina, a town of the
Santa Fe province. He lived in provincial towns until the age of twelve, at which point he moved
to the capital. In 1914 Martinez Estrada began working at the postal service of Buenos Aires,
where he continued to work until retirement in 1946. His profession as a writer began as a poet,
and it is said that his main influences were Edgar Allan Poe, Ruben Dario, and especially,
Leopoldo Lugones. He was a literature professor at the Colegio Nacional de la Universidad
Nacional de la Plata from 1924 to 1945. Martinez Estrada’s work as a writer was widely
acclaimed in his own lifetime, meriting him the National Prize of Literature in 1933 for his
poetry, the National Prize of Letters for the Radiografía de la pampa, and the Grand Prize of
Honor from the Argentine Writers Society in 1948. In 1946, Martinez Estrada established a close
tie to the journal Sur and its editor Victoria Ocampo, with whom he exchanged letters for years.

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92Rosman, 27.
93Graciela N. V. Corvalán, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. El hombre y su obra (St. Louis: Webster
University, 2001).
He became president of the Argentine League for the Rights of Man in 1957. Estrada was undoubtedly a noted figure of the Argentine cultural landscape of his day.

*Radiografía de la pampa* (1933) is Martinez Estrada’s best-known work, and it is arguably among the first social psychology studies in literature in Latin America. The work was a response to Uriburu’s 1930 military coup and set out to study the history of Argentina in order to truly understand the problems that currently plagued her.94 Martinez Estrada attributed the country’s ills to Argentina’s colonial legacy, which entailed European men coming to find riches, and in the process, producing offspring of shame with indigenous women they did not value as equals.95 His next works (*La cabeza de Goliath* (1940), *Sarmiento* (1946), *Los invariantes históricos en el Facundo* (1947), and *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro* (1948)) are seen as a continuation of the writer’s passionate examination of the Argentine social, political and cultural reality.96 Martinez Estrada, as the others who came before, responded to Sarmiento’s categories of “civilization” and “barbarity”, but subverted the meaning and blame previously embodied by these terms, to demonstrate the very failure and injustice of Sarmiento’s “civilization” project.97

After the fall of Peronism in 1955, Martinez Estrada tried to influence politicians and educators through writings such as *Cuadrante del pampero* (1956), *¿Qué es esto?* (1956), *Exhortaciones* (1957), and *Las 40* (1957). In his writings, Martinez Estrada evaluated his country as exhibiting a permanent state of social and political crisis. Martinez Estrada’s choice to leave

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94 Martinez Estrada explains that when he wrote *Radiografía de la pampa* he was actually working on a study of Sarmiento. He claims that it was in 1930 that he understood the parallel between 1930 and 1910, between Uriburu and Yrigoyen. See Enrique Espinoza, ed., *Leer y escribir, preguntas y respuestas* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969).
96 Ibid., 2.
97 Ibid., 3.
Argentina in 1959 fueled contemporary criticism that regarded him as an intellectual not as much of the people but above them; which is ironic, because he reportedly left Buenos Aires precisely because he did not feel his advice was valued by the people. Reflecting the tension that exists between the definition of the public intellectual as participant and leader of his society, Martinez Estrada’s choice to move to Bahía Blanca upon returning to Argentina in 1962, ensured that he continued to have a “peripheral” relationship to his public. From this position, the writer continued to advocate his views. Always aware of his public reception, he requested that his work be read and judged as the production of an artist and thinker.

James Maharag argues that Martinez Estrada was part of a cohort of intellectuals who “all subscribed to a belief in the efforts of an élite, of an enlightened minority, to effectively lead a given country toward its moral/historical destiny.” In envisioning his leadership as consisting of diagnosing the country’s ills, rather than in becoming involved in social or political institutions, Martinez Estrada received much backlash from fellow intellectuals and the public of his day. He was criticized for not taking on a more pragmatic stance when it came to helping “heal” the country. Perhaps Martinez Estrada’s perceived “limitations” speak to his embodiment of an intellectual in the mode of Edward Said versus that of Cynthia Ozick, one dedicated to perfecting culture, not politics. From a nation that expected their intellectuals to be

100 Ibid., 5.
101 Maharag, 40.
102 Ibid., 83-9.
103 Argentine historian, sociologist and literary critic Juan José Sebreli gave perhaps the harshest critique of Martinez Estrada. See Sebreli, *Martínez Estrada, una rebelión inútil* (1960). Viñas did grant that Martinez Estrada’s mission was important because he exposed and attacked Argentina’s collective lies. Viñas in fact dedicated an issue of his journal *Contorno* exclusively to Martinez Estrada. This reflects the interconnectedness of public intellectuals in Argentina, who speak to each other within and across generations. See Maharag, 181.
leaders, his approach was critiqued as cowardly.\textsuperscript{104}

Eduardo Alberto Mallea, a second principal member of the fourth generation, was born in Bahía Blanca on August 14, 1903 and died in Buenos Aires in 1982. He was a descendant of Sarmiento’s.\textsuperscript{105} Educated early on by foreign teachers, and surrounded by classmates who came from immigrant families, Mallea is said to have felt inferior to them, while also developing an early respect and fascination with Europe and European culture.\textsuperscript{106} Having moved to Buenos Aires with his family at the age of thirteen, Mallea first studied law, yet chose to leave his legal training in order to write for the newspaper \textit{La Nación}, for which he subsequently became its editor. In 1937 the literary review journal \textit{Sur} published Mallea’s most important interpretive study about the social and spiritual reality of Argentina, \textit{Historia de una pasión argentina},\textsuperscript{107} which was born of a profound anguish over the fate of his country.\textsuperscript{108}

Treading the same intellectual and cultural pavement as the intellectuals who came before him, Mallea joined the discussion of civilization versus barbarism and city versus countryside. Siding with Gerchunoff in portraying the man of the countryside as the more authentic, Mallea described him as deep, dignified, decent, generous, spiritual, clean, and tied to the land.\textsuperscript{109} Mallea’s widely celebrated \textit{El sayal y la púrpura} also dealt with the ideal and authentic

\textsuperscript{104} Among the intellectuals cited here, Martinez Estrada was the only one who was born in the countryside and did not move to the city. If Buenos Aires was considered the core of the nation by the second generation, Europe was its beacon for the first, a draw for educational reasons and as a viable place of exile, when the intellectuals disagreed with national politics.

\textsuperscript{105} Sarmiento mentions Mallea’s family in his \textit{“Recuerdos de provincia,”} in \textit{La biblioteca Argentina, Serie Clásicos} (Barcelona: Agea S. A., 2001), 23.


\textsuperscript{107} Mallea was also to become one of the editors of this prestigious magazine.

\textsuperscript{108} Eduardo Mallea, \textit{Historia de una pasión argentina} (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1937), 15.

\textsuperscript{109} It is to these \textit{pampa} men that Mallea dedicated his work, \textit{La bahía del silencio}. Polt, 23.
Argentine, which for Mallea, like for Gerchunoff, resided in the nation’s Hispanic elements.\(^{110}\) In *La bahía del silencio*, Mallea writes of his present Argentina: “Aquel país no era el país. Aquel país que veíamos no era el país que queríamos. Aquel país que tocábamos no era el país que esperábamos[…]. Un país nuevo debe ser sobrio, claro, limpio de palabra, seguro de sí.”\(^{111}\)

Eduardo Mallea describes his work a dialogue,\(^{112}\) hoping to inspire others to both engage in dialogue and in action.\(^{113}\) The writer presented himself as a social-psychological surgeon of sorts, curing his sick nation with a painful but necessary deep incision,\(^{114}\) extricating through intellectual activity the malignant tumor: “Inteligencia analítica y asociadora, voluntad de participación…Este intervenir, este abrir un mundo y buscar sus males y extripar el tumor, es operación de intelecto…Participación fundamental y movilización de la conciencias, eso es lo que el instante exige del que reflexiona, y no contemplación.”\(^{115}\) Mallea scholar John H.R. Polt explains that the writer was clearly a product of the political climate of his time, having “matured in the period of Radical rule and, during the next twenty-five years, witnessed the systematic destruction of liberal democratic institutions and processes, the corruption and authoritarianism of democracy’s enemies and the weakness and disorganization of its defenders.”\(^{116}\)

Like Martinez Estrada, Mallea also wrote about what it meant to be a part of a

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\(^{113}\) Alberto Roldán writes that Mallea offered a vision of a new kind of Argentine man, one who was dedicated to his country, his people and their destiny. Mallea’s reflections are understood as ones born of anguish, fueling this generation’s search for meaning. See: Alberto Fernando Roldán, *Eduardo Mallea y su visión del nuevo hombre argentino* (lecture, Bahía Blanca, Sept. 24, 1987).

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 3-5.

\(^{116}\) Polt, 3.
community or nation, and likewise was criticized for not offering practical solutions.\textsuperscript{117} Yet Mallea’s message nonetheless called for action and concrete decisions,\textsuperscript{118} and likewise regarded his own role as one that differentiated between “writer-spectator” and “escritor-agonista,” defining himself in the process as the latter: a writer whose fate is intertwined with that of his fellow countrymen, thereby dictating his responsibility to lead the polity.\textsuperscript{119} Scholar John Hughes calls this trend a “ritual-narration” and points out that Mallea’s fictional characters are constantly involved in a struggle, which the reader experiences and relates to. The audience sympathizes with the characters’ plights, where elements of good are pitted against elements of self-destruction.\textsuperscript{120} In this way, Mallea identifies with Argentina, the country divided against itself in search of its true identity.\textsuperscript{121} For Mallea, literature achieved prophetic proportions in the creation of America, and he, the public intellectual, needed to fulfill as writer his duty in the creation of the Argentine nation.\textsuperscript{122}

In the third generation the language of national salvation turned decidedly medical; the goal became that of finding a cure, of surgically removing the malignancy from a country, which, if healed, would finally live up to its potential. For Mallea, as for Martínez Estrada, the cure was very personal and also very spiritual.\textsuperscript{123} While Mallea was willing to assume the political orientation demanded of him to a greater extent than was Martínez Estrada, he too

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{117} Ibid., 51.
\bibitem{118} http://www.ensayistas.org/filosofos/argentina/Mallea/introd.htm (accessed 10/28/09).
\bibitem{119} Mallea writes: “El escritor-spectador realiza su existencia en su obra; el escritor-agonista realiza su obra mediante el compromiso y el riesgo de su propia existencia. El primero, es el tipo del ensimismado; el segundo es el tipo del intelectual que participa trágicamente en el destino de su tiempo”. http://www.ensayistas.org/filosofos/argentina/mallea (accessed 10/30/09).
\bibitem{120} See Hughes’s introduction to his translation of Eduardo Mallea’s compiled works, \textit{All Green Shall Perish and other novellas and stories} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).
\bibitem{121} Hughes, viii.
\bibitem{122} Polt, 79.
\bibitem{123} Ibid., 8-9.
\end{thebibliography}
maintained a preference for artistic endeavors over public leadership.\(^{124}\) Thus, though the correlation between activism with culture emerged in the third generation of intellectuals, it would take the military dictatorship of the 1970’s to catapult an actual program of response to the enduring crisis of democracy and identity in Argentina.

4. Fourth Generation: Viñas and Aguinis

“Tradition is not inherited; it is conquered”.\(^{125}\)

The fourth generation of public intellectuals in Argentina responded to the terror of El proceso de reorganización militar, which initiated the last quarter of the twentieth century. Literature was thereafter to serve not only as a venue through which to define the country, but with which to mobilize it. The previous pursuits of the “ideal” and the “authentic” became associated increasingly with violence and totalitarian policies, and there emerged a new emphasis on democracy over national identity. In the fourth generation, the public intellectual would continue to address the various roles and characteristics of the previous generations, as well as the ever-salient question: What went wrong with Argentina? Yet now, the people were asked to join in fixing the nation by the very act of participating in it. The public intellectual was to be the one who would issue the invitation or even provide a handbook, but his relationship to the people became for the first time a dialectical one.

David Viñas and Marcos Aguinis are the two principal members of the fourth generation.

\(^{124}\) Pilar Roca Escalante critiques that Mallea only provided a brief analysis between a “visible” and rather ostentatious Argentina, one preoccupied with bureaucratic affairs, and the “invisible” sphere of Argentina, which was formed by an honest but silent population. She explains that the intellectuals at Contorno thought Mallea stopped short in his analysis and remained an “escritor preocupado” without taking the leap to engaging with the reality he denounced. Yet Pilar allows that perhaps this scathing criticism was somewhat unjust because in Mallea’s conception, the task of incorporating the social fragmentation belonged not to writer but to the politician. See Pilar Roca Escalante, “David Viñas o el proceso a sí mismo,” Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana 29 (2000): 299-300.

of Argentine intellectuals, and they are both of Jewish decent and identified publicly as Jewish writers.\textsuperscript{126} It is not surprising that if public intellectuals act as harbingers of modernity in Latin America, that Jews, as implicit challengers to homogeneity, should emerge as the quintessential advocates for a modernity of diversity, pluralism, and participation.\textsuperscript{127} Born in Buenos Aires in 1929, David Viñas was the first among all generations of intellectuals mentioned thus far to have been born in the capital. In fact, he was born to a mother who likewise was a native of the city, and he died there as well in 2011.\textsuperscript{128} David Viñas’s father, Judge Pedro Ismael Viñas, came from an Andalucian family that had immigrated to Argentina in the first third of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{129} Viñas’s grandfather took part in the campaign to conquer the desert in 1879, led by Julio Argentino Roca, a campaign that wiped out the indigenous population and established the current national boundaries.\textsuperscript{130} His grandson was to dedicate his life to counter the violence within Argentine society toward unwanted elements.

David Viñas was well known as the director of the Argentine Literary Institute and the Institute’s literary criticism magazine \textit{El Matadero},\textsuperscript{131} and is remembered as a writer of novels and essays, in addition to having been a playwright, journalist, and historian.\textsuperscript{132} Viñas’s writing

\textsuperscript{126} For an excellent summary David Viñas’s life and contributions as an Argentine writer, see David Lockhart’s \textit{Jewish Writers of Latin America: A Dictionary}. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 565.
\textsuperscript{127} For a brief look at this topic, see: Darrell B. Lockhart’s “The Narrative Assertion of Cultural Identity in Three Latin American Jewish Novels,” \textit{Romance Languages Annual}, 1993; 5: 451-54.
\textsuperscript{128} Viñas’ mother, Esther Porter, was likewise born in Buenos Aires in 1899 in a hotel for immigrants, her parents having recently emigrated from Eastern Europe.
\textsuperscript{129} David Viñas, “En Capítulo,” in \textit{La historia de la literatura Argentina}. No. 148: (Centro Editor de América Latina: Buenos Aires, 1982).
\textsuperscript{130} Escalante, 295.
\textsuperscript{132} In 1953, Viñas co-founded and co-directed the magazine \textit{Contorno} with his brother Ishmael. \textit{Contorno} was a politically and literary revolutionary magazine for the time. See \textit{Entrevista de Fabián Berenblum}, Revista Lote N° 49.
centers on class conflict and cultural repression by totalitarian regimes. His most popular essays of literary criticism are *Literatura argentina y realidad política, de Sarmiento a Cortázar* (1970), *Indios, ejército y fronteras* (1982), and *Anarquistas en América latina* (1984). According to literary scholar and novelist, Ricardo Piglia, Viñas’s work is marked by his indignation toward violence of the economic, ideological, or political brand, and toward oligarchic domination. Piglia sees Viñas’s works as having to do with violated bodies, while Viñas himself stated that his point of departure in literature is one of “desquite” or vengeance, of doing in literature what one cannot do in life. Likewise, Viñas proudly and explicitly presented his magazine *Contorno* as a vehicle of treason to the “official” nation. In his work *Literatura argentina y realidad política*, Viñas stated explicitly that Argentine literature is the history of the national will:

La literatura y la cultura Argentina en su última y más profunda instancia es asunto político. La literatura argentina es la historia de la voluntad nacional…la literatura argentina comenta a través de sus voceros la historia de los sucesivos intentos de una comunidad por convertirse en nación, entiendo ese particular nacionalismo como realismo en tanto significación totalizadora, como elección y continuidad en un élan inicial y como estilo en tanto autonomía y autenticidad de los diversos grupos sociales de acuerdo a las conyunturas a las que se ven abocados.

If David Viñas’s grandfather was involved in the first generation’s struggle to define Argentina according to both physical and sociological boundaries, the grandson came to devote his professional life to the consequences of exclusionary nationhood and its processes. After suffering in his own family the “disappearance” of his two children by *El Proceso de Reorganización Militar* of the 1970’s, and having himself been exiled in Europe, Mexico, and

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133 Ibid.
136 Escalante, 296. Escalante understands Viñas as using literature to question the Argentine national identity that had been established through literature.
the United States during the military dictatorship, David Viñas returned in 1984 to Argentina to call for practical solutions to Argentina’s national crisis, understanding that the effective union of culture and politics was integral to achieving a democratic nation. Viñas felt guilty precisely as an intellectual, for not having been able to prevent El Proceso, and thereafter employed his skills as a fiction writer and as a playwright to demand for the democratization of Argentine national culture. It was therefore Viñas who, as a member of the intellectual elite, first made way for this last generation’s association between politics and culture to be necessarily one of popular participation and activism. Like the intellectuals before him, Viñas took it as his right and duty to both define and create Argentine national identity, however he reformulated the top-down approach to include a project of cultural production by the population at large. As Escalante argues:

Viñas como parte de su generación concebía la literatura como un medio por el cual ayudar a devolver la soberanía al pueblo y reinstaurar en él su capacidad para elegir su destino. Esta visión que entendía la práctica literaria como un modo de acortar distancias entre el pueblo y su correspondiente gobierno, le concedía a la obra de creación un valor más utilitario que el de ser un objeto estético destinado a la contemplación y al alimento del alma.

In his approach, Viñas was explicitly reacting to the Centennial generation of intellectuals who sought to identify the ideal Argentina, and perceived their writings as acts of violence that taught people to disrespect their fellow man. Viñas argued that by becoming

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138 Viñas spoke to the abuse of the so-called neo-liberal government, which he understood engaged in violence (literally and figuratively) against all deemed “others”, for the sake of the unity of the nation. Masiello writes: “Viñas, who is arguably one of Argentina’s most formidable intellectuals set in place a reflection on marginality that continues to carry its weight upon those who seek to explain the social imaginary in terms of critique of difference.” Francine Masiello, *The Art of Translation: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 30.

139 Escalante, 297.

140 Viñas, *Literatura Argentina*, 358. See also Gyanendra Pandey’s *Routine Violence* for an explanation of the use of violence as a mechanism of state control to disempower people and
vigilant and wary of the search for the authentic, and identifying the racist and classist elements of this long-standing Argentine tendency, one could fend off totalitarianism. This last reflection was stated as a critique to Gerchunoff, who Viñas judged as contributing unwittingly to the dangers of authenticity as a purebred mentality by turning a blind eye to the political, racist, classist, and political implications of treatment of foreigners. Viñas claimed that had Gerchunoff truly understood the situation in 1910, he would either have left Argentina or killed himself.

In the three generations of Argentine public intellectuals that came before Viñas and Aguinis, the duty of the intellectual evolved from that of defining, authenticating, to healing the country. Viñas went one step further to claim along with his right as a public intellectual, a responsibility to create the Argentina that would not produce or allow totalitarian governments at home. Having experienced the “disappearance” of his two children, Viñas expressed that he had failed, not as a father but as an intellectual, to create a country that would not tolerate such realities. Literature and theater, according to Viñas, were the cultural forums that could serve as tools for instilling political awareness and teaching individual responsibility. However, in spite of Viñas’ political awareness, and though often touted as the height of the public intellectual in modern Argentina, Viñas did not serve in a government capacity. Marcos Aguinis,

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141 For a full discussion of Viñas’ views on Gerchunoff, see section “Gerchunoff: Gauchos Judíos y Xenofobia” in Chapter 4 of Viñas’s *Literatura Argentina*.
142 Viñas cites Payró’s letter to Gerchunoff, where fellow intellectual Payró chastises Gerchunoff for undermining the real implications of immigration to a country that was so intent on defining authenticity in order to achieve the desired outcome. Ibid., 360.
143 Escalante, 302-3.
144 Ibid., 305. Escalante also cites Viñas as being influenced by Jean Paul Sartre’s 1948 essay titled “What is Literature?” where political activism and literary practice and presented as two sides of one coin. Ibid., 299.
of the fourth generation, would be the one to unite the political, the civic, and the cultural in the person of public intellectual in Argentina.

III. Marcos Aguinis

In his role in the government as a Minister of Culture and through his prolific work as a writer of various genres, Aguinis participated in an Argentine milieu that both produced him and employed him. In so doing, he knowingly took part in a legacy of generations of intellectuals who have likewise mapped out programs or identities for Argentina in view of wider national and world processes.

A. By His Own Account

Marcos Aguinis was born on January 13, 1935 in Córdoba, Argentina. In an autobiographical essay published in literary scholar Stephen A. Sadow’s *King David’s Harp*, Aguinis declares his first love to have been with the humanities, even though he pursued a career in medicine before turning to writing. One might wonder whether Aguinis’s professional choices may not also have been pragmatic ones, as a career in medicine would surely have been a more secure choice than that of a writer. We are not however privy to such reflections, and more relevant to the present study is that when Aguinis relates his professional journey, the narrative is one of consistency, a path perhaps faceted, but unfailingly leading to the role of national healer. For example, when reflecting about beginning his medical studies at the University of Córdoba, Aguinis notes that he did not neglect literature, philosophy, or history out of lack of interest or inclination, but rather, because these specialties “were controlled by

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146 Ibid., xv. In Latin America, it is quite common for public intellectuals to have other professional training if not simultaneously pursued vocations, oftentimes because it is a practical impossibility to subsist on intellectual work alone.
backwards figures, steeped with a Catholicism closer to the Inquisition than the Gospels.”\textsuperscript{147} Aguinis explains that he sought out medicine as an alternative to the humanities because, like literature, it gave him access to “the pain, anguish, desperation, and also the gratitude of human beings,” without subjecting him to the mentorship of those he would ultimately spend his life battling.\textsuperscript{148}

Aguinis’s medical trajectory began with neurosurgery and ended with psychiatry. He received scholarships for his surgical training, which took him from Córdoba to Buenos Aires, and then to Europe (France and Germany specifically). While practicing medicine, Aguinis also worked for the Jewish Congress of Latin America and in this capacity, organized a Colloquium for Cultural Pluralism. At the age of forty-two Aguinis decided to dedicate himself to psychoanalysis, and it was during his medical training that he wrote his first novels, a vocation that became his primary one after 1990.\textsuperscript{149} Yet in the interim, upon the country’s return to democracy in 1983, Aguinis served under President Raúl Alfonsín as the nation’s sub-Secretary and then Secretary of Culture.

Aguinis’s civic work was part of the President’s wider program of including intellectuals in his government in both official capacity and as informal presidential advisers.\textsuperscript{150} It is in this context that Aguinis headed a committee aimed to mobilize mechanisms of cultural participation

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 36. Aguinis’s first book appeared in print in 1963, and he has since become a bestselling author in Argentina, publishing ten novels, fourteen books of essays, four compilations of short stories and two biographies, in addition to an incessant flow of newspaper contributions. While his works are consistently bestsellers in Argentina, they have received very little attention by North American audiences due largely to the fact that only a few of his works have been translated into English. See also Ignacio López-Calvo’s \textit{Religión y militarismo}, Ch.1.
\textsuperscript{150} During the last military dictatorship (1976-83) the circulation of Aguinis’s books was limited and many of them were secretly taken out of the country. The reason behind this censorship is precisely what Aguinis and Alfonsín intended to counter with a return to democracy: the limitations of free speech and the restriction of the public sphere.
throughout the country through the Programa Nacional de Democratización de la Cultura (PRONDEC). PRONDEC was designed to yield an Argentine cultural awakening, inciting the country’s citizens to become conscientious about their rights, responsibilities, and the potentials of achieving a true democracy. These are the same themes that became the obsessions of Aguinis’s literary works. Like his literary products, PRONDEC was an intellectual success. The government program received the acclaim of both UNESCO and the United Nations, earning Aguinis UNESCO’s prize of Educación para la paz (Education for Peace). Nonetheless, the actual effects of the program were admittedly limited,151 and the appointment of Marcos Aguinis, a Jew, was a widely contested issue in Argentina.152 Though the otherwise prolific and honest Aguinis does not reflect this public outcry against his appointment in his essays, novels, dialogues, or articles, making space for the Jew in Argentina became central to his mission. This quest was not for Aguinis a question of Jewish rights, but of Argentine pluralism and hence modernity.

Aguinis served for only eight months as Minister of Culture, yet he continued to head PRONDEC under the direct auspices of Raúl Alfonsín until the President left office in 1991.153 Though Aguinis seldom and briefly addresses his exit from the government post, the reader witnesses Aguinis subsequently pursue his agenda of national democratization through a fervently vibrant literary career, polemical tracts, public lectures and newspaper contributions.154 Aguinis thus became not only a writer but also a nationally recognized public figure who

154 It was in Europe, while pursuing his training as a surgeon, that Aguinis gathered information for his books Refugiados, crónica de un palestino and La cruz invertida. The latter work earned him Spain’s Premio Planeta in 1970, and marked the first time this prestigious literary award was ever granted to a foreigner.
supplemented his livelihood from conferences and lectures at artistic, scientific, educational, and political institutions in Europe, the United States, Latin America, Russia, and Israel. In the process, he was awarded numerous national and international awards for his work as a public intellectual.

Marcos Aguinis transparently reveals a persistent agenda as it relates to his literature, agreeing with the “accusation” often directed at him that his works revolve around a half dozen obsessions. He unapologetically teases that the changes in characters or scenery from book to book are actually just a courtesy to the readers, so that they will not be bored. By the author’s own description, the themes that occupy his works are:

Disgust with injustice, solidarity with the weak, revulsion toward the owners of ‘truth,’ fanaticism for life and its celebration, admiration for spiritual courage, and adherence to beautiful and vigorous prose. My narrations are aesthetic products, where the aesthetic doesn’t hesitate to strengthen itself with thought. Thought is also conflict and, if it is properly treated, generates the maximum tensions. I don’t avoid it; every character not only runs, he maneuvers, fights, and feels; he also reasons and questions.

While interested in the aesthetics of literature, Aguinis’s dedication is not to art but to an agenda expressed through the text. The craft is admittedly a handmaiden to the message within, and as such, serves to promote a forum for democratic participation. The themes of conflict, struggle, and demystification of rule and truth are all facets of empowering the individual, and by extension, the people of Argentina at large. David Foster, scholar of Latin America, observes:

Desde un principio, la tarea literaria e intelectual de Aguinis ha sido poner en evidencia semejantes estructuras ideológicas, siendo el caso la ignorancia sobre su existencia y cómo funcionan es lo que más permite que circulen libremente como

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155 The biographical information offered here has been taken from Aguinis’s interview as translated by Stephen A. Sadow in *King David’s Harp*, as well as from Aguinis’s work of conversation with Laguna in *Diálogos sobre la Argentina y el fin del milenio*, and from Aguinis’s official website www.Aguinis.net. (Of note, the website offers versions in Spanish and English, indicated his intended local as well as international audiences.)

156 Aguinis in Sadow, 36.

157 Ibid., 36-7.
In revealing the verticality of power, Aguinis’s intention is to demystify the machinations of authority, and thereby make them accessible to the public. Throughout his works, Aguinis promotes the removal of the barriers to political and social constructs as the necessary first step toward popular enfranchisement and democratization.\textsuperscript{159}

Though having lived under tyrannical governments, Aguinis is the only intellectual of the four generations mentioned, who remained in Argentina and continued to advocate his message of democracy and to participate in the cultural production of his country. While living in oppressive environments, Aguinis found a way to creatively “doctor” his writing in such a manner as to evade the censors. In his own words: “The greater part of my existence was spent under the yoke of authoritarianism that scorched Argentina. The repression obligated the use of ellipsis; to say what was burning in one’s guts and at the same time, not lose the book that one had written or one’s life.”\textsuperscript{160} Tyrannical conditions led Aguinis to use certain historical periods, such as the Inquisition in America, not only as “ellipses”, but actually as historical parallels to moments of totalitarianism within his own lifetime. In his writings, Aguinis equated the various systems of oppression ranging from the \textit{Proceso} of 1970’s Argentina, to the Inquisition, the Holocaust, and Argentine complicity to Muslim fanaticism, as embodiments of historically synonymous systems of hatred, violence, and exclusion.

\textbf{B. Aguinis, the Jew from Cordoba}

1918 witnessed a university revolution in Cordoba, catalyzing a modernization and

\textsuperscript{158} López-Calvo, i-ii.  
\textsuperscript{159} Aguinis in Sadow, 37.  
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 34.
democratization program not only in Argentina, but rather in Latin America at large.\footnote{161} The revolt was geared toward the Jesuits of the University of Cordoba, who were thereafter overthrown as hallmarks of an antiquated anti-modern legacy. The students fought for free access to university education for all, university autonomy, student co-government, scientific modernization, and a secular curriculum. The uprising is noteworthy because the students were not only reacting to the Counter-Reformation shackles of Argentina’s Hispanic colonial legacy, they were also questioning the modernizing country’s view to the “right” Europe, to Western Europe, as the key to her salvation, urging that Argentina provide her own answers.

The students of Córdoba University in 1918, set forth their goals for Argentina achieving a culture of diversity, democracy, and critical thought within global processes of modernization. In so doing, this generation offered in Latin America, an earlier instance of that which would emerge two generations later as the post-Habermas debate. The Argentine newspaper Clarín reported:

Según el mensaje de los estudiantes a la juventud ibero-americana: “Nuestra América hasta hoy a vivido de Europa, teniéndola por guía. En cultura, la ha nutrido y orientado. Pero la última Guerra ha hecho evidente lo que ya se adivinaba: que en el corazón de esa cultura iban los gérmenes de su propia disolución. Su ciencia estaba al servicio de las minorías dominantes y alimentaba la lucha del hombre contra el hombre (...) Para los jóvenes, esto trajo como consecuencia el despertar “de un continente que vivía colonizado por el pensamiento europea y cuyos hombres representativos sólo aspiran a figurar como rasgo notorio de discípulos en el concierto mundial de la inteligencia”.

The Cordoba uprising is in fact credited with inspiring the widespread revolts of industrialized

\footnote{161}{The target of the uprising was identified as the entrenched system of education that was instituted by the Jesuits in the 17th century, and which was organized to reproduce the antiquated social stats quos. The demands of the revolt were for democracy and science, in contestation of authoritarianism and despotism in the universities. The University Manifesto is titled Reforma Universitaria de 1918, and is available online at: http://www.fmmmeducacion.com.ar/Historia/Documentoshist/1918universidad.htm (accessed 4/23/2010).}

nations’ in the 1960’s.\textsuperscript{163} The ramifications of the Córdoba revolt included a spawning of movements across Latin America formed with similar goals, including the organization of an international conference in Mexico City attended by delegates from both America and Europe. Thus, we see in Cordoba the beginnings of Latin America ceasing to be parochial on Shils’s terms, precisely by embracing the local. It seems fitting, if not a case of historic poetry, that on January 13, 1935 Aguinis was born to Jewish immigrant parents in Córdoba, Argentina.\textsuperscript{164} Aguinis, as this dissertation demonstrates, likewise dedicates his life to advocating for an Argentine nation of diversity, democracy, critical thought, and accountability, a nation that has global traditions to draw on as well as to overcome, if it is to emerge as a true democracy, and therefore, as a nation that can then serve as an example to others globally.

For Aguinis, Jews will serve as a meter of Argentina’s modern democratic character and that of other nations’ treatment of diversity in their midst. Aguinis’s ultimate message both at home and abroad is that of diversity, participation, and responsibility, a demand that citizens and their governments respect all members of society, including, and not simply tolerating, those who are deemed “others”.\textsuperscript{165} Aguinis repeatedly draws connections in his literature, between the Inquisition in Spain and Latin America in the late Middle Ages, Nazism in twentieth century Germany, and the totalitarianism within his own country that (disproportionately to their percentage in the population) produced large numbers of Jewish victims among the thousands of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{164} Marcos Aguinis’s mother was educated in Europe in a gymnasium (or preparatory school) where she was taught Romanian, Russian, Latin, and French. Aguinis’s father, though less formally educated, is described as an avid reader.
\textsuperscript{165} López-Calvo, 3. Aguinis states that as a child he felt discrimination in his home-town due to his Jewish roots, and recalls being called “rusito” at school and the school teachers insulting Jews in class. He also reports having learned of the Holocaust as a child.
\end{footnotesize}
“disappeared peoples” between 1976-1983. Jews ultimately serve as a litmus test for modernization. The fact that Aguinis today considers himself an agnostic is irrelevant. He openly identifies as a Jew and publicly defends Jews in an often-unsympathetic Argentine climate. Aguinis’s Judaism is critical to his persona as a public intellectual mostly because it bestows on him authenticity in his mission to democratize culture.

Aguinis’s Judaism, like Gerchunoff’s and Viñas’s, informed the work not simply of a gifted writer, but of a public intellectual promoting the importance of inclusive nationhood in Argentina. Aguinis is noteworthy among the three however, as the only writer who fully embraced the notion that the fair treatment of the Jews is not a favor to be begged, granted to a meek minority by magnanimous governments, but rather, as a treatment that is central to the civil liberties of the country’s non-Jews as well. Perhaps that is why Alfonsín placed not only Aguinis, but many other Jews in government posts. It was not about saving the Jews, but about the Jews helping to save Argentina. Selling ten times as many copies of his novels as other members of his Jewish cohort, Aguinis’s popularity is understandable precisely because he is not out to save Argentina’s Jews.

As a member of two peripheries, Jewish and Latin American, Aguinis speaks to the

166 For more background on Aguinis’s childhood, see Aguinis’s conversations with Monseñor Laguna in Nuevos diálogos; and Aguinis’s autobiographical essay in Stephen A. Sadow, King David’s Harp.
167 The family subscribed to the Yiddish Argentine newspaper, and Yiddish was in fact the language of the home. Aguinis, Nuevos diálogos, 79.
168 Alfonsín’s government had so many Jews that his opponents nicknamed it “La Sinagoga Radical.” See Haim Avni, Argentina y las migraciones judías: De la inquisición al holocausto y después (Buenos Aires: Editorial Milá, 2005), 208.
inclusiveness of larger entities that have in the past marginalized each. If Latin America’s modernization was not to be a question of a long-awaited successful adoption of the Enlightenment, so too Aguinis shows that the treatment of the Jews in Argentina is not a parochial issue.

Before engaging more in depth with the subject of our study, it behooves us to first turn to other contemporary global public intellectuals who have warned of what is politically and morally at stake in the dichotomous relationship between culture and politics. We turn briefly to a group of Aguinis’s contemporaries, scholars of politics, education, and society, who have offered their own cultural prescription for achieving true democracy. Intellectually and programmatically, it is not Aguinis’s uniqueness as much as his appropriateness, which renders him historically important.

IV. Global Intellectuals Confront the Failures of Democracy

European philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guatterri, and Bronislaw Backzo, and Latin Americans Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire, have all alerted their audiences of the global farce of nation-states’ liberal democratic personas. They argue that liberal democracies oftentimes are mechanisms of exclusion and elitism, not of participation by and respect for, fellow inhabitants of a country. The modern-nation-state as outlined by the ideals of the European Enlightenments, they argue, has yielded a plethora of tyrants in disguise. By this logic, Argentina’s missteps, including the Semana Trágica of 1909 and the military dictatorship of the 1970’s and 80’s, are to be understood not as evidence of Argentina misapplying the golden

171 Guidry et al., 15. Jürgen Habermas, when praising the rise of his famous “public sphere,” admitted the limits of exclusive bourgeois association with respect to true democratic participation.
blueprint of modernity, but rather of the blueprint itself being inherently flawed.

Bronislaw Baczko, a Polish philosopher born in 1924, is among the better-known theorists to explain what is at stake between the state and the individual, between homogeny and difference, and between language and power, as the one relates to a whole. In his scholarship, Baczko presents issues of censorship and points out that those with power decide not only what to include in public discourse, but also what to exclude, arguing that vocabulary itself is biased.\(^\text{172}\) French empirical philosophers, Gilles Deleuze (1930-1992) and Felix Guattari (1925-1995), warn that the individual in the nation-state is molded as an apparatus (at best) or an appendage (at least) of the State.\(^\text{173}\) If Habermas came to realize the limitations of the public sphere regarding inclusiveness vis-à-vis the nation, Deleuze and Guattari took the next step of warning against the homogenizing dangers inherent in State machinations. The French philosophers cautioned society against falling into a mode of complacency during times of “peace,” warning that the State takes advantage of these times in order to impose its disenfranchising mechanisms onto its subjects.\(^\text{174}\) These admonitions against State domination were directed as much at physical violence, as toward cultural and political violence that oftentimes occur unnoticed and compromise individual liberties.

In Latin America, the interconnectedness of the spheres of politics and arts manifest in a more integrated and culturally applied manner than in Europe. Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal took the European critique to the practical level, founding a participatory theater movement that demands audience engagement, envisioning democracy in theater as a metaphor and training


\(^{174}\) The authors are drawing on an often-made distinction between nation and state, the nation being the sum of the people, and the state its institutions, programs, and positions of leadership.
ground for affecting political change. Boal’s contention is that a healthy national collective can only be formed when language is appropriated in an inclusive public sphere; by providing a forum for democratic participation, new truths can be expressed. Like Baczko, Boal too understood language as a political tool, and argued that once man becomes conscious and in control of his actions and words, he becomes an actor. In other words, only when the spectator asks questions and engages in dialogue, does he become a protagonist.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), also a Brazilian, was an educator by trade and an influential thinker of critical pedagogy who likewise highlighted the importance of critical thought and deliberate action. Freire understood education as the path to “permanent liberation” and explained that it consists of two stages. The first stage is one by which people become aware or “concienticized” of their oppression, and through “praxis” transform that state. The second stage builds upon the first, and is a permanent process of liberating cultural action.

Freire’s analysis of Latin America was broadened in the sixties when he witnessed war protests and was exposed to minority spokesmen in his own country. At that point, he realized that the crisis of democracy was not limited to the Americas and that likewise, theater had been embraced beyond Latin America as a venue through which to involve public participation and thereby initiate people in democratic dynamics. In understanding violence as a political concept that was not limited to Third World countries, Freire suggested theater as a worldwide tool of

175 Ibid., 32.
176 Agusto Boal, Teatro del oprimido y otras poéticas políticas (Uruguay: Ediciones de la Flor, 1974), 164. Boal explicitly builds on both Baczko and Freire’s (below) stress on education, and explains that popular education, as opposed to bourgeois education, stimulates critical thinking and popular involvement.

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public democratization. The pedagogue achieved an international impact by founding the Paulo Freire Institute in 1991 as a global practical conduit of his ideas. Aguinis was therefore not alone, either in Latin America or globally, in realizing the connection between culture and politics; he was an advocate and facilitator of this connection as an Argentine public intellectual.

V. Aguinis and Latin American Cultural Democracy

Historians and literary critics alike, note that culture and democracy have become increasingly intertwined specifically in post-1990 Latin America. David Foster defined cultural democracy as the process through which the public participates in forming national identity through cultural venues, and as such, feels invested and responsible for the emergent nation. For Foster, the agents of re-democratization are as much the writers, intellectuals, producers of culture, as the consumers of it. It is a definition Aguinis furthers, as an Argentine public intellectual seeking to participate in Argentina’s modern redefinition. Marcos Aguinis met the call of scholars and contemporary intellectuals of his time, by working to involve the people of Argentina in building a modern nation-state that responds to all of its polity. In doing so, Aguinis importantly participates in both a Latin American as well as a global network of intellectuals that emerged after World War II, a network desperately searching for solutions to the western project of modernity gone globally wrong.

Aguinis and his Argentine project suggest further that Latin America is not only not peripheral to the global process of modernization, but rather, is a partner and potentially a leader, in its creation. Aguinis’ Argentine model for democracy also indicates a new role for the public

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179 Anny Brooksbank Jones and Ronaldo Munck eds., Cultural Politics in Latin America (Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 2000), 191.
181 Ibid.
intellectual not only in Argentina, but globally. This emergent figure of modernity becomes as much a servant of the nation as a leader of its people. In this context, Aguinis joins the scholars and intellectuals of his time, both at home and abroad, who have either implicitly or explicitly responded to Habermas by addressing the persistent limitations of national public spheres.

In order to understand the significance and workings of Marcos Aguinis as a self-proclaimed healer of Argentina who unites psychology, culture, literature, and politics in an effort to help create a democratic society, it was necessary to place him and his life’s work in the regional and global context of the figure of the public intellectual in Argentina. Marcos Aguinis is the subject of my study due to his national recognition as a public intellectual; the clarity and persistence of his message of cultural democracy, which he has pursued through multiple professional venues; and the local and global traditions in which he participates by redefining his role and agenda as a public intellectual.
Chapter 3. Aguinis and Alfonsín: Public Intellectuals and the Argentine Government

“In Latin America, culture and thought have evolved parallel to the historical process[...]. At present, Latin America is seeking to define its cultural identity in spite of the division existing between the state and society[...]. In this century the emergence of the popular classes onto the social scene is clearly reflected in social and political thought.”

On December tenth, 1983, Raúl Alfonsín, the presidential candidate of the Radical Civil Union party, became the first democratically elected President in Argentina after the military junta of the Proceso de Reorganización Militar. After assuming the post, President Alfonsín appointed Macros Aguinis sub-Secretary of Culture of Argentina, under Secretary Carlos Gorostiza. The former was a renowned author at the time, the latter a celebrated playwright; both were representative of the President’s desire to incorporate artists and scientists into the government and into the country, after their noted absence during the dictatorship period.

While Aguinis emphatically highlights the importance of PRONDEC’s mission and the salience of its message for his present-day Argentina, he downplays the significance of PRONDEC moving away from the Ministry of Culture within a year of its inception. It is however a move that evidenced the people’s decreasing faith in the new government, a government that had reneged on its promise to persecute the military personnel that was responsible for the period of terror, a period of Argentine history that Alfonsín was elected to rectify. This chapter aims to place Marcos Aguinis’s program of culture for Argentina within a specific moment in Argentine

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182 Mar, “Culture and Thought in Latin America,” 49-50.
184 Beatriz Sarlo, “Argentina 1984: La cultura en el proceso democrático,” Nueva Sociedad No. 73, (Julio- Agosto 1984): 78-84. Sarlo notes that many Argentine intellectuals of the previous period had either been alienated or were in exile.
history, whereby intellectuals were summoned by the President to help construct a democratic Argentina.  

Alfonsín’s dedication to institute democracy as a national culture was intended by Alfonsín, and perceived by Aguinis and by other intellectuals alike, to be of national and global importance.

This chapter precedes the study of Aguinis’s literary production because the ideology and agenda that were eventually pursued primarily through essays, dialogues, and novels, were first espoused through the Ministry of Culture and PRONDEC. The first section of the chapter is dedicated to introducing Marcos Aguinis’s plan, called Programa Nacional de Democratización de la Cultura, as outlined in the work Memorias de una siembra: Utopía y práctica de PRONDEC (1990). This section is concerned as much with the public intellectual’s cultural program for Argentina, as with an analysis of how Aguinis intended his program to be recorded for posterity, a witness to Aguinis’s tenure as Minister of Culture and director of PRONDEC. The chapter then covers the implications of PRONDEC’s exit from the Ministry of Culture for Aguinis and Alfonsín’s government. The last section of the chapter will place PRONDEC and Marcos Aguinis within the larger context of Argentine artists and intellectuals who were recruited by Alfonsín to democratize the country by democratizing culture. Both sections together will show how Aguinis, through PRONDEC, was given not only a political platform

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185 For an excellent work on this topic see Saul Sosnowski, ed., Represión y reconstrucción de una cultura: el caso argentino (Argentina: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1988).

186 Alfonsín presented a talk in Madrid in 1983, titled “La transformación cultural; un objeto de la cooperación iberoamericana.” In it, Alfonsín demonstrates that from the beginning of his Presidency, Alfonsín himself espoused many of the same ideas that Aguinis furthered as Secretary of Culture and beyond, ideas also enunciated by the Secretary of Culture that preceded him, Carlos Gorostiza. Alfonsín also demonstrated his acknowledgement that Argentina’s path is one that has transatlantic implications. See Marcos Aguinis, Memorias de una Siembra: Utopia y práctica del Prondec (Programa Nacional de Democratización de a Cultura). (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1990), 11; and Luis Gregorich, Cultura y Democracia: Documentos de Trabajo del Taller de Cultura y Medios de Comunicación (Buenos Aires: Centro de Participación Política. Movimiento de Renovación y Cambio. Unión Cívica Radical, 1983).
through which to advocate his ideology, but that in doing so, Aguinis participated in a unique juncture in Argentine history that self-consciously grappled with the nation’s relationship to democracy and the role of the public intellectual therein.

What makes Aguinis distinctive is that which remains unsaid in Memorias: his Jewishness. Though Aguinis dedicates his life to fighting for democracy, pluralism, and inclusiveness, he does not openly address the very limitations he encountered in Argentina in being a Jewish intellectual and cultural figure, aiming as such to widen the public sphere. Though reflected nowhere in Memorias or in any subsequent self-authored writings about Aguinis’s tenure as Minister of Culture, Aguinis did face considerable public outcry for being a Jew and holding such a high-profile public office. It was a reaction that also was partly to blame for Aguinis’s removal as Minister of Culture, less than a year after his tenure in this post began. Even more so than in his literary works, as a government functionary Aguinis’s Jewish identity remains notably left aside from his public identity and mission. Aguinis purposefully dedicates himself in PRONDEC to national pluralistic goals that do not speak to his Jewish condition directly. Yet in the end, it is unavoidably as a Jew and as a Secretary of Culture that Aguinis tries, and fails, to implement his ideology, because Argentina is not ready to receive either.

I. PRONDEC According to Aguinis

In February 1986, Marcos Aguinis was named Secretary of Culture of Argentina. In April 1986, shortly after presenting his PRONDEC plan at an UNESCO meeting in Bulgaria, Aguinis launched PRONDEC in his own country. Though his post as Secretary of Culture was short-

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188 Ibid.
189 Aguinis, Memorias, 21.
lived, lasting less than a year, Aguinis remained committed to PRONDEC as the program’s titular or director under the auspices of the President, and remained so until the end of Alfonsín’s term in office in 1989.\footnote{Ibid., 171. PRONDEC passed to the Presidency with the first meetings in the new capacity taking place on August 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1987. The first was held in the Centro Cultural San Martín, the second in the Congreso de la Nación. We learn in Memorias that PRONDEC was envisioned as a beginning, a program set to continue and move forward, but that it came to an abrupt halt with the new government elections of 1989, which entailed Carlos Menem succeeding Alfonsin.} Memorias de una siembra: Utopía y práctica del PRONDEC serves as the literary witness to Aguinis’s work as head of this program, a work published the year after Alfonsín’s presidency ended.

In the work that testifies to his role as civil servant, Marcos Aguinis attempts to present Argentina as an example for the world, a blueprint for democracy globally.\footnote{Ibid., 270.} From the first page, Aguinis explains the singularity of the genre in which he writes, asking that his readers approach it not as a novel or essay, but as an intense documentation of a psychosocial experiment that generated curiosity and enthusiasm in its day.\footnote{Ibid., 7.} As such, it is presented as different from a work of literature, not to be digested in one sitting, but to serve as a witness to a certain ideology. Aguinis expresses his intention that the work inspire researchers and lay people alike to pursue more programs like those described within Memorias:

En un país como la Argentina, donde es un lugar común reconocer nuestra mala memoria, es frecuente que se desprecie la documentación, la verificación o la preservación. Depredamos alegremente los testimonios como si nos gustara empezar de cero, como si antes-hace poco o hace mucho-no hubiesen acontecido sucesos que basamentan los actuales. Esta aparente urgencia por lo nuevo o fundacional (el cambio) en realidad encubre un miedo al cambio. Sin el registro del pasado, nada se cambia, sino en la ilusión. Por eso confeccionamos estas Memorias.\footnote{Ibid.}

Also a literary vehicle, Memorias documents and requests the continued healing of the nation,
which can only come from a country that is willing to deal with its past.\textsuperscript{194} It will be the same program to permeate all of Aguinis’s literary genres.

Aguinis opens his testimony to a program of cultural democratization by demanding that Argentina be cognizant of the wider global trajectories it has participated in when engaging in programs that seek out an “other” to victimize. Informing his readers that hundreds of institutions and thousands of people enthusiastically participated in PRONDEC all over Argentina, he attributes the success of his program to PRONDEC’s vision of inclusion.\textsuperscript{195} A democratic society of cultural participation and pluralism must accept the existence of “the other” within, and thus Aguinis calls for “un reconocimiento explícito de la alteridad.”\textsuperscript{196} *Memorias de una siembra* then dovetails with what will become the core of Aguinis’s literary agenda: systemic change must begin within the individual.

With the help of UNESCO representatives, Aguinis developed a program for alternative communication so that Argentina’s citizenship would take on an attitude of responsibility for the fate of its community and its country: “el aumento de la participación es directamente proporcional al aumento de la responsabilidad.” \textsuperscript{197} Uniting his socio-political agenda to psychological healing, Aguinis stated that what has prevented the embrace of the other without is a culture of deprecating the other within:

La dignificación de la vida-que tanto nos cuesta asegurar-conlleva factores tales como la solidaridad, amor y participación. El largo tiempo de la humillación nos ha acostumbrado al auto-desprecio que sume la morbosidad depresiva o en la

\textsuperscript{194} The social responsibility that Aguinis felt as an intellectual was part of a larger national moment in Argentine history. See Hugo Vizetti, “Los intellectuals y las responsabilidades de la memoria social,” in *Localismo y globalización. Aportes para una historia de los intelectuales en Iberoamerica*, ed. Mariano Plotkin and Ricardo González Leandri (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, Instituto de Historia, 2000), 281.
\textsuperscript{195} Aguinis, *Memorias*, 7-10.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 49.
omnipotencia destructiva. La depredación de bienes, valores y vidas es consecuencia de mucho odio, mucha opresión y mucha marginalidad. Urge defender el patrimonio de la nación, que empieza por el patrimonio de sus ciudadanos, con el respeto que merece cada persona. La cultura democrática es el instrumento, el sostén y el testimonio del hombre vivo.\[198\]

Aguinis the psychologist, first turned to the government to build the country one healthy psyche at a time. First in PRONDEC, and then through Elogio de la culpa, Diálogos completos, and finally in Asalto al paraíso, Aguinis addressed his public as his patient, advocating for personal healing as a prerequisite for the healing of the nation.

A. Aguinis’s Agenda: “Filosofía de una cultura en democracia”

Acting within the first democratically elected government after the military dictatorship of 1976-1983, Aguinis called for patience and maturity in delineating the path toward democracy, admitting it is an imperfect road. Aguinis requested that any failures or missteps of PRONDEC be accepted as the growing pangs of a democracy, rather than judged as evidence of the program’s failure.\[199\] In this light, Memorias reveals points of tension within PRONDEC, be it tension between the needs of action and reflection, tension between the political, technical and administrative levels, tensions between the substantive units, or tension between the text and context.\[200\] Another apologetic mechanism for Memorias was to claim that PRONDEC was a work in progress, a work intending a long development as well as a long impact, much like the democracy it hoped to affect. Aguinis warned time and again that the path would be rocky, beseeching his public to understand that utopias, guarantees, totalities, and as such, totalitarianism, are often more alluring than the challenges of reality: “La democracia obliga a tener el coraje de contemplar el rostro real, no la máscara. El autoritarismo sólo muestra la

\[198\] Ibid., 20.
\[199\] Ibid., 8. Aguinis explains that the criticism or lack of support the program received is due to Argentina’s imperfect reality. He states that his program was sabotaged and misunderstood by some, but embraced and nurtured by the rest.
\[200\] Ibid., 276.
máscara. La democracia también duele, y la democracia, aunque funcione en las calles y en las instituciones, no es fácil ponerla en marcha dentro del corazón.”

In *Memorias*, Aguinis repeatedly insisted that Argentina’s weakness was not its imperfection, but its impatience with processes of democracy.

Aguinis, the psychiatrist, prognosticated that the nation’s future would be a function of the possibility in the present for change, not a result of past failures. Moreover, Aguinis explained that Argentina was not alone in its struggle to achieve an admirable nationhood; most nations did not yet boast of true modernity since they had yet to incorporate “the other within.”

Argentina may even be at an advantage, Aguinis consoled his readers, because the existence of pluralism is part of her own fabric; all the nation needed to do now, is embrace it:

“Los argentinos no necesitamos inventar el pluralismo, sino darnos cuenta de que lo tenemos. Y aprovecharlo como un bien común. La identidad tiene derecho a incluir la infinita variedad de rostros, vocaciones, mitos, ingenios, conflictos y realizaciones que conforman el acervo interminable de la nación.”

For Aguinis, the power and responsibility of culture lied principally is its ability to build pluralism, which is why Aguinis presented liberty of expression as the key to ushering in a true political democracy.

The role of PRONDEC, as a vehicle of the state, was not to validate certain contributions of culture over others, nor to identify certain expressions of national identity as the “correct

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201 Ibid., 15, 12.
202 Ibid., 16.
203 Ibid., 27, 37. Chapter 3 in *Memorias* deals with the repercussions of Aguinis’ announcement, as covered in the news in Argentina. He was vehemently attacked for many reasons, including his definition of culture and his use of “la red” to inform people of his plan. The authors of *Memorias* posit that the real issue comes down to the fact that people don’t like to think about or accept the real problems that Argentina has with authoritarianism, which only underscores the need for PRONDEC.
204 Ibid., 18.
ones,” but rather, quite contrarily, to encourage a forum where everyone would have access to participate in the cultural conversation. Key to achieving democracy is what Aguinis calls the “desacrilization of culture.” A government concerned with creating a democracy must first deliver to the people the tools and power of self-definition. In this vein, PRONDEC was committed to propose not a doctrine, but rather, a way of living that endorsed critical thought and engagement with the “other”. The program of culture was intended to be understood as a verb, not as a utopic noun pronounced from above. Aguinis qualified that though his program was enunciated and even created within the government, it belonged to the people:

Nace con este gobierno, pero no es solamente de este gobierno, sino de la sociedad argentina... Cada hombre y mujer argentino pueden sumar su contribución valiosa para salvarnos el miedo, el desprecio, la arrogancia y la sumisión; pueden ya mismo observar, describir y debatir. Este programa entraña algo tan sencillo-y tan ambicioso-como ayudarnos sistemáticamente a ser más responsables, más racionales, más solidarios. Y más felices.

It was a position that mirrored Aguinis’s self-conception as a public intellectual. As his dialogues, novels, and essays show, Aguinis used the various literary and civic vehicles available to him to provide an example, envisioning his work in any capacity as successful only if it inspired participation.

B. Answering the Press

Responding to a contested reception, Aguinis spoke to the patience required of the country to learn to be democratic while also addressing the lack of enthusiasm PRONDEC was often greeted with in the national press. Taken together, these hurdles only reinforced the nation’s need for PRONDEC, in Aguinis’s mind. The complete title of the work, Memorias de una siembra: Utopía y práctica del PRONDEC, reflects the distinction between reality and utopia that Agunis

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205 Ibid., 16.
206 Ibid, 10. Aguinis provides the speech he gave in presenting PRONDEC to the nation in 1986.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid., 27-28.
worked to warn against, a distinction he assessed many Latin Americans would too easily overlook. As a participant in the first government elected into office after the military dictatorship, Aguinis warned that after the first few months of euphoria, there can emerge a sense of nostalgia for the totalitarian system where everything was taken care of. Addressing thereby the loss of support Alfonsín had initially garnered, Aguinis urged his audience to consider that democracy does not provide complete answers; “es en conflicto abierto y creador, en contraste con las dictaduras, que se esmeran en ocultar dicho conflicto y reprimirlo.”209 Advocating for critical thought and constructive criticism, Aguinis repeatedly warned against cynicism, adamantly insisting that democracy for Argentina would be a dangerous endeavor, one that required patience and perseverance.210

A corollary goal of Memorias was for the program and its director to document themselves that, which in their perception, was covered either insufficiently or unjustly by the press, while not refraining from citing the positive coverage it did receive as proof of hope for the country’s future and in order to further reinforce the need for Aguinis’s message.211 For example, Memorias documents that in a meeting at the end of 1984 at the Centro Cultural General de San Martin, Aguinis presented his program in a speech that was published in March 1985 in the newspaper La Razón.212 While referring to both the event and the press coverage the speech received, Aguinis reiterated the key concepts that were key to the PRONDEC program, and documented the impact of his program’s public presentation.213 In like manner, Memorias also notes that though the Argentine press ignored the 1985 presentation of PRONDEC at the

209 Ibid., 12 (original italics).
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid., 8.
212 The article is titled “Ideología de la cultura democrática.”
213 Ibid., 11.
UNESCO meeting in Bulgaria, journalists in Europe did enthusiastically report the plan overseas and even endorse PRONDEC as a worthwhile plan for all of UNESCO nations to adopt.\textsuperscript{214}

\textit{Crónica, Tiempo Argentino, La Razón,} and \textit{La Nación} are among the newspapers that covered PRONDEC’s launching. Yet Aguinis notes in \textit{Memorias} that his message of inclusiveness was better received in the provinces.\textsuperscript{215} Journals such as \textit{Río Negro, Córdoba, Salta,} and \textit{Entre Ríos,} which commented extensively about the topic, reflected that the need for pluralism was more readily grasped there than in Buenos Aires.\textsuperscript{216} This does not come as a surprise, since the country/province antagonism has existed in Argentina since the wars of independence, with the countryside being consistently excluded from the national definition. \textit{Memorias} thus reports that the journal \textit{La Capital} of Rosario recognized PRONDEC as promoting mutual respect among human beings and cited the program as praiseworthy for promoting freedom of speech and participation of all Argentines in the national life.\textsuperscript{217} Aguinis therefore does not refrain from documenting in \textit{Memorias} when the national or Buenos Airean press did take notice of PRONDEC’s achievements, and moreover placed the Argentine acknowledgement in the context of UNESCO’s prior endorsement.\textsuperscript{218}

Aguinis did not limit documenting the “good press” PRONDEC received to recording the positive media coverage, he also used \textit{Memorias} to lend testimony to fellow intellectuals’ appreciation of PRONDEC’s mission. Writer and journalist Pablo Giussani is cited as appreciating that Aguinis offered a new approach with which to combat authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{219}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 20. \textit{Memorias} states that Spain’s reaction to PRONDEC was a proposal that all countries within UNESCO adopt it, thus demonstrating its global reception/applicability.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 37.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 40.
\item \textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 29.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Pablo Giussani, \textit{Los Dias de Alfonsín} (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1986).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Giussani is also cited for his observation that for PRONDEC to succeed, it would need as much government support as popular support, advocating that it ought not be seen as a source of confrontation between officials and opponents.\textsuperscript{220} Likewise, \textit{Memorias} cites Mariano Baptista Gumicio, a Bolivian intellectual, who attested to PRONDEC’s usefulness as a psychosocial project, positioned to help Argentina overcome its authoritarian past, and as such, affirm its global applicability. \textit{Memorias} also reports Gumicio’s disappointment that PRONDEC had largely been ignored both at home and abroad. Attesting to the global importance of the program, Gumicio is cited as stating: “No solamente los argentinos, sino todos los latinoamericanos estarán en deuda con él si este programa llega a puerto y se convierte, como quiere UNESCO, en una experiencia piloto para otras partes del mundo tan necesitadas de la misma receta.”\textsuperscript{221} Finally, \textit{Memorias} includes President Alfonsín’s endorsement of the project.\textsuperscript{222} \textit{Memorias} therefore addresses both the unjust coverage and reception that PRONDEC received in Argentina, as well as its enthusiastic reception by those with wider visions, both at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{223} Any lack of support or notice garnered in Argentina serves only to prove how necessary the project was to overcoming society’s backward ways.\textsuperscript{224} National and international vindications of PRONDEC are meanwhile, studiedly cited, as Aguinis was determined to not leave PRONDEC’s legacy to the mercy of the Argentine press or the missteps

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[220]{Aguinis, \textit{Memorias}, 31.}
\footnotetext[221]{Ibid., 54.}
\footnotetext[222]{Ibid., 86. \textit{Memorias} notes that the newspapers \textit{La Prensa, Ámbito Financiero, Clarín, La Nación, Página 11, La Razón, and Crónica} all reported the President’s request of the people and the government alike to jointly create a culture of participation, responsibility, and effort.}
\footnotetext[223]{Ibid., 43. The work relates the enthusiastic reception received by Aguinis in France at the UNESCO meeting, documenting that in Europe, Aguinis’s program was seen as both important and exemplary. \textit{Memorias} documents that PRONDEC’s international launch and its favorable reception abroad, was not covered in the press at home, even when the international recognition was brought to the attention of the President at la Casa Rosada.}
\footnotetext[224]{Ibid., 41.}
\end{footnotes}
of his country’s still immature moment in history.\footnote{Aguinis, 22. Memorias documents that Argentina was reluctant to embrace PRONDEC because in Argentina, the urgent always displaces the important. Because the country did not know how to think or act the way Aguinis was asking it to, PRONDEC met with resistance. Thus, the limitations that Aguinis’s faced were indicative of the nation’s shortcomings, not those of the program or the necessity of its goals.}{225}

\textbf{C. The Work of Aguinis and his Committee}

The purpose of \textit{Memorias} is not to highlight Aguinis, but rather to present an example for Argentina, and the democratizing world. In this effort, \textit{Memorias} primarily provides testimonies of the committee members that ran different PRONDEC programs. Thus, while introduced by Aguinis, it is a book of compilations from Elvira Ibarguren, Pedro Pont Verges, Nestor Carlinsky, Lia Ricon, Silvia Chab, Jorge Kirszenbaum, Julio Lopez, Hernan Aguinis, Pablo Perel, and Bernardo Blejmar.

Concerned with the relationship between the state and its citizens and between individual citizens and larger institutions, PRONDEC is presented as aiming to reach the realms of neighborhood life, education, family, work relations, health, justice, law and security, public administration, art, science and technology, and sports.\footnote{Ibid., 51.}{226} The goal in all cases was presented as that of overcoming the obedient state of submission in which Argentina still found itself, and of creating new social, political, and economic structures to enable this dramatic change. \textit{Memorias} documented that to this end, PRONDEC effected seminars, workshops, colloquiums, courses and congresses geared to different sectors of Argentine society, including business, physical health and mental health, scientific research, journalism, university extension, neighborhood life, arts, and alternative communications.\footnote{Ibid., 48, 120-121. See cited work, \textit{Informe del Primer Congreso de ONG}, which collected the materials produced by the Non-government agency congress where 18 agencies gathered to discuss the support they needed from the government (through PRONDEC). \textit{Memorias} makes}{227} PRONDEC printed pamphlets and created participatory and
decentralizing initiatives, in this effort.\textsuperscript{228} The committee also documented that it was committed to using research tools of social science to evaluate its performance. Partnering with FLASCO (Facultad Latino-Americana de Ciencias Sociales), PRONDEC conducted research in the following spheres: education and society, technological development, political organization, and agriculture and cattle raising.\textsuperscript{229}

To give concrete examples of the topics found within, one chapter of \textit{Memorias} covers the initiatives in mental health, which took place in the \textit{Hospital Italiano}. The focus in the hospital conference was to discuss authoritarianism, education, parenthood, sexuality, violence, and women’s rights. Many types of companies and organizations were contacted to participate in PRONDEC’s initiatives, many of which planned follow-up seminars and insisted on spreading, through TV and radio, the benefits they experienced both socially and in productivity, as a result of adopting PRONDEC’s “participatory technologies.”\textsuperscript{230} The chapters reporting the success of the various sector initiatives, served to reinforce PRONDEC’s mission, with statements such as: “La gestión participativa genera responsabilidad y compromiso. El trabajador se siente persona. Mejora su calidad de vida laboral y también su vida global (fuera del trabajo).”\textsuperscript{231}

\textit{Memorias’} public relations goals meshed with its testimonial element, in reporting the benefits of mutual respect that were reaped both by the participants and by society at large as a sure to report the initiative to reach the whole country, providing evidence of congresses in Neuquén, Resistencia, Santa Fe, and Entre Ríos, which included the participation of neighboring delegations as well. \textit{Memorias} proudly concludes that almost the whole country had been included in the program’s reach, especially considering that the first initiative extended to Córdoba, Buenos Aires and the Cuyo region.

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 220.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 169, 246-262. We learn also of television spots that reported on PRONDEC’s activities, including coverage of a Congress of NGO’s, a Congress of Technological Participation in Industry, Colloquia on the Contribution of the Graphic Press to Democracy, and the National Meeting of Aid to Battered Women.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 170 (original italics).
result of PRONDEC’s programs: “En otras palabras, extender la democratización de la cultura al interior de las empresas con el objetivo ambicioso de institucionalizar los conflictos, aumentar el respeto por cada persona y su rol, incrementar la creatividad, mejorar la calidad de vida dentro y fuera del trabajo, aumentar la productividad.” The reader is therefore constantly reminded that PRONDEC is as much a social program as a cultural, social, political and economic one, where success in one realm affects all others.

**D. Beyond the Ministry of Culture**

*Memorias de una siembra* describes PRONDEC’s shift away from the auspices of the Ministry of Culture to one of special council to the President as a challenge that became an opportunity, a change that allowed PRONDEC more liberty of movement. The shift was reported in *Memorias* to have permitted PRONDEC (now called *Comisión Nacional Asesora*) to grow substantially and to become a model of a government agency that could be large while also enjoy an admirable efficiency and technical prowess. Yet the reality is that the impetus for this shift was a negative one, as it was due to a weakening in Alfonsín’s power. By 1987, Alfonsin had lost much popular trust in part because of compromises that he made with the preceding political and military institutions. The public’s confidence of his ability to effect the social and cultural change he had promised was additionally strained by economic problems.

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232 Ibid., 157. Throughout the work, Aguinis’ committee continues to address the press coverage PRONDEC received. In this instance, *Memorias* documents that though not reported in the Argentine presses, PRONDEC organized meetings with chiefs of industry, and that at these congresses, the CEO’s reported that the initiatives had worked and that their companies were more productive as a result. The book bears witness to the program’s adoption and success, thereby working to create PRONDEC’s legacy by its own accord.

233 Ibid., 149.

234 Ibid., 265.

235 Ibid., 101.

236 Ibid., 265.

Memorias does not hide that PRONDEC’s shift away from the Ministry of Culture meant an interruption in the functioning of the program, involving PRONDEC’s political and technical teams quitting. Yet PRONDEC’s program is emphatically presented as unchanged with this move, and its perseverant mission as well as the President’s support of the project, is repeatedly emphasized. Again, the press and corroborating literature is dutifully cited to demonstrate how especially in the provinces, PRONDEC remained embraced throughout this second phase. Bernardo Blejmar, the organizational consultant to PRONDEC during the program’s second phase, provides the rosy account of PRONDEC under the presidency.238 Blejmar reports the enthusiastic international support the program received since its inception, citing UNESCO’s continued endorsement, participation and adoption in this new stage. International approval is further evidenced by the fact that many of the new staff for Phase Two came from UNESCO’s own ranks. The changes are therefore portrayed by Aguinis’s team as a positive, legitimizing factor for a country still working on its transition to democracy, a shift that would better serve Argentina in its goal of becoming a peer of the nations of the West.239

The positive spin placed by Blejmar comes into doubt however, when read alongside the reflections of another sub-Secretary of Culture from the same period, who reflected that the shift denoted a lack of government and party support for the Ministry of Culture, a support that would have benefited from the program maintaining the autonomy of its own ministry.240 Moreover, it appears that Aguinis’s removal from the Ministry of Culture was in some measure a response to public disapproval with the post being occupied by a Jew, a development nowhere addressed in

238 Ibid., 99.
239 Ibid., 275.
Memorias. It is striking that Aguinis, as intent as he was on both providing honest historical accounting and fighting exclusionary tendencies, chose to not include these specific details in any of his writings. Instead, the work endorsed and organized by Aguinis sums up the goals of the second stage positively, focusing on extensively describing the program’s goals as unchanged and ever-dedicated to continuing the development of the channels of participation in the nation’s social, economic, health, and cultural structures. Any shortcomings of the program in the process are owed to the growing pains involved in teaching a people to be democratic and to the fact that the program was intended as a ten year jump-start to a longer process, not the five year run to which it was limited due to Carlos Menem’s election. Yet, as we shall see below, Menem did continue PRONDEC, under the Ministry of Culture, and emphatically presented it as a continuation of Alfonsín’s initiative.

By not addressing in the “work of testimony”, the reason or even the shift of PRONDEC away from the Ministry of Culture, or what, if any, was his continued relation to other Secretaries of Culture after he left the post, Aguinis exhibited a startling silence by a man whose multi-genre explanations and intentions are otherwise quite openly articulated. We wonder if Aguinis’s aims to democratize the country would not have been better furthered by being more transparent about the conditions that altered the role of the Jewish public intellectual

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242 Aguinis, Memorias, 267.
243 Ibid., 173.
244 Ibid., 278. In the months prior to Aguinis’s departure from the Ministry, there were many newspaper rumors about him leaving his post due to conflicts he faced within the government. Yet Memorias does not address the basis of these rumors, nor does it explain the move in speaking as PRONDEC’s director. Memorias only states that in 1989, the country found itself in a difficult economic moment, forecasting a devastating economic crash that ultimately led to Alfonsín’s early exit from office. In this context, the reader learn that funds allocated to PRONDEC were questioned at this difficult economic juncture, by the government that was looking to cut its spending.
within the government capacity in which he was hired to help democratize the country. Since Aguinis does not in *Memorias*, or in any other self-authored works, place himself within Alfonsín’s Argentina of public intellectuals, we must look beyond Marcos Aguinis’s pen or editing desk.

II. Aguinis, One of Many

How did Aguinis fit into the larger Argentine moment that gave rise to his program of national democratization? The literature by other public intellectuals and government officials of the era reflects that Aguinis was not singular in embodying a connection between intellectuals and politics in Alfonsín’s government, nor was his cultural program for Argentina’s healing a maverick idea for his milieu. Rather, Aguinis was one of many intellectuals with whom Alfonsín surrounded himself. Hired specifically to help the President enunciate a vision of cultural participation as key to combating authoritarianism, Aguinis echoed Alfonsín’s own goals of transforming Argentina into a modern nation that could participate proudly in a wider world.245 This moment in Argentine history that gave rise to a unique relationship between politics and culture, created in Argentina a unique role for the public intellectual, a role that Aguinis benefited from.

Raúl Alfonsín came to power with a promise to institutionalize liberty, peace, democracy, and respect for individual liberties and human rights, which were destroyed by the military juntas, and which society was only then prepared to repair.246 Alfonsín spoke about cultural questions and the future role that the state as a civil institution, and that Alfonsín as its leader, would play. In this effort, he was dedicated to rescue and reorder the place of art, culture, and

intellectuals in Argentina, all which had been repressed and accosted under the military juntas.\textsuperscript{247} During Alfonsín’s campaign for the presidency, he called on his public to take part in creating a new, modern, participatory and cultural democracy that would embrace pluralism and reject dogma.\textsuperscript{248} Key to Alfonsín’s message was the idea that the state is a collective product: “el hombre es el gran protagonista y el destinario final de todo el proceso formativo. La libertad, la dignidad de la persona humana, el genuino pluralismo, sin discriminaciones ni opresiones, son los valores centrales de ese proceso.”\textsuperscript{249}

In seemingly a catch-22, the state tried also to be the agent of the decentralization of power. Mirroring this oxymoron, the new intellectuals that Alfonsín depended on, too were determined to lead the people to lead themselves. Luis Gregorich, who in 1988 served briefly as sub-Secretary of Culture under Alfonsín,\textsuperscript{250} reflected that one of the principle objectives of the incoming government was to create the necessary channels for widening public participation in cultural production, a step that was commonly understood among his cohort of intellectuals as key to consolidating democracy in Argentina.\textsuperscript{251} Gregorich writes that it was only with this president that he himself chose to affiliate with a political party, beforehand having considered himself to be an independent intellectual and critic, earning his livelihood as a journalist and editor.\textsuperscript{252} This is the context under which Aguinis too had come to be included in Alfonsín’s government, invited as one of a cohort of intellectuals with whom Alfonsín surrounded himself in 1983, as he prepared to run for the post of presidency of the nation.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{248} Luis Alberto Romero, \textit{Breve historia contemporanea de la Argentina} (Argentina: FCE, 2001), 245.
\item \textsuperscript{249} Chavolla, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 25.
\item \textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 11.
\item \textsuperscript{252} Gregorich, “Cultura y Políticas,” 23.
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Alfonsín’s intellectuals initially came from a group called *Taller de Cultura y Medios de Comunicación*, to which Alfonsín selected the membership himself. It included Marcos Aguinis, Jorge Roulet, and Luis Gregorich. These intellectuals were to provide Alfonsín with a forum for the discussion of ideas, and would help craft his candidacy platform as related to the sphere of culture and democracy. Luis Gregorich enunciated the widely held belief among intellectuals of the time, regarding the connection between cultural identity and the liberty of a nation:

> El pluralismo cultural, sin inútiles escalas de dominio o dependencia, despojado de prejuicios, será el mayor instrumento para el acercamiento de los pueblos y, a la vez, para el enriquecimiento de cada identidad en particular. Otra postura que defendíamos...era que la cultura erige una dimensión fundamental del desarrollo y crecimiento de un país, y contribuye a fortalecer su independencia y soberanía.

Gregorich underscored the role and responsibility of the state in ensuring the equal participation of all people in its cultural and political life.

From Gregorich’s works, we learn that in 1983, the group of intellectuals under Alfonsín backed a government initiative for a “Plan Cultural Nacional.” This official government program was to guarantee liberty and consolidate democracy through equal and inclusive cultural and artistic participation within Argentina. This approach was likewise envisioned by Alfonsín’s intellectuals from the onset to have larger ramifications beyond the national level, intended to propagate an educational, scientific, and cultural integration within all of Latin America.

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253 Aguinis’s membership in the *Taller* is confirmed in Gregorich’s *Cultura y Democracia*, 48-53. Gregorich writings reflect that Aguinis was one of many intellectuals, writers, artists, musicians, and journalists of his milieu, a figure numbering over a hundred, who were dedicated to a shared goal of the democratization of the country through the democratization of its culture. 254 Gregorich, “Cultura y políticas,” 24. Gregorich reflects that the group of intellectuals was aware that they were living a historically important moment when forming Alfonsín’s cultural platform, appreciative that culture had at this juncture in Argentine history, had earned its own place on a radical political platform. 255 Ibid., 25.
Evidently, the vision that came to define Aguinis’s PRONDEC was enunciated first by the *Taller de Cultura y Medios de Comunicación* in 1983, a committee that had conceived of a National Cultural Plan, calling for administrators and proponents from within the government to elaborate regional programs.\(^{256}\)

During *el Proceso*, and prior to running for office, Alfonsín sought out exiled intellectuals after assisting a seminar in San José, Costa Rica that dealt with the future of democracy.\(^{257}\) It was then that Alfonsín united himself with the group of intellectuals who made up (CISEA) *Centro de Investigaciones Sociales sobre el Estado y la Administración*. From CISEA, Alfonsín created the *Centro de Participación Política* during his campaign, and formed a forum to discuss his ideas.\(^{258}\) This group was not meant to be simply a plane of theoretical discussion, but a platform of participation, and it was the forum that would become the forerunner of *Grupo Esmeralda*, a group that would constitute a new elite of intellectuals with ties to the government after Alfonsín took office.\(^{259}\)

In an in-depth study of this particular juncture in Argentine history, Josefina Elizande writes of the connection between intellectuals and politics in ushering in Alfonsín’s moment of

\(^{256}\) Ibid.


\(^{259}\) The Club’s *Declaración de Principios* states that the institution would be: “Un centro de análisis y discusión de los problemas políticos, sociales y culturales de la sociedad argentina [y funcionaria] como una institución civil y pública [que] aspira a contribuir a esa renovación atrayendo el esfuerzo de todos aquellos que se interroguen críticamente sobre el significado actual del socialismo como identidad ideológica, cultural y política, [apoyando] la democracia, el pluralismo, el tratamiento argumentado de las disidencias, el respeto a las minorías y, en general, a la opinión ajena. La democracia y la transformación social estarán en el centro de las preocupaciones del Club de Cultura Socialista”. “Declaración de principios” available: www.clubsocialista.com.ar (accessed May 11, 2010).
transitional democracy. Her work focuses on Grupo Esmeralda, the specific group of intellectuals who met with Alfonsin weekly, beginning with his campaign and continuing throughout his years in office. Through Elizande’s study, we learn that Alfonsin invited intellectuals from abroad to “help him think” even once he had ascended to the Presidency, and that this group came together on Esmeralda Street in Buenos Aires at the end of 1984 and in the beginning of 1985. Modeling itself after Roosevelt’s “speechwriters” and French President Mitterrand’s cohort, this group was committed to helping Alfonsin write his speeches, provide a reality check to his policies, and produce a more solid base from which to form his goals.

Thus, we see under Alfonsín, a new role for the intellectual from within the Argentine state, an interesting corollary to Alfonsín presenting himself as a new kind of leader, one that would redefine modernity and democracy in his country by fashioning his government after the western models he admired. The inclusion of intellectuals in government was a post-Cold War reality, reflecting also the intellectuals’ willingness to embrace what Gramsci understood to be the connection between intellectuals and politics.

Esta operación de retorno gramsciana de los años ochenta, contribuye a pensar en la política como la creación de un espacio común en el que todos se reconozcan como partes, como cooperación para luchar por la dirección de la sociedad sin destruirse mutuamente, como creación de un campo común de conflictos entendido como combinación de consensos y disensos, como pluralismo conflictivo, como moderación de los comportamientos y reconocimiento del

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261 Ibid., 10. Elizalde cites Grupo Esmeralda’s journal La ciudad futura as useful in tracing the tie between academia, intellectuals and politics in this time, starting in 1986 and continuing through Alfonsín’s presidency.
262 In 1986 the office would move to Talcahuano and Corrientes. Ibid. 72, footnote 151.
263 Ibid., 73.
264 Ibid., 116.
265 Ibid., 50.
Argentine intellectuals in Aguinis’s generation were therefore no longer determined to bring revolution from without, nor to focus on history as a battle of classes, but were instead willing to rethink the connection between socialism, democracy and the intellectual. The new public intellectual that was created in Argentina would help Alfonsín enunciate a new collective identity for his country in a manner that had potential global repercussions.

It is clear that Alfonsín sought out intellectuals like Aguinis early on, not only as aides of thought, but as manpower with which to run his government. From members of the think-tank CISEA, Alfonsín was to fill the role of various ministers of his cabinet, including Dante Caputo, who would become head of Foreign Relations, and Jorge Sábato, Minister of Education. With the help of these individuals, Alfonsín also set out to bring to justice those who violated civil laws under el Proceso. Exemplifying their role and impact, it was the intellectual Ernesto Sábato who was to head the Comisión Nacional de Desaparición de Personas (CONANDEP), and it

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268 Ibid., 61, 63. Elizande importantly notes a cultural venue that allowed a practical expression to the new Left’s ideas: El Club de Cultura Socialista, publicly founded in July 1984. The Club included in its leadership and founding members members of Grupo Esmeralda such as José Aricó and Juan Carlos Portantiero, editors of *Punto de Vista*, editors of the journal of Grupo Esmeralda, as well as others such as Beatriz Sarlo, Ricardo Graciano, José Nun and Emilio de Ipola. The Club allowed for a greater support of intellectuals for the Alfonisista project, a support that would stay steady through Alfonsín’s tenure as President. See also “Club de Cultura Socialista, Breve Historia and Declaración de principios” available: www.clubsocialista.com.ar.
269 Ibid., 65. Grupo Esmeralda was to provide Alfonsín with his intellectuals who would accompany him through his presidency. The group was formed with the help of Meyer Goodbar a sociologist of the University of Buenos Aires whom Alfonsín met through his CISEA connection Jorge Roulet, the latter, a friend of the President and future member of the Radical Party.
270 CISEA was created in 1974 in Buenos Aires, but considers its high points to be between the years 1982 and 1990, essentially the years comprising Alfonsín’s presidency. The archives of the organization are managed by the University of Buenos Aires, in the Centro de Estudios Avanzados, located at Uriburu 950.
was under his direction that *Nunca Más* was published as testimony to the crimes that caused the phenomenon of “the disappeared.”

Alfonsín’s commitment to bringing justice to the period of terror preceding his presidency won him the support and admiration of intellectuals and the public alike, as well as an international recognition as a defender of human rights. The President’s eventual bowing to the military, which threatened a coup if Alfonsín continued his persecution of justice for those involved in the *Proceso*, led to the President’s losing support from those who had seen in him the key to a different future for Argentina. By 1987, Alfonsín had lost his footing, and intellectuals such as Beatriz Sarlo, José Nun, and Carlos Altamarino exited Alfonsín’s circle.

It is at this juncture that Aguinis too ceased to be Secretary of Culture, yet he remained committed to PRONDEC and to the President’s surviving ideology from within the Presidency’s own auspices. As Aguinis reflected in a newspaper editorial, he and Alfonsín remained committed to PRONDEC, but the structure that supported the Ministry had weakened, necessitating the undertaking of a different path. Elizande’s study concludes that ultimately there emerged a split between Alfonsín’s political party and the groups of intellectuals he consulted. I argue that Marcos Aguinis provides an example to the contrary, evidenced by

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272 Alfonsín’s adoption of the policy “Punto Final” put an end to the investigations of the participants in the military government that he followed. This development in the President’s policy was widely seen by intellectuals and the public alike, as indicative of the fact that the rest of Argentina, and especially the military, was not willing to democratize and modernize along the lines of the rest of the country. Beatriz Sarlo is among the members of Grupo Esmeralda who expressed the disconnect that emerged between Alfonsín’s program and that of his party and the intellectuals who had joined in the political apparatus. See the December 1986 editions of *La ciudad futura* for Alfonsín’s intellectuals’ discussion of the President’s disappointing policy.
273 Elizande, 113.
274 Marcos Aguinis, “Con pena y sin odio,” *Diario Perfil* (July 26, 2009). Aguinis was not among those who abandoned the Argentine President when circumstances took a turn for the worse, just as he was not among those who chose exile during the preceding rule.
Aguinis’s move from the Ministry to the Presidency in heading PRONDEC.

What did it ultimately mean to have intellectuals in Alfonsín’s government? For Alfonsín it was a means of making Argentina current; for Aguinis it meant that intellectuals could “doctor” Argentina from within. While Aguinis does not place himself within this larger context of intellectuals within Alfonsín’s era in his work *Memorias de una siembra* or elsewhere, he does reflect an awareness of questions of legitimacy he as intellectual faced, having collaborated with the government.

**III. The New Argentine Intellectual**

The incorporation of intellectuals in Alfonsín’s government created a new model of Argentine intellectual, one distinctively positioned to help coordinate the various factions of a government committed to political and cultural democratization and decentralization. For the first time in Argentina’s history, between 1983 and 1989, the main ideological pivot was not that of achieving Argentina’s true or ideal character by extricating the unwanted social “others,” nor would there be given a promise of a providential future. Rather, the President and his public intellectuals concentrated on paths of healing, programs to establish democracy that focused on inclusion, not blame.

The President’s “Parque Norte” speech of December, 1985, transmitted to the public also by television, is credited for being the communication in which the President best enunciated his program of building a democratic society based on the recognition of “the other,” identifying the

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common enterprise facing Argentines as that of creating pluralism and the will to participate:279

El concepto de esta democracia participativa que buscamos impulsar, representa una extensión e intensificación del concepto moderno de democracia...De lo que se trata, entonces es de ampliar las estructuras participativas fijadas por la misma Constitución, y de dar canales de expresión adecuados a los partidos políticos, las organizaciones sociales, los municipios, las instituciones barriales y vecinales...La modernización no es un tema exclusivo de las empresas, es toda la sociedad la que debe emprender esa tarea y con ella la Nación, redefiniendo su lugar en el mundo.280

Alfonsin stated in the same speech that democratic participation of the citizenry in the politics and culture of Argentina is the vital missing piece, the necessary element with which to combat the phenomenon of “alienation of power.”281 Yet before the democratization of the people, came the politicization of the intellectual.282

Alfonsín’s Grupo Esmeralda marked a unique period in history in which the country’s intellectuals reached great propinquity to the political branch, without always participating in it.283 Corroborating materials from intellectuals besides Aguinis, who likewise participated in this Alfonsín moment, allow us to appreciate that Aguinis and his agenda were part of a larger milieu.284 While Aguinis was initially part of a cohort of intellectuals who backed Alfonsín and

279 Intellectuals like Pablo Guissani, Juan Carlos Portantiero, and Emilio de Ipola, all members of Grupo Esmeralda, helped write this speech, aware of their common task of building democracy in Argentina. See Emilio De Ipola, “Veinte años después (Parque Norte: rezones del fracaso de un intento inédito de enfrentar la crisis Argentina),” in La historia reciente, eds. Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermos (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2004), 51-2.
280 Raúl Alfonsín, “Convocatoria para una convergencia democrática.” This is a speech by Alfonsín delivered January 12, 1985, before the delegates of the National Committee of the Unión Cívica Radical (Pg. 7-11).
281 Memorias reflects that the PRONDEC group chose to focus on society’s psychosocial and cultural roadblocks. Thus, no longer the removed observer or independent intellectual, Aguinis participated within a a government apparatus that accepted Alfonsín’s assessment that the country was not truly ready to tackle its past economic, clerical, and military demons.
282 Miller, 133. This new collaboration with the government brought unease regarding a new role of the intellectual who was no longer independent from the state it was trying to amend.
283 Elizande, 116.
284 See Argentine intellectual Pablo Giussani’s, Los días de Alfonsín (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1986), Sections 64, 99, 111, 147, 170.
whom Alfonsín in turn supported, Aguinis was one of the few who maintained their support and involvement in the government after 1987.

IV. PRONDEC After Aguinis

Argentine philosopher Hugo E. Biagini wrote in 1989: “Both intellectuals and political leaders, instead of simply seeking power in academia or the government, should work toward our incipient democracy’s becoming entrenched in all aspects of Argentinean reality.”

I argue that Aguinis and Alfonsín spoke to precisely this demand. Marcos Aguinis’s work Memorias de una siembra was produced in the company of a like-minded government apparatus of intellectuals who widely expressed sentiments like these:

Las políticas culturales[…]deberían[…] asegurar a todos el acceso a la creación y el consumo de los bienes culturales y simbólicos, promover nuestra identidad en el diálogo abierto con otras culturas y no desde la cerrazón y el aislamiento, y hacerse fuertes tanto en la inteligente conservación de nuestro patrimonio, como en su renovación, recreación y reinvención.

What was to be the legacy of the position of Minster of Culture in Argentina, its connection to the Presidency, and the fate of the once-envisioned programs of democratization of culture? The generation that ushered in the transition to democracy in 1983, effectively publicized concepts of cultural patrimony, cultural industries, cultural identity, and multiculturalism, in a manner that has persisted in Argentine national awareness until today.

Mercosur, the Plan Nacional de Lectura and the Instituto Nacional del Libro, the Instituto Nacional del Teatro, and the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía, are seen as evidence of the continued legacy for cultural participation in Argentina. Yet the difficult road and unfulfilled

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286 Gregorich, “Cultura y políticas,” 34.
287 Ibid., 30.
288 Ibid., 30-3.
goals of the intellectuals of 1983 grew in the subsequent twenty-three years.\textsuperscript{289} Since 1983, there have been thirteen Secretaries of Culture, three of which served under Alfonsín between 1983 and 1989. None, according to some, could surpass the bureaucratic impasses to truly have the impact they desired, evidenced in part by the fact that the Ministry of Culture could not maintain an autonomous standing outside of the Ministry of Education or National Presidency since its short tenure under Aguinis.\textsuperscript{290}

\textit{Memorias} does not speak to the continuation of PRONDEC after Alfonsín’s exit from office or Aguinis’s consequential abandonment of PRONDEC. Other government and intellectuals’ sources reveal however, that the program did continue in some fashion in 1991 under the leadership of Luis Durán, Ángel Federico Robledo, César Jaroslavsky, Francisco Recchini and Silvina Zabala.\textsuperscript{291} For example, a work titled \textit{Por 100 años de democracia}, published under Menem in 1993, not only speaks to the program’s prolongation, it aims to tie Menem’s PRONDEC to that of Alfonsín’s.\textsuperscript{292} In this effort, Menem’s book opens with a citation of Alfonsín addressing the nation in 1983. On the opposing page, an address of Carlos Menem from 1989 is printed. Through visions enunciated side-by-side, Menem presents the continuation

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{290} Gregorich, “Cultura y políticas,” 32. In Gregorich’s assessment, the country has yet to witness, or at least to take notice, of a cultural project that is audacious and innovative yet realistic, presented by the Secretaries of Culture in office, and that would justify an increase in the state’s insufficient allotted budget for the Ministry. Instead, argues Gregorich, Argentina remains a country with great social and economic asymmetries that continue to be evidenced in its cultural production and consumption, whereby Buenos Aires reaps most of the state’s recourses.
\textsuperscript{291} Programa Nacional de Democratización de la Cultura (Argentina), \textit{La Comunicación en la cultura de la democracia: una propuesta federal de participación comunitaria} (Buenos Aires: PRONDEC, 1991). This work was published under Menem’s direction.
\textsuperscript{292} \textit{Por 100 Años de Democracia, Decimo Aniversario}. Argentina: Coedición EUDEBA PRONDEC, 1993.
of PRONDEC alongside his own stated goal of attaining a united country.\textsuperscript{293} Thus, at least on the level of appearances, the legacy of Alfonsín’s intellectuals was important for Menem in constructing his own government.

The conversation between intellectuals that occurred under Alfonsín, in an effort to construct a democratic Argentina, is a conversation that was never addressed by Marcos Aguinis in his own writings. Yet, the method and goal of Alfonsín’s era persisted within Aguinis through a prolific production of essays, novels, works of dialogues, article contributions, and public appearances. That is to say, after 1989, Marcos Aguinis revealed his enduring commitment to cultural democratization, as well as to the process of creating Argentina, as a public intellectual in conversation with other intellectuals, both regional and global. Aguinis, the Jew and public intellectual, continued to embody two complementary identities that served in his writings both implicitly and explicitly to challenge Argentina’s pluralistic and democratic character.

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid.
Chapter 4. Aguinis and the Essay: The Argentine Erasmus?

Elogio de la Culpa

In 1992, a pickup truck driven by a suicide bomber crashed into the Israeli Embassy in Argentina and exploded, leveling the Embassy and severely damaging a nearby church, school, and retirement home. Twenty-nine people were killed and another 252 were injured. Four of the casualties were Israelis and the rest were Argentine civilians. Even in Argentina’s long history of violence against social or political undesirables, the Embassy attack was remarkable at the time for its international visibility and shock value (though its death toll would be soon surpassed in 1994 by the bombing of the Argentine Jewish Community Center). Marcos Aguinis, one of the most renowned Argentine public intellectuals of his day, wrote the essay *Elogio de la culpa* [In Praise of Guilt] in response to this attack. Though written in direct response of the attack, Aguinis nowhere in the work mentioned the bombing. Instead, the public intellectual pursued a purposefully generalized moral and psychological approach to further a message of responsibility toward the individual other.

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294 Anti-Semitism in Argentina can be traced from the Inquisition to the Argentine pogroms of *La Semana Trágica* in 1919, and to attacks in the 1990’s on Jewish communal sites in Buenos Aires, whose cause is linked to Iran and Hezbollah. For more details See: Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2007) 79. Also, The Office of the United States’ Secretary of State released a statement in 1993 reporting that Islamic Jihad (a Lebanese Hezbollah organization) publicly claimed responsibility for the attack, and noted that there was mounting evidence linking the Iranian government to this incident. This statement was a part of the Patterns of Global Terrorism initiative of the United States State Department, which reported that while 1992 marked a record decrease in terrorist attacks globally, Latin America suffered more terrorist attacks in this year than did any other region. The attack of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina singularly accounted for forty percent of those wounded worldwide in terrorist attacks that year. The report is available at: http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror_92/review.html (accessed Aug. 25, 2010).


296 The government of Argentina has yet to prosecute the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks of the 1990’s, which injured hundreds on national soil. The Jewish community in Argentina has
This chapter analyzes *Elogio de la culpa* as a historical product, where both the context of its writing and the literary choices involved inform the meaning and importance of the work. My chapter engages the intellectual traditions in which Aguinis positions himself both in writing in the essay genre in Argentina, and specifically, in writing an essay entitled “In Praise of Guilt.” In literature, Aguinis continued the dynamic of Alfonsín’s intellectuals, defining democracy from above. Aguinis embraces this discourse among intellectuals, presenting it in his novel as an intellectual patrimony, while aligning himself with Erasmus of Rotterdam, Pablo Neruda, and Sigmund Freud.

In *Elogio de la culpa*, Aguinis engages in what will prove to be his pervasive psychological approach of healing the country by healing the individual first, while also placing that which Argentina must mend within a global framework of misuse of power. Ultimately, I demonstrate how Aguinis’s essay is involved in dethroning the Enlightenment as the cure-all blueprint of modernity, showing that Erasmus has something to learn from Neruda and Freud. The chapter will close with a view to Aguinis’s other essays, which also deal with Argentina’s shortcomings. *Elogio* will prove noteworthy within the context of Aguinis’s essays in presenting violence in Argentina as a symptom of a global malaise, and in likewise presenting his nation’s prospective healing process within a global intellectual conversation. Consequently, Aguinis himself is rendered a global intellectual figure.

I. The Chosen Tradition

“No quería componer otro Quijote —lo cual es fácil— sino el Quijote. Inútil agregar que no suffered since then from the unresolved nature of these crimes, understanding the persistent irresolution and lack of persecution of the guilty as indicative of Menem’s government’s indifference to, if not outright condoning of, anti-Semitism in Argentina. Though Argentine President Néstor Kirchner did in 1995 accept partial responsibility for the bombing on behalf of Argentina, those accountable have not yet been brought to justice. See Aizenberg, *Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires.*
Jorge Luis Borges wrote the above-cited words regarding his desire to “re-pen” Cervantes’ *Don Quijote*, expressing that though the author “Pierre Menard” would write in twentieth century Argentina, word for word, the same story as the great Cervantes did in Spain, “Menard’s” intention was not to produce a copy, but an original. In other words, even if *Don Quijote* were to be written anew in America, Borges suggests, the work itself would be fundamentally different because each act of writing produces an original product.297 Conversely, Aguinis expressly presents *Elogio de la culpa* as the Argentine iteration of *In Praise of Folly*, claiming not only that the twentieth century Argentine author could have written the original Dutch version of centuries before, but that Erasmus could have written the same words as those penned by Aguinis in Argentina in 1992. Erasmus and Aguinis are thus rendered interchangeable, as are their missions. I argue that in spite of Aguinis’s claims, his essay proves Borges’ Pierre Monard right, and intentionally delivers in Argentina a much different product than that produced by Erasmus, precisely by presenting it as the opposite. The question that remains is why, in order to produce a revolutionizing product in America, Aguinis perceives that he must present it as the reiteration of a European document, and no less, the one credited with instigating the Reformation, and by extension, the Enlightenment as well. The answer lies in the catalyst for Aguinis’s writing: Aguinis adopted Erasmus in order to heal a nation that had been a

ready host for the violence of another un-reformed religion: Islam. If Erasmus’s goal was to shift power away from Christian authoritarian sources by empowering the individual, Aguinis aimed to counter the forces of institutionalized religious homogeneity that in 1992 Argentina, found a ready host. The objects of Aguinis’s attacks throughout his writing are: Argentine governments that harbor totalitarian influences, a national culture of apathy and disempowerment that permit abuses of power, and those individuals who commit “visible” transgressions.

Modeling his work as a sequel to In Praise of Folly, Aguinis selected a predecessor who was not only a retrospectively identified catalyst of modernity, but also one who deliberately crafted his own figure of a global public intellectual. Erasmus scholar Lisa Jardine has effectively shown Erasmus to have self-consciously created his image as the “archetype and exemplar of the European scholar,” and in so doing, succeeded in founding “the dialectic

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298 Aguinis, in turning to Erasmus, builds on Erasmus’s own building in the humanist writings of the classics (and Cicero specifically) for his own example of critical thought.
300 Aguinis’s national “classroom”, addressed through his essays, in his complementary literary genres, and in his work as Minister of Culture, is envisioned as applicable to a global audience.
302 Ibid., 11. Jardine points out that Erasmus himself chose St. Jerome as his own model, claiming to simply restate the message of this already accepted figure. Erasmus hoped to claim for himself in his own day, the celebrated grandeur of a figure considered to be an admirable Christian, in order to apply to the secular sphere the same influence Jerome had garnered in the spiritual one. Jardine shows how Erasmus’s choice of St. Jerome was strategic, as every European country claimed Jerome as the favored son. The international “agreement” that the figure of St. Jerome garnered, argues Jardine, is what allowed Erasmus to create an international community of thought that could unite on shared ideals and beliefs that Erasmus would then propose. Jardine speaks to the emergence of what might be considered the first (somewhat) global public sphere, created by a Church figure for the purpose of ultimately subverting it.
character” of the intellectual world. Erasmus’s accepted authority and image as the original Western Man of Letters, speaks to Aguinis’s parallel aim of crafting of his own persona. Among the most striking similarities between Aguinis and Erasmus is their shared mission to create an international intellectual community in which they would be regarded as lead actors, while positioning themselves within a global society of intellectual participation and responsiveness in influencing their environments. The following claim Jardine makes about Erasmus could equally apply to Aguinis:

[He had] an urge to set the record straight, and for the betterment of the world whose boundaries are not national boundaries. The printing-house activity symbolizes a kind of internationality of communication, a “classroom without walls,” in which the scholar-editor is the center of a whirlpool of dramatic activity- a centre at which the struggle with language, meaning and text becomes a heroic wrestling with the monster, error, to save mankind. There seems to be a project here-a deliberate intensification of an aura which will extend beyond the charisma of the individual pedagogue.

Aguinis’s own literary output evidenced the same intensity of approach to the written word. If Erasmus is, as Jardine argues, the founding international Man of Letters, then Aguinis is admittedly savvy to position himself and his work as his successor. Moreover, though claiming no originality in person and not responding to the explicit event that spurred Elogio’s writing, the Argentine iteration aspires to be just as innovative, local, and current as Erasmus and his work were in Erasmus’s day. As a confident communicator, writer, and manipulator of the media at his own disposal, Aguinis aptly applied historical and literary traditions in order to transmit his

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303 Ibid., 8. While Jardine herself does not stress this aspect, others have noted that Erasmus was a political thinker who was in touch with all the major European humanist thinkers of his day, and as such, was interested in the arts and had strong opinions on the ideas that concerned his contemporaries. By keeping his pulse on the important cultural currents of his day, Erasmus would be able to claim the place of authority he so deliberately sought.

304 Ibid., 43-4.

305 Ibid., 7. For point of contrast, see Jardine’s description of Erasmus as a “model for the detached and disinterested pursuit of learning,” whereby he effectively positions himself at once as the absent, but perceived to be ever-present, charismatic professor.
own message, persona, and program to both a local and global contemporary audience.

Aguinis shares one other commonality with Erasmus that he does not mention, but that significantly adds to the appropriateness of his choice in predecessor: both aspiring leaders of their people come from the margins of their societies. Erasmus was the illegitimate son of the union between a future priest and the daughter of a physician; Aguinis is an Argentine Jew. These defining characteristics are not simply side-notes to their identities, but marked the lives and perspectives of each in meaningful ways. Erasmus could not accept a benefice because of his illegitimacy, and Aguinis notes his scarring experience of anti-Semitism in Argentina since he was a child. Their identities as peripheral members of society led each to experience the limits of their respective societies’ openness, and consequently, to further visions of universality that would allow for diversity of thought and identity in their societies’ collective identities. The choice of both men to focus their programs for social betterment on the individual, craftily allowed each to advocate for change in a society that did not yet fully accept either. Erasmus and Aguinis are therefore indeed appropriate intellectual bedfellows, and not simply in the monofaceted literary manner Aguinis acknowledged.

Aguinis’s decision to model his work on Erasmus of Rotterdam’s internationally influential In Praise of Folly, speaks to Edward Shils’s notion of the “Tradition of Intellectuals”, which states that intellectuals are not only retrospectively situated, but also strategically selective of their own traditions. Understanding the appropriateness, benefit, and craftiness of Aguinis presenting his own work as Erasmus’s sequel is key to understanding Aguinis’s message as well as his creation of his own public persona in his contemporary Argentina, particularly when his message and agenda differ from that of his chosen mentor. While Erasmus is perhaps best known

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306 Edward Shils, “The Intellectuals”.

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for his attack on the Church and its officiators’ many hypocrisies and rampant incompetence, his emphasis on each individual’s morality and spirituality provided Aguinis with the optimal pedestal for his own message. Erasmus’s legacy and fame together provide Aguinis the preceding legitimacy and recognition of a sympathetic leader but firm critic; a locally legitimate but globally respected public intellectual; a shrewd but well-intentioned writer, widely credited with instigating the Reformation, and thus, of essentially ushering in the modern age.

Aguinis was not the only contemporary writer to note the appropriateness of Erasmus for the modern day. The emergence of fifty-two new translations or printings of In Praise of Folly between 1950 and 1962 is one indicator of this widespread appreciation for Erasmus present in Aguinis’s generation. Because Erasmus’s work represents what is universally considered to be a watershed historical moment, it had been adopted by other moments deemed comparably innovative or unstable. Erasmus was widely taken up in the latter part of the twentieth century.

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307 Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly and Letter to Maarten Van Dorp 1515*, trans. Betty Radice (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), xv, xlvii. Erasmus’s revolutionary ideas were ostensibly not intended to overthrow the existing religious institutions under attack, but rather were intended to bring change from within. While Erasmus claimed to be advocating for the institutions he was attacking, his tenuous and sometimes inconsistent tone reveals the author’s awareness of the actual revolutionary implications of his critical message for the developing religion of Christianity.

308 The author of In Praise of Folly was not only revolutionary in his own day, he has since then been the source of study, inspiration, and imitation throughout the five centuries since his death. For examples see Arthur DuBois, “Review: Erasmus Laughs,” *The Sewanee Review* 43. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1935): 236-240, p. 238. For an insightful look into Erasmus’s legacy and the way his memory has been used by subsequent people and movements, see Bruce Mansfield, *Man on his Own and Phoenix of his Age*. Bruce Mansfield, *Interpretations of Erasmus c 1750-1920: Man on his Own* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Bruce Mansfield, *Phoenix of his Age: Interpretations of Erasmus c 1550-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

309 A.H.T Levi posits that such a renewed interest in the later half of the twentieth century may have been owed to the fact that the post-war milieu gave way to a new era that understood itself to be akin to Erasmus’s Europe.

310 The work is widely understood to have been a hopeful plea, born of a place of desperation because the author lacked the blueprint for constructing the world he so desired. Erasmus scholar A. H. T. Levi reflects that for all of Erasmus’s careful and purposeful editing and reediting of the
specifically as a model for tolerance and diversity, and as an alternative to “total disintegration.”\textsuperscript{311} Choosing Erasmus as his “Quijote”, Aguinis suggested that Argentina’s experience of violence and the victimization of its Jews was a local symptom of a much wider malaise.\textsuperscript{312}

Aguinis’s appropriation of Erasmus in order to “re-write” his message in twentieth century Argentina, reveals a distinct Latin American relation between letters and politics that makes Erasmus’s message and medium particularly attractive and understandable to a Latin American audience. Perhaps meant as an afterthought, Jardine proposes that Erasmus’s optimism would not be found currently:

[There is a modern-day loss of the Erasmian] conviction that true learning is the originator of all good and virtuous action—that right thought produces right government. In fact, of course, we try not to use the words like true, good, virtuous, and right at all, if we can help it. They embarrass us. We are too deeply mired in the relativity of all things to risk truth claims. And on the whole we believe that in all of this, our age is one of loss—that we have lost something which the age of Erasmus possessed.\textsuperscript{313}

This feeling of a lost era could effectively explain the wistful revisiting of Erasmus’s work, yet the opposite could be argued as well. The Latin American arena is one where optimistic literary piece, he did not in 1509 (when he first wrote the work), nor in the editions of 1511, 1512 or 1514, know either the means through which the Church could be reformed, which dangers to avoid at the time, or how to bring about change without starting a revolution. Literarily, Levi explains, this insecurity comes out as disunity, and as such, “makes the satire as much tentative as it is sharp and subtle.” Erasmus, 240.

\textsuperscript{311} Dickens, 297.

\textsuperscript{312} Robert P. Adams, who wrote “The Modern Relevance of The Praise of Folly,” represents Erasmus’s work as coming at a time of optimism, when European humanists hoped a Golden Age of peaceful social reconstruction was dawning. Adams describes Erasmus’s work as constructive, optimistic, and expectant. He understands the satire as revealing and destroying “idiot structures”, whereby “Folly” is employed to repair “human fatuity”. In like manner, Aguinis’s culpa will take on the modern iteration of the same “baton”. See Robert P. Adams, “The Modern Relevance of The Praise of Folly” in Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Praise of Folly, ed. Williams, Kathleen (England: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 68. See also Erasmus, Praise of Folly, xxii-xiii.

\textsuperscript{313} Jardine, 4-5.
expressions of national hope have been ubiquitously present in essays since Latin American independence, particularly at times when the reality and the desired future seemed hopelessly disjointed.

Aguinis’s iteration of a national program modeled after Erasmus’s most renowned work is indicative of something much more interesting than simply a Latin American instance of a twentieth-century global resurgent interest in Erasmus. Aguinis shrewdly adopted the popular genre of the Latin American essay, previously used primarily as a tool of the intellectual to espouse national missions, to advocate in this instance, for personal responsibility. Aguinis therefore subverts the genre so often used to espouse national programs, to address the healing of the individual within the larger nation.

II. The Essay in Latin America

Literary scholar Ilan Stavans proposes that it was the generation of the late eighteenth century in Latin America, influenced by the Enlightenment, that was “responsible for solidifying a trademark in Latin American letters: that of the link between the sword and the pen, between politics and the written word.” Stavans, 10. The essay genre in particular has been chosen by cultural and political leaders throughout Latin American history as a platform from which to mold their nations according to their convictions. It is precisely the trust and belief in new systems that has led to the Latin American acceptance of, and in fact need for, inspired manifestos and utopian promises. Since the late nineteenth century, lofty promises to deliver a redemptive future out of the chaos and despair of the present, have been expressed in Latin America through both literary masterpieces and by authoritarian governments. Domingo F. Sarmiento’s Facundo, José Rodó’s Ariel, and José Vasconcelos’s Raza Cósmica, are but three examples of such literature.

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314 Stavans, 10.
315 It is precisely the trust and belief in new systems that has led to the Latin American acceptance of, and in fact need for, inspired manifestos and utopian promises. Since the late nineteenth century, lofty promises to deliver a redemptive future out of the chaos and despair of the present, have been expressed in Latin America through both literary masterpieces and by authoritarian governments. Domingo F. Sarmiento’s Facundo, José Rodó’s Ariel, and José Vasconcelos’s Raza Cósmica, are but three examples of such literature.
their connected paths to modernity. Aguinis participates in a long legacy of writers in Latin America, beginning with Sarmiento, and continuing with José Martí, José Vasconcelos, Alfonso Reyes, Jorge Luis Borges, Germán Arciniégas, José Lezama Lima, and Leopoldo Zea, to name just a handful, who have used the essay to further national programs of identity and politics. Stavans posits that the essay in the region remains “unparalleled in deciphering the troubled status of critical thinking among Hispanics and in navigating the bumpy road toward democracy.”

The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to analyzing four principle mappings found within Aguinis’s essay. The first regards Aguinis’s self-aware image as a public intellectual, and the intellectual traditions within which Aguinis places himself. Second, Aguinis describes Argentina as an ailing patient, one whose healing involves a psychological understanding of society. Third, Aguinis presents Argentine violence as a manifestation of a national malaise, which itself reflects a global tradition of intolerance. Fourth, Aguinis uses his work to replace Erasmus as the harbinger of true modernity, because Erasmus did not provoke an effective modernization. If Erasmus is credited for bringing the Reformation and then the Enlightenment, Aguinis uses his work to effectively dethrone the Enlightenment as having provided the crucible blueprint of modernity. In this way, Aguinis the Latin American presents a perspective that Erasmus did not, and could not have, provided.

A. Themes of Aguinis

1. In the Traditions of Erasmus, Neruda and Freud

The first tradition that Aguinis calls upon to place his essay Elogio de la culpa, is that of

317 Stavans, 7.
Erasmus of Rotterdam; the second is provided by Pablo Neruda, the beloved Chilean poet; and a third is owed to Sigmund Freud, author of *Civilization and Its Discontents* and father of psychoanalysis. It is in the latter two choices, where Aguinis diverges from Erasmus, that he becomes authentic to Argentina, and therefore relevant both at home and abroad.

Aguinis cites the line “Venid a ver la sangre por las calles, venid a ver la sangre por las calles,” to open his book dedicated to addressing abuses of government power. Pablo Neruda, a fellow Southern Cone writer who predates Aguinis by thirty-one years, wrote those words in 1936. While the Chilean is widely known as a great poet, he was also a politician who accepted various government posts, including briefly filling a senate seat for the Chilean Communist Party. Acting as the consul for the Chilean government in Spain in 1936, Neruda wrote the cited line in protest of the murder of his Spanish friend and fellow poet Federico García Lorca. Coincidentally, decades later, Neruda would encounter a similar circumstance to Lorca’s in his own country with the overthrow of Salvador Allende’s democratically elected government by the fascist military dictator Augusto Pinochet. Just as Lorca was deemed a subversive by Francisco Franco’s government in the mid-1930’s, so too was Neruda by

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318 As seen in Ch. 1, Shils describes intellectuals as participating either consciously or by osmosis in traditions of intellectuals, positioning their thoughts and sometimes persons in the footsteps of others who have come before. Aguinis, in this same manner, demonstrates a very explicit positioning of himself within a historical trajectory that helps validate his thoughts and program.

319 Neruda’s poem is titled, “Explico algunas cosas”.

320 The reason this position was brief is that the Radical Party President, Gabriel Gonzáles Videla, turned against Neruda and the other government communists. In response, Neruda escaped Chile and lived in exile for three years. Before leaving his post and country however, Neruda protested Videla’s treatment of a communist miner’s strike while still in the Chilean Senate in 1948, in a speech titled “Yo acuso”. In the vein of understanding intellectual traditions, Neruda here is borrowing the same phrase to title his protest of a hypocritical and unjust government as did Emile Zola in his letter “J’accuse”, which marks for many scholars the emergence of the modern public intellectual. See Ron Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics*, 37.
Pinochet’s in the early 1970’s. The Chilean people and international community alike regarded Neruda as a great artist and public figure, and his death from heart failure, occurring three years into Pinochet’s rule, was an occasion of national mourning. Thousands of Chileans flooded the streets among a strong police presence, reciting their beloved poet’s works and honoring his life and political goals, which together labored to defy fascist governments.321

The citation Aguinis takes from Pablo Neruda to open his own essay is neither incidental nor secondary in meaning to Erasmus’s. Neruda was perhaps the most widely celebrated and internationally recognized Latin American poet of his day, who had used his distinguished participation in culture to further his agenda as a public intellectual. He was as much locally important as he was globally active, and he used his status of celebrated writer to fight for political causes at home and abroad. Just as important, Neruda viewed the proliferation of art among the people as an avenue of instituting liberty. 322 These combined elements dovetailed with Aguinis’s agenda of the democratization of politics through the democratization of culture, as well as his understanding of incidents of authoritarianism in America as processes connected ideologically and historically to comparable ones abroad.

Pablo Neruda contributes a facet that is central to the message of Elogio de la culpa and is one that Erasmus could not provide: the unique connection between culture, politics, and the public intellectual in Latin America. Having receiving international recognition as a brilliant

321 Pablo Neruda famously earned the 1971 Nobel Prize in Literature, returning from the award ceremony to an invitation from Chilean socialist President Salvador Allende, to whom he was an advisor, having been invited by the President to speak before an audience of 70,000 nationals.
322 Shortly after the Chilean dictator took power, Neruda’s home at Isla Negra in Chile was searched, at which time Neruda reportedly challenged: “Look around—there's only one thing of danger for you here—poetry.” The known tie between culture and politics and thus, between literature and power, constantly emerges as a hallmark of the region. See Victoria Arana, The Facts on File Companion to World Poetry: 1900-Present (New York: Infobase, 2008), 307.
public figure, and widely credited for reclaiming Latin America for Latin Americans,\textsuperscript{323} Neruda was a local hero who had shown Europe that Latin America had something to add to humanity.\textsuperscript{324} Thus, even if in the end Latin America mattered because Europe said it did, Neruda serves to make Aguinis’s appropriation of Erasmus valid. By adopting Neruda alongside Erasmus, Aguinis established the necessary combined patrimony of the intellectual traditions that gave birth to Latin America, to then make his own contribution.

The citation from Erasmus’s work that Aguinis chooses to open his own, reflects the Argentine’s innovative agenda: “Aquél que recibe la mission de gobernar los pueblos ha de ocuparse de los negocios públicos y no de los privados, y no ha de pensar en otra cosa que en la utilidad general.”\textsuperscript{325} Though Aguinis’s agenda is not that of reforming religious institutions, he too calls to task those in positions of power, urging them to recall their obligation to work for the common good. Aguinis is calling not for a Reformed Argentina, but rather, for a post-Reformation Argentina, one where the state is not anti-religion, but irreligious. The key for Aguinis lies in the hands of responsible leaders, and in a public that demands such leadership.

This opening pair of citations by Neruda and Erasmus is therefore quite astutely chosen if we are to consider Aguinis’s own conception of his place in a multi-layered intellectual legacy. Both cited men united politics and culture, public service and art. One provides the European legacy to the Western humanist tradition; the other provides the message of self-determination and liberty in the Americas that likewise reflects a Latin American engagement with larger historical processes of modernization. Not coincidentally, both Erasmus and Neruda were

\textsuperscript{325} Marcos Aguinis, Elogio de la culpa (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1993), i.
recognized as public intellectuals in their own day, and are remembered internationally as notable men of history who fought for the good of society through cultural venues. If we are to recall once more Shils’s notion of the Tradition of Intellectuals, Aguinis has clearly situated himself quite aptly both literarily and historically in their wakes. The self-aware Argentine public intellectual is thus rendered at once an actor of history and his own historian.

The third pillar to Aguinis’s work is Sigmund Freud, and like Neruda, his influence speaks as much to Argentina’s relationship to modernizing Europe, as to the specifically local realities that are born of the transatlantic relationship.

2. The psychological terms of healing

Argentine literature, which had for decades reflected sociological and political commentary, in the 1960’s adopted psychological terms. Mariano Ben Plotkin has written extensively on the topic of the permeation of psychoanalysis in Argentine society and culture, stating that while in the United States and more optimistic societies the 1960’s brought a surge in humanistic psychology, concerned with effecting true democracy in the a postwar world, the 1960’s in Argentina became permeated with psychoanalysis precisely because the country was in a less optimistic place, and intellectuals of the new Left were concerned with how and why they were always “caught on the wrong side of history.” Plotkin explains that by 1960, due to the increased constriction of the public sphere in Argentina, it was common to see psychoanalysis funneled through culture in order to explore conflicts, fears, and disappointments that lacked

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327 Plotkin points out that the adoption of psychoanalysis in Argentina reflects the nation’s constant importation of European trends, especially French. See also Mariano Ben Plotkin ed., *Argentina on the Couch: Psychiatry, State, and Society, 1880 to the Present* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2003).
other means of expression in society.\footnote{Plotkin notes that Argentina boasts among the highest per capita Freudian analysts in the world today, becoming in 1960 the world center for psychoanalysis and competing with France for the first spot of Lacanian (followers of Jacques Lacan) analysts to date. In Argentina, the 1950’s marked the true takeoff of the field, with psychoanalysis spreading from Buenos Aires, and to some extent from Cordoba, into the other provinces since then. Plotkin argues that like in France after 1950, psychoanalysis in Argentina also became a cultural artifact instead of simply a therapeutic technique. It would be interesting to compare French and Argentine post-war societies, to understand their parallel need for, and cultural use of, psychoanalysis. See Plotkin, \textit{Freud in the Pampas}, 1,11; and Plotkin, \textit{Argentina on the Couch}, 2, 12.} Psychoanalysis had been rendered among the only safe outlets where the disconnect between personal and social ideals and realities could be expressed and addressed,\footnote{The discipline of psychology has served Argentina’s need for self-understanding in a “crisis of civilized morality” when there have been constant changes and feelings of loss of stability. See Plotkin, \textit{Freud in the Pampas}, 5, 78, 83, 223 and Plotkin, \textit{Argentina on the Couch}, 9.} becoming Argentina’s secular religion and providing a framework with which to deal with suffering even if it was unable to bring about its cure.\footnote{The result, Plotkins argues, is not simply that of producing a society that is largely accustomed to undergoing psychoanalysis, but also a culture that itself has become saturated with psychological lingo and concepts. See Plotkin, \textit{Argentina on the Couch}, 6-8.}

The influence of psychoanalysis in Argentina is not only one of loose patrimony; it is substantively based in Freudian polemics. The central preoccupation of Freud’s \textit{Civilization and its Discontent},\footnote{Ibid., 91. It is worth noting that Freud himself was interested in politics and applied a psychological approach to understanding his reality, as is evidenced perhaps most obviously in his 1929 \textit{Civilization and its Discontents}.} namely, the tensions that exist between the individual and society, lie at the very heart of Aguinis’s \textit{Elogio de la culpa}.\footnote{As much as Erasmus’s message is better understood in the context of the author’s life and historical moment, so too is it important to recall that Freud expressed this discomfort with modernity in the interwar period. Aguinis’s message is likewise propelled by a latest instance of violence in what he explains as a moment of worldwide fascism and totalitarianism.} In \textit{Elogio}, psychology serves as a kind of purgatory, providing the necessary space to bridge ideal and reality in a continent that has been searching to achieve the illusive nation of justice and harmony so desperately sought in the West at large since the beginning of the Reformation. Aguinis’s adoption of Freud therefore does not negate Erasmus’s contribution to the advance of modernity. It simply shows how the Dutchman,
like the Reformation and Enlightenment that followed, did not succeed in solving the ever-present issue of man’s suffering in societies that were born of exclusionary systems. It would be Latin America, serving as a vertex of all of these historical traditions, that could offer a final response.\textsuperscript{333}

If Erasmus intended a spiritual healing of his era’s “folly”, psychoanalysis in Argentina provided the secular tool of social healing for his milieu. Mirroring Erasmus’s presentation, Aguinis provided a complete personification of the narrator that identified guilt as the daughter of law and the mother of responsibility.\textsuperscript{334} While allegedly paying homage primarily to Erasmus, Culpa does credit Freud for realizing that guilt was what entered the space that existed between a person’s ideal self and his real incarnation.\textsuperscript{335}

Al quitarme el velo Freud descubrió entonces que yo, la Culpa, me introduzco en el espacio que se produce entre el yo de una persona y su ideal. Si el yo se siente poca cosa en comparación con el ideal, la instancia critica le aplica un pellizcón; si la diferencia crece, el pellizcón se convierte claramente en culpa.\textsuperscript{336}

In Elogio, Responsabilidad is described as the gentler offspring that shares the mother’s agenda

\textsuperscript{333} Interestingly, psychoanalysis was initially adopted in Argentina by the medical institutions as a state apparatus to help order and mold the population, as an extension of the Alberdian policies of creating the “right kind” of society. Plotkin argues that psychology was used by the elites in society in order “reorganize society to reflect bourgeois rationality,” and this reflected a “medicalizing” of social policies. See Plotkin, Freud in the Pampas, 5, 16; and Plotkin, Argentina on the Couch, 6-8, 23.

\textsuperscript{334} Aguinis, 71. We learn in Elogio that Guilt had her start with the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, when humankind was first faced with choice between right and wrong. The narrator reflects that most have not internalized Guilt to live with responsibility toward their fellow human beings, and that though some have suffered from her violent exterior, society has yet to produce the intended results. As does Erasmus, Aguinis personifies his protagonist and provides a biography of when “culpa” was born and what her different veils have been over time. It is worth noting that yet again, Aguinis was imitating an imitator: Erasmus, as many Renaissance humanists did, modeled his own work after classical writers. In using masks as a literary technique, Erasmus participated in thus humanist tradition, and identified in Cicero a particular affinity. Aguinis chooses the term “veil” over mask, but they serve the same function and likewise portray a similar play with identity and tradition.

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., 138.
of instituting social harmony. Revealing a quite modern message, responsibility is explained as being applicable only to those who are capable of responding, with the prerequisite for being able to respond lying in society’s capacity for critical thought. It is the message of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant’s definition of maturity, expressed in Freudian terms.

Aguinis writes in his prologue to *Elogio* that he had hoped that each person’s internal regulatory mechanism had been tapped to a greater extent by now (meaning the historical moment he was living), but laments that morality in society has witnessed a terrible decline in inverse measure to scientific advancements: “la ecisión entre inteligencia e irraconalidad nos llevaba al borde de los abismos.” If Erasmus’s task was to place spiritual power in the hands of the individual, Freud adds for Aguinis the admonition that science alone does not cure people or societies. In fact, according to Aguinis, it is precisely this disconnect between intelligence and irrationality, which prompted the need for Guilt. Critical thought along with psychological health, as enunciated in Argentina, would help moderate global “scientific programs” of modernity that have served more often to cause suffering than healing, effecting systems of exclusion versus societies of democracy. Aguinis justifies in *Elogio* that there was a need for his sequel only because while *Praise of Folly* did get people thinking, it did not change mankind:

Elogio de la Culpa [debe tener] mayor lectura que aquél (de la Locura) y los humanos se reserven de las consecuencias que genera su actual corrupción. Es por esto que yo, la Culpa, considero urgente alzar la voz, ser incluso más enfática que la Locura, amenazar si es necesario, para que el hombre-maravilloso y pavoroso-cobre conciencia.

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337 Ibid., 246.
339 Aguinis here also dates the search for a globally applicable program of modernity to before Eighteenth century France and the Enlightenment.
340 Aguinis, 11.
341 Ibid, 21. The Argentine’s message is significantly not about religion or the Church; it is rather, quite pointedly secular. Any mention of religion is a historical one, presenting for example the Fall from the Garden of Eden as the catalyst to the emergence of guilt and the need
In his adoption of psychoanalysis as both a literary tool and diagnostic framework with which to understand Argentine crises, Aguinis importantly participates in an emerging scholarly tradition that is “pay[ing] attention to the particular manner in which ideas are received, filtered, and incorporated, in different national cultures.”

While Aguinis is eager to place himself in the company of Erasmus, Freud, and even the Chilean Neruda, Aguinis does not seek intellectual peers in Argentina to establish his intellectual lineage. Yet Aguinis was not the only Argentine public intellectual speaking in terms of the health of the nation in trying to solve “the problem” of Argentina. On the contrary, Aguinis followed a generation of intellectuals including Eduardo Mallea and Ezequiel Martinez Estrada, who, before him, looked to psychology to provide the individual healing that would lead to healing the nation at large. Where Aguinis and Elogio de la culpa are noteworthy among the works of Aguinis’s co-nationalists, is in their addressing not just Argentina, but all of humanity:

Yo la Culpa, soy nuevamente reclamada para restablecer la armonía. Cuando los seres humanos se desbocan en ataques recíprocos y descadenan guerras que jamás pueden saciarse porque una alimenta el calor de la siguiente, debo intervenir. Debo intervenir porque soy la única que no actúa desde afuera, sino desde el interior de cada ser humano, desde una porción de su alma.

Aguinis is literarily and intellectually unique within the context of fellow Argentine writers in his exploration of guilt’s role, personality, veils, and heritage, all adopted in an effort to achieve

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342 Plotkin provides that “psychoanalysis has been one of the defining systems of thought in the West during the twentieth century”, and his own work adds to the emerging scholarship that had begun to counter the traditional approach to Latin America as a passive receptor of European ideas. See Plotkin, Argentina on the Couch, 8-9.

343 Aguinis, 37.

344 Ibid., 39.
global societies of responsibility as opposed to victim-hood.\footnote{Ibid., 29. Aguinis’s message is clearly enunciated as that of achieving a society imbued with a moral conscience, and he posits that only Culpa can be effective because she operates from within each individual.}

Ultimately, neither Erasmus nor Freud could have written *Elogio de la culpa*; yet without them, Aguinis could not have done so either. Aguinis’s choice of the two as his Western intellectual bookends is critical to placing him within larger historical and intellectual trajectories. Nonetheless, Freud does not provide the ultimate key. Critical thought, translating to individual responsibility for society’s workings, emerges as the endpoint of modernization, which is equated with democratization. In order to convey this message, Aguinis presents Culture as the handmaiden of Guilt, portraying it as the positive manifestation of social harmony and as a prerequisite for a healthy public sphere.\footnote{Ibid., 225. Aguinis’s global vision provides examples where guilt has been internalized on a societal level. For example, Aguinis explains that the public face of guilt is shame, and he presents Japan as an example where there are the conditions (often present in minority circles or traditional societies), where shame serves to regulate individual behavior to accommodate the group’s standards. It is thus shame, which is Guilt as public morality, that Aguinis argues will keep the debate about good and evil alive in society. In this way, Aguinis aligns with Ozick’s call for the unity of morality and blame, and the public intellectual’s duty to be an moral compass in society.} The key for Aguinis, as much as for Erasmus, remains not in external salvation, but in establishing a society of responsive individuals. Thus, as much as Aguinis claims Guilt (Folly’s re-incarnation) as his protagonist, Responsibility is the essay’s true hero, a hero identified by Freud, but exemplified by Neruda.

“Guilt’s” personification and subsequent lineage, while providing a literary parallel to the inspiring Dutch version, helped Aguinis identify the stages of national maturation in a manner that challenged accepted teleological notions of history that would otherwise render Latin America “the Third World”. As the renowned Argentine writer Julio Cortázar wrote: “Neruda opened the greatest of gates to an awareness which one day will truly be called freedom. After
that we could go on reading Mallarmé and Rilke, placed in their proper orbit, but we could not deny that we were Latin American.” 347 Neruda was the proud American who was as local as he was global; it was he who provided the blood behind the words, the life behind the science. With Neruda’s contributions, Aguinis could present Latin America as not an aberration of modernization, but as a clear indicator of the tragedies that the failures of historical programs had caused globally. Aguinis’s work furthers that the connection between Reformation Europe and the scientific West had yet to produce a healthy society.

Neruda was the Catholic-born American who spoke of democracy and participation, and he bridged Freud and Erasmus and their imperfect methods of science and religion. Like Neruda, Aguinis too united the sword and the pen through his essay and civic service. A psychologist, public intellectual, and former Minister of Culture, and a Jew in a country that had experienced the worst anti-Semitic terrorist attack to date, Aguinis was uniquely positioned to bring the necessary ingredients for democracy together in a program of both national salience and global import. With the threefold patrimony delineated above, Aguinis’s Elogio aimed to cure the seemingly interminable Latin American rhythms of despair by providing the blueprint for a participatory and responsible nation of healthy individuals.


Aguinis explains in his “Prólogo o dis-culpa” that he wrote this work in 1993 because it was a year of much activity on both cultural and political fronts, with violence and cruelty erupting in many countries. 348 Resisting providing any details on how this resurgence of

347 Cortazar, 163.
348 It is worth noting that the “Dis-culpa” is a play on words, meaning both to apologize and to undo or take away guilt, and thus, makes a fitting prologue to his tongue-in-cheek work. On a note of interest, Erasmus too employed this playful tactic with the title to his own work. His book is titled in Greek Morias Enoomion, which can be translated either as The [or In] Praise of
xenophobia manifested in Argentina, and specifically, on how it caused the worst terrorist attack in the history of Latin America, Aguinis uses *Elogio* to address the breakdown within each human being’s regulatory system as symptomatic of something being very wrong in the world at this time:\(^{349}\)

La tarea de restaurar el tejido roto entre cuerpo, mente y entorno ha fracasado y seguirá fracasando…Por haber abandonado al paraíso-el estado de naturaleza-edificó la cultura y sus maravillas. Por lo tanto, no se trata de hacerlo regresar al punto de ruptura, cosa que es absolutamente imposible. Se trata de conseguir que sus contradicciones no terminen por destruirlo a él y a todo el planeta.\(^{350}\)

*Culpa*’s purpose is to condemn all hate crimes committed toward the powerless when moral conscience is weak: “Resurge el odio hacia minorías indefensas, asesinan niños de la calle, aumenta el odio y la violencia gratuita y crece la marea de corrupción económica hasta niveles nunca alcanzados antes. Todo esto ocurre cuando afloja la conciencia moral, que es mi sublime esencia.”\(^{351}\) Aguinis urges his reader to consider that the health of the whole is connected to that of the individual, and that any weakness in the fabric translates to social failure.\(^{352}\) Consequently, crimes against Argentine Jews are simply one local manifestation of a global fabric of illness. The psychological approach is meant to cure the social and political violence toward all “others” of society.

Aguinis quotes *In Praise of Folly* verbatim in order to stress the universality of the problems ailing Argentina:

Vapuleó con eficacia a los negociantes, militares y jueces que “ofreciendo para obras piadosas una misera parte de sus rapiñas, se creen tan limpios de culpa

\(^{349}\) Aguinis, *Elogio*, 11.
\(^{350}\) Ibid., 109.
\(^{351}\) Ibid., 238.
\(^{352}\) Ibid., 37.
como si se hubieran bañado en la laguna de Lerna y redimido como por escritura pública sus perjurios, liviandades, borracheras, camorras, asesinatos, impostures, perfidies y traiciones, al punto de creer que, tras la escasa donación, podrían reiniciar libremente sus fechorías.  

Aguinis’s attack, like Erasmus’s, focuses as much on those who transgress as on those who condone or ignore the actions of the perpetrators:

Dictadores y dictadorzuelos han oprimido a sus naciones para gozarlas como al delicioso jugo de una fruta; han mentido, torturado, robado, asesinado. Y cuando logran escapar a las penas de la justicia ni siquiera huyen al este del paraíso como el arrepentido Cáin; algunos tienen la insolencia de reclamar la honra que se debe a los heroes. Repugnan en millones, pero ellos no sienten la repugnancia. Y si se las comunican, no les importa. Además, no falta quienes, por complicidad, identificación o idiotez, los admiren pese a todo.

Though Aguinis states at the onset of his work that he will not end the essay without referring to those who manipulate the world for evil, the author does not provide a specific attack on either Argentine policies or certain government officials, nor does this stated driving purpose occupy the bulk of the essay. Aguinis instead repeatedly admonishes his public as part of a global cohort of societies producing the governments they deserve. Furthermore, the absolute exclusion of the Embassy incident in a work written in its response, is not the only instance where Aguinis chooses to direct his message to the public who lived through the misfortune, instead of to the cause of their suffering. By making his public accomplices, rather than victims, he passes on to them the blame and responsibility for their condition. It will be the same tactic pursued in the novel *Asalto al paraíso*, written in response to the Embassy’s bombing as well.

The section in *Elogio* that is dedicated to the work’s stated goal of bringing to task Argentine abusers of power provides instead a plethora of international examples of abuse.

353 Ibid., 27.
354 Ibid., 52.
355 Aguinis quotes France’s first Minister of Culture, André Malraux. Predating Aguinis in his appointment to 1959, Malraux took office at the end of the Second World War. This observation within the work serves to tie Aguinis to his global cohort of public intellectuals, proving in the process that even “Western” countries continue to struggle with questions of modernization.
Aguinis cites the German writer and political activist Thomas Mann, who, in an effort of international protest in 1940, stated to the BBC that he did not know how the German people would ever face the rest of humanity again.\textsuperscript{356} Aguinis uses these dramatic words, spoken by a post-Holocaust German, to support his own work written in direct response to anti-Semitic attacks in Argentina: “Estas dramáticas palabras, oportunas y proféticas, sólo se escucharon a medias. Como prueba de ello, hoy se produce la siniestra resurección del nazismo. Y no sólo en Alemania, sino en Francia, España, Polonia y casi todos los demás países del orbe.”\textsuperscript{357} Aguinis also cites Reagan and Bush’s support of military governments that disregarded human rights around the world, the Catholic Church’s abuses in Uganda and Sudan in 1993, and the seventy years’ ethnic wars of Yugoslavia. \textsuperscript{358} Argentina in 1992 therefore emerges as simply one more foci of recent widespread activity.

When Aguinis does bring his argument current, the author makes sure to place his words within a twenty-five hundred year tradition that links the birth of modernity with the Reformation, culminating in individual responsibility as the ultimate missing piece of the modernizing puzzle:

Dos mil años antes de que la Locura dictase su Elogio a Erasmo, Jerusalem fue zarandeada por una aparición tan alegórica y vivaz como la suya en el Renacimiento y ahora la mía, al término del siglo XX. Fue registrada por el libro de los Proverbios[…]La Locura completó el discurso de la Sabiduría. Yo, la Culpa, completo ahora el de la Locura.\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 202. Aguinis quotes Thomas Mann lamenting that he does not know how Germany could do enough penance to merit participating among the fraternity of nations ever again, acknowledging the pain his nation caused, and the moral and physical ruin it brought humanity with her bestial ideology.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid., 200. In his list of global injustices, Aguinis mentions that Clyde Snow, the United Nations’ forensic physician, came to Argentina in 1991 to lead a group of anthropologists. The mission’s goal was to uncover the remains of victims of the last dictatorship, who found that those being treated in hospitals in Croatia had been victims of the Serbian army’s crimes.

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 248.
The purpose of the plethora of examples Aguinis provides serves not only to earn the writer his erudite standing as an educated public intellectual, it places Argentina within a historical trajectory that spans all time.\textsuperscript{360} By providing ongoing global examples of violence, often witnessed and supported by the West itself, Aguinis suggests that Argentina’s malaise is not an exception of Western history modernization.\textsuperscript{361} Instead, this heritage provides the humanist backdrop to Erasmus’s call for global responsibility: “That you are patriotic will be praised by many and easily forgiven by everyone; but in my opinion it is wiser to treat men and things as though we held this world the common fatherland of all.”\textsuperscript{362}

Aguinis’s diagnosis of Argentina’s violence in \textit{Elogio} provides a similar message of the importance of upholding laws for the good of society:

\begin{quote}
No siempre la satisfacción de un impulso termina bien. \textit{Lo agradable a veces es demasiado breve o ilusorio o costoso y, al final, resulta horrible. Y la cultura del Estado debe procurar que sus ciudadanos sean solidarios, no fieras recíprocas. Los poderosos, los que están en condiciones de cometer abusos, son quienes más deberían aferrarse a la virtud para el bien de todos, y de ellos mismos en especial.\[Quoting Socrates\] “Es una cosa difícil Calicles, vivir dentro de la justicia cuando se tienen las opciones de obrar mal. Por eso, amigo mío, la mayor parte de los hombres en el poder se vuelven malos.” [Original emphasis]\textsuperscript{363}
\end{quote}

To enjoy culture, one must obey the laws that come as a corollary to living in a society: “Para el hombre la naturaleza no ha quedado atrás de la cultura, sino que se volvió una instancia de la cultura misma, un objeto cultural. Esta poderosa conversión, lograda a partir de sus salto sin

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{360}Ibid., 201. For instance, the author accuses the United Nations’ security council of being too complacent, challenging them to be a vanguard of global justice.
\textsuperscript{361}Ibid., 199. In maintaining a global, and also historical view, Aguinis functions within a tradition that understands itself as part of a certain Western lineage. Erasmus’s own chosen intellectual predecessor, Cicero, too worked to correct government mismanagement in his own day, warning his present-day Rome against the impending downfall that poor government would bring to society. Erasmus thus saw himself as following in the footsteps of Cicero, who too was wary of the mismanagement of the state by those who ruled it. See Erasmus’s Letter to Budé, 480.
\textsuperscript{362}Aguinis, \textit{Elogio}, 199.
\textsuperscript{363}Ibid., 189.
\end{footnotesize}
Though Aguinis adamantly insists on placing the Argentine violence in global context, while studiedly not addressing the bombing in Buenos Aires that fueled the writing of this essay, Aguinis’s message is unmistakably directed at an Argentine audience. Erasmus’s line that opens Aguinis’s work, where “Folly” admonishes those in power to rule with the good of the people in mind, is reserved throughout the work for comments concerning contemporary Argentina. “Culpa” comes to speak as Folly’s reincarnation when asking the reader to reflect about her nation’s governors and to notice if there are any coincidences between them and others who function without a conscience. In the concluding section titled “Actualidad de una vieja polémica,” Aguinis refers to local politics only obtusely, but he pointedly addresses the “ocupantes de poder” versus the “dueños de poder” in Argentina, and focuses on reminding his readers that those in power are simply occupying positions of power; they are not the owners of it. It is therefore the people of Argentina, who allow such injustice, that are the target of Aguinis’s words.

In pursuit of his mission, Aguinis connects the narrative of the modernization of Argentina to the history of the West by leading the reader through parallel stories spanning from Adam and Eve, to the Hebrews’ first adoption of monotheism, Seneca the Younger of the Roman Empire, Dante’s Middle Ages, Constantine the African of the eleventh century, and subsequently to André of Lauren who was a physician of Henry IV’s. Aguinis jumps from Aristotle, to Freud, and to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, all in an further effort to show that Western history and her different cultures have dealt with culpa or social responsibility dialectically, and how they have

364 Ibid., 213.
365 Ibid., 210-211.
366 Ibid., 211-212.
all produced great men who have tried to save society from itself.\textsuperscript{367}

Aguinis’s schema, unlike Erasmus’s, does not end at diagnosis. It takes the next step to include a plan for Argentina’s psychological maturation with clear pragmatic manifestations, which involves the venue of culture.\textsuperscript{368} Herein lies Aguinis’s originality and self-justification at once: psychoanalysis and culture together comprise the future of a healthy society,\textsuperscript{369} because to enjoy culture, one must obey the laws that come as a corollary to living in a society.\textsuperscript{370} Aguinis thus serves as his country’s conscience and healer, bringing the hopeful historical process of modernization that began with Erasmus, current and local.

4. Dethroning the Enlightenment

Latin America has been faced with the accusation that she did not modernize effectively, meaning that she did not internalize or apply the Enlightenment successfully.\textsuperscript{371} It is also common trope that Latin American ideas and products are merely poor imitations of the far-away, superior original.\textsuperscript{372} Both views reject the region’s agency, while qualifying any connections it bears to Europe as reinforcing her inferior standing in the relationship. Aguinis, in adopting Erasmus, speaks to this dynamic and subversively works to rectify it. While admiring the democratic principles of the Enlightenment,\textsuperscript{373} Aguinis emphatically lays bare the

\textsuperscript{367} Aguinis, \textit{Elogio}, 118-119, 127, 134, 135.
\textsuperscript{368} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 213. Aguinis writes in \textit{Elogio}: “Para el hombre la naturaleza no ha quedado atrás de la cultura, sino que se volvió una instancia de la cultura misma, un objeto cultural. Esta poderosa conversion, lograda a partir de sus salto sin retorno [Garden of Eden] hasta ahora no ha sido compartida por ninguna otra especie de vida.”
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{373} In \textit{Elogio} as well as his other essays, Aguinis makes clear his admiration for both Sarmiento and Alberdi, staunch Enlightenment advocates who aimed to adopt European ideals in order to build the desired Latin American nation. Yet, by not addressing the shortcomings of the
shortcomings of “the West”. In his essay, Aguinis is skeptical about the Enlightenment legacy of programs of reason and technology, warning that humanity cannot be guided by science and reason alone.\(^{374}\):

El siglo XX, inaugurado con las pompas de una infatulación científica sin paralelo, cantado como al alba de un mundo mejor, se sumergió en el volcán de los totalitarismos infernales y puso en marcha una competencia de transgresiones en todos los órdenes de la vida pública y privada. El fin del Segundo milenio ahora se parece al fin de muchas cosas, menos al fin de la destructividad humana.\(^{375}\)

Aguinis message that amends the shortcomings of the positivist Enlightenment blueprint is that morality must manage the advances of the mind.\(^{376}\) *Elogio de la culpa*, written as a response to a terrorist bombing targeting a Jewish site in 1992 Argentina, closes with examples of the resurgences of Nazism worldwide as much as it opens with it. Nazism reincarnated becomes a global symptom that the warnings of Guilt remain unheeded, and that science continues to be used not for the betterment of society, but in order to justify targeted violence. By positioning *Elogio de la culpa* as *In Praise of Folly*’s sequel, Aguinis uses the starting point of the Reformation, which led to religious freedom, the Enlightenment, and her programs of modernization, to check modernity’s current state of violence and totalitarianism. The Argentine’s uniqueness comes from placing Latin America and Europe on an equal plane, whereby Argentina has as much of a chance at “recovery” as the rest of the ailing West, and can consequently serve as a model for the still-flailing global modernization project.

In this light, Aguinis calls Argentina’s treatment of its minorities to task only as Enlightenment, or how their adoption of the Enlightenment excluded the polity of Latin America as a whole, Aguinis misses an opportunity to critique the Enlightenment’s application as well as applicability in his own country, and its role in hindering the evolution of a truly democratic culture.\(^{374}\) Culpa in *Elogio* serves to argue that humankind has arrived at the age of reason, but that by not feeling guilt, man acts as though he has no internal law.\(^{375}\) Aguinis, *Elogio*, 194.\(^{376}\) This concept speaks to what Plotkin called the psychological “crisis of civilized morality” that cannot absorb the magnitude of changes brought by modernity.
indicative of Argentina’s failure to modernize, thereby uniting the predicament of the Jews in Argentina to that of minorities in the rest of the world:

Acusar minorías étnicas como responsables de las penurias económicas, por ejemplo, no ayuda al buen diagnóstico ni a la implementación de las correcciones adecuadas, sino al incendio, el odio y la agravación de las penurias que se anhelaban superar[...] Se intenta convencer de que eliminando gitanos de España, turcos de Alemania, musulmanes de Bosnia, negros de la Inglaterra, bolivianos de Argentina, y Judíos de todas partes se lograría mágicamente el bienestar.377

Instances of violence against Jews in Argentina are not Aguinis’s focal point. Rather, they serve as a mirror to shortcomings of both national and global processes of democratization. The Jews are emphatically not victims, but a measure of nations’ modernity.

III. Essays on Argentina’s Shortcomings

“The harder the writings of an author are on his country, the more intense will be the passion binding him to it. For in literature violence is a token of love.”378

The concluding pages of the chapter address how Elogio de la culpa fits into Aguinis’s larger agenda as pursued through his other essays. While remaining cognizant of wider circumstances, Aguinis’s other essays are focused on describing the particular Argentine condition and character that have contributed to defining Argentina’s national reality. Bringing El atroz encanto de ser argentinos, ¿Qué hacer? and ¡Pobre patria mía! into the discussion, demonstrates the singularity of Elogio’s global agenda within Aguinis’s essays, while also indicating the commonality of the psychological method pursued by the writer in this genre.

Like Elogio, the essay El atroz encanto de ser argentinos was published in a year of national crisis, in this case, the year of the devastating Argentine economic crash of 1991. In Atroz encanto, Aguinis made a similar choice to not focus on the immediate symptom of his

377 Ibid., 38.
country’s suffering, and instead responded to the larger issues that made possible the economic crisis in the first place.\textsuperscript{379} The 1991 work posits that Argentina does not just have an economic problem, it has a political, social, moral, and cultural one. While Aguinis was doubtless aware of the global factors that contributed to Argentina’s economic development and current crisis, the pursued argument in this instance is not that Argentina is simply evidencing a local iteration of a global problem.\textsuperscript{380} Instead, Aguinis places responsibility in the hands of Argentines, and identifies the difficulties rendered by the various Peronist regimes as part of a legacy of Argentina seeking heroes in leaders who do not teach their citizens to “fish for themselves”.\textsuperscript{381} Responding to an Argentine moment of panic, Aguinis does not absolve the people of their joint responsibility for their own nation’s downtrodden reality. Instead, the national culture is seen as one lacking responsibility, effort, and honesty, the same moral of Elogio, but here placed squarely within an Argentine context.

In \textit{El atroz encanto}, Aguinis admonishes Argentina’s despicable culture of \textit{el vivo}, the quintessentially Argentine character who is always aiming to get the most for the least, seeking to outwit the system in order to gain personal advantage.\textsuperscript{382} This, the author laments, is the

\textsuperscript{380} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{381} Aguinis argues that poor leadership, coupled by the handicaps left by the colonial legacy, stunted Argentina’s healthy development: “Los argentinos estamos cruzados por herencias y visiones que, además de generar tension, producen conflicto. Nos cuesta integrar lo mucho que tenemos y sabemos. Quizás ese conflicto genera el atroz encanto de nuestra identidad. Vamos a intentar explorarlo a fin de aquirir los conocimientos que nos faciliten un cambio verdadero. Y lo haremos aunque debamos soltar amarguras, ironías y humor.” Ibid., 15. Elogio provides this same argument that holds both the government and its supporters responsible for the country’s wellbeing.
\textsuperscript{382} In understanding Argentina as a product of certain legacies, Aguinis reflects that the country inherited Hispanic individualism, which was about fending for oneself without regard for one’s fellow. This is juxtaposed to Anglo-Saxon individualism, which is about respect for laws and institutions, as each individual understands himself to be a part of the whole. Ibid., 16. The point about “el vivo” is addressed in depth in Aguinis’s essay, \textit{Las redes del odio: recursos para}
reality of a society that lacks cohesion and a feeling of mutual accountability. Noting moreover, that Argentina tends to cope with national crisis by finding internal culprits, Aguinis warns that these are tactics of distraction for instances of national and personal disappointment, and advocates for an end to the culture of marginalization of certain members of society, as a coping response. Aguinis’s message to his country, which had just undergone the most dramatic economic crisis in the history of the continent due to governmental decisions, is one that asks of his countrymen to stop seeing themselves as victims and seeking culprits, both which seek outward blame instead of personal responsibility.

Aguinis’s essay ¿Qué hacer? provides another example of a passionate message delivered on the heals of a national tragedy. 1994 was the year that gave way to the second terrorist bombing against a Jewish site in Argentina (this time targeting the Jewish community center of Argentina (AMIA)). The essay in response focused once more on uncovering Argentina’s sources of illness instead of its manifestations. This time, Aguinis identified three local causes to Argentina’s downfall: “anomía, debilidad de las instituciones, resistencia al progreso.” Yet, unlike in Elogio, here Aguinis did accuse the government of Carlos Saúl Menem, the government that succeeded Alfonsín’s, of being more in favor of protecting criminals than citizens: “Del intolerable clima padecido durante la dictadura saltamos a un clima permisivo que también se ha vuelto intolerable. Una cosa es convertir en culpable a cualquier sospechoso y castigarlo sin pruebas, otro es no fijarse en los sospechosos ni tomar las medidas desactivar la violencia (2003). Again, Aguinis provides a psychological understanding of hatred and violence, which he sees manifested for the same reasons in an abusive father as in a totalitarian government.

Marcos Aguinis, ¿Qué hacer? Bases para el renacimiento argentino (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2005), 44.
que previenen el delito.\textsuperscript{384} Aguinis’s message is once more focused on transforming the public by placing the fate and power of the nation in its hands:

Necesitamos incrementar nuestro capital social, hacer ejercicio de nuestros derechos y deberes ciudadanos. Si hace falta impulsar cambios y reformas, digámoslo, exijámoslo. Las instituciones dependen de nosotros, mucho más de lo que imaginamos. Y cada uno puede hacer mucho más de lo que hace. Los dirigentes son producto de la sociedad. Cuanto más se comprometa cada uno, vos y yo, con los medios que tenemos a nuestro alcance y en los lugares donde se nos escucha, mejores serán nuestros representantes. ¿Por que no va a ser posible reeditar la epepeya que nos condujo a figurar entre los mejores?\textsuperscript{385}

¿Qué hacer? is therefore one more psychological torrent aimed at the author’s co-nationals who refused to mature as a nation, and continue to fail to protect its people and alleged values.

Aguinis’s persistent voice evidently remains unheeded through the many governments Argentina has experienced over the decades, necessitating the public intellectual’s continuing reiterations of a same national message. The 2009 version of Aguinis’s plight is to be found in the “pamphlet” ¡Pobre patria mia!\textsuperscript{386} In this publication, Aguinis passionately writes about Argentina’s missed destiny yet again, exclaiming that he has so much to say that he doesn’t know where to begin. Yet Aguinis finds a way to offer one more tirade that literally opens with an exclamation point that is carried in tone throughout the work’s 185 pages. In ¡Pobre patria mia! the author argues that there are no impervious roadblocks between Argentina’s fallen state and a thriving future, and reminds his readers that the country is far from regions of war, has abundant natural materials and human recourses, and enjoys the benefit that ethnic and religious differences are no longer valid. All this should render a golden reality; yet, Aguinis writes, “we” the Argentines, continue to pillage it.\textsuperscript{387} The statement serves to once again place power in the hands of the public, state the national ideals as allegedly shared by the polity, and embrace a

\textsuperscript{384} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{386} Aguinis, Marcos. ¡Pobre patria mia! (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009).
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 10.
responsibility shared by the public intellectual and public alike.

By exposing Argentina’s still violent and unfulfilled reality, Aguinis, the public psychologist, aims to close the gap between Argentina’s desired, and supposedly attainable ideal, and her debased reality. The essay thus restates the message of Elogio, where the role of Culpa was to align the reality with the ideal: “Fuimos ricos, cultos, educados y decentes. En unas cuantas décadas nos convertimos en pobres, mal educados y corruptos.” In ¡Pobre patria mía! Aguinis also explicitly addresses his choice of literary vessel to convey his message, explaining the “pamphlet” as a sub-genre of essay where he can be direct about his message and convey it passionately: “Acudo hoy al subgénero del panfleto-eléctrico, insolente, visceral-para decir lo que siento sin tener que poner notas al pie o marcar con citas. Lo que quiero transmitir es tan fuerte y claro que debo escupirlo.” Perhaps the key to studying Aguinis’s essays as a whole lies in the opening citation to the “pamphlet”: “El verdadero significado de las cosas se encuentra al decir las mismas cosas con otras palabras.”

A contextualized study of Aguinis’s essays reveals that the writer’s proposed cure for Argentina is dependant on all individuals internalizing a sense of collective responsibility: “Debemos hacer algo porque Argentina merece otro destino.” Aguinis innovatively embraces the essay, the accepted Latin American model of protest as well as indoctrination, to model discourse and participation. At the end of ¡Pobre patria mía! Aguinis asks his audience whether they agree if there is a need for Culpa:

Qué opina, mi conmovido lector? Después de todo lo que ya padeció el mundo, esta orgía nauseabunda revela que los hombres, pese a mi acción milenaria, a mi ubicuidad, mis excesos y mis disfraces, pueden marginarme como si la culpa no

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388 Ibid., 9.
389 Ibid.
390 This quote is taken from Charles Chaplin.
391 Aguinis, ¡Pobre patria mia! 9.
existiera. Pueden actuar con tanta bestialidad y desenfreno como lo hacían antes de mi irrupción en las hordas primitivas. ¿Podría jubilarme, entonces? 392

Aguinis legitimizes himself as a public intellectual by demonstrating that his country requires and moreover, requests it of him. Aguinis responds dutifully and with a counter-offer: the public too must ante-up.

Aguinis’s use of the essay importantly differs from that of other Latin American public intellectuals who have used the medium to espouse national programs from above. For Aguinis, the essays serve not as an instruction manual that hails from an ivory tower, but as a beacon from one Argentine to another. His lot is clearly set alongside that of his readership, and his essays accordingly read as an invitation to participation. The unifying aspect that ties all of Aguinis’s essays together is precisely their approach as a dialogue with the reader.

392 Aguinis, Elogio, 200.
Chapter 5. Dialogue: Leading by Example

"Across many disciplines, the study of culture today is about the power of gatekeepers, the rhetorical legitimization of formal organizations, the social determinants of art and ideas, the reproduction of hierarchies, the acquisition of cultural capital, the normalization of the individual self." 393

Written almost a decade after Elogio de la culpa, Las dudas y las certezas: Diálogos completos (2001) is a work of dialogue that embraces Erasmus’s religious legacy in a way that Elogio de la culpa does not. If Elogio de la culpa insisted on focusing not on religious reformation but on individual agency, Diálogos completos evidences Aguinis’s acknowledgement that the message Erasmus is most famous for was in fact necessary for building the desired Argentina. The nation admittedly would not achieve the plural democratic character it allegedly sought, the one Aguinis used Elogio to promote, without first undergoing a religious reformation. 394 Erasmus provided Aguinis with the global passport to modernity; the Argentine Catholic bishop named Monseñor Justo Laguna provided Aguinis with a local facilitator, a gatekeeper of traditional society who promoted the necessity of adaptation and modernization within the Catholic Church in a country still steeped in the homogenous legacy of Counter-Reformation Spain.

In Diálogos completos, Laguna and Aguinis stress to their readers that Argentina’s readiness to receive an inter-religious dialogue speaks to the possibility of Argentina achieving democracy, and thereby of moving beyond a state of psychosocial immaturity. Democracy is

presented in *Diálogos* as the nation’s penicillin, poised to counter Argentina’s centuries’-long hosting of authoritarian movements and regimes that have caused suffering and shame.\(^{395}\) The dialogue between Aguinis and Laguna serves as both an invitation for the public to engage in like conversation and, just as importantly, as an example for relating across differences. The end result of conversation among difference is envisioned by Aguinis as the establishment of an inclusive public sphere.

In order to situate Aguinis’s dialogues within the context of his wider aims and approaches, this chapter will consist of the following five sections: The first section speaks to the usefulness of Aguinis’s choice in Monseñor Laguna as a partner in dialogue. The second part contextualizes Aguinis’s work within the company of other writers and renowned intellectuals in Latin America who previously adopted the genre of dialogue. The third section provides an analysis of how Aguinis’s goals within his dialogues with Laguna speak to his larger aim of creating inclusive democracy through literature. The fourth section delves into *Diálogos completos* and provides an analysis of the content and method therein as relates to the previous three themes. If Erasmus was credited with the Reformation, which is ultimately seen as the first seed of modernity, democracy, and the modern “West”; and Latin America is the inheritor of the Counter-Reformation; then Monseñor Laguna is the necessary link between the two: the modern-day Argentine Erasmus capable of rectifying Argentina’s failed modernization. The fifth and final section addresses the global message within the local work.

**I. Dialogue partner, Monseñor Laguna**

Aguinis’s choice in partner for his work of dialogue is not incidental, and serves a purpose that is not any less meaningful than the previous choice of patrimony rendered by the

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\(^{395}\) Ibid., 167.
Erasmus, Neruda and Freud trio in the essay genre. Much like Erasmus embodied an in-between space, claiming to be an insider of the Church while advocating for its dramatic transformation, so too does the Catholic bishop Monseñor Justo Laguna occupy a tenuous role within his contemporary Church. In representing a modernizing take on Argentine Catholicism, Laguna, like Erasmus, walks a fine line between a traditional and a revolutionary figure, precisely in order to be successful in promoting change.\textsuperscript{396} Since change from the inside is at the core of Aguinis’s techniques, Laguna allows Aguinis the platform to achieve through dialogue, the Argentine piece of the puzzle for which Erasmus provided the global connection.

Monseñor Laguna’s identity of a Catholic bishop is necessary but not sufficient to earn him the position of Aguinis’s partner in conversation. Laguna proves a useful choice for Aguinis because of his biography, accomplishments and regrets, which taken together helped to shape the bishop’s post-1983 agenda. Laguna was born in Buenos Aires in 1929 and was ordained a priest there in the year 1954. In 1975 he received Episcopal ordination, and five years later he was named Obispo de Morón. Laguna explains that this new appointment involved contact with the poor of Morón, a community different from where he grew up in San Isidro. Laguna claims that it is in this environment where he truly understood the underprivileged class of his country and assumed their cause as his own. In the capacity of the Obispo de Morón, Laguna also earned various honors, among them, an honorary doctorate for his dissertation titled “Educación para la paz” in 1990. Laguna’s dedication to championing the creation of an inclusive nation stemmed by his own account from his commitment to the poor and to education, which fueled his goals to rectify the injustices caused by the nation’s instituted inequality.

Laguna’s commitment to his country was further driven by the regret that resulted from

\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 168. Laguna explains that the Church itself has modernized, making liberty a part of the Church’s definition of faith since 1869.
his witnessing the horrific events of the *Proceso de reorganización militar*. In response, Laguna assumed responsibility for ushering in a new era, and perhaps most pertinent to our study, the bishop expressed regret as a Church functionary for not doing more during the *Proceso* to save the lives of those who were victimized.\(^{397}\) Laguna acted on his remorse, and in recognition for his service and contribution to the process of national reconciliation, Laguna was named “Man of the Year” in 1982 by the journal *Tiempo Argentina*.

Since then, Laguna has dedicated himself to reforming the country’s relationship to Catholicism so that it reflects a more modern sensibility of separation between church and state, while furthering religious toleration and inter-religious discourse in his country. In favoring such contentious amendments to Church policies, such as those of sexual education in schools and de-penalization of abortion (in certain cases), Laguna revealed that he was willing to confront the Church as an institution, and a religious Argentina as a nation. Not shying away from critiquing core tenets of Catholicism, Laguna also called for a separation of the civic and religious laws regarding divorce, explaining that society as a whole cannot be subjected to laws that refer only to Catholics.\(^{398}\) Laguna thus recognized the need for reassessing the limits of Catholic authority in Argentine civic life, and he demanded change within the Catholic Church of Argentina as part and parcel of acknowledging the responsibility that unreformed Catholicism had in enabling past systems of terror.

Prior to partnering with Aguinis, Monseñor Laguna had already worked to achieve

\(^{397}\) David Viñas expressed regret, admitting his failure precisely in relation to his responsibility as a public intellectual in his work *Literatura Argentina y realidad política*. Here Viñas argues for the necessary connection between Argentine literature and politics: “La literatura y la cultura argentina en su última y más profunda instancia es asunto político.” Viñas, 80.

ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue in Argentina. Laguna’s work regarding religious reconciliation in Argentina, specifically with the Jewish population, had been officially recognized twice within the Jewish Argentine population: Laguna was granted the B’nai B’rith Prize in human rights by the Jewish organization in 1993, and six years later, was named guest of honor by the Argentine Jewish community of Santa Fe. Additionally, in 1998 Monseñor Laguna led a pilgrimage to Israel together with Rabbi Mario Rojzman, after which they traveled together to Rome and interviewed Pope John Paul II. This experience resulted in a book jointly authored by Laguna and Rojzman titled, Todos los caminos conducen a Jerusalén (y también a Roma): un obispo y un rabino latinoamericanos peregrinan juntos por primera vez. Upon their return to Argentina, the pair continued their advocacy for inter-religious dialogue through their jointly hosted talk show, Para seguir pensando, where they took pride in talking about subjects they assessed people often preferred to avoid. Through their various joint ventures, Laguna and Rojman identified that the key ingredients necessary for a society aiming to heal from the horrors of totalitarian systems would be inter-religious dialogue, critical thought, and joint interaction. It was an approach echoed by Aguinis wholeheartedly.

Laguna’s friendship with President Raúl Alfonsín, starting the year of Alfonsín’s presidency in 1983 and ending when Laguna granted the dying man’s last rites, also speaks to an

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399 Monseñor Laguna is currently a member of the Episcopal Commission of Ecumemism as well as the Commission of Relations with Judaism and other Religions.
400 Justo Laguna and Mario Rojzman, Todos los caminos conducen a Jerusalén (y también a Roma): un obispo y un rabino latinoamericanos peregrinan juntos por primera vez (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998). Of note, the work’s cover shows the rabbi and the bishop shaking hands in front of the Western Wall and Dome of the Rock, and their names are titled Rabbi and Monseñor on the cover, respectively. Laguna himself notes the groundbreaking undertaking effected together by the bishop and the rabbi, in leading an interfaith group to both Israel and Rome. It is also worth mentioning that Monseñor Laguna currently lives in Barrio Once, the same neighborhood of his youth, which has been the Jewish part of town since the first half of the twentieth century.
important element Aguinis shared with the bishop: an independent but parallel connection to the Argentine President who came to power on the platform of democracy and freedom. Aguinis, in beseeching the partnership of Laguna, intellectually acknowledged that without religious reformation in Argentina, civic democracy could not come about. Moreover, it evidenced an acknowledgement that change would ideally come from within the systems that needed amending, be they the church or the government. Laguna was much more than simply an Argentine Erasmus, or an Argentine agent of Reformation. Laguna was an advocate for an extended society of participation as well as for a society of responsibility toward others, one to be achieved through discussion, acceptance, and dialogue. The reformation pursued by Aguinis and Laguna, that of an Argentina and a Latin America that had engaged in the torture and persecution of its own citizens, would moreover not be an issue of a game of catch-up with the West, but one of joining the West in creating the still elusive societies of equals.

II. Other Works of Dialogue in Latin America

Aside from Jorge Luis Borges’s dialogues with Ernesto Sábato and Octavio Paz’s with Julián Ríos, both which occurred in the mid 1970’s, the region does not benefit from an extensive tradition comparable to that of the genre of essays or novels. Nonetheless, in engaging the genre of dialogue, Aguinis unites with a small cohort of notable intellectuals in Latin America who likewise advocated for more inclusive democratic nations, and acknowledged the inherent link between dialogue and politics in the region. Where Aguinis is most original in his own dialogue is his choice of partner, reflecting his acknowledgement that for intellectuals to be successful in modernizing Latin America, they need to engage with the institutions that have worked to hinder this.
The earliest work in the set is that of Octavio Paz and Julián Ríos, published in 1973.\textsuperscript{401} From the onset of this dialogue, the connection between culture and politics, and specifically, between public intellectuals and governments, is brought to the forefront. Of note, the first question that Ríos poses to Paz in their dialogue is whether Paz is nostalgic over his post as ambassador.\textsuperscript{402} The Paz-Ríos work subsequently undertakes to connect politics and intellectuals in Mexico to revolutions and intellectuals in Latin America as a whole. The Mexican work also discusses the dangers of utopias, as well as the influence that European writers have had on Latin American ones. In this way, the pair too engages in Neruda’s plight of returning to Latin America its dignity and voice, demonstrating that it can aim for more than simply poor imitation. Paz and Ríos also make use of the genre to be approachable, human actors, presenting the activity of dialogue to their readers as one engaged in by both their models and their peers.

Borges’s and Sábato’s dialogues, which took place in the summer of 1974, are the second instance of dialogue among intellectuals in Latin America that predates the Aguinis-Laguna dialogues. Borges’s and Sábato’s dialogues comprise a series of seven sessions coordinated by the journalist Orlando Barone. At the time, Borges was seventy-five years of age, while Sábato was sixty-three. Barone compiled and published the work in 1976, and it soon sold out of its initial ten thousand copies as well as of two subsequent editions, with a latest edition released in 2007. Borges and Sábato, two iconic Argentine men who had allegedly not spoken for forty years prior due to political differences, here came together to discuss topics ranging from common literary interests, to religious beliefs, art, tango, death, and mental sanity.

While Borges was quite deliberately not a political activist, his cultural impact in

\textsuperscript{401} Octavio Paz and Julián Ríos, \textit{A dos voces} (Spain: Editorial Lumen, 1973).
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 1. Paz’s work in the Mexican diplomatic service took him to New York, Paris, India, Tokyo, and Switzerland.
Argentina and the region as a whole is undeniable. One might argue that his willingness to engage in conversation with a highly regarded fellow literati who did engage in the political realm, is noteworthy if not in finally making of Borges a political activist himself, in addressing the explicit and implicit questions of the obligation of the artist to be a political figure in Latin America. The public interest and demand of iconic figures engaged in conversation over contentious issues also demonstrates the Argentine public’s readiness to receive the intellectuals’ message and the format of conversation engaging differences of opinion.

Though the tradition of literary dialogue between intellectuals is evidently not very broad in the region, Aguinis joins in elite and meaningful company with his iteration. He and Laguna evidence similarities with the previous two pairs in their own rendition of the role of intellectuals in society, and in modeling discussion and critical thinking as a necessary element of democracy. Aguinis, in choosing Laguna, also joins one more dialogue that is critical to Argentina and to Latin America as a whole: the continent’s relationship to the Reformation and to the Counter-Reformation, and the significant connection that this bears on the region’s national identities. It has to do with a topic dear to Paz’s heart as well, but not pursued as systematically as in *Diálogos completos*.

**III. The Mission of Dialogue in Latin America and Beyond**

The genre of dialogue provides certain tools of rhetoric that aid Aguinis in addressing questions of Latin American inclusiveness and democratic participation. This section studies dialogue as a literary genre, and then engages the global context of Aguinis and Laguna’s inter-religious dialogue. The section ultimately demonstrates how Laguna’s engagement with both

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Aguinis at home and with Pope John Paul II in Rome, unite to produce in Laguna, the much needed partner in dialogue, capable of joining Aguinis in healing Argentina’s enduring legacy of the Counter-Reformation.

A. Literary Genre of Dialogue

Works of dialogue commence with the simple act of conversation, but their publication for an audience delivers the conversation to the public sphere, a sphere it simultaneously helps to create: “Like texts, discourse can be viewed as having a life of its own, independent of the institutional contexts in which it unfolds.” 404 The field of dialogue studies, first established by Soviet scholars Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky, posits that dialogue has an inherent emotional component, which connects the participants and emphasizes “the open-ended freedom of social life.” 405 It is this emotional component that allows dialogue to become a tool for building participatory public spheres because it involves the people it reaches on a personal level. Laguna and Aguinis agree that the key point in dialogue is being able to see the other as oneself.

As much as Erasmus and the essay addressed the psychology and the individuality of each reader, dialogue as a literary genre adds to Aguinis’s arsenal by providing the model of engagement with others. Contemporary scholars of dialogue, Brazilians Marcelo Diversi and Cláudio Moreira write: “conscientization and notions of inclusive social justice-states of mind often associated with positive feelings of connectedness with others-result from the experience of

405 Ibid.
seeing ourselves in Others and vice-versa”.

These scholars, who are themselves occupiers of an in-between state in that they are both Brazilian and North American, explicitly see themselves as continuing Paulo Freire’s mission of extending the public sphere through literature and theater. Diversi and Moreira emphatically embrace their in-between space, claiming it gives them access to the marginalized elements of Brazilian society, which in turn allows them to see the importance of building true democratic inclusive societies. The Brazilian scholars write of their own academic work of dialogue: “Our text itself is a battleground, where we speak of possibilities in how to do decolonizing scholarship, and where we show it.” They therefore see their own work of dialogue as legitimizing “the hyphen” and thereby inviting the audience to join in their “search for humanization.”

B. Latin America and the Public Sphere

As critics of Jürgen Habermas identified, the limited access and makeup of the public sphere were key to the flawed outcome of the Enlightenment because the democracies that emerged did not extend participation to the entire polity. What is most useful about Habermas

407 Ibid., 28.
408 Ibid., 206, 222.
409 In his seminal work, *Structural Transformations*, Habermas both explains that the emergence of the public sphere is key to democratic nations, and reflects that “modern democracies fall short of adequacy even when measured against the yardstick of their own ideals and values.” See Crossley and Roberts, 2. The post-Habermas debate essentially centers on the realization that the incarnation of the public sphere remained limited in Europe (either to the bourgeoisie or to other privileged groups), evidencing the flaw’s enduring and dangerous nature most blatantly with World War Two, when Europe revealed that at the core, it suffered from an immature application of democracy. The question of who should be included in the conversation, is at the core of the post-Habermas generation, which spoke to the very problematic element found within the birth of modern nation-states, revealing not only limited democracy, but in some cases, anti-democratic tendencies. Part of the post-Habermas debate itself has centered on translating Habermas’s ideas to practical manifestations. Jasper, concerned with Habermas’ legacy for sociology and the interpretations of Habermas’s work by various disciplines and thinkers, writes:
for our goals is not that he located the birth of democracy or the modern nations-state in eighteenth century France, but that he connected democracy to public opinion and raised the question of who constituted the public sphere.\footnote{410} However limited in scope, Habermas did nonetheless identify as central for modernity the emergence of a space that would foment “rational critical discussion”: \footnote{411} “Those who control discourse control society. Politics is discourse, and discourse is politics; depending upon its use, all language can become political language.”\footnote{412} Habermas scholar Craig Calhoun argues that the last two centuries of public discourse reveal “the problem of identifying ‘the people’ who may be members of a discursive public or civil society.” \footnote{413} By empowering the participation of the public in national discourse, the people gain the means to hold their governments accountable: “Through communicative interaction we can challenge those in power to live up to rules and ideals we all share, asking them to justify their actions.” \footnote{414}

As much as Habermas was remiss to overlook the limitations of the public sphere in its inception in Europe, the West as a whole barred Latin America from inclusion into its category

\footnote{410}{Although he [Habermas] puts meaning at the core of social life, Habermas remains a social theorist, not a cultural analyst.” Jasper, 122. Jasper explains that while Habermas realized that human rights are at stake when national identities are in question, and that though Habermas advocated that modern nations be tolerant states, inclusive of different cultures and worldviews and reflective of the political community they truly comprise, he did not fully address the issue of who is to be included in the national conversation. See Finlayson, 110-111.}

\footnote{411}{Ibid., 6.}


\footnote{414}{Jasper, 121.}
of modernity. Enrique Dussel, a Latin American philosopher of liberation, argues that a worldview that excluded the “global south” from the ‘north’s” public sphere, created a binary word of “us” and “them”; there was a “violence of the center, which sought to impose its ‘universal principles’ upon the periphery, a center which negates the idea of a “reason of the other.”

I situate Aguinis and Laguna as joining the global post-Habermas aperture of the world-wide public sphere, as well as the one engaged in by fellow Latin American pedagogues and intellectuals, who likewise have turned to culture as a vehicle for extending their own nations’ public spheres.

**C. Argentina’s Global Project of Inter-religious Dialogue**

Wayne Teasdale’s *Catholicism in Dialogue* provides the last contextualizing piece of Aguinis and Laguna’s work, that of the contemporary significance of inter-religious dialogue. Teasdale’s work speaks to the newly recognized duty embraced by John Paul II’s Catholic Church to pursue an attitude of openness toward people of other religious traditions. Noting the significance this posture has for society at large, Teasdale states: “Essentially, the nature of inter-religious dialogue, what constitutes its very essence, its enduring, definitive character, is the search for and the discovery of our common humanity.” Dialogue, according to Teasdale, involves a choice for meaningful and peaceful relationships with others: “Dialogue is an attitude before it is an activity. That is, it requires a state of willingness and generosity of heart to enter into genuine communication with others different from us in faith and commitment.” It is the message of Erasmus, several centuries’ later, a focus on the individual before the

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417 Ibid., 25.
418 Ibid., 5.
institutionalized religion that divides him from others.

In accepting the importance of, and even need for, engagement with others of different religions, there must be an assumed acceptance of various truths, and as such, of the legitimacy of diversity. Without this step, a world with religion could not also be democratic and pluralistic. Teasdale argues that the intolerance and persecution of those who held other beliefs, which was part and parcel of the Church’s Counter-Reformation, must be rectified in the present generation. The author of Catholicism in Dialogue points to Pope John Paul II as exemplary of the new step Catholicism must take. Teasdale cites the Pope’s priority of healing the Church’s relationship to the Jews, noting that in 1986, John Paul II became the first Pope to visit the Chief Jewish synagogue of Rome. Furthermore, Teasdale cites the Pope’s public acceptance of responsibility for the Church’s behavior during the Holocaust of the Second World War, a participation that was part and parcel of that generation’s “Christian Europe,” as critical to understanding the importance of the Pope’s call for subsequent inter-religious aperture within the Catholic Church.\(^\text{419}\) This same Pope that Teasdale praises for his willingness to modernize the Church, by demonstrating both openness to dialogue and tolerance of diverse faiths, is the one who welcomed Monseñor Laguna in the Vatican during his joint pilgrimage with Rabbi Rojzman to Jerusalem and Rome. Thus, if Aguinis is only writing the dialogue in Argentina in the year 2001, a dialogue he notes could not have been written twenty years prior,\(^\text{420}\) it is due to local conditions in Argentina that are tied to a larger Catholic context of institutionalized reform.

The works of dialogue of a select cohort of the most visible and respected of Latin American intellectuals coincides in Aguinis’s generation with the Catholic Church’s new commitment to inter-religious dialogue. Teasdale concisely verbalizes what is also Aguinis’s

\(^{419}\) Teasdale, 77.

\(^{420}\) Aguinis, Las dudas y las certezas: Diálogos completos, 7.
agenda: “authentic dialogue requires a supportive environment; it needs a culture designed for it to thrive.” Following in the footsteps of a handful of Latin America’s great cultural figures, including Neruda, Paz, and Borges, as well as a new initiative from the Catholic Church, Aguinis joins both regional and global movements that advocate for more diverse and participatory societies. A Jewish public intellectual and a Catholic bishop therefore unite in Argentina to produce a conversation that is geared toward social and political aperture, via religious reformation.

IV. Inside Aguinis and Laguna’s Work

Aguinis and Laguna’s final iteration of two previous works of dialogues is titled Las dudas y las certezas: Diálogos completos (2001). It is the primary source of study for this chapter because it essentially compiles the other dialogue books written by the two authors: Diálogos sobre la Argentina y el fin del milenio (1996) and its sequel, Nuevos diálogos: Una mirada humanista sobre los grandes temas (1998). Like the previous two, Diálogos completos is a work of written conversation, and it opens with the stated importance of such a dialogue between Aguinis, the agnostic Jew, and Laguna, a Catholic bishop in Argentina. The conversation between the two is presented as key to ushering in a future that can prevent further instances of totalitarian violence. The authors state that given the national legacy, their task is not easy: “El diálogo no es siempre fácil, menos en una Argentina tan lastimada,” states Laguna the Catholic priest. The Jewish public intellectual completes the thought: “Y con tradiciones excluyentes.” It is precisely in a place where society has experienced such a tradition of exclusion, that this tool of encounter and engagement is so necessary. The give and take of dialogue provides for Aguinis, as much the form as the content to healing.

421 Teasdale, 71.
422 Aguinis, Las dudas, 9.
Diálogos completos spans three hundred and fourteen pages that are divided into three parts. Section One explicitly addresses both the necessity for conversation in Latin America as well as the call for an “orchestra director,” due to the lack of sustained cultural development in the country.\textsuperscript{423} The cultural fate of Argentina and the role of Aguinis the public intellectual become logically linked from the dialogue’s onset, for the sake of healing Argentina. The opening section then traces Argentina’s history of violence, beginning with the Inquisition and extending to the Terror of the Military Dictatorship of 1976-1983, a trajectory connected in the dialogue to the absence of religious reform.

The second section builds on the first and provides an exploration of the persistent social and political need for an “other” in Argentina. Laguna and Aguinis explain that diversity in a nation is not to be a function of tolerance, but of engagement, of which they aim to provide the example themselves. In this effort, each conversational partner explores the other’s faith, beliefs, politics, and professional goals with interest and respect. By speaking as individuals, each author’s humanity is evidenced, and his views and identifying characteristics are humanized instead of institutionalized, thereby providing an example of how adversaries on paper can become “compañeros” in practice.\textsuperscript{424} Argentina’s need for such a conversation is openly stated in the work, as well as is the reflection that only now is the country ready to receive these Diálogos.\textsuperscript{425}

The third section finishes what Aguinis began in Elogio de la culpa, and that which was Erasmus’ lasting legacy: the Reformation. Yet this time the goal is not the reformation of the Church, but an acceptance of otherness in society as a whole, that would enable Argentina as a

\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., 9-12.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid., 314.
\textsuperscript{425} Ibid., 168.
country to achieve a diverse and peaceful nation. Aguinis states that the “crisol” or melting pot solution to Latin America’s condition of diversity was also not the path to follow, explaining that only real solution is a mosaic that shows “unidad en la diversidad.” The dialogue posits that if Argentina is to succeed, it must first claim responsibility for the past. In this effort, Aguinis and Laguna set out to rectify the violence of the previous eras by addressing the mistaken belief that there can exist exclusive ownership over the truth. Dialogue as a practice and as a literary genre, provides each participant a voice and argues that no person owns the truth: “ningún ser humano puede abarcar la inmensa verdad.” Dialogue, which allows seeing the other as oneself, is the necessary starting point.

A. Latin America’s Need for a Reformation

Monseñor Justo Laguna provides Diálogos with a contemporary, local, and insider’s endorsement for Aguinis’s unabashed call for a religious reformation in Argentina. That which Aguinis did not do, and perhaps could not do in the essay genre even with the help of Erasmus, he can accomplish through dialogue with the help of a post-Nostra Aetate Church and the Argentine Laguna. Aguinis and Laguna are aware, and invite their readers to reflect, on how revolutionary their conversation is. They appreciate that it would be unthinkable for a believer and agnostic to discuss faith and liberty in such a way in Argentina twenty years prior. Aguinis offers that their dialogue is a testament to the advances of the end of the twentieth century in Argentina, since prior, faith was linked not to liberty but to coercion. The change is additionally understood as correlated to the Catholic Church’s new willingness to embrace inter-

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426 Ibid., 49.
427 Ibid., 142. Aguinis also sees man’s search for Truth as having accompanied him since ancient times, citing the positivism of modernity as the ultimate arrogance. Ibid., 258.
428 Ibid., 142.
429 Ibid., 168.
430 Ibid.
religious dialogue, and as such, provide her endorsement for true democracy.\(^\text{431}\)

Evidencing a willingness to defy traditional power structures, Aguinis directly accuses the Church of having been an endorser of extremism, fanaticism, and closed-mindedness, stating that Argentine Catholicism is even less democratic or modern that that of other countries, including other churches in Latin America. In defense, Laguna cites an example of the Church in Argentina in May 1981 voting in favor of democracy in a document titled “iglesia y comunidad social.” Laguna insists that this document actually sets the Argentine Church apart in favoring democracy.\(^\text{432}\) Mitigating his accusation, Aguinis grants that certain bishops spoke out against the *Proceso* and that the Church was also quick to state that there had been acts of torture committed against prisoners.\(^\text{433}\) On this topic, Laguna responds to Aguinis’s accusations not defensively, but positively, focusing on defining the cure for violence as democracy. The two agree that regret and responsibility are the necessary steps toward to national healing. Aguinis is ultimately not interested in demonizing his partner as a Church functionary, but in proving that his partner in dialogue is his partner in reformation, and as such, is both reform-able and modern. In this effort, Aguinis points to Laguna’s embrace of television as a handy medium of engagement with the public (when it can be interactive), such as in news shows that invite call-ins. It is a forum undertaken by Laguna and Rojman, and one adopted also by Aguinis literarily in his novel *Asalto al Paraíso*, in order to showcase a dialogue among people of different religions.\(^\text{434}\)

Laguna as an ally is ultimately much more useful to Aguinis than as an enemy, and the combination of the Pope’s *Nostra Aetate* and a post-Alfonsín Argentina, has rendered him so.

\(^{431}\) Ibid., 105.
\(^{432}\) Ibid., 42.
\(^{433}\) Ibid., 43.
\(^{434}\) Ibid., 73.
Indicative of his function within the dialogue, Laguna never strays from speaking from the position of the Church, answering questions ranging from poverty to immigration and to ethics, as a functionary of the institution he represents. It is from this position, that Laguna’s opinions on various forms of progress are most useful to Aguinis, who seeks to endorse change from within.

B. The Chosen Genre Counts the Choice Religion

In *Las dudas y las certezas: diálogos completos*, the authors both embody and enunciate the importance of respectful and unprejudiced communication among men of different backgrounds and convictions, arguing that this is the key to creating the desired society of the future. Dialogue proves to be better suited than the essay for delivering Aguinis’s message of diversity because in form, it broadens the access to language. By inviting a wider pool of participation, dialogue among difference disallows the totalitarian ownership of truth. The genre of dialogue is in large part appropriate the mission, because it allows Aguinis and Laguna as individuals to connect to their audience by showing how they are a part of them, in conversation addressing the public sphere they aim to widen. Both authors express that though they each hold relative positions of power in society, their goals in this dialogue are not about achieving celebrity status, but about serving their people.

The opportunity each conversant takes to explain his personal and professional trajectory is perhaps one of the most useful aspects of the work regarding inter-religious dialogue. For Laguna this means addressing not only the struggles inherent in the personal choices that led to his becoming a Bishop, but also providing an explanation of his own relationship to the basic tenets of the Church and to the institution itself. For Aguinis, it involves an explanation of how

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435 Ibid., 91.
436 Ibid., 58.
and why he is both a Jew and an agnostic, as well as proving a narrative that connects his work as a writer, Minister of Culture, and physician. Again, form and function intercept as the authors explore their differences and similarities on a human plane, making them at once accessible, likeable, and also informative, to an audience that may have had many assumptions but little information about both the men and the larger identities they engender.\textsuperscript{437}

Form and message come together in dialogue. The response to Aguinis’s statement “El odio a lo diferente se origina en el temor que despierta todo lo distinto” is the set-up for Laguna’s question regarding Aguinis’s exposure to Anti-Semitism as a child. On Laguna’s invitation, Aguinis tells the readers of his experience as a child, when the teacher taught in school that Jews do not care about religion and that they are materialists who only live for money.\textsuperscript{438} Aguinis recounts that it is this same teacher who explained to the class that Jews have no land of their own because they rejected Christ.\textsuperscript{439} Laguna responds to these anti-Semitic anecdotes with regret and empathy, acknowledging that Aguinis’s experiences reveal a sad reality of the regrettable role the Church has played in instigating hatred and exclusionary practices toward members of other faiths. The dialogue allows Aguinis not only to relate that his own experience with anti-Semitism led to his undertaking a life mission to fight for equality among all of humanity, it allows him to lay bare the attitudes of society that are counter-indicative of the democratic aims of the nation. His past experiences as a Jew in Argentina provides a measure of the country’s

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 87. \textit{Diálogos} provides a more informal setting in which to get to know these public men beyond the level of celebrity, superstition, or institution. For example, Laguna and Aguinis both reflect that they are by nature shy, Aguinis comments that he was always studious, and Laguna reveals a deep sense of self-doubt and a tendency to be quite critical of himself. Only when the bishop in a Latin American country reveals his human side, can the Reformation come about; only when men stop presenting themselves as the embodiment of True religion, can there be room for humanity and diversity. It is a humanizing element of the Church, effected by Laguna in conversation with Aguinis.

\textsuperscript{438} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{439} Ibid.
remaining distance to achieve true modernity.

The second section of the dialogue builds on the readers’ empathy garnered by the first section’s presentation of the authors’ personal stories, and delves further into how “the other” in religion and in politics has historically been treated in Argentina. In this effort, the second section begins with an exploration of what the religions of Judaism and Catholicism are truly about, and aims to explain to what the antagonism between the two is owed. The dialogue serves not only to educate the public about both the tenets and history of Catholicism and Judaism, it does so in a manner that redefines the accustomed roles they would take in Latin America. Whereas it would likely be accepted that Judaism would be the “other” in the equation between Judaism and Catholicism, in this capacity Aguinis is positioned to ask Laguna as much about Catholicism as Laguna asks Aguinis about Judaism, assuming no standard knowledge. For example, Aguinis asks Laguna about immaculate conception and the Virgin Mary and asks when both figures became a part of Catholicism. Upon being told that their inclusion in the cannon occurred as recently as 1884, the reader learns that among the most sacred tenets of Catholicism are man-made amendments. Aguinis uses the dialogue as much to demonstrate the malleability of Catholicism, as an opportunity to educate the public about Argentina’s national relationship to anti-Semitism, and Latin America’s wider tradition of discrimination against mestizos, indigenous, and blacks. Laguna’s listening and his endorsement of Aguinis’s conclusions regarding inclusiveness and respect for all, is critical to Aguinis being heard by the larger society.

The third section takes a more psychological and emotional angle in a manner that echoes

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440 Ibid., 131.
441 Ibid., 168-173.
442 Ibid., 115.
Aguinis’s approach in *Elogio*. Through a compassionate understanding of the individual, Aguinis proposes to heal the suffering of society as a whole. The psychiatrist explains that suffering is caused by love gone awry, such as the case of the father who loves his son but does not respect his autonomy and so controls all of his son’s decisions.\textsuperscript{443} Aguinis uses the personal angle to explain national history in a way that does not demonize Argentina, but understands its violence as misdirected good intentions, suggesting that perhaps this is the story behind many fundamentalists, who are psychologically positioned in certain ways to see the world violently due to the lack of respect they received growing up.\textsuperscript{444} By humanizing the enemy as well as the perpetrator, both can heal together. The approach is one that both a priest and a psychiatrist would agree to as keys to salvation, and it is an approach that permeates the novels perhaps even more than the dialogues.

The last section of the book brings Aguinis full throttle to his goal of achieving a Latin American Reformation. He arrives there by stating that Positivism, the unwavering trust in science as providing the tools to construct desired societies, was the last attempt by the West toward achieving the ultimate society, a society that was thought to be based on “Truth”. But Positivism, onset by the Protestant Reformation, did not as the post-Habermas cohort would agree, render the golden future it promised in Europe or elsewhere. This would mean that the age-old question of what is wrong with Latin America, would have to shift from being a question of catch-up, to one where Argentina joins the rest of the West in grappling with the still-pending question of how to achieve inclusive participatory democratic nations. Aguinis offers in response that Argentina can only do so by owning her individual past and projected future paths:

¿Qué pasó cuando no desaparecieron las guerras, ni se terminó con las

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid., 177-185.
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., 189.
enfermedades, ni se alimentó a todo el mundo, ni se logró evaporar la angustia? Vino el desencanto. La ciencia basada en la lógica, la razón, la contrastación y la verificación que era el instrumento privilegiado para capturar la verdad, fallaba. Y mucho. Es cierto que obtenía grandes logros, pero más lento de lo querido. Entonces empezó a crecer una tendencia contraria, que se alimenta de fuentes antiquísimas: llegar a la verdad por el camino de la irracionalidad. El error no radicaba en la incapacidad de la ciencia, sino en haberle conferido un poder que antes se atribuía a lo sobrenatural.445

**Diálogos completos** ends with a reiteration of the appropriateness of the genre of dialogue as a vehicle to communicate the message within: “Esta experiencia confirma el valor de un diálogo auténtico, en el que escuchamos al otro-con respeto, con curiosidad- procesamos lo que recibimos y lo devolvemos de nuestro interior.”446 Dialogue is at once the method as well as the example for building an inclusive and respectful social environment.

So as to leave no doubt of the point of departure, Aguinis’s final words are ones of compliment for Laguna, stating that Laguna’s reflections, coming from an Obispo, made a big impression on him:

Un Obispo aguerrido y lucido, que puede conjugar de una forma tan valiente conceptos inalterables del reertorio dogmático de la Iglesia, y hacerlo con una flexibilidad extraordinaria. Hemos llevado nuestro diálogo por el riesgoso sendero de la disección desprejuciada de ideas, entregándolas como una ofrenda al otro. Creo que en esa práctica del sincero humanismo se apoya nuestra esperanza.”447

The message of the dialogue is clear: Argentina needs a Reformation in order to heal. It is a reformation pending not only in Argentina, but for the Church as a global institution, which had became even more exclusionary and violent with the Counter-Reformation. Dialoguing together in the first year of the twenty-first century, the Jewish agnostic public intellectual, trained as a psychiatrist, and the Argentine Catholic bishop, worked together to model communion among difference, once the Pope did so in Rome.

445 Ibid., 259.
446 Ibid., 314.
447 Ibid.
C. Aguinis: Government Minister or Public Intellectual?

In the year Raúl Alfonsín’s presidency ended, so too did Aguinis’s post within the government as head of PRONDEC. In Diálogos, Aguinis addresses the limits he had faced during his tenure as Minister of Culture, and reflects that his greatest professional disappointment came when he worked as sub-Secretary and then Secretary of Culture of Argentina.\footnote{Ibid., 61.} We learn in Diálogos that Alfonsín’s support did not suffice to counter the rest of the government functionaries, who according to Aguinis, were only interested in self-promotion and their own access to power.\footnote{Ibid.} Aguinis explains that it was then that he confirmed Albert Bamus’s idea that an intellectual is an affront to a politician: “un intelectual es siempre un irritante para el poder. Me serrucharon el piso.”\footnote{Ibid.} Aguinis makes use of the literary genre of dialogue to at once justify his limited success in government capacity, and evidence that he has not given up on his political, social, and cultural mission of healing Argentina. The psychiatrist, disillusioned with the government as a viable partner in democratizing the public sphere, turns undeterred to literature to pursue his mission.

As a writer, Aguinis sought to continue to play his role as an “orchestra director” in order to bring about the healed society Argentina so fervently desired.\footnote{Ibid.} Though Aguinis had despaired at the prospect of intellectuals working effectively within Argentina’s current political system, there is in Diálogos an indication that Aguinis had not fundamentally disavowed the possibility of an intellectual being an effective agent from within any state apparatus - Argentina simply had yet to evidence the admirable government that would allow it. \footnote{Ibid.} Perhaps when
Argentina has a Reformation, there will be room for intellectuals in government positions, and the government will more importantly also reflect a leadership that is informed by a culture of public participation. The focus of Diálogos is not to produce an attack on the government for betraying either its people or Aguinis the public intellectual. Reflecting the new professional direction he chose, Aguinis used his dialogue to address the public sphere he aimed to heal and expand.

Comparable to the manner in which Aguinis blames the public for society’s limitations and backwardness in Elogio, so too in Diálogos completos Aguinis argues that if Argentina desires a different future, her people are responsible for both demanding it and creating it. Aguinis and Laguna in the meantime insist that they are doing their part, and that they are doing so at the request of their public. Taking care to prove the timeliness and receptivity of their message, the authors indicate that they are public servants, responding to their people who have demanded a third iteration of their dialogues.\textsuperscript{453} Thus, Aguinis the public intellectual shows that his mission is that of serving the people, not manipulating them, a fact that the public is made aware of in order to capitalize on the responsibility inherent in the act of their readership.

\subsection*{V. Diálogos completos: A Local Work, a Global Message}

If in psychology, suffering can bring about healing, Argentina’s long endured suffering would hopefully give way to an environment of aperture. According to Aguinis, the repercussions of having an exclusionary society where the gatekeepers were all-powerful, punitive, and sole owners of the truth, were what necessitated the Aguinis-Laguna dialogue. By making of the authors human and relatable conversationalists, the larger topics they broach are rendered both debatable and approachable by the public. What makes Aguinis both locally

\textsuperscript{453} Ibid., 9.

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grounded and globally relevant is his awareness that Argentina’s short-fallings are local symptoms of an as-of-yet un-rectified global malady of which Nazism, Fundamentalist Islam, and the Religious Wars of the 17th century are examples. The important message advocated by both dialoguers is that there is only one race, the human race, and that movements that are predicated on the fight against any segment of it anywhere and at any time, are dangerous and detrimental to society. Through inter-religious dialogue, the measures of modernity become humanitarianism and social equality.

Importantly, Aguinis’s Reformation is not an attack on spirituality or even on institutionalized religion. In fact, the agnostic author acknowledges that institutionalized religion is often necessary to calm the soul and direct the human spirit, especially in places like Argentina where there is so much reason for anguish. Aguinis understands that the correct use of religion can prove quite useful in producing peaceful individuals and thereby, peaceful societies. Thus, for Aguinis, religion is utilitarian and ought to be reformed in order to not obstruct. If it can aid in the construction of a society defined by secular, humanistic commonality, all the better, but such a society can only be created when world religions are tolerant of other ways of being and do not marginalize those who are different:

Hoy llamo profeta a la persona que se juega por el bien de la gente a partir de un fuego interior, de una energía que nace en el corazón. Esto puede señalarse tanto en sacerdotes como en laicos. Quizás alguno que otro rabino, pero seguramente no todos, tiene suficiente mérito para alcanzar el noble título de profeta.

In an epoch where people still need and demand leaders, Aguinis the Jewish agnostic can be their prophet, as much as their orchestra director. Once Argentina heeds Laguna, it can make room for Aguinis.

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454 Ibid., 142.
455 Ibid., 154. Of course, a utilitarian argument for religious validation involves a rejection of the idea of one divine truth upon which most religions are predicated.
456 Ibid., 159.
If an orchestra needs the leadership of its director, it follows that the conductor cannot make music without the participation of each musician. While Aguinis emphatically states this fact time and again, in his methodology we see that his conversations are not with the people, but with fellow intellectuals, and importantly, intellectuals that place Aguinis and his Argentina within a global milieu. In dialogue with a Catholic priest, as in ideological conversations with Erasmus, Neruda, and Freud, Aguinis indicates his pervasive method of leading from above. Aguinis therefore demands that he be included in creating Argentina’s diverse and democratic public sphere, because Argentina’s very modernity depends on the nation’s ability to embrace both elements of the identity that he engenders: public intellectual and Jew.
Chapter 6. Jews and the Novel: Aguinis’s Means to an End

“The quest for identity seems more important than its definition [in Latin America]. Cultural identity, to be really representative and fruitful, must also draw on a country’s internal differences[...] Cultural pluralism is a sign of strength, not of weakness as might be first assumed.”

Aguinis, who began his professional career as a psychologist, then became Minister of Culture, and ultimately turned to various genres of literature to express his message, incorporated each professional vocation into his evolving persona as a national healer. Closely mirroring Aguinis’s general messages of social responsibility (essay) and that un-reformed religions are antithetical to modernity (dialogue), in the novel, Aguinis is willing to call Argentina to task as a nation with a specific history. The psychologist is still at the helm, but his patient is now a historically contextualized entity. This chapter ends the dissertation because it is the one that best reflects Aguinis’s willingness to embrace a concrete political message for Argentina through literature, ultimately posing the question: Will Argentina emulate the United States, which persecutes terrorists, or will it follow in the path of Beirut, which fell to them? The question is one that unites Argentina’s path to modernization with global processes of anti-reformation.

The chapter begins with a study of the message and methods found within Asalto al paraíso (2002), a novel about the terrorist bombings of two Argentine Jewish sites that took place in the nineteen nineties. It then places the work within the context of three other novels, La gesta del marrano (1991), Refugiados (1969), and La matriz del infierno (1997), in order to show how the genre as a whole encompasses a perseverant agenda spanning more than three decades. Throughout, Aguinis insists on empathizing with the “villains” in order to ultimately cure them,

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457 Fernando Ainsa, “The Universality of Latin American Cultural Identity,” in Cultural Identity in Latin America, 52.
understanding that pain begets pain, and that history will continue to create new incarnations of exclusionary violent systems until the individuals who perpetuate the cycles of hatred are healed.

In *Asalto al paraíso*, Aguinis presents the ideological and methodological ties between the Inquisition of colonial Latin America, the Holocaust of the mid-twentieth century, and contemporary Islamic terrorism. Placing *Asalto* in the context of Aguinis’s other novels serves to further these connections within the genre, and illuminates the cohesion that exists between this literary genre and the others pursued by the author, demonstrating that Aguinis’s choice of Luther as his predecessor in the essays and of Laguna as his partner in dialogue, are not inconsequential or unrelated. Religion, the ever-malleable justifier of exclusion and violence, provides the author with an anchor with which to evaluate modernity throughout his oeuvre. The country’s ability to achieve true democracy is evidenced as directly correlated to its position vis-à-vis global processes of ideological totalitarianism.458

The author’s dialogues, essays, and novels taken together show that an inclusive and cosmopolitan Argentina that can engage with the morally admirable modern world as an equal, must be able to reject local and global incarnations of religious totalitarianism. Through *Asalto al paraíso* the author asks: Will Argentina continue to be a part of global movements that identify with the pursuit of homogeneity and the persecution of a hunt-able and defined enemy? The alternative, if Argentina truly desires to be an inclusive, heterogeneous, modern nation, requires Argentines to stop being complacent or view themselves as victims, and understand that, from colonial times to the present, they have been accomplices to their nation’s experiences of

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458 In an article published in *La Nación* on July 26, 2005, Aguinis again argues that the problem with Islam is that it did not reform. He stresses that the issue is not that Christianity as a faith is superior to Islam, but rather, that because Christianity had a reformation, it was able to have an Enlightenment, itself presented as a necessary (but not sufficient) step to achieving pluralistic democracies. See: Marcos Aguinis, “La hora del islam moderado,” *La Nación* (July 26, 2005). Available: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Aguinis/message/37 (accessed January 10, 2011).
suffering and violence.

I. Jewish Targets, National Victims

In analyzing the literary responses to the 1994 attack in Argentina, Stephen A. Sadow places Marcos Aguinis within a cohort of writers who “understood that 1994 was a pivotal moment for an Argentine Jewry 220,000 people strong.”459 This group reacted to the trauma in works that “grieve, protest, and attempt to explain the disaster. Directly or implicitly, they bear witness and demand justice for the crime and equal treatment for Argentina’s Jews.”460 The second attack made the Jews of Argentina realize their vulnerability and marginality in a way that had physical and psychological impacts much greater than the 1992 bombing alone: “The sense of physical and psychological security and the broader participation in national life that had been slowly growing since Argentina’s return to democracy in 1983 were suddenly threatened”.461 A Jewish community that was mostly optimistic about its prospects even after the 1992 bombing, after 1994, culturally shut down.462

Yet for all of the horror that the attacks entailed for the Argentine Jewish community and for the Latin American Jewish polity at large, Aguinis, the ever-prolific writer, did not pen Asalto al paraíso in 1992 or in 1994. Instead, it was published in 2002, the year following New York’s infamous September 11th. I argue that Aguinis’s message needed the North American example to juxtapose the manner in which a modern nation, the United States, reacted to the attacks it suffered, with the way that Argentina ignored the cause of its own attacks in its media and government. The bombings are critical for Argentina, according to Aguinis, not as a question of the fate of the Jews in Latin America, but as a question of Argentina’s membership in the

460 Ibid., 151.
461 Ibid.
462 Ibid.
modern world. Ilan Stavans writes of the (second) bombing:

It was perceived not only as an assault on *El Once* but on Argentina in general. It was a strike against the very concept of what it means to be a citizen of modern Latin America. On that morning, the region was touched by the Middle East as never before; the entire Spanish-speaking world was made aware of its vulnerabilities. Today the AMIA building has tight security. There are concrete barriers on the street. No photographs of it are allowed. That, in and of itself, is a metaphor for Jewish identity in Latin America today.

Predating Stavans’s observation, Aguinis presents the state of Jewish identity in Latin America as reflective of the region’s own vulnerabilities. His novel insists that this vulnerability become part of the national conversation not for anti-defamation reasons, but for the very sake of Argentina’s own identity and future global alignment. For Aguinis, the treatment of the Jews in Latin America provides a litmus test for the region’s modernity.

II. Aguinis, the New Latin American Intellectual

David Foster and Ignacio López-Calvo agree that Aguinis’s opus demands a call of conscience for his country. They argue that it is precisely because Aguinis faces, publicizes, and humanizes the national ideological structures that comprise his nation, that he is able to challenge the public to understand the current systems of authoritarianism and violence in order to demystify and overcome them. Only once the “vertical structures of authoritarianism” are laid bare, appreciates López-Calvo, can Argentina change paths to pursue a more democratic and egalitarian society. Foster likewise applauds Aguinis’s use of literature to create a “national

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463 *El Once*, situated to the north of Plaza Once, is the most recognizable Jewish neighborhood in Buenos Aires, the area where Jews first settled when coming to the country in the late 19th and early 20th century. See Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, eds. *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 65.
465 This is what López-Calvo and Foster argue is Aguinis’s goal as pursued in his works through both the topics of religion and militarism. See Ignacio López-Calvo, *Religión y militarismo*.
466 Ibid., iii.
allegory,” and thereby, his use of literature to create a dialogical confrontation between different socio-ideological forces to construct what Frederic James calls an “inconciente político.”467 By deconstructing national systems as a necessary step in democratizing culture, Aguinis works against the trappings of what Santiago Kovadloff identifies as the homogeneity sought by Latin American programs of “nationalizing culture.”468

Kovadloff argues that programs that are intent on defining a national identity often prefer to not take stock of the nation’s past and identity in an honest manner: “La ‘cultura nacional’ se define entonces por la parálisis que impone el miedo a descubrirnos y, mientras impere ese miedo, la nación a él sometida seguirá identificada mucho más con lo que oculta que con lo que muestra de sí.”469 Working precisely against this cowardice, Aguinis’s stated mission is to hold his country accountable to a vision of its whole self, so that true healing can come about:

No tenemos la posibilidad de jugar con el futuro como jugamos con el pasado. Y ese pasado no siempre es recordado en su plenitud. Habitualmente hacemos eclipses de fragmentos del pasado; los sectores que nos producen dolor, que nos resultan intolerantes pasan a una especie de olvido o de sombra, y eso dificulta poder entenderlo bien. De allí que hay zonas que quedan excluidas de nuestro recuerdo colectivo y que son las que posiblemente tienen la clave de algunos de los conflictos del presente.470

Aguinis’s method of bringing about change insists on taking an honest look at the past, again evidencing his role as national psychologist. This is where the historical novel is most useful; by Aguinis’s own account, the genre of fiction allows the author to tell the whole truth. I argue that he can do so, because he enters into the psyche of those he wants to heal.

A vehicle of political impact, the novel is widely accepted in Latin America as more than

467 Ibid., ii.
468 David William Foster, Violence in Argentine Literature, 13.
469 Ibid.
either entertainment or a socially shared experience. Jean Franco writes about an almost spiritual power that the written word has in Latin American literature as a whole: “What had once been the secular project of literature is now re-signified in semi-religious language that seems intended to safeguard against its disillusion into the more general categories of performance, poetics, and the aesthetic.”\footnote{Jean Franco, \textit{Decline and Fall of Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 18.} For George Yúdice the cultural sphere in Latin America functions as a ‘proxy for power’.\footnote{Ibid., 202.} Ronaldo Munck takes the argument further by stating that “postmodernist literature questions “la historia official”, and “allows more space for alternative forms of knowledge”.\footnote{Ronaldo Munck, “Afterword: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture in Latin America” in \textit{Cultural Politics in Latin America}, ed. Anny Brooksbank Jones and Ronaldo Munck (Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 2000), 200-1.} Literature is thus widely accepted as a Latin American agent of combat and critique of the current regime,\footnote{Anny Brooksbank Jones, “Cultural Politics in a Latin American Frame,” in \textit{Cultural Politics}, 4.} and Aguinis makes use of the novel as an available conduit of social and political change. I so doing, Aguinis participates not only in an accepted form of voicing dissent, he provides through literarily espoused truths, what Jean Franco calls a “new social religion” to supplant the old.\footnote{Franco, 18.} The term is poetically fitting when applied to a public intellectual committed to the reformation of Argentina.

Literature, as a specifically Latin American product, becomes the ultimate political means through which to understand and then heal the exclusionary models that have plagued Argentina’s endorsements of global systems of violence. In this regard, Aguinis, the public intellectual, seasoned civil servant, and Jew, is ideally outfitted to identify the country’s needs and diagnose the cure. The essay provided Aguinis with the platform through which to address

\footnotetext[471]{Jean Franco, \textit{Decline and Fall of Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 18.}
\footnotetext[472]{Ibid., 202.}
\footnotetext[475]{Franco, 18.}
his reader directly; the dialogue provided the arena of participation; and the novel allows the public intellectual the platform in which to narrate a new reality. While seemingly the least engaged with the public of the literary genres cited, it is the necessary missing literary tool for Aguinis to effect democracy because of the authority the novel carries in Latin American letters, reflecting the accepted association writers and politics carry in the Latin American public imagination.476

Indicating what may for a North American audience seem like a rare inclination for a novelist, Aguinis openly states his intentions for how he intends his work to be received through interviews, articles, and his biographical works. Within the very acknowledgements of the novel, Aguinis states:477

El libro esta inspirado en hechos históricos recientes, pero no se limita a ellos porque anhela penetrar en los fantasmas que pueblan de horror, deseo, odio y coraje nuestro presente. Como toda novela, toma materiales de la realidad pero no se queda en ella porque aspira a transformarla. Intenta crear un mundo paralelo desde el que podamos ver mejor y sentir de otra forma. Quiere elevar nuestro observatorio y hacer más agudo el discernimiento.478

The novel is a key piece of Aguinis’s literary arsenal because without it the public intellectual lacks the means through which to make of the actors of history, subjects of history. When the reader is able to connect to the people, the emotions, anxieties, and turmoil behind the events that drove history, Aguinis can both suggest a different outcome and make the reader understand that

476 Anny Brooksbank Jones writes that in the 1960’s and 70’s, leading literary figures like Gabriel García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, publicly supported (leftist) political figures and were expected to be seen with them.
477 Marcos Aguinis, Asalto al paraíso (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2002), 336. In Asalto al paraíso, Aguinis assures his readers that he has investigated through in-depth research the Argentine Jewish sites’ bombings, both at home and abroad, through newspapers, federal files, and interviews with people involved.
478 Ibid., 335.
he and those who “make history”, are one and the same.\textsuperscript{479} The novel uniquely allows Aguinis to stand not only on the shoulders of Neruda, Erasmus, Freud, or Luther when advocating his message. It allows the wary psychiatrist and disillusioned Minister of Culture, an ultimate regional platform from which to request an understanding of those who have participated in the most horrific historic times.\textsuperscript{480}

This chapter builds on Foster and López-Calvo’s assessments of Aguinis’s literature as a tool for deconstructing authoritarian national systems, and on their understanding that this deconstruction is a necessary step toward building a dialectic relationship to culture. Instead of the violence-inducing homogenizing goal of achieving a national narrative, Aguinis’s novels are intent on working toward what he considers to be the more admirable, reformed aim of modernity: heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism. While Foster qualifies that Aguinis’s agenda in literature, including his novels, is not about a psychological exploration of the characters, but rather, about the creation of ideas,\textsuperscript{481} I argue that Aguinis’s novels are effective in introducing new ideas precisely because through his novels, he applies psychological understanding to his characters. The sympathetic portrayal that is rendered is key to making history accessible, which translates to delivering agency to the public. Aguinis understands that empathy for the individual characters bound in structures of authoritarian violence is critical to the deconstruction of those very structures identified by Foster and López-Calvo; empathy is the necessary tool with which

\textsuperscript{479}Aguinis writes in \textit{Las dudas} that he sees the novel as a genre as capable of allowing him a more direct path to truth, one more accessible to a reader than that which documented histories alone can provide. See Aguinis, \textit{Las dudas}, 85.

\textsuperscript{480}Aguinis tells Laguna in \textit{Las dudas} that the greatest disappointment of his life came when he became secretary of Culture, because he lacked the support from Alfonsín and his government to affect his policies, a situation that made him question the compatibility of intellectuals and politics. See Aguinis, \textit{Las dudas}, 61.

\textsuperscript{481}López-Calvo, ii.
Aguinis can demystify the integrity and power of systems of violence.482

The following analysis of Asalto al paraíso is organized according to the novel’s main characters and principle themes, followed by a contextualization of this work within a selection of Aguinis’s other novels. The last genre provides Aguinis not only one more platform from which to combat global instances of injustice, it engages with a contemporary and local event through which to demand public accountability for violence committed on the reader’s own watch.

III. Themes and Methods

A. Paradise Lost

The topic of Asalto al paraíso is the terrorist attacks on Jewish sites in Buenos Aires that took place two years apart, the first on March seventeenth, 1992 and the second on July eighteenth, 1994. Aguinis’s aim in the novel is not primarily to garner empathy for the victims of the terrorist attacks, but to unveil the reasons and psychology that drove the perpetrators and collaborators to such events that remain to this day unpunished and unresolved in Argentina. The title, Asalto al paraíso, proves to be a cynical one; Aguinis shows that Argentina was not a “paradise lost” to a random outside attack, but rather, that had it been such a paradise in the first place, the country would not have been the accomplice to an “asalto,” much less would it have permitted a repeat offence. After presenting the facts of the first attack, the historical novel is not dedicated to exploring the suffering endured by the victims and their survivors, but to uncovering the conditions that gave rise to the first bombing and that allowed for its repetition two years...

482 López-Calvo points out that when one reads Aguinis’s novels, one feels as if he’s almost reading the same work time and again, a singular work that is more about ideas than the characters, enabling the reader to travel almost seamlessly from the Inquisition to the Holocaust, and to the creation of the State of Israel. Ibid., 30.
At the same time, the novel is intent on giving credit to those who worked to combat the evil, reflecting an equal commitment to praising agents of moral behavior as to calling to task the collaborators of violence. Aguinis thereby emphasizes that even in times of terror, the option to counter violence exists; the possibility of choosing justice is always available to those who comprise the public sphere. Aguinis’s protagonists are therefore as much the suicide bomber and government officials, as a journalist, a reforming imam, and a historian. The message rings clear: the fate of history resides in the hands of individuals who have choices, even in the face of protected and institutionalized violence.

B. Victims or Conspirators: Is Buenos Aires the Next Beirut?

A “journalistic novel,” Asalto al paraíso informs the reader in the first chapter that the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires qualifies as the worst mass killing of Jews worldwide since World War Two, and that it is the first attack of this magnitude in Argentina, if not in all of America. From the onset, the reader also learns that the Iranian embassy is involved in the plot and that various higher-ups in branches of the Argentine government are active conspirators in the attack. It immediately becomes clear that the crime will not be pursued in Argentina as it “ought” to be because from the onset the cause was considered

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484 Ibid.
485 Aguinis, Asalto, 15.

The attack on the Israeli Embassy of Buenos Aires, two years later is also widely linked to Iran. See Stephen A. Sadow, “Lamentations,” 147-162. Sadow’s essay also provides an excellent overview of other Argentine Jewish writers’ responses to the AMIA attack.
unimportant: “los programas se interrumpian para informar sobre una explosión espeluzante cuya causa se ignoraba”.  

The September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States provided Aguinis with the perfect forum of comparison to the previous decade’s attacks in Argentina. Written not in 1995, but in 2002, Aguinis juxtaposed the manner in which the United States reacted to the attacks it suffered, to the way that Argentina ignored the cause of the attacks in its media and government. The message was clear: if Argentina aspires to count itself among nations like the United States, it must react to terrorism on its own shores in kind. From the onset, the global context of the event therefore exposed Argentina as the accomplice, not the victim, to Muslim terrorism.

Showing that any path is reversible and that history is defined by each generation, Aguinis educate his reader about how Beirut went from being the “gem of the Middle East,” to the emblem of what it means for other countries to be “Lebanized,” or brought from glory to ruin due to a rejection of religious, social, and cultural pluralism. Aguinis takes pains to relate the local bombings in a world context, providing in the novel a summary of other international events that occurred on March seventeenth, 1992. By including the Argentine bombing in a newsreel type paragraph, positioned alongside North Korea’s nuclear program, the peace process of the Middle East, and the newly established links between the Vatican and Israel, Aguinis challenges: What will be the part Argentina plays in this global arena? The decision is one between a modernity of heterogeneity, hence democracy, or the forces of counter-reformation in any religion.

C. All Voices but the Jewish

487 Aguinis, Asalto, 9.  
488 Ibid., 46.  
489 Ibid., 321.
It is worth emphasizing that in a work written in response to the bombing of Jewish sites in Argentina, in the genre that provides Aguinis the singular opportunity to allow his characters to speak “for themselves” and thus garner empathy, Aguinis gives voice to all the characters involved in the bombing except the Jewish ones. Sadow writes: “Jews are present only in the short scene describing the AMIA bombing itself or as they appear in the minds of others.” I argue that this choice has to do with reflecting the Argentine reality that gave way to the national tragedies: the Jews’ absence in the novel’s voices reflects an absence in society that allowed the attacks. As such, their presence would be an indication of a healed nation.

Setting the stage for the book’s mechanics of argumentation, the novel opens with the experience of the 1992 attack through the eyes of the non-Jewish caretakers of the property, who live down the street from the Embassy. We first see the shock and injury incurred by Rosendo Ruiz and his wife, who both witness and are hurt from the blast while enjoying their afternoon break from their job from within their nearby apartment. Rosendo’s wife prays the *Avemaria* as the narrator scans the Buenos Airean city streets that are affected. The reader then learns that one hundred and ninety-two children at a nearby kindergarten are among the “collateral” victims, and witnesses parents rushing toward the daycare in desperate search of their children. The very manner the protagonist, a journalist named Cristina, is introduced, is as she stumbles across a child’s drawing covered in blood. The reader subsequently is informed that the nearby old-age home was also affected by the attack. The scene describing the attack on the Israeli Embassy is thus emphatically presented from the onset as one that is not suffered or told by Jewish Buenos Aires. Through his novelistic choices, Aguinis shows that the non-Jewish victims were not “collateral” damage, as might otherwise be assumed. Rather, he shows that when Jews are

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490 Ibid., 157.
491 Ibid., 8.

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targeted, the entire city is under attack.

Latin American literary figures and scholars alike, such as Ignacio López-Calvo, Naomi Lindstrom, Susan Sontag, Ricardo Feierstein and Marjorie Agosín, widely agree that Jewish writers in Latin America tend to have a psychoanalytic and thematic approach that reflect liberal values as a form of self-legitimization. Aguinis’s approach joins this trend, but is unique in evidencing a Jewish writer who does not seek to universalize the Jewish condition in Latin America so as to earn the Jews’ protection. Jewish rights as an end pursued through the extrapolation of universal rights, is not Aguinis’s goal. Rather, for Aguinis, Argentina’s treatment of the “other” reflects Latin America’s internal struggle to achieve modernity. It is an approach that speaks to Doris Sommer’s analysis of the still unachieved Latin American national modernity:

A culturally fissured and porous nation-state is a precondition for democracy, a contractual system of citizens that Jean-François Lyotard takes care to distinguish from the nation, which is defined by birth. Unfortunately, the fissures are also interpreted as rents in the native fabric, by those who would defend national compactness by eliminating personal and collective differences [...] monocultural patriotism was the state’s official libretto in an obsessively repetitive spectacle of eliminating internal differences.

Likewise, Aguinis urges his fellow countrymen to realize that violence toward Jews is symptomatic of the fissures in Argentine society, fissures that prevent Argentina’s modernization. The author conveys his message to the whole by speaking through those who do have a voice in Argentina’s post-1994 public sphere.


D. The Creators of Argentina

Aguinis’s play on John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost*, in both title and method, reflects Aguinis’s goal of leading the reader to empathize with the devil in order to understanding the danger within each individual. It is through the eyes of the novel’s main characters, and through their voices indicated by distinctive font, that Aguinis’s narrative delivers the Miltonesque feat: that of empathizing with the devil in literature, in order to then be able to ward off the internal one within each reader. Milton’s work, having been understood as a critique of the Church, provides an additional parallel to Aguinis’s mission. In *Asalto*, the religion that needs reforming is Islam, yet the implication is that a country that had undergone its own reformation, even if Christian, would align with other forces of pluralism instead of those of exclusion.

In the case of *Asalto al paraíso*, there are three Satans: the Islamic terrorist who comes to Argentina to affect the bombinngs, the Argentine conspirators who facilitate the crime, and the socio-political-cultural system that condones it either in spirit or through inaction. Yet Aguinis does not stop at empathizing with the devil, he also provides examples of the forces of good. The main characters Aguinis creates to provide the ying and yang of Argentina’s path toward modernity are Cristina Tibori, the reporter; Zacarías Najaf, the reforming imam; Dawud Habbif, the Muslim terrorist; Rámon Chávez, the conspiring Argentine police official; and the members of a televised roundtable, which include a sociologist who is Muslim sympathizer, and a Catholic historian.

By including a televised roundtable within his novel, Aguinis not only makes his novel current, he provides a behind-the-scene look at a medium that the public is already absorbed by,

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and suggests a better use for it. The inclusion of “television” as a stage to present Aguinis’s arguments also provides a modern medium for showcasing dialogue, one more instance of the kind of dialogue Aguinis undertakes with Monseñor Laguna as well.

If in the essay Aguinis’s partners in dialogue were Erasmus, Freud and Neruda, and in the dialogue genre it was the Catholic bishop Monseñor Laguna, here the participants include voices of Islamic reform. I will use Aguinis’s protagonists as a way to structure my own analysis. Their perspectives lead the reader to understand both why the bombings occurred (the voices of the perpetrators) as well as how they could have been prevented (the perspectives of the reformers). The characters that receive the most condemnation and least empathy are the Argentine ones, those who are part of the government or the media and either collaborated with, or passively allowed, the bombing.

1. Cristina the Journalist

The local protagonist within the novel who dedicates herself to reforming Argentina serves as Aguinis’s doppelganger, insisting the country accept responsibility for the violence it harbored. In the novel, the journalist Cristina makes it her mission to bring accountability to the culprits and to bring about justice in response to the terrorist act, understanding that failure to do so would translate to a repeat offense. Cristina is perfectly crafted to mirror Aguinis’s role of responsibility to the Argentine nation and his pursuit of any communication outlets through which to influence his audience. In the novel, Cristina is effective only because she is already loved and respected by her audience. It is a trust Aguinis demonstrates through interviews, prolific writing, and past civil service, that he too aspires to gain.

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495 See Chapter 4 in David Foster’s *Culture and Customs on Argentina* for a useful overview of the impact that broadcasting and print media have had on Argentine culture.
496 Aguinis, *Asalto*, 38.
Mirroring Aguinis’s own methods, the journalist’s program for bringing justice to Argentina is two-fold: the first step is to uncover the truth through investigating the local networks that facilitated the Embassy bombing, a truth that in reality has yet to be uncovered. The second is to educate the public and involve the public sphere in a national conversation about the bombings, bringing attention to the connection between the “random” attacks in Argentina, Muslim fanaticism, and Middle Eastern politics. In this second effort, Aguinis’s journalist leads a televised roundtable where different viewpoints are heard, a roundtable staged in order to create public awareness of the connection between the fundamentalists of the Middle East and the Argentina that was “victim” to their attacks. Like the novel itself, the roundtable is created as a direct response to the bombing of a Jewish Argentine site. And like the novel, the roundtable does not include any Jewish voices. Any defense of Argentine Jews or Israelis within the roundtable is one that defends the Jews not for their own sake, but for that of a modern Argentina.

It is during this first roundtable that Cristina informs her audience that in the 1992 bombing in Argentina, 29 people were killed, more than 300 were injured, and that many of the victims weren’t Jewish. The reporter contrasts for “the television audience” that in the case of terrorism in the United States only a year after Argentina’s bombing, the perpetrators were immediately identified; yet in Argentina, the issue remains unresolved.

Cristina, the Christian reporter who empathizes with Jews at home and Israelis in the Middle East, organizes a Middle East talk show with a Catholic historian that shares her bias, and with a sociologist and an

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498 It should not be lost on the reader that the fact that empathy toward the Jews would diminish the cause of “the journalist” to effect justice, and as such, is indicative of the state of widespread societal anti-Semitism that gave rise to the need for the roundtable in the first place.
499 Aguinis, Asalto, 163.
Iranian diplomat that provide the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric that is taken for granted in Argentine society.

Another method Aguinis pursues in the novel to convey that the bombings were not only of Jewish concern, is that Cristina’s boss argues the opposite, teasing that he doesn’t understand why she cared so much, that it was not like the Obelisco was next in line to be bombed.\(^{500}\) The Obelisco is a central Buenos Airean landmark, situated at the intersection of Corrientes and 9 de Julio, and the comment serves to highlight Aguinis’s argument to the contrary: until an attack on any part of Argentine society is considered an attack on Argentina, the country will remain undemocratic. Cristina’s response as a journalist with a conscience, is likewise to demonstrate the salience and gravitas of the unpunished injustice:

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\text{Hemos recuperado la democracia, eliminado la censura, enjuiciado a las Juntas militares, reparado el tejido institucional. Pero la salida de la dictadura no trajo la automática superación de sus vicios. Los antiguos torturadores e ideólogicos permanecen como mano de obra desocupada, lista para infiltrarse en cualquier requerio. La justicia incorporó nuevos nombres, pero no se cepilló la patología. Continúan los negocios turbios, la corrupción, la degradación del Estado. Lo mismo, por desgracia, ocurre en el resto de América Latina: presidentes elegidos en forma inobjetable son autores de escándalos sin paralelo...La desmesura de América degeneró en la desmesura de estos nuevos monstruos.}^{501}\]

Thus, in one sweep, Argentina’s identity is compared to that of the United States and Beirut, placing it within the larger context of a Latin American modernization. Cristina explicitly draws a comparison between how the bombing of the twin towers was dealt with as a national issue in the United States, and how the act of terrorism was conversely dealt with in Argentina:

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\text{Este pedazo de nuestra cuidad es ahora un espejo de Beirut. Es el testimonio de la locura asesina, del odio y de la impunidad que alienta a los fanáticos... El evento demuestra que el terrorismo está dispuesto a trasladar su aliento de muerte mucho más allá de donde nace. Es parte de la globalización, su costado más tenebroso.}^{502}\]

\(^{500}\) Ibid., 43.
\(^{501}\) Ibid., 108.
\(^{502}\) Ibid., 12, 15.
By allowing and aiding in such acts of terror, Cristina argues that Argentina is not an innocent victim of the attack. Rather, the country has chosen to unite its fate with that of a war-torn Beirut, where tolerant Christians lost to totalitarian Muslims who opposed diversity in Lebanon’s government and society in the 1980’s.

What makes Aguinís’s message most effective is that the novel provides both the reporter’s and the terrorist’s assessment that Buenos Aires is strikingly similar to Beirut: “Jamás pensó que esta ciudad, ubicada en el confín del mundo sería el escenario de su gran batalla […] Maldición, como se parecen Beirut y Buenos Aires!” reflected the terrorist upon arrival. The choice for Argentina is clear: Will the Latin American nation emulate the United States, which persecutes terrorists, or will it follow in the path of Beirut, which fell to them?

2. Martha the Historian

For the public intellectual with a multi-colored pallet, Aguinís’s various genres sometimes cross-fertilize. In the novel, the roundtable dialogue provides an example of critical thought and diversity of opinions, while also allowing Aguinís to rhetorically present the arguments that connect religious fanaticism to the hindrance of modernity: “Un buen programa que ayude a desmontar mentiras y complicidades. Quiero exhibir la red que liga lo peor de nuestra sociedad,” says “Cristina.” If Aguinís the novelist makes pains to prove his factual basis when presenting his works of fiction, within his novel, it is the historian who provides that legitimizing role by educating the public about the Middle Eastern socio-political reality that gave rise to terrorist bombers.

Mirroring Aguinís’s commitment to research and to identifying trustworthy sources at home and abroad, Martha is granted the most legitimacy of the members of the roundtable on the

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503 Ibid., 46.
504 Ibid., 232.
bases of being the only one who actually had been to Israel, and the only one well versed on the facts of the topic at hand. It is she who explains that Israel is hated not for being Jewish in a Muslim neighborhood, but for being modern in a fundamentalist authoritarian region that is opposed to women’s rights, free speech, pluralism and critical thought. Martha is the one to present the argument that the Middle East conflict is one between fundamentalist theocracies like Iran, that won’t accept modernity, and modern nations like Israel and the United States. Consequently, the attack on the Israeli embassy in Argentina must be understood not only as a Jewish issue, but rather, as an attack on modern Latin America.

Through the “roundtable”, Aguinis is granted one more forum of exemplified dialogue. In it, Jews and Israel are presented as synonymous with modernity, and Muslim fundamentalists are placed within an authoritarian global movement. These opinions coming from a Catholic historian, function in the novel in much the same way as do Erasmus’s perspective in the essay and Laguna’s in the dialogue. Martha is the insider, the trustworthy Argentine who can advocate for change since she herself is considered by her audience to be an authentic member of the public sphere. It is indicative of Argentina’s continued limitations, and thus the very need for this argument, that Aguinis cannot include Jewish voices in an event that targeted them. Aguinis needs Martha and Cristina to make the arguments Argentina still cannot hear from its Jews. Yet, in this choice, Aguinis pursues another aim regarding the expansion of the public sphere: the Argentine advocates of reformation and accountability are women.

3. Silver Bullet: Imam Zacarías Najaf

If a primary objective of the novel is to show why anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hate crimes

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505 Ibid., 175.
506 The equality and participation of women in the public sphere is a topic Aguinis addresses explicitly in his articles. See for example: “Mujer excluida... ¡qué desperdicio!” La Nación, August 7, 2009.
in Latin America and the Middle East should matter to the people of Argentina, a corollary objective of the novel is to provide a framework with which to heal the negative forces of globalization that have found in Argentina a welcome host. The Imam Zacarías Najaf is invited by Cristina to participate in the second round-table, providing for Islam a parallel role as that of Laguna who advocated for reforming a Church still scarred from the fundamentalist nature of the counter-Reformation.

In the novel, Zacarías Najaf is introduced when Cristina rushes to the scene of the first attack, and discovers her sister is one the victims. In the same instance where Cristina becomes personally implicated with the Jewish victims, and becomes the novel’s dedicated detective and beacon of justice, she meets her partner in this mission, a reforming voice of Islam who is as intent as is Cristina in finding and punishing the perpetrators in order to both effect justice and prevent a further attack. The imam is the quintessential Aguinis figure, the reforming man of the violent religious institution who healed his own misguided past and then advocated for change in the larger system. To make his point, Aguinis makes Zacarías one of the founders of Hezbolla (the Iranian-backed terrorist organization widely suspected to have been behind the Argentine attacks),\textsuperscript{507} who chose to leave Hezbolla and moreover become an advocate for the reform of Islam.

The imam voices that the problem with Islam is that it became intolerant and closed, and most importantly, laments that it didn’t make the changes that Judaism and Christianity did to become modern. The imam delivers the silver bullet when he states in the novel that it was due to their reformations that the other two monotheistic religions are now positive ones for humanity:

\textsuperscript{507} \url{http://www.tabletmag.com/arts-and-culture/books/64473/fresh-exposure.}
Gracias a los cambios que se avinieron a realizar sus fieles gozan ahora de riqueza crítica, productividad, bienestar. El Islam tuvo su pico durante los califatos de Bagdad y de Córdoba, fue Puente de culturas y usina de progreso. Hizo cosas nuevas, inspiradas en los tiempos del profeta, claro, pero sin limitarse a imponer el tiempo pasado, porque eso es pereza, ignorancia y poca fe.”

In the imam, Aguinis provides a modern but authentic Muslim voice to advocate that Islam was harmed when it was made intolerant, and to provide the examples of when Islam was a global beacon of light and an example of pluralism. In this effort, the imam highlights that in Córdoba and Baghdad, during the convivencia of the Middle Ages, Muslims were able to flourish due to their openness, tolerance, and liberty in their treatment of Jews and Christians. Through Zacarías, the reader along with “the television audience,” learns that it was only in this period of pluralism that Muslims were superior to Christians. The imam in the novel laments that this enviable position that lasted three centuries, ended when Islam forgot that Allah likes variety in the universe. If Islam’s best moment was tied to Spain’s convivencia, a time of tolerance and openness, both the Spanish heritage and the globalized Islam that have harmed Argentina, are not inherently violent and can be healed through reformation. Aguinis thus demonstrates that any system that is violent and misguided, has within it the seeds for peace and harmony. It is the approach of a psychiatrist applied first to individuals and then to the systems they create.

Providing the trajectory within one person, Zacarías Najaf states in Aguinis’s novel that it was precisely when Hezbollah wanted to institute a homogenous Islamic republic, that he realized the movement was on the wrong path. That is, upon witnessing Hezbolla’s celebration of assassinations, the imam realized that his fellow Muslims were working for Satan, not God,

508 Aguinis, Asalto, 203.
509 Ibid. Reminding the reader that Islam in its glory days too was admirable for its cosmopolitanism, the imam recalls the emperor Akhbar of India and the city of Andaluz of medieval Spain. See discussion of Aguinis’s Gesta del marrano below for a study of Aguinis’s agenda regarding the Americas’ connection to Convivencia Spain, and where his approach situates him vis-à-vis his fellow Jewish Argentine writers.
510 Ibid., 206.
and were thus in fact acting in direct offense to what he understood Islam to be.\textsuperscript{511}

Lest Zacarías be called a traitor for such “inauthentic” visions of Islam, the imam argues that the great leader of Hezbolla, Mohammed Fadlallah, did not condone suicide attacks and kidnappings initially. Only when pressured was Fadlallah to compromise his vision to condone the new path. Zacarías understands this moment as the juncture when Hezbolla ceased to be a religious, social, and educational organization, and began to be a factory of terrorists: “Sus líderes querían guerra. Interpretaban las alfobras de cadáveres enemigos como la ruta de santidad.”\textsuperscript{512} The imam thus argues that the Muslim fundamentalist path is not the authentic one. He reflects that Muslims that claim to get back to the “fundamentals,” to live like the Prophet, are in actuality preaching blasphemy because Allah also created time, and one cannot go against time and modern realities.\textsuperscript{513}

Like Laguna, the imam argues that followers of Islam can be both authentic and modern, true to themselves and to their religions precisely by being pluralistic and open to a heterogeneous cosmopolitanism. Najaf himself argues against religious theocracies, explaining that their omnipotence contaminates religion with power and provide models of violence: “Ahora hay millones sin esa paz, porque les hierve el odio y el espíritu de venganza. Con odio y venganza sólo llegan calamidades. Por eso urgen las reformas-afirmó el imam.”\textsuperscript{514} In support of his fellow Muslims who are capable and willing to be a part of modernity’s moral path, the imam assures Cristina that not all Muslims are fundamentalists; many want a fresh faith: “Vea, no

\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., 207.  
\textsuperscript{512} Ibid., 208.  
\textsuperscript{513} Ibid., 237.  
\textsuperscript{514} Ibid., 283.
todos los musulmanes pensamos lo mismo…Ojalá que se realice una buena investigación.”  

In *Asalto*, the Imam therefore provides the insider’s perspective that calls for reform, and in so doing, vouches that heterogeneity and pluralism are not only possible in both Islam and Argentina’s Hispanic roots, but that they are the very attributes that were key to each society’s peak moments of greatness. The imam’s notions in *Asalto* are always importantly collaborated by Cristina, the authentic Argentine who realizes with the bombing of the Embassy that both the future of Argentina and that of the virtuous Islam, depend on Islam’s reform. It is a mission that emphatically receives support and appreciation from the imam himself: “Hoy es un día de gloria para usted, salvó vidas creadas por Alá. Ha hecho un bien inmenso. Se ha ganado el Paraíso. Se lo agradezco como hombre de fe y como musulmán practicante. Ese crimen hubiera sido otra mancha para mi fe. Ya tenemos demasiadas.”

4. **Dawud: Milton’s Satan**

Najaf’s counter-point in the novel, the embodiment of the destructive version of Islam, is presented as a victim of suffering himself. Aguinis must bring his reader to understand the people that cause history, if the future has any hope of delivering a different narrative. The reader must understand those who cause pain, comprehending that pain is a cycle and that perpetrators are often victims of suffering themselves, victims who have subsequently looked to vengeance, structure, and authority as the way to affect their own justice and deal with the self-hatred that has resulted from the pain they experienced in the past. The novel thus aims to get inside Dawud Habbif’s head in order to understand how he became a suicide bomber: “Through

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515 Ibid., 18. Of note, the opening chapter of Aguinis’s work takes pains to conclude not with an incrimination of Islam, but with the specification of which kind of Islam is dangerous: the violent, intolerant, homogenizing, vengeful, unreformed Islam, condemable as much by Cristina as by Zacarías.

516 Ibid.

517 Ibid., 310.
his thoughts and memories, presented in steam-of-consciousness, Aguinis reveals the mentality of a person willing to die for a religious cause and the historical situation that led him to this intention."\textsuperscript{518}

The reader learns that the terrorist Dawud was raised by an environment that militantly fought against pluralism. Dawud, the Palestinian refugee, is introduced to the reader as one who by the age of five had fled both Israel and Jordan, only to then become involved in Lebanon’s civil war.\textsuperscript{519} It was a war in which Dawud’s family fought against the heterogeneous Beirut, the same war that left Dawud an orphan and positioned him to fight for vengeance against those who caused his family harm. It is through Dawud’s voice that the reader is provided the history of Beirut before the civil war, the Beirut that was considered the splendor of the Middle East: "pero la tolerancia entre culturas, religiones, y hasta placeres sostenía un equilibrio imposible."\textsuperscript{520}

The reader learns that the ulamas that educated Dawud called the variety of pre-war Beirut “perdition,” and understood diversity as regrettable and evil. Evidencing this perspective, Dawud reflects that Allah couldn’t have been happy with the Muslims and Christians sharing power as they did in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{521} And so, the Beirut of Roman Catholics, of Shiites, Sunnis, Greek Orthodox, Jews and Protestants of various denominations, the Beirut known as the “Jewel of the Orient,” to the vindication of Dawud and to those who educated him, was gone after the Lebanese civil war. The Beirut that could have been Imam Najaf’s next Córdoba, instead fell victim to Islam’s religious fundamentalism, and its ambassador to Argentina was Dawud.

Dawud therefore conceived of himself as a victim who was duty-bound to redeem his fate from the infidel, for his own sake as well as that of the rest of his family and fellow community

\textsuperscript{518} Sadow, “Lamentations,” 158.
\textsuperscript{519} Aguinis, Asalto, 51.
\textsuperscript{520} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{521} Ibid., 56.
of victims. The terrorist aspired to become a martyr in order to finally and conclusively avenge his past: “tendría la oportunidad de redimir las humillaciones que le habían hecho padecer…solo la venganza tendría dulzura suficiente para calmar su rencor.”

David embodied the new version of Hezbolla, sent to effect the second bombing of a Jewish site, pursuant to that of the Embassy two years prior. Though Dawud’s actions are clearly condemned by the novel, the path that formed him, that made him who he was, is explained to the reader with empathy, allowing us to “see” the terrorist as a boy orphaned and molded to destruct. Dawud therefore provides for Aguinis the necessary Miltonesque satanic character.

Only with the counter-point of Dawud’s perspective can Aguinis provide the larger narrative. The imam Najaf reads that much more meaningfully as an alternative to Dawud and to the Beirut into which he aimed to convert Argentina. Though originating on a path like Dawud’s, Imam Najaf came to Argentina to affect the opposite historical end. Aguinis does not however limit himself to providing a contrasting character to Dawud, he uses the novel to show that the characters he writes are themselves faced with choices. Thus, when faced with the possibility of meeting an old teacher of his, one whom he remembers fondly from his childhood, Dawud chooses to not meet Najaf, knowing that such a meeting would make him doubt his commitment to “effecting justice”. Dawud instead sacrifices the personal peace that would come of that meeting, to the forces of social violence by deciding to remain “strong” in his convictions and not pursue the encounter. In the novel, the decision Dawud is faced with serves to show how Dawud, at any moment, could have also become a Najaf; after all, Najaf started off as a Dawud.

522 Ibid., 55. We learn that Dawud’s initiation to systems of vengeance occurred at age five when his father handing him his first Kalashnikov (rifle) and bestowed on yound Dawud the “duty” of effecting justice. The story of the Lebanese civil war is then told within the novel retrospectively, through the eyes of the eleven-year-old boy who witnessed the humiliation of his father and raping of his mother and sisters, as part of the civil war.

523 Ibid., 104.
When in the end of the novel, Dawud is not “privileged” to commit the bombing because his cell has been compromised by informants in Argentina, Dawud speculates regarding who may have taken his place. The terrorist guesses that it was perhaps another orphan, maybe someone he even met at a military camp or street demonstration burning Israeli or American flags. He postulates that it must have been a young man like himself who also had an experience of humiliation, and who likewise vowed to take vengeance on the infidel who got in his way. “Dawud”, in a series of reflections evidencing impressive “self-knowledge”, thus provides for Aguinis the profile of people that commit the acts of terror in the world. Dawud emerges as a symptom of a much larger malady that finds for violent systems, personal enactors.

5. Sundry Argentine Conspirators

From the novel’s opening pages, the reader is provided several clues about the government complicity and media cahoots that led to the bombing of the Israeli Embassy: Ramón Chávez, the blond-haired, blue-eyed official from the Servicios de Inteligencia del Estado, reacts quickly but unsurprised to the news of the explosion, receiving the news “as if he were awaiting the call”; the reporter’s boss tells her not to pursue the story under threat of being fired; police officers that should have been present at the Embassy at the time of the bombing were coincidentally gone at just the right moment, again, “como si le hubiesen advertido a tiempo”. Like Dawud, the Argentine conspirators are presented as people shaped by their pasts and drawn to their actions and opinions by their own painful experiences. These characters are likewise shown to have survived traumatic childhoods. Abandoned by their families, they became violent, corrupt men who find in Neo-Nazism and in the governments of Perón and later

524 Ibid., 331.

526 Ibid., 16 (original italics).
Menem, as much the purpose as the structures that would finally offer them redemption. By directing their hatred at a targeted group that they can conveniently blame for their predicament, they seek to be considered “powerful men.”

Ramón Chavez, the secret police (SIDE) chief in the novel responsible for the cover-up of the bombings, is one such character. He is introduced as having had an absent father, a mother who died when he was young, and two sisters who left him. He is portrayed as “lonelier than a stray dog,” when a Peronist gangster took him under his wing and taught him to obey and do things for money. Chavez’s violent streak is described as one that is fed by global institutions of hatred and oppression. He is presented as a philo-Nazi who learned from his mentors that Argentina’s destiny is that of “Crislam”: Christianity plus Peronismo. The emblem of Crislam looks like a half moon, which is also the sign of Islam, and we learn through “Chavez” that Christianity and Islam share a common enemy: the Jews and all their creations. In Asalto, Chávez provides the Argentine connection to Muslim fundamentalism, connecting Argentines to global movements of violent totalitarianism through choice, not chance.

Furthering the description of transnational networks of evil, the novel provides a view of the collaboration between an Iranian mastermind, Ibrahim Kassem and the Argentine police chief Santiago Branca. Branca, in courting Kassem, assures the Iranian that he is connected in the Department of Immigration, Minister of Interior, Federal Police, Buenos Aires police, and various governors, using as proof of his trust-worthiness the fact that he stopped the investigation of the first bombing. Thus, Argentina is conclusively rendered far from an innocent target of

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527 Ibid., 66.
528 Ibid., 72-3. The reader also sees Chávez participate in an Argentine operation to violate Jewish tombs, which significantly occurred in the novel on Hitler’s birthday. Ibid., 80.
529 Ibid., 139. The cover up was allegedly done to protect Argentina’s wheat trade with Tehran, and was the result of a secret meeting in Europe between the Argentine chancellor and high
the attack, and emerges instead as a partner actively seeking the violence it suffered. Dawud presents the same message when preparing for his mission: he and his party reflect that without the local cooperation they received, their mission would be impossible.\footnote{Ibid., 143.}

Demonstrating Aguinis’s argument of the ever-present choice of righteousness, even within contrary environments, Aguinis includes in the character ensemble of the novel a secret police officer who becomes an advocate for justice and expresses his exacerbation at his group’s inefficiency in persecuting the culprits in the first attack, one and a half years after the incident. This officer explains to his cohort that even if the terrorists came from abroad, someone had to buy the car, get the detonator, and orient the terrorists: “Si la investigación ha tropezado con tantos problemas, es porque existe demasiada gente que no quiere verla progresar.”\footnote{Ibid., 63.} This government insider reinforces that Argentina had to actively seek to not pursue the perpetrators of the attacks.

Through the novel, Aguinis claims that it was conclusively a case of corroberation and condonement on the Argentine side that led to the terrorist attacks. Through the choices his characters make, Aguinis demonstrates that Christianity and Islam had the choice of coming together in Argentina as forces of pluralism and reform, or as forces of authoritarianism and violence. In both cases, actors who form part of global historic processes, make the choices for Argentina.

**IV. Aguinis the Novelist Surrenders to Aguinis the Psychologist**

Ultimately, the novel reveals that history was to repeat itself with a second bombing two
years after the first, because the players on the side of totalitarian violence were more powerful than those on the side of pluralism. Yet the voices of the characters working to bring justice to Argentina demonstrate for Aguinis that the attacks were not inevitable. Nonetheless, the novel ends much as it began, with the reader experiencing an attack on a Jewish site in Argentina. The second time the Jews, though still voiceless, are however present alongside the non-Jewish victims of the attack. This time, moreover, the reader experiences the attack alongside the Jewish and non-Jewish victims, privy to the events and thoughts that immediately preceded their murder instead of arriving after the fact to the scene down the street.

At the end of the novel, the reader therefore perceives how it feels for the ground to begin to shake, for the buildings cave in; we are witnesses to the creation of a world of smoke and rubble, confusion, death and injury, a world we come upon only as a fait accomplis the first time around. Asalto thus takes us inside the AMIA building in the minutes leading up to the bombing, and the Jews’ suffering is shown to be intimately tied to those around them and among them. This choice by Aguinis is not only one of producing empathy, it renders responsibility by making of the reader a witness. We are witnesses providing testimony in the moments leading up

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532 In 1997, in an interview about another book, Aguinis speaks of the advances in the investigation of the Argentina bombings that do show there was a national collaboration with the Muslim plans. Aguinis asserts that while he would never negate that the impetus lay in Hezbollah and its Syrian, Lebanese, and Iranian conspirators, he asserts that the attacks could not have been effected without Argentine collaboration. Moreover, Aguinis commends Argentine society for pursuing the investigation in 1988, identifying in its dedication to uncover the truth, evidence of a changing, maturing nation: “El pedido de investigación por los atentados a la embajada y a la AMIA, el pedido de investigación por el crimen de María Soledad Morales, el asesinato de Cabezas, la carpa docente, son hechos que en Argentina están durando meses y años. Esto es algo nuevo por parte de la gente, con manifestaciones públicas de perseverancia, de tenacidad. Y esto, evidentemente, va a generar cambios en nuestra dirigencia, que va a tener que atender a esto y que va tener que darse cuenta que está con un pueblo que es mucho más maduro y mucho más obcecado de lo que era antes”. See Diego Barnabe, “El escritor Marcos Aguinis presenta en Montevideo su libro ‘La matriz del infierno’.” July 2, 1998: 5. Uruguay: Radio El Espectador.
to the attack to a father gathering with his family, to the members of the community center milling around, to the workers who earn their livelihoods there. The reader is this time inside the Jewish center, hearing the Jewish voices, not simply in the caretakers’ apartment down the street, or the children’s day care nearby. Again learning of the “collateral damage” from outside the building, it is presented this time only after showing the suffering within the institution that was targeted. It is my contention that Aguinis, the Jewish public intellectual, writes the preceding three-hundred pages to earn that space of the moments leading up to the attack, the moments that include the Jewish victims without the novel being about them, the moment in Argentina that could have been followed by different moments. The Jews, in the novel, and the Jew in the author, provide Argentina with the measure of her modernity, as the public’s fate is tied to those who are crossing the street and who find themselves in adjacent buildings to the AMIA.

In this effort, the novel takes the reader to the sidewalk nearby where a six-year old boy finds himself on his way to a doctor’s appointment. We see the boy walking hand in hand with his mother become separated from her by the blast, having just passed a police car double parked with the hazards on but with no one inside, as if once again the officials had orders to vacate at the “right” time. At that moment, the reader experiences the instant the boy is injured alongside his mother who, walking down the street holding his “hijito’s” hand, finds the two suddenly detached, her arm bloodied and the bone exposed, her son flung on the ground.533 The mother’s impotence on the sidewalk this time echoes that of the Jews and the workers within the AMIA.

In Asalto, written the year after September 11th, the reader is asked to experience the terrorist tragedies in Argentina from the perspective of all who lost their lives, including those who celebrated the attack. Aguinis thus crafts the scene of the injured boy and his mother

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533 Aguinis, Asalto, 328.
directly before rendering that of Dawud hearing the news of the bombing, to which the
fundamentalist reacts with elation as he envisions the suffering and pain that the attack caused.
Elated by the “victory” the bombing meant for his people, Dawud reflects: “El mundo era
sacudido por la potencia de sus hermanos, que de esa forma compensaban las humillaciones
padecidas.” Dawud’s only regret was that it was not he who had the “honor” of being the
martyr to carry it through.

In the end it is not however Dawud who gets the last word. The moment of truth is
delivered through the voices of Cristina, the Imam, and all others dedicated to creating a
heterogeneous globalized world. The cast of responsible intellectuals historicize for Aguinis’s
readers the events of the bombing, placing Argentina and the choices she embodied within a
global context. Moreover, the novel closes with the “martyr” being greeted in the afterlife not in
heaven, but by a plaque that reads “Hell.” Aguinis the narrator finally effects justice in the
closing pages of Asalto not by rewriting history, but by providing the higher truth:

‘Infierno para los que quitan la vida creada por Alá’. Empezaron a doblársele las
rodillas. La boca se le había secado y la lengua quedó pegada al paladar. Empezó
a torturarlo un ciclón de vidrios rotos y pedregullo ardiente. Le dolían los oídos,
como pinchados por agujas. Sólo un ángel quedó a su lado y le permitió enterarse
de destino de las criaturas que él había hecho morir con la bomba: niños, mujeres,
hombres, y ancianos-judíos y no judíos-, que se encolumnaban felices hacia otro
pórtico, también colosal pero nada suntuoso. Era apacible y decía en un fulgurante
arabesco: ‘Paraíso’. 

Aguinis is able to argue through the genre of the novel, that history is not inevitable and that he,
as a public intellectual, has the power and responsibility to redefine Argentina’s future by
providing a framework through which to first understand, and then heal, the past.

V. Asalto in the Context of Aguinis’s Other Novels

López-Calvo points out that when one reads Aguinis’s novels, one has the feeling of reading

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534 Ibid., 329.
535 Ibid., 333.
a singular work that is more about the ideas than the characters, traveling almost seamlessly from the Inquisition to the Holocaust, and to the creation of the State of Israel. Yet I posit that Aguinis claims the right to request empathy for his characters because of his commitment to historical accuracy. Aguinis’s novels are able to connect the various themes precisely because the reader is led to understand the human component within systems of violence that share certain tools and ideologies about the chosen “other”. Both the psychiatrist and the historian are necessary for the public intellectual if he is to be a successful reformer.

The rest of this chapter will provide a brief look at a selection of Aguinis’s previous novels including *La gesta del marrano* (1991), *Refugiados* (1969), and *La matriz del infierno* (1997), in order to demonstrate Aguinis’s consistency in message and agenda, as pursued throughout the genre.

**A. La Gesta del Marrano**

Among Aguinis’s most popular works, ranking alongside *La cruz invertida* and *Elogio de la culpa*, *La gesta del marrano* (1991) was received upon its publication with bestselling acclaim throughout Latin America. *La gesta del marrano* is, of note, the novel Aguinis published two years after Alfonsín’s government ended and Aguinis stepped down as director of PRONDEC. I posit that the timeframe of publication is not incidental and reflects Aguinis’s admonition to his fellow Argentines in choosing paths that do not support the continued expansion and inclusiveness of the public sphere. Moreover, it reflects an identification with a martyr who marched to his end with words tied around his neck. Likewise, Aguinis would spend the rest of his career battling through his pen, the violence of exclusionary systems.

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536 López-Calvo, 30.
537 Barnabe.
The plot of *La gesta* is set in 1639 Lima, Peru. It presents the story of Francisco Maldonado da Silva’s trial and *auto da fe*, which spanned the years 1626 through 1639. Based on the most famous *auto* that occurred in Spanish America, the topic of the novel is the Inquisition’s persecution of the first doctor Chile had produced on its own shores. The fact that the Inquisition persecuted not only a Jew, but rather, the first American doctor, delineates for Aguinis the forces of progress and of backwardness as well as the factors that identify the modern public intellectual with past quelled forces of progress in Latin America. In “da Silva”, Aguinis places the Jew and science on one side, and the forces of the Counter-Reformation on the other. Most indicative of the contemporary nature of Aguinis’s message is the transmutation that the historical Maldonado da Silva underwent in becoming a protagonist in Aguinis’s novel: da Silva became a symbol of religious heterogeneity when the historic subject was unequivocally an advocate of his own truth in a binary religious world. Whereas it appears the true da Silva was convinced of his own truth as much as his inquisitors were convinced of theirs, Aguinis chose to mold his protagonist into the conscience of heterogeneity, writing instead “a hymn to liberty.” The work is thereby rendered a modern novel, not a historical monograph; much more a product of Aguinis’s time than that of the seventeenth century where truth was binary and tied to religion.

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540 Efrain Kristal agrees that Aguinis’s Maldonado da Silva was shaped to be a champion of religious tolerance, rather than exemplifying what he was in reality: a champion of his own religion. See Kristal, Efrain, “The Representation of the Marrano in Two Contemporary Spanish American Historical Novels (Aridjis and Aguinis),” *American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Southern California Conference* (Claremont, California: Scripps College, April 8, 2000).
541 Sadow, *King David’s Harp*, 37.
In Aguinis’s novel, we see da Silva resist his torturers’ sadism for thirteen years, until he was finally burned at the stake. Despite this outcome, da Silva garners the respect of the reader and the shock of his Inquisitors when he “confesses” to his identity and acts in defiance of what he considered to be the corruption, hypocrisy and authoritarianism of his day. Again evidencing the modern psychological approach that programs of healing begin with individual healing, in La Gesta, only by working through the pain of the memory of his father’s choice to become a “reconciliado” of the Catholic faith, can da Silva truly embrace his Jewish lineage. In La gesta del marrano personal healing allows da Silva to triumph morally, even if ultimately, the protagonist is condemned by the Inquisition. Moreover, da Silva fights back with dignity, education, and a call to conscience to his oppressors, in spite of being physically fettered and subjected to emotional and bodily abuses at the hands of his inquisitors. Mirroring Aguinis’s insistence on the power of the word, the reader witnesses da Silva “impress” his accusers with his knowledge about both Christian and Jewish theology to such an extent in the novel, that Christian-theological figures from all over the Spanish colony are called to debate with the prisoner. The justice the historical person was unable to achieve is thus vindicated by the power of the novel to set the record straight. In the process, the tools of the public intellectual are rendered the tools of historical righteousness.

Indicative also of Aguinis’s persistent goal of religious reformation, the author outlines his La gesta novel according to the books of the Bible. Yet this rewriting of the Bible, much like Aguinis’s iteration of Erasmus, is to yield a modern message that is well beyond the scope of Inquisition America or the historic da Silva’s aims. In the novel, Francisco Maldonado da Silva realizes upon his arrest for being a Jew, that though he thought New Spain was a paradise in a new world, a new world were he was setting roots that harkened back to a beloved Spanish past,
this was to be an illusion. Far from the American Córdoba, colonial Peru was more akin the modern day Beirut. It is a message that *Asalto al paraíso* would later echo.

Demonstrating also in *La gesta* that the persecution of Jews was an issue that affected the larger Latin American society, Aguinis depicts the indigenous people, themselves victims of the Spaniards, rushing to embrace their conquistadors’ methods in order to be a part of the oppressing group instead of the oppressed group, a dynamic that is historically founded. In his novel, Aguinis demonstrates that the indigenous Americans of colonial Peru, in order to identify with the conquistadors and the inquisitors, became their own enemies. Showing how the indigenous were forced to give up their names, gods, language, and thus, their pride and identity, the novel demonstrates that the conquest was effected by having the indigenous engage in self-hatred, a self-hatred that they then deflected toward others in order to be on the “right side of history”. *La gesta del marrano* therefore offers a new perspective on what the arrival of the Spaniards meant for the new world, thereby giving voice to the marginalized in a manner that resonates more with the present than with the past. In *La gesta del marrano*, Aguinis is decidedly exposing his public to the truth behind the contact that created Latin America, suggesting through modern Latin American tools of rhetoric, that the region has yet to embrace

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542 Viviana Fridman notes that the trees that da Silva paints at the beginning of the novel are Spanish trees that speak of a nostalgia for Spain and of the connection of the new land with the old. The Spanish legacy for da Silva is not however that of Convivencia Spain, but of Inquisition Spain, a connection that instead of bringing paradise, will bring a literal hell: da Silva will burn to his death due to the Spanish legacy that was transported to the New World. See Viviana Fridman, “De la celebración a la conmemoración: cent ans de literature juive-argentine” *Études Littéraires* 29.3-4 (1997): 81-94.


544 López-Calvo, 46. López-Calvo points out that it is not a coincidence that Aguinis was president of the *Comisión Argentina para el V Centenario del Descubrimiento de América* in 1986 and 1987. The public intellectual understood the violence inherent in the colonization and colonial period of Latin America as a violence suffered by all of society, and it is an argument clearly expressed in *La gesta del marrano*. 

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heterogeneity. Requiring more than either Erasmus or Freud to bring the Reformation to Latin America,\textsuperscript{545} Aguinis utilizes the novel to defeat religious authoritarianism through empathy.

Aguinis is therefore intent on expressing that the victimization of entire populations happened as much at the hands of the perpetrators as of those victims who internalized systems of hatred. Demonstrating how collaborating with homogenizing forces that seek to divide the world in binary terms of insider or outsider, Aguinis is intent also on showing that those who are willing to “save themselves” by participating in societies of violence, in fact participate in their own demise along with that of the identified, and often marginalized, victims. Through the novel, Aguinis therefore furthers his argument that when the marginalized marginalize others and deflect their own internalized hatred of society onto an “accepted” group, they are joining in systems of violence that target the viability of the whole as a modern entity. As Aguinis writes in \textit{El valor de escribir}: “La cacería no busca sólo matar brujas, sino imponer la convicción profunda de que existen y que son las responsables de todas las desgracias. Encontrarlas y quemarlas tranquiliza y brinda un gran beneficio adicional: convencer de que el aparato represivo es más necesario que nunca.”\textsuperscript{546} Aguinis shows time and again that exclusionary apparatuses feed on finding enemies. An argument that permeates Aguinis’s works, it underlies his insistence on using instances of hatred and violence toward Jews to advocate not for the survival of the minority, but for the viability of the majority.

Consistent with Aguinis’s message throughout his works, is that the social and political ills of society are accompanied by individual psychological malady. In this light, we are shown

\textsuperscript{545} Freud himself understood that endemic to religion is the tendency to treat the “outsider” with cruelty and intolerance. See Sigmund Freud, “Archaic and Infantile Features in Dreams,” in \textit{A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis}. Sigmund Freud (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 676.

\textsuperscript{546} Marcos Aguinis, \textit{El valor de escribir} (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1985), 132.
in *La gesta* how the society that surrounds da Silva is subjected to the psychic trials for participating in such an environment of violence toward an “other”. The reader therefore witnesses the mulatto Martín blame himself for his lineage, and ultimately suffer schizophrenia and succumb to auto-flagellation. Da Silva’s friend Lorenzo is the embodiment of the yes-man, both depreciating the indigenous and abandoning the protagonist, but he too does not escape unscathed. The protagonist himself must go through periods of self-loathing before he can embrace his own identity. The characters in *La gesta*, on all sides of the encounter, must solve their internal problems having to do with both the internalized and the deflected hatred of society. Aguinis’s use of psychology is a modern application to the colonial *auto*, as is his joint application of reason and empathy to understand his protagonist as well as the supporting characters of the novel.

As much as his *Asalto al paraíso*, Aguinis’s *La gesta del marrano* focuses on the characters in order to make accessible, and thus transformable, the systems that they are a part of. Ultimately, it will be only through physical and psychic pain that the salvation of Francisca Maldonado da Silva’s soul will come about. Aguinis the psychologist shows that without engaging in an honest look at oneself, growth is impossible. Thus, though da Silva is sentenced to death at the end of *La gesta*, da Silva does not die before speaking his truth to his “Inquisitors”, taking the last steps of his life with the two books that he wrote while in prison tied

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547 For an excellent account of the Counter-Reformation’s victimization of indigenous people in Latin America, see Sokolow, 116-8. Here, Sokolow describes Spain’s need for religious homogeneity alongside Spanish ethnocentrism, which viewed as humanism its crusade to assimilate or punish all “others” within its empire.

548 López-Calvo, 58.

549 Ibid., 73.
around his neck. Through *La gesta*, Aguinis tells the tale of a war of consciousness and reason against powers of violence and authoritarianism, the same battle evidenced in other moments of history where religious systems have caused tremendous injustice. Through da Silva, Aguinis provides a key contemporary message: Censuring a human being, what he can read, study, or write, and truncating his ability to be creative, are all forms of violence.

The past Minister of Culture and director of PRONDEC thus ended his tenure as a civil servant aiming to democratize culture, by writing *La gesta del marrano*. Through this choice of novel upon his exit from government, Aguinis indicated that he understood that his own writings would be the ones to bring the still elusive goal of the public intellectual, that of creating a pluralistic and democratic Argentina, to fruition. In doing so, Aguinis would take advantage of a unique attribute of healing endowed to the novel in Latin America:

> The novel tends to make myth apart of the story in order to show all the dimensions of man. It is this ‘total man’, with his contradictions, his impulses, his desires, his dreams, his violence, his frustrations and his hopes, that present-day Latin American novelists attempt to depict. Investigation of the origins, the sources of the myth, assists them in this undertaking...Myth is a response to a void, to man’s questioning of his destiny, and represents another world which will promptly resolve confusion in the here and now.

Da Silva, the first Jewish victim of the Inquisition in America condemned in life, is resurrected by Aguinis who himself has claimed to have the biggest impact in his own milieu, through the written word. Aguinis, like da Silva, shows he will march beyond the conditions dictated by his government, with his words tied around his neck. That both the author and his main

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550 The novel shows da Silva combating the violence of censure by making writing instruments from a chicken bone and a nail, and paper from bags of corn flour mixed with water.


552 Fell, 34.


554 Homi Bhabha notes the rhetorical tool of using the arguments of the oppressor in order to be subversive and resist hegemony. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.
character in *La gesta del marrano* are Jews who studied medicine, are impressively learned in the Catholic faith, and use this education to refute the institutional dogmas and hierarchies that promote violence, provides additional autobiographical parallels that make da Silva a convenient proxy for Aguinis to espouse his agenda at this point in the public intellectual’s life and in Argentine history. The similarities are not simply coincidences or biographical ego boosts; the parallels are what make da Silva’s story pertinent and useful to the author’s contemporary goals not as a writer, but as a public intellectual. Aguinis’s compilation *El valor de escribir* provides further testimony to the responsibility and power Aguinis believes the written word has to change society. Like his protagonist in *La gesta del marrano*, Aguinis too lived and wrote through a censored time, that of the Argentine military dictatorships of the nineteen seventies and eighties. Stating, “the greater part of my existence was spent under the yoke of authoritarianism that scorched Argentina,” it is clear that Aguinis sees a likeness between himself and his protagonist da Silva.

A last element that Aguinis nowhere highlights in his interviews regarding the meaning and message of *La gesta*, is the novel’s participation in the larger category of Sephardic Literature in the New World. Edna Aizenberg astutely points out that Aguinis is one of the modernizers within the region’s Jewish writers who includes the legacy of Spain in understanding the place of the Jews in Latin America. Aizenberg notes that Aguinis’s Maldonado da Silva “is a sort of Argentine Maimonides-Jew writer, doctor, a native of Cordoba,” noting that da Silva is but one of several of Aguinis’s characters that embody

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555 López-Calvo, 78-9.
556 Ibid., 37.
557 Ibid., 36.
559 Ibid., 59.
Maimonides. Unlike Gerchunoff’s *Gauchos Judíos*, Aizenberg suggests that Aguinis uses this novel to show that the Spain of the *Convivencia*, which thrived on pluralism, is not the one that either colonized America, or welcomed the Jews in the twentieth century. Aizenberg writes of Aguinis and his work:

> The change from a passive to an active attitude is new, with an emphasis on questioning and changing society. There is also a willingness to leave behind the image of the Technicolor Promised Land. Aguinis now portrays a lame and hungry Latin American nation, downtrodden and seeking justice. These twin threads, battered republic and critical activism, would increase in the author’s personal commitment and writing.\(^{561}\)

Building on Aizenberg’s assessment, I argue that Aguinis’s mission to bring the reformation to Argentina is about constructing a world that celebrates pluralism. For Aguinis, religion as the instigator or recipient of hatred is not a theological issue, but has to do with the possibility of the emergence of a heterogeneous and democratic polity.

**B. Thirty-one Years, One Message**

Among Aguinis’s other novels, two provide particularly resonating messages as well as a shared methodological approach to that found in *Asalto al paraíso*. They are, *Refugiados: Crónica de un palestino* (1969) and *La matriz del infierno* (1997). Taken together with *La gesta del marrano*, the three depict moments of global history that for Aguinis demonstrate a reflected reality to each other and to the Argentine present.\(^{562}\)

> The awful present disturbs us. The Inquisition of those days was the model for totalitarianisms, dictatorships and fundamentalisms that have devastated the planet and humanity, and even now intend to continue to generate grief and pain. Nazism, Stalinism, and the Latin American dictatorships owe a great deal to the Inquisition. From it, they obtained methods and mentality. We have to continue

\(^{560}\) Ibid., 61.
\(^{561}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{562}\) López-Calvo, 91. López-Calvo highlights the similarities between *La matriz del infierno*, *La gesta del marrano*, and *La cruz invertida*, by pointing out that in all these novels, Aguinis’s main characters experience religious persecutions.
fighting against it today, here and everywhere.\textsuperscript{563}

Like \textit{Asalto al paraíso}, the following novels reveal how far from paradise the societies that aim for utopia typically are. They also evidence Aguinis’s pervasive literary strategy of applying psychiatric sensibility to healing through empathy. \textit{Refugiados} additionally shares with \textit{Asalto al paraíso} the topic of the Middle Eastern conflict.

\textit{Refugiados} was Aguinis’s first novel, written in the months preceding the Six-Day war in Israel, and it was the first work of fiction in Latin America to deal with the Israeli-Arab conflict. The narrator/protagonist in \textit{Refugiados} is a Palestinian, effectively the “other” in relation to the Jewish author.\textsuperscript{564} The protagonist is also a doctor, and specifically a neurosurgeon like Aguinis.\textsuperscript{565} In order to create a legitimate voice in this context, Aguinis immersed himself in the study of the Koran as well as in the history of the Palestinian refugees.\textsuperscript{566} Only by intimately empathizing with his protagonist, by becoming he, in fact, can Aguinis can show him his errors.

This novel is noteworthy in technique, when viewed in comparison to Aguinis’s later novels, in that it provides the voice of one narrator only. Yet, though intent on intimately identifying with the narrator, this Palestinian refugee is never given a name. I see Aguinis pursue a similar choice thirty years later in \textit{Asalto} in insisting on understanding Dawud and his motivations, yet not allowing him to be the one to effect the attack. Both choices show the psychiatrist’s commitment to comprehending the enemy, in order to communicate political or cultural aims. By maintaining the Palestinian in \textit{Refugiados} anonymous, and by keeping Dawud

\textsuperscript{563} Sadow, \textit{King David’s Harp}, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{564} López-Calvo, 102.
\textsuperscript{565} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{566} Aguinis, \textit{Nuevos diálogos}, 84. Aguinis admits to be quite directed about his message and method, prizing his role as a public intellectual above that of a writer. Aguinis uses the various genres of literature, as well as journal entries and media outlets, to directly address his readers about his intentions. In his work of dialogue with Laguna, Aguinis shares his purposes and methods in explaining that he does not create art for the interpretation of the beholder, but rather to convey a message he directs.
from effecting the bombing, Aguinis consistently uses empathy in the novels to show that individuals are interchangeable examples of wider societies. Aguinis writes not to understand the one person, but to understand the people within historic systems and nations.

In *Refugiados*, Aguinis seeks to deliver his agenda through the empathetic protagonist as well as through well-chosen supporting characters. For example, Rolf Freytag is the Jewish German doctor (whose name means “free day”) who advocates for the Jews’ willingness to compromise with the Palestinians. He reminds the readers of the fault of the surrounding Arab countries in the predicament of creating the entity *refugiado* in the first place. Freytag knows whereof he speaks, having been a victim of a parallel condition to that of the Muslim: “Usted es un refugiado, como lo he sido yo.”  

Freytag therefore serves the same role that Najaf will serve in *Asalto al paraíso*: having suffered a painful past, he nonetheless chooses to not be a “victim” in his own life. It is precisely from a position of compassion that Freytag is able to instruct the Palestinian refugee that he must stop seeing himself as a victim if he is to heal, and warns of the psychiatric maladies that can come from holding onto hatred. Freytag thus delivers Aguinis the psychologist’s message: systemic healing must start with the individual.

To help achieve his goal of humanizing the characters involved and make them meaningful beyond the systems that otherwise define them, Aguinis includes a romantic story in the novel. The young Palestinian doctor falls for the daughter of one of his patients. As one may expect, the refugee’s love interest turns out to not only to be an Israeli, but a Holocaust survivor as well. Like him, she too studies medicine thanks to a scholarship she earned. Aguinis sets up his novel to show that in spite the larger context and antagonistic differences that divide the

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567 Freytag is empathetic to the refugee’s condition because he too is one, as a German who after the Treaty of Potsdam had to flee his home when it became part of Poland. Aguinis, *Refugiados*, 67.

568 Ibid., 148.
Palestinian and the Israeli, the personal details of their lives unite them. The protagonist of *Refugiados* provides Aguinis’s message: “Dí la verdad aunque sea amarga. Dí la verdad, aún contra ti mismo.” Truth and empathy are the keys to bridging humanity and to breaking systems of violence.

If we keep in mind Freud’s assessment of the inherent intolerant quality of religions, we can understand why Aguinis the psychologist and Aguinis the religious reformer are one and the same; they are the messiahs of universal acceptance and peace, a role that can come not by banishing the shameful parts within, but by turning to them with empathy. Rita Gardiol assesses that *Refugiados*, Aguinis’s first novel represents the author’s “faith that humanity supercedes nationalism and that love and understanding can overcome prejudice and hate.”\(^5^{69}\) Aguinis corroborates this assessment in his essay *Un país de novella: Viaje hacia la mentalidad de los Argentinos* (1988), stating that all of humanity suffers from a desire to expel the other. His life’s work is to fight against this tendency.

Aguinis’s *La matriz del infierno* provides the Holocaust piece to the global totalitarian puzzle, and shares in Aguinis’s overarching goal of insisting that his readers grapple with another obviously ideologically fraught moment of history. In this novel, the reader is taken from Bariloche, Argentina to Berlin, Germany of the 1930’s. In the process, we encounter Argentine General Félix Uriburu, the journalist Ernesto Alemann, German masterminds Himmler, Goebbels, and even Hitler himself, as well as Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli. Aguinis once again comes out from behind the traditional anonymous veil of the novelist to explain that his aim in this novel is not to show the consequences of the Holocaust. Rather, the goal is to understand the circumstances in Germany that gave rise to Nazism, and those in the rest of the world that stood

Esta impunidad que tuvo Hitler es responsabilidad de la humanidad de entonces. Aquí tenemos que reconocer que no se trata solamente de que hubo un grupo de "malos", sino que hubo otro grupo de gente que aparentemente tenía buena conciencia y que fue cómplice de los "malos" por callarse la boca y dejar que las cosas sigieran su curso.\textsuperscript{570}

Ever wedded to the tool of empathy, in \textit{Matriz del infierno} Aguinis the psychiatrist again shows how the category oppressor/oppressed, and center/periphery are not always so clear, nor do they function in a vertical and traceable manner. It is important for Aguinis to demonstrate that these categories extend throughout society in more obscure and often invisible ways,\textsuperscript{571} because it is precisely this uncertainty that provides for Aguinis the opportunity for change. In this effort, Aguinis weaves a web of characters that are at once attracted to and repelled by one another, living with passions and emotions common to all people. Thus, the reader learns that the Argentine Rolf Keiper becomes an SS leader who became a part of Hitler’s personal security team. Keiper is described as a victim of physical abuse as a child, who later learned to project his own aggression towards defenseless others, thereby becoming a tool of authoritarianism. Because Keiper is taught to hate as a child, he readily finds in anti-Semitism an outlet for his anger.

Violence toward Jews emerges in this novel as in those that deal with the Inquisition, with Jews in Israel, and with the bombings of the Jewish sites in the 1990’s: to address not the tragedy of Jews, but to understand those who need to hate them. In the case of torturers and inquisitors alike, Aguinis shows how hatred of humanity is at the core of targeted violence toward Jews, always revealing unresolved self-hatred on behalf of the perpetrators of

\textsuperscript{570} Barnabe.
\textsuperscript{571} López-Calvo, 88.
violence.” \textsuperscript{572} Consistent with Aguinis’s other novels, \textit{La matriz del infierno} also exposes the global ramifications of an institutionalized religion in fraught historical moments. This time, the Argentine Church welcomes and celebrates its distinguished Nazi guests. As in Aguinis’s other novels, regret and reform eventually comes from within the Church itself, when a member of the establishment both criticizes his own institution and connects that moment of violence to all other moments of like violence in history. Once more, an Argentine priest delivers Aguinis’s message and this time in a novel, explicitely equates for Aguinis’s readers the workings of the Inquisition that occurred on Argentina’s shores to that of Germany’s Nazism: “Nosotros mediante el bautismo y las expulsions, los Nazis mediante el terror.” \textsuperscript{573} In a moment of poetic justice not orchestrated by Aguinis, this novel was published just a few months before the Church officially apologized for its passivity during the Holocaust. The priest’s realization in the novel is made more powerful in that it was delivered as a confession to the work’s Jewish heroine, Edith Eisenbach, a figure that once more does not serve as a victim, but as a moral gauge to the society that chose to victimize her. Like in \textit{Refugiados} and \textit{Asalto al paraíso}, it is also a woman in this novel who in humanizing her adversaries, renders them more accessible. It is the woman who is at the matriz (literally meaning uterus, figuratively used as center) of this “infierno”, as much as it was a woman, Cristina, who tried to make possible Argentina’s elusive “paraíso.”

In \textit{La matriz}, Aguinis again shows that there must be a psychological rendering on the part of the protagonist that is caught in an authoritarian system of violence, if he is to break free from cycles of suffering. Rolf Keiper, unable to solve the psychological malady that came from his predicament, engaged instead in repeated personal abuses of those he loved. The result was

\textsuperscript{572} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{573} Aguinis, \textit{La matriz del infierno} (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1997), 443-4.
that he both raped and impregnated the woman that embodied his unresolved confusion: Edith Eisenbach. Having not dealt with his internal demons, Keiper too was not to write history as he desired, and in the novel met his end by assassinating his own superiors before he himself fell victim to psychosis. Significantly, Keiper’s lack of healing does not end solely with his own demise or that of those around him, there is a future of that malady in a pregnancy he caused. The message is one that crosses temporal and geographic boundaries, showing how individual malady has transnational and multi-generational roots, ramifications, and consequences.

Nazism, Islamic fundamentalism, and the Inquisition combine in Aguinis’s novels to tie moments of violence in Argentina to world ideologies, thereby demonstrating Argentina’s multigenerational participation in “foreign” systems of oppression. Asalto al paraíso, Gesta del marrano, Refugiados, and Matriz del infierno also espouse a call for the reform of religion on a local and global scale. The three additional works together show Aguinis’s use of the novel to bring humanity and complexity to moments that collective memory may prefer to forget. In this effort, Aguinis’s first order of business is to call to task all who have claimed sole ownership of the truth. Empathy for oneself or “the otherness within” is the prerequisite to a possibility of inclusiveness of the other. Through the novel, Aguinis is best equipped to demand accountability from the individual within the system, because it is the genre that allows him to best engender empathy for the devil within. For Aguinis, the psychiatrist, the path to healing is to be sought through the individual, yet for the public intellectual, the goal is a national one.

574 López-Calvo, 95.
575 Aguinis, Las dudas, 204.
VI. Summing Up

Aguinis’s opus, which considered together includes dialogues, essays, and novels, approaches the problem of modernity as an issue of reformation. In so doing, Aguinis connects Argentina through temporal and geographic trajectories at home and abroad, mapping connections that the nation must own and rectify if it is to claim the future it allegedly desires. Edna Aizenberg argues: “The bloody explosion of the AMIA exemplifies the prejudicial blind spots and xenophobic mindsets that over the course of the twentieth century hindered Argentina and other Latin America countries from creating truly pluralistic societies in which difference is celebrated, not merely tolerated.”\textsuperscript{577} She argues that the literature of Jews post-1994 “[moved] Jewish culture out of Latin America’s margins and Latin American culture away from the periphery of the West.”\textsuperscript{578} I understand Marcos Aguinis to be a participant in this trend, and argue that in Aguinis, the boldness of the Jewish writer is evidenced through insisting on his role as a healer of a nation, an expander of the public sphere in a country that evidently did not yet accept Jews as part of its national definition.

Read in the company of Aguinis’s other novels, it becomes clear that the impetus of \textit{Asalto al paraíso} permitted Aguinis an opportunity to take his message of combating exclusionary and violent gatekeepers, to a markedly local and contemporarily salient arena. In the author’s own words:

\begin{quote}
Cuando uno describe una novela ambientada en otra época lo que busca es entender mejor la época que vivimos ahora. Por ejemplo, en "La gesta del marrano", por más que yo describí un suceso que ocurrió hace 300 años estaba describiendo las resonancias de aquella época inquisitorial, persecutoria, en nuestro tiempo. Y también, los conflictos que existían en aquella época con los perseguidores o los dueños de la verdad, los discriminadores, los torturadores... En fin, todo eso seguía existiendo hasta hoy, y aquella época, de alguna forma,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{577} Aizenberg, \textit{Books and Bombs}, 2.
\textsuperscript{578} Ibid.
determinó muchos rasgos negativos que hemos tenido. Incluso las formas como se desempeñó la Inquisición son las formas que después adoptó el nazismo. Las formas que adoptó el nazismo son las que después adoptaron las dictaduras latinoamericanas, la misma forma de perseguir, de torturar, de despreciar la vida, de considerarse dueños de la verdad y discriminar la verdad del otro como si fuera una mentira o una agresión.  

Aguinis repeatedly makes his objectives clear, explaining that his goals are those of a public intellectual, even when in his methods he adopts the tools of a writer. Aguinis does not intend his works to primarily entertain or provide aesthetic contributions; rather, through a strong argument delivered through sympathetic characters, the novel is intended to reveal truths that have up until then been left obscure: “La ficción, en verdad, facilita decir las cosas. El autor tiene la licencia de hacerse a un lado y son sus personajes los que hablan.” It is through his characters that Aguinis ultimately hopes to show that the attacks on Jewish sites in the 1990’s were more than isolated aberrations that were conveniently disconnected from a larger Argentine reality, but that in fact they were manifestations of the distance Argentina still had to traverse in order to arrive at her own desired “paraíso”. As any physician knows, suffering needs as much a cure, as prevention and a doctor. Through the novel, Aguinis aims to provide all three in calling to task the society that hosted the pain.

579 Barnabe.
580 Ibid.
Conclusion

I. A Final Genre

Aguinis’s articles provide a last element that helps cohere his multifaceted corpus. For a writer as dedicated to conveying his message to a contemporary public as is Aguinis, the newspaper provides the most immediate outlet available in print. Through this medium, Aguinis uses his own voice to argue in favor of critical thought, equanimity, opportunity, security, education, patience, vision, participation, and hard work, the keys he identifies to building lasting democracy. Through a personal website dedicated to his articles, featuring over two hundred entries spanning the eight years between September 12th, 2003 to June 14th, 2011, Aguinis demonstrates his ongoing dedication to his program as well as to his legacy. Through the website, Aguinis leaves a cyber trail that reflects his willingness to appropriate as many vehicles as are available to him in order to continue to communicate with his audience.

A survey of the articles supplies a striking insight into Aguinis’s crafted mission and persona in view of the legacy of the Argentine public intellectuals who came before him. In his articles, Aguinis repeatedly refers to Juan Bautista Alberdi and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento as the founding fathers of Argentina, presenting the members of the first generation of Argentine

581 Through his personal website, Aguinis provides a collection of all his literary works, press reviews, biographical information, links to his articles as well as to online coverage of his public appearances, interviews, and an invitation to join his mailing list. Available: http://www.Aguinis.net (accessed January 18, 2012).

582 A compilation of Aguinis’s collected articles, provided by the author, can be found at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Aguinis/messages/

It is an invaluable source not only for the content, but in order to see the author’s dedication to his mission and his persona in personally providing for his public a collection of two hundred and twelve of his newspaper entries. It is a website equipped with the possibility for conversation with the author and the wider community, with a feature for “reply” built-in, evidencing the public intellectual’s contemporariness as well as his ensuing dedication to instigating public discourse.
intellectuals in contrast to the fallen vision and policies of post-Alfonsin presidencies.\(^{583}\) Aguinis presents post-Alfonsin Argentina as one where the government was bereft of intellectuals, and where Peronism was antithetical to modernity. Aguinis’s repeated contributions to \textit{La Nación}, a largely anti-government newspaper, helps couch the author’s perspective. In critiquing his present-day Argentina, Aguinis presents the founding intellectual leaders of his country as having had the right formula; a formula that he claims is still applicable and if embraced, would set Argentina on the path to claim her still illusive grandeur. At the core of such a critique of course, is the unquestioned assumption of the right and duty of intellectuals to both define and lead the nation.

To give a handful of examples of Aguinis’s message as expressed through his articles, in 1983, the year Alfonsín was elected to the presidency, Aguinis wrote an entry about the correct path that was once set forth but sadly abandoned:

\begin{quote}
Se inició una marcha accidentada, pero por el sendero correcto. A los tumbos fue mejorando la democracia, se perfeccionaron las instituciones, se integró a millones de inmigrantes y el país se volvió rico en esperanza, bienes materiales y también en valores educativos y culturales. Se convirtió en la vanguardia y el modelo de América latina.\(^{584}\)
\end{quote}

In an article dated December 19, 2008, Aguinis again referred to Argentina’s fallen state in terms of affinity to the Alberdi ideals, stating that Argentina was initially a “país vacío y desierto” that could have gone in any direction and failed to reach its potential not due to bad luck, but due to

\(^{583}\) Many of the articles cited in this section were written in 2008, in attack of the Néstor Kirchner presidency. Aguinis time and again points to the intellectual leadership and programs of the 1850’s in contrast to the fallen leadership of his present day. Yet there were public intellectuals who did, at least for a time, support the Kirchner presidencies, those of both Néstor and Cristina. Dany and Ricardo Feierstein are among them.

wrong choices.\textsuperscript{585} Writing for \textit{La Nación} on March 3, 2009, Aguinis pointed to the correct formula once more, as posited by the independence period intellectuals:

La sabia ruta constitucional inaugurada en 1853 fue quebrada de forma impune y es preciso volverla a construir. No olvidemos que para que haya paz social y progreso es necesario más democracia y un sólido desempeño de las instituciones. La democracia es el gobierno del pueblo, no de un autócrata, aunque se lo haya votado.\textsuperscript{586}

Not only does Aguinis consider that Alberdi and his cohort provided Argentina with the right roadmap, he speaks of Argentina in his articles as they do, a blank slate, and compares other countries’ modernization to that of Argentina in terms of whether or not they had the benefit of “an Alberdi.”\textsuperscript{587} In so doing, Aguinis at once adopts the Enlightenment rhetoric of Latin America as a blank slate, yet provides his country with the yardstick with which to measure other Western modernities: Argentina’s Alberdi.

In doing so, Aguinis does much more than simply place Argentina back in the global conversation of the Enlightenment. He effectively changes the terms that Alberdi and Sarmiento accepted in their own programs of modernization. If the first generation of intellectuals was dedicated to bringing the Enlightenment to Argentina in order to cure the barbarian through the civilized, or the American with the European, Aguinis spent his life addressing the shortcomings of the public sphere that they furthered. In placing Alberdi on such a pedestal and presenting him


as the one who got it right, Aguinis appears intent on downplaying the innovative elements in his own agenda. My analysis of Aguinis’s multi-faceted professional expression demonstrates that Aguinis is in fact markedly different to either Sarmiento or Alberdi in his advocacy of pluralism being part and parcel of a modern democratic nation. In pursuing this mission incessantly and through multiple venues, Aguinis was in effect advocating for an Argentina very different than that of Alberdi’s dreams.

Perhaps Aguinis’s positioning of himself in the articles as Alberdi’s heir is reflective of the same strategy employed in presenting himself as Erasmus’s heir or as Laguna’s dialogue partner.588 If an un-reformed Argentina needed the endorsement of reform-minded but internal patrons of change, the same audience would need a national hero widely recognized as having envisioned an Argentina of desirable qualities, to pave the path for further progress. I would venture, however, that in asking for Alberdi’s patronage, Aguinis uses it subversively. Through articles, the only literary genre that carries Aguinis’s singular unmasked voice, the writer downplays the true revolution to which he has allegedly dedicated his professional life as a psychiatrist, Minister of Culture, Director of PRONDEC, and prolific writer.

Aguinis’s literary choices reflect his understanding that a desirable Argentina is not one that must replicate either the religious Protestant Reformation or the European Enlightenment, in order to achieve a truly inclusive and pluralistic democracy. Yet in his methods, Aguinis consistently acknowledges Argentina’s need of the endorsement of both, if his country is to

588 See Aguinis’s article, “Desarrollo sin coimas,” where Aguinis cites Alberdi, Avellaneda, Sarmiento, Roca, and Pellegrini as those who got it right for Argentina. If only their programs would have prevailed, Aguinis here argues, “estaríamos gozando de sus beneficios formidables.” It is worth noting that these men were highly debated figures in Argentina. Roca, for example, is remembered both for his modernization of the country and for his Indian wars. Aguinis chooses to focus on the former, while rejecting the latter, in favor of inclusion of the periphery. See Marcos Aguinis, “Desarrollo sin coimas,” La Nación (August 22, 2008). Available: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Aguinis/message (accessed Dec. 15, 2011).
progress toward its desired national identity. A teleological view of history, thus adopted by an Argentine Jew to unveil the limitations of the Enlightenment, is a subversive and interesting machination indeed. With the global project of pluralistic democracy still in question, Aguinis was to be neither Argentina’s Erasmus nor its Alberdi, but he needed their endorsement in order to become Argentina’s, and thereby the world’s, healer. Aiding in this effort, Aguinis includes in his collection of articles a handful that were written about him, identifying him at once as a noteworthy intellectual and as a Renaissance man.⁵⁸⁹

It is worth noting as well, that even when placing himself within an Argentine tradition, Aguinis accedes only to situate himself in the company of the intellectuals of the independence period, ignoring the persons and the ideas of his co-national contemporaries or predecessors. To be in the company of intellectuals who are two hundred years dead, reflects a pervasive tactic of Aguinis’s, one of carefully choosing the intellectual traditions that legitimate his own participation in the endeavor of nation building. Aguinis stated in one article dated to 2010: “La Argentina es como un corcel brio so al que le han atado las patas. Debe ser liberada su potencialidad mediante una dirigencia noble, práctica, sensate y visionaria. Entonces, el corcel iniciará un galope que lo llevará a las más altas cimas en poco tiempo.”⁵⁹⁰ While ostensibly Aguinis here calls upon the government that would “untie [Argentina’s] legs,” after his civic work Aguinis engages in this project himself, legitimized in his endeavor as a public intellectual in “conversation” with those global and national intellectuals who together, help Aguinis deliver the desired ideological construction of Argentina.

Aguinis’s pursuit of pluralistic participation, the inclusion of the margins precisely in

order to erase the condition of marginality, was a contemporary agenda pursued in Argentina and in Latin America more widely after 1968. It was a goal that was sponsored by President Alfonsín with an understanding that he and the intellectuals he gathered were engaged in a project of national salvation with global significance. Ironically, Aguinis wanted to be seen as innovative and unique when he was actually in good company, and claimed to be traditional when he was being revolutionary. I would venture that this is not a simple case of coyness, but rather has also to do with the limitations still present in the Argentina Aguinis aimed to mold.

II. Closing Thoughts

“There could be no talk of a nation’s or indeed a continent’s literature so long as that nation or that continent was not part of a universal consciousness and had not produced a body of significant writings. We are now aware that Latin America exists [...] and more than that, of Europe’s acknowledgement of Latin America’s achievements.”

“All knowledge or understanding must begin with the part: ‘universal’ must never be confused with ‘alienated’.”

Marcos Aguinis, the Argentine Jew who is nationally recognized as a public intellectual and prolific writer, presents his professional career as one that teleological led to his healing the nation of Argentina through a path that began in psychology, continued through civic service, and ultimately centered on his writings. In this effort, Aguinis has placed himself in the tradition of Argentine intellectuals such as Alberdi and Sarmiento, and in the wake of global and regional historically important figures such as Erasmus, Neruda, and Freud. Aguinis’s

591 Fell, 25.
592 Ainsa, 59.
593 Sadow, King David’s Harp, 33-42.
construction of his persona and agenda reveal parallel processes, indicating the intimate relationship that exists between the public intellectual and the modern nation-state, a relationship that Aguinis demonstrates involves a “vertical” (temporal) and “horizontal” (geographic) conversation.

An issue implicit throughout my dissertation, though not its focus, is the role of Marcos Aguinis as a Jewish modern intellectual dedicated to the construction of pluralistic nations. In this context Aguinis too is not unique, and my forthcoming projects will more directly address the wider role that Jews have played as modern intellectuals acting as harbingers of modernity. This is the message of La gesta del marrano, and it extends through all of Aguinis’s works that stress responsibility, reform, and inclusion. Like Maldonado da Silva who marches to his death with his book of testimony tied around his neck, so too has Aguinis the Jew, past Minister of Culture, public intellectual, and best-selling writer, dedicated his own life to combating systems of exclusionary violence in Argentina. In Aguinis, culture and politics coincide because in Latin America, literature is a political endeavor.

Through the Latin American genres of essay, dialogue, and novel, the tools and agenda of Marcos Aguinis became intertwined in an effort to democratize a country through democratizing its culture. If modernity is the step beyond the Reformation, colonialism, and the Enlightenment, Aguinis the civil servant and prolific writer needed to enlist the patrimony of Alberdi, Erasmus, Freud, Neruda, Monseñor Laguna, Cristina, Najaf, and da Silva, in order for Argentina to surpass them all.

594 Lewis A. Coser’s Men of Ideas, a study of public intellectuals involved in the building of modern national identities, reveals a disproportionately high percentage of Jews numbering among the public intellectuals cited.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Literary works by Marcos Aguinis

Short stories


Biographies


Novels


Essays

Appendix 2: Articles by Marcos Aguinis

6) “Las ideas zombies que mantienen en el atraso a América latina,” *La Nación* (March 15, 2004).
26) “Crímen contra la humanidad,” *La Nación* (July 18, 2005).

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Aguinis/messages (accessed January 18, 2012). In addition to providing a collection of his own newspaper contributions through this personal website, Aguinis also provides interviews and articles about himself, as covered in the contemporary Argentine press.
28) “¿Galeano es culpable o inocente?” La Nación (August 3, 2005).
32) “Seducir a los musulmanes,” La Nación (September 22, 2005.)
33) “Deslumbrado en el gran museo,” La Nación (October 7, 2005).
37) “Golpes de sorpresa,” La Nación (December 2, 2005).
38) “Un telescopio indispensable,” La Nación (December 16, 2005).
41) “La historia más antigua del mundo,” La Nación (February 2, 2006).
42) “El embrollo palestino (I),” La Nación (February 6, 2006).
43) “El embrollo palestino (II),” La Nación (February 17, 2006).
44) “El embrollo palestino (III),” La Nación (February 24, 2006).
45) “El embrollo palestino (IV),” La Nación (March 4, 2006).
47) “Gracias, Sigmund,” La Nación (March 31, 2006).
53) “Salvar a el Salvador,” La Nación (July 14, 2006).
54) “Hezbollah, el factor confuso,” La Nación (July 14, 2006).
57) “Peregrinaje a Tanglewood,” La Nación (September 8, 2006).
60) “Africa pide perdón por sus esclavos,” La Nación (October 6, 2006).
62) “¿Qué piensan afuera de nosotros?” Revista Noticias (October 28, 2006).
64) “Chávez, modelo para armar,” La Nación (January 12, 2011).
68) “Misterioso socialismo del siglo XXI,” La Nación (March 9, 2007).
70) “Chocolate por la noticia,” La Nación (March 30, 2007).
80) “¿La presidencia es un bien ganancial?” *Revista Noticias* (July 14, 2007).
82) “Reportaje,” *Diario INFOBAE* (December 8, 2011).
84) “Sensación por el humor,” *La Nación* (September 24, 2007).
93) “¡Rían, los médicos aconsejan reír!” *La Nación* (January 11, 2008).
103) “Reflexiones en la ciudad de los muertos,” *La Nación* (June 6, 2008).
104) “Y el mundo sigue andando,” *La Nación* (July 4, 2008).
105) “Kirchner lo hizo (o el padre de la crisis),” *Revista Noticias* (July 5, 2008).
118) “Siento envidia de Israel,” Revista Noticias (February 7, 2010).
119) “Del hombre y de la bestia,” La Nación (February 20, 2009).
120) “Carta a la oposición,” Revista Noticias (February 28, 2009).
128) “La Argentina renga,” laNación.com (June 12, 2009).
129) “EL deber moral de la oposición,” laNación.com (June 29, 2009).
131) “¡Hambre cero, ya!” laNación.com (July 13, 2009).
133) “Mujer excluida…¡qué desperdicio!” La Nación (August 07, 2009).
137) “Cómplices de buena conciencia,” La Nación (September 18, 2009).
138) “Hacia el Perón de la madurez,” laNación.com (October 13, 2009).
141) “Se acercan las FARC,” laNación.com (November 12, 2009).
143) “Con Kirchner, me equivoqué,” laNación.com (December 10, 2009).
144) “‘Democracia puta’, impresionante editorial paraguayo,” laNación.com (January 12, 2010).
146) “Cuando un maestro se va,” laNación.com (February 18, 2010).
147) “Volcánico personaje de novela,” La Nación (March 06, 2010).
148) “Desprecio argentino por la ley,” laNación.com (March 12, 2010).
150) “Nik, bisturi del humor,” laNación.com (March 12, 2010).
152) “Ese maldito Israel,” La Nación (March 26, 2010).
154) “Del centro a la izquierda,” La Nación (May 21, 2010).
155) “Esperanzas argentinas,” laNación.com (June 18, 2010).
156) “Lo llaman ‘atrasismo’,” La Nación (July 02, 2010).
160) “Discépolo, un verdadero profeta,” La Nación (September 13, 2010).
161) “Fidel, el resucitado,” laNación.com (September 15, 2010).
163) “Las mentiras de los terroristas,” laNación.com (October 20, 2010).
165) “Con Kirchner era más fácil,” La Nación (October 08, 2010).
166) “La otra presidenta,” laNación.com (December 08, 2010).
168) “Quien siembra vientos...,’” Diario Perfil (December 12, 2010).
169) “Fiestas del espíritu,” La Nación (December 18, 2010).
170) “Invención del pueblo palestino,” Revista Coloquio online (December 28, 2010).
176) “Impactante deterioro educativo,” La Nación (June 14, 2011).
177) “Por fin, una política de Estado,” La Nación (June 28, 2011).
184) “Cuando de ambos lados se confunde a César con Dios,” La Nación (September 28, 2011).
185) “La maquinaria del populismo,” La Nación (October 12, 2011).
186) “Dos hemorragias que pueden frenarse,” La Nación (October 26, 2011).
Appendix 3: Scholarship on Marcos Aguinis


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