

POETRY, DOCTRINE AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CATHOLIC PRESS*

POESÍA, DOCTRINA Y SUBJETIVIDAD EN LA PRENSA CATÓLICA DE LA SEGUNDA MITAD DEL SIGLO XIX

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ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on the role played by poetry in the doctrinal and conservative context of the weekly newspaper *El Católico Argentino* (1874-1876), a forerunner in the consolidation of the Catholic press in Argentina. By studying how the aesthetic repertoire of the poetic pieces relates to the strong criticism of dominant liberalism and modernity in the newspaper's doctrinal pieces, the essay argues that poetry, via different strategies, appeals to the creation of a shared or communal reader subjectivity. This will stand as in contrast to the liberal subjectivity appealed to by the contemporary press of the time, which highlighted novelty and fashion.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo focaliza en el papel que jugó la poesía en el contexto doctrinal y conservador que ofrecía la revista semanal *El Católico Argentino* (1874-1876), precursora en la consolidación de la prensa católica en Argentina. A través del estudio de la relación entre el repertorio estético de los poemas y la fuerte crítica al liberalismo y a la modernidad en los artículos doctrinarios de la revista, este ensayo argumenta que la poesía buscaba la creación de una subjetividad lectora de carácter comunitario. Esta se presentará como alternativa a la subjetividad liberal a la que apelaba la prensa liberal del momento, promoviendo la novedad y la moda.

KEYWORDS

Argentina, poetry, press, modernity, liberalism, conservatism, Catholicism

PALABRAS CLAVE

Argentina, poesía, prensa periódica, modernidad, liberalismo, conservadurismo, catolicismo

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INTRODUCCIÓN

In the process of nationalization and the diversification of the press, publications in 1870s Buenos Aires displayed a variety of formats and contents. For example, modern newspapers such as *La Tribuna*, *La Prensa* and *La Nación*, coexisted with the first anarchistic newspapers, such as *Le Révolutionnaire* (1875-76) and *El Petróleo. Órgano de las últimas capas sociales y primeras blusas comunistas* (1875)¹. Thus, the press of the decade can be thought of as a stage on which to observe the tensions brought into play in the face of modernity. In his classic book on modernity, Julio Ramos refers to the field of intellectual power as “fluid and deterritorializing, [which] does not mean that networks and relations of domination [were] not established”². This fluidity is an expression of the tension between dominant, residual and emergent forces, as described by Raymond Williams in his classic discussion of the fundamental place of literature and art in society. Departing from the concept of hegemony, Williams argues that art and literature not only contribute to the articulation and reproduction of the dominant values and practices within a certain culture, but they also “embody residual meanings and values” and show the presence of “emergent practices and

meanings” in a struggle either to keep or to achieve dominant positions³.

In the literary and cultural coteries of late nineteenth-century Buenos Aires, there was a growing concern to consolidate a national literature⁴, although the form this should take would differ according to the group. The two associations that dominated the literary social circles of the decade were the *Círculo Científico Literario* (Literary Scientific Circle) and the *Academia de Ciencias y Letras* (Academy of Sciences and Letters), but while the members of the *Círculo* “adhered to a cosmopolitan cultural project, mostly European and, in particular, Francophile”⁵, the *Academia* “set itself the primary objective of configuring a cultural movement of a patriotic nature” and was interested in promoting “initiatives from various artistic and scientific manifestations, with related aesthetic concerns, and that would highlight the expression of national themes mainly inspired by the native tradition”⁶.

It is within this context that the strongly anti-liberal weekly newspaper *El Católico Argentino* emerged, though it also drew on other social contexts, including those of the parishes of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Santa Fe, where “the growth of pastoral structures took place at a pace that aimed to accompany the

¹ Claudia Román, “La prensa periódica. De la moda (1837–1838) a La patria argentina (1879–1885)”, in *Historia Crítica de La Literatura Argentina*. Vol. II. La lucha de los lenguajes, ed. Julio Schwartzman. (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2003), 439-467.

² Julio Ramos, *Divergent modernities: culture and politics in 19th century Latin America, post-contemporary interventions* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 118.

³ Raymond Williams, *Culture and materialism: selected essays, Radical Thinkers* (London: Verso, 2010), 45.

⁴ Sandra Gasparini, “El Círculo Científico Literario en la década de 1870. Polémicas y promesas durante la modernización”, in *Sociabilidades y vida cultural: Buenos Aires, 1860-1930*, ed. Paula Bruno and Martín Albornoz (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2014), 76.

⁵ Daniela Lauria, “La Academia Argentina de Ciencias y Letras (1873-1879): reflexiones en torno a su proyecto cultural”, in, Bruno and Bernal, *Sociabilidades y vida cultural...*, 92. All translations from Spanish are the author’s.

⁶ Lauria, “La Academia Argentina de Ciencias y Letras...”, 101-102.

vertiginous socio-economic development of the region”⁷. This was a moment when the Church was experiencing a notable expansion. As national institutions grew throughout the territories that had originally been home to native peoples, new parishes were founded and, as new contingents of immigrants arrived, particularly from Spain and Italy, new European congregations were also established, especially those from Spain and Italy⁸. The Catholic press in Argentina was only consolidated in the decade after the 1870s, when heated debates surrounding education, the Civil Registry⁹ and civil marriage led to a newfound cohesiveness; this period would be referred to by Di Stefano as “the laicist assault”¹⁰. *El Católico Argentino* was published between August 1, 1874 and February 12, 1876, under the archbishopric of Buenos Aires by Federico A. Aneiros (1873-1894), which makes it a forerunner of the more consolidated Catholic press.

My interest in this publication is that it aids us in understanding the role that poetry played in a strongly doctrinal and conservative—even reactionary—context, within the larger context constituted by the Argentine society of the moment. It is important to keep in mind that this was a society in which liberalism and the desire for modernity already occupied hegemonic positions. In an earlier article, I studied

literary texts published in the period from August 1, 1874 to February 27, 1875, observing that the authors published in *El Católico Argentino* were largely Spaniards; the publication was almost completely bereft of national (Argentine) authors. Considering that the spirit of the times called for creating a national literature, brushing aside the colonial period to a residual position and thus mitigating the importance of the Spanish literary tradition, *El Católico Argentino* seemed to be performing an inverse operation – turning itself into an emergent force by offering “a conservative present that imagined the quiet and unchangeable time of Christian globalization”¹¹.

In the present essay, I extend the scope of my findings by studying the publication as a whole. Here, my focus is to understand how the aesthetic repertoire of the newspaper’s poetic pieces relates to the strong criticism of liberalism and modernity put forward by the doctrinal articles with which they shared space. I propose that this repertoire, via different textual strategies, appeals to the creation of a shared or communal reader subjectivity: that is, the poems symbolically figure a subjectivity that stands in contrast to the liberal subjectivity that was appealed to by the press of the time, which focused on novelty and fashion¹².

⁷ Miranda Lida, “La prensa católica y sus lectores en la Argentina, 1880-1920”, *Tiempos de América* 13 (Castellón de la Plana 2006): 60.

⁸ Néstor Tomás Auza, “Población, inmigración y agentes pastorales en la Provincia de Buenos Aires, 1869-1914”, in *Iglesia e inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: CEMLA, 1997), 179-195.

⁹ Miranda Lida, “Algo más que un diario católico. La América del Sud (1876-1880)”, in *Prensa argentina en el siglo XIX. Imágenes, textos y contextos*, by Marcelo H. Garabedian, Sandra Szir, and Miranda Lida (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2009), 85.

¹⁰ Roberto Di Stefano, “Por una historia de la secularización y de la laicidad en la Argentina”, *Quinto Sol* 15/1 (Santa Rosa-La pampa 2011): 14. Laicization does not go all the way in Argentina, though. The State will keep trusting in religious congregations the care of the sick, the guard of prisoners and the evangelization of the indigenous people, among other things (Di Stefano, 17).

¹¹ Andrea Castro, “Estética y doctrina – el lugar de la literatura en *El Católico Argentino*”, in *Sensibilidades conservadoras. El debate cultural sobre la civilización en América Latina y España durante el siglo XIX*, ed. Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik (Iberoamericana; Vervuert, in press).

¹² According to Wolfgang Iser’s theory of aesthetic response, the literary text carries a set of reading instructions in the form of repertoires (allusions to literary tradition and to other extratextual norms) and textual strategies (the way the text is organized)

After introducing the newspaper and offering a general overview of the literary texts that are found in its pages, I examine two particular poems more closely, thus rehearsing a model that allows me to visualize the construction of reader subjectivity through topics and repertoires employed in the context of the newspaper.

EL CATÓLICO ARGENTINO

Not unlike the Chilean *El Estandarte Católico* (1874-1891), *El Católico Argentino* took “a confrontational and political” stand toward liberalism and modernity¹³. Both attended to the call of Pius IX to defend the Catholic faith. Through the encyclical *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus* (1864), the Pope called believers to combat:

“the nefarious enterprises of wicked men, who, like raging waves of the sea foaming out their own confusion, and promising liberty whereas they are the slaves of corruption, have striven by their deceptive opinions and most pernicious writings to raze the foundations of the Catholic religion and of civil society, to remove from among men all virtue and justice, to deprave persons, and especially inexperienced youth, to lead it into the snares of error, and at length to tear it from the bosom of the Catholic Church”¹⁴.

This encyclical was part of the process of Romanization implemented by Pope Pius IX “in order to consolidate the cohesion of the Church in the face of the nation-states and the influence of secularism.” This process led to the concentration of dogmatic, doctrinal and disciplinary power in the Pontiff and his Curia¹⁵. Dogmatic power rested on the *Pastor Æternus*, a document that established the dogma of papal infallibility, according to which the Pope, as supreme teacher, was free from error when teaching on matters of faith or morals¹⁶. According to Di Stefano and Zanata, the Argentine Catholic Church defended the spirit of Romanization more stridently than other national Churches in the region, opening up to the normativity coming from the Vatican, reducing the autonomy of the local parishes, and resisting the process of laicism¹⁷.

El Católico Argentino was administered by laymen, but served as the mouthpiece of the Archbishopric of Buenos Aires, at that time under the guidance of Federico A. Aneiros. According to the declaration of principles in the first issue of the magazine, on August 1, 1874, its goal was to:

“Spread the Catholic doctrine among the people and sustain this doctrine

that serve as a reading guide and will appeal to certain reader positions. In the context of a newspaper the literary texts do not stand alone and the interplay between them is significant. In their togetherness they will appeal to – or seek to create – certain kinds of reader subjectivity. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980).

¹³ Javier Muñoz Salas, “La imagen del liberalismo desde el diario *El Estandarte Católico* durante el gobierno de Aníbal Pinto Garmendia (1876-1881)”, *Universum* 27/2 (Talca 2012): 116.

¹⁴ Papal Encyclicals on line. *Quanta Cura*. Condemning currents errors. Pope Bl. Pius IX – 1864: <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9quanta.htm> (retrieved on 25 March 2020)

¹⁵ Roberto Di Stefano and Loris Zanata, *Historia de la Iglesia argentina: desde la conquista hasta fines del siglo XX*, 2nd edition (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009), 342.

¹⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Papal Infallibility”, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/papal-infallibility> (retrieved on 8 February 2020).

¹⁷ Di Stefano and Zanata, *Historia de la Iglesia argentina:...*, 343.

with all our strength until it is sealed with our own blood, if necessary.’ So strong is our conviction in the purity and in the truth of what the Church teaches us, and so diminished is our faith in everything that does not come from it [the Church], as the only source of true health; and in everything that she does not admit, nor approve, as the only *ex cathedra* of truth and wisdom! Every sacrifice seems too little to us and of no value in support of a unique doctrine and morality, which can keep man in the right limit of his rights and duties”¹⁸.

Publications contemporary with *El Católico Argentino*, such as *La Nación* and *La Prensa*, had established themselves as opinion makers; furthermore, by including advertisements, these papers were also less dependent on subscriptions. *El Católico Argentino*, on the other hand, was produced in more traditional ways, carried no illustrations, and was very much dependent on subscriptions. The format consisted of a “Doctrinal section” (*Sección doctrinal*), one of “Assorted News” (*Noticias varias*), a “Miscellaneous Section” (*Sección miscelánea*), a “Leisure Section” (*Sección recreativa*) and finally, one of “Parish notices, Works, etc.” (*Avisos parroquiales, obras, etc.*). In the articles of the “Doctrinal Section”, which occupied the first few pages, the magazine took a clear and passionate position against libe-

ralism in general and liberal Catholicism in particular. The “Miscellaneous” and “Recreational” sections ran poems, stories and other texts of—at least partly—literary character, such as chronicles, anecdotes, and parables.

Miranda Lida points out that the publication began as an ecclesiastical bulletin addressed to parish priests and clergymen of the archdiocese of Buenos Aires—which was founded in 1865¹⁹—which had expanded its range to other dioceses in the country and to the Catholic laity in the wake of the violent protests that took place in the Jesuit College of El Salvador in February 1875²⁰. However, from the very first article of the newspaper’s first issue, editors address their work directly “To the public”. Signed by “The Administrator, Cárlos Alou,” this first issue suggests the paper’s intention of reaching a wider audience:

“Given the increased expenses caused by a weekly publication of such nature as ours, we beg the Messrs. Priests, Lieutenants, all the secular and regular clergy, and the pious people of this capital, that they make it known to their friends, recommending it, if not for its literary importance, for its healthy influence on the morals and customs of all classes of society”²¹.

¹⁸ “Difundir en el pueblo la doctrina católica y sostener esta doctrina con todas nuestras fuerzas hasta sellarla con nuestra propia sangre, si necesario fuese. ¡Tanta es y tan firme nuestra convicción en la pureza y en la verdad de lo que nos enseña la Iglesia, y tan menguada nuestra fé en todo lo que de ella no dimana, como único manantial de verdadera salud; en todo lo que ella no admite, ni aprueba, como única catedra de verdad y de sabiduría! Todo sacrificio nos parece poco y de ningún valor en apoyo de una doctrina y de una moral únicas, que pueden mantener al hombre en el justo limite de sus derechos y de sus deberes.” La Redacción, “Una Palabra y Un Saludo”, *El Católico Argentino* 1 (Buenos Aires 1874): 1.

¹⁹ The archdiocese of Buenos Aires comprised the territories of what we now know as the provinces of Buenos Aires, La Pampa, El Chaco and the region of Patagonia. Lida, “Algo más que un diario católico...”, 96.

²⁰ On February 28, 1875, what started off as a peaceful protest against Archbishop Aneiros’ decision to hand over the Church of San Ignacio to the Jesuits transformed into violence some protesters attacked the Archbishop’s Palace with stones and ended up burning the Colegio del Salvador. This shook public opinion and occupied a central place in the press of the moment. Hilda Sabato, *La política en las calles: entre el voto y la movilización; Buenos Aires, 1862-1880*, Colección Historia y Cultura (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998).

²¹ “Atendidos los crecidos gastos que ocasiona un semanario de las condiciones del nuestro, suplicamos a los Sres. Curas Párrocos, Tenientes, á todo el clero secular y regular, y a las personas piadosas de esta capital, lo den á conocer á sus amigos, recomendándolo,

Pius IX had already pointed out that the press exerted notable influence on the masses²²; it is within this context that *El Católico Argentino* can be seen as a test-run for the use of the modern technology (the press) to disseminate its critique of Liberalism. However, as already suggested above, it did stick to more traditional technologies, and was thus unable to keep pace with larger and more modern periodical publications. What appears to be a short life span is less so if we take into consideration the continuation of the publication with *La América del Sud. Diario de la mañana, católico, político y de intereses*²³. The fact that this daily newspaper was announced in the final issues of *El Católico Argentino* and continued publishing instalments of a popular novel entitled *Las ruinas de mi convento. Novela histórica del piadoso literato español D. Fernando Patxot* (The ruins of my convent. Historical novel of the modest and pious Spanish writer D. Fernando Patxot) further supports this idea²⁴.

As mentioned above, within the framework of the political orientations of the moment, *El Católico Argentino* stands out for its markedly Spanish repertoire, which was situated in a different global context than what is usually thought of from a historiography focused on liberal

traditions. Another aspect that makes it stand out is that while the rest of the press was in the process of creating an intellectual field separate from the state, *El Católico Argentino*, although its name refers to an specific national community, resorted to a literary repertoire that, for the most part, was created outside the borders of this state and did not refer to national problems.

In her work on the *Diccionario de Argentinismos*, Daniela Lauria notes that, within the context of national literature, the mid-1870s were characterized by “a change in the liberal political orientation” which produced “a movement towards a traditionalist wing in relation to the processes of modernization that were beginning to develop in the country”²⁵. Finally, it was also during this time that “the figure of the gaucho and the rural life as an icon of tradition and a mythical past”²⁶ was revalued. *El Católico Argentino* was also strongly traditionalist, but, as will be seen, the traditions that it reassessed were of a Spanish and Christian nature.

Besides the national focus mentioned above, it is also necessary to bring to mind the “American conception of cultures, that were perceived as one unit or, if preferred, as a continuity the root of which is to be found in the indigenous

si no por su importancia literaria, por su saludable influencia en la moral y costumbres de todas las clases de la sociedad”. Carlos Alou, “Al Público”, *El Católico Argentino* 1 (Buenos Aires 1874): 1.

²² “And besides these things, you know very well, Venerable Brethren, that in these times the haters of truth and justice and most bitter enemies of our religion, deceiving the people and maliciously lying, disseminate sundry and other impious doctrines by means of pestilential books, pamphlets and newspapers dispersed over the whole world.” Pope Pius IX, “Quanta Cura”.
²³ La América del Sud was under the direction of both lay and clergy, among whom were the figures of Laureano Veres, a Galician priest who had migrated to Argentina after the 1868 Glorious Revolution, and the Argentine author Santiago Estrada. Lida, “Algo más que un diario católico...”, 92. Diego Castelfranco, “La América Del Sud (1876-1880) y las perspectivas católicas sobre el vínculo entre la ciencia y el catolicismo en la Buenos Aires de fines del siglo XIX”, *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana Dr. Emilio Ravignani*. Tercera serie, 47 (Buenos Aires 2017): 63-100.

²⁴ The novel, first published in Barcelona in 1851 and reprinted several times, was published in *El Católico Argentino* from January 1875.
²⁵ Lauria, “La Academia Argentina de Ciencias y Letras...”, 111-112.
²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

people that inhabit the soil”²⁷. This was first represented in a tradition of anthologizing poetry written by Spanish-American poets, initiated with the project *América Poética. Colección escogida de composiciones en verso, escritas por americanos en el presente siglo*, by the Argentinian Juan María Gutiérrez and the Chilean Santos Tornero in 1846. This anthology was reprinted in 1866-1867 and also, as Auza mentions, inspired a series of anthologies of similar character²⁸. In the introduction to *América Poética*, the editors expressed their intention to highlight the “harmony of thought” that, besides the “harmony that springs from the communities of religion and language”, exists among the peoples of the Americas. The editors emphasized a series of shared experiences on which they base the idea of a harmony of thought:

“In peoples that live remote from each other shines the flame of a common inspiration; a common love of the homeland, a common hope of improvement and aggrandisement, a common enthusiasm for the institutions born out of emancipation; a common enthralment by the unspoiled, lush and wonderful nature of the New World”²⁹.

As will be seen further on, this recently-started tradition would also pass unnoticed in the pages of *El Católico Argentino*.

LITERARY TEXTS IN *EL CATÓLICO ARGENTINO*

In the first period studied, i.e. August 1, 1874 to February 27, 1875, out of the forty-three literary texts collected in *El Católico Argentino*, thirty-four are poems, seven are short stories, parables and anecdotes, one is a drama and one is a novel – both of these final narratives being serialized pieces³⁰.

Out of the twenty-six authors to whose names these texts were ascribed, most of them (seventeen) are contemporary Spanish authors³¹; one is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; one is Damián de la Vega (XVII-XVIII Toledo); one is the French writer Luis Gaston Adrien de Ségur; three are names I have not been able to locate³²; two are sets of initials: P. R e I. LL. A; and one seems to be the name of a Catholic magazine from Copiapó, Chile³³.

In the period that follows, i.e. from March 6, 1875 to January 29, 1876, fifty-eight literary texts were published. Out of these, fifty-four are poems; two are novels in instalments; one, a story; and one, a poetic essay.

Out of the fifty authors of these texts, only four are repeated from the previous period (the poets Juan Arolas

²⁷ Nestor Auza, “‘América Poética’: primera antología americana”, *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 500 (Madrid 1992): 145.

²⁸ Auza, “‘América Poética’: primera antología...”, 150.

²⁹ “Al ver cómo en pueblos tan apartados luce la llama de una misma inspiración; el mismo amor por la patria, las mismas esperanzas de mejora y de engrandecimiento; igual entusiasmo por las instituciones nacidas de la emancipación; igual encanto ante la naturaleza virgen, lozana y maravillosa del Nuevo Mundo, creemos que no se podrá negar, que a más de aquella armonía que proviene de la comunidad de religión y de idioma, existe otra entre las Repúblicas Americanas, –la armonía del pensamiento.” Juan María Gutiérrez and Santos Tornero, eds., *América poética. Colección escogida de composiciones en verso, escritas por americanos en el presente siglo*. Parte lírica (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1846), v.

³⁰ “Teatro de los ciegos”, de D. Francisco Cutanda and the already mentioned Las ruinas de mi convento.

³¹ Antonio Arnao, Juan Arolas Bonet, Juan Manuel de Berriozábal, Fernán Caballero, Severo Catalina y del Amo, Josep Coll y Vehí, Francisco Cutanda, Josefa Esteves de G. del Canto, Gaspar Núñez de Arce, Fernando Patxot, Victorina Saenz de Tejada, María Concepción Saralegui de Cumiá, José Selgasy Carrasco, Narciso Serra, Ramón Torres Muñoz de Luna, Sebastián Trulloly Plana, José Zorrilla

³² Mercedes I. Rojas, Balaguer Crespi, Pascual Rincón.

³³ Castro, “Estética y doctrina – el lugar de la literatura en *El Católico Argentino*”.

Bonet, Josep Coll y Vehí, José Zorrilla, and Fernando Patxot, the author of the novel in instalments). With regard to genre, four of the texts are narratives, while the rest are poetry. Among the names I have been able to identify, most are Spanish authors³⁴, but they also include a Chilean author (Rosendo Carrasco y Jelves), a Cuban (Manuel J. Díaz y Cruz) and an Ecuadorian (Víctor Roselló). In the June 19, 1875 issue, dedicated “To the sovereign Pontiff Pius IX”³⁵, four members of the Argentinean Anchorena family write laudatory poems in Latin, Spanish, English and French³⁶. There are also seven acronyms, a “s. F.” (*sin firma*: no signature) and a pseudonym that I could not identify³⁷.

In the newspaper as a whole, no major changes can be observed between the first and second periods, neither with regard to literary genres nor to the authors that are published. In its entirety, a wide gallery of authors is presented to the readers. Poetry is the most represented genre by far; the repertoire of genres and poetic forms is also vast, although most of them take up religious, moral and social issues. Aesthetically, romantic and neoclassical

styles are to be found, and among these the variety ranges from more learned forms –such as the *silva* or the Italian octave– to more popular ones, such as the *redondillas* and other variations of octosyllabic verses.

It is important to keep in mind that *El Católico Argentino*'s doctrinal section did not refrain from directing powerful attacks against current local events, whether they were publications in the contemporary press –where, not unexpectedly, the anti-clerical newspaper *La Tribuna* stands out– or debates about education, secularization, etc.

The local event that occupied the most space in this section was undoubtedly the fire at the school El Salvador, because it went on to symbolize the maximum expression of the chaos created by the liberal press together with a government that did not know how to control it. For example, in an article that evinced particularly fiery language, a legislative draft was proposed that would mean, among other things, that the publication of *La Tribuna* would be “forever suppressed, as incompatible with the peace and order of the Republic”³⁸.

³⁴ For eg. Miguel Amat y Maestre (1837-1896); Patrocinio de Biedma (1858-1927), Felix Sardá y Salvany (1841-1916); el entonces muy popular Ventura Ruiz Aguilera (1820-1881); Cayetano Fernández (Cádiz 1820-Sevilla 1901); Juan Eugenio Hartzenbuch (1806-1880); Aurora Lista de Milbart (pseudonym of Luisa Torralba de Martí 1850-?)

³⁵ The whole dedication reads: “To the sovereign Pontiff Pius IX, to the august vicar of Jesus Christ to the venerable bishop of Rome and the entire Catholic world, to the universal doctor, to the pastor of the shepherds, to the immortal pontiff of the Immaculate, the Syllabus, the infallibility and the Vatican Council, the noble victim of liberalism and impiety, the legitimate sovereign of the pontifical states, the innocent, the kind, the apostolic and kind Pius the Great in the twentieth anniversary of his happy exaltation to the pontifical solitary Dedicate, Offer and Consecrate this number the Editorial Department.” “Al soberano Pontífice Pio IX, al augusto vicario de Jesucristo, al venerable obispo de Roma y de todo el mundo católico, al doctor universal, al pastor de los pastores, al inmortal pontífice de la Inmaculada, del Syllabus, de la infalibilidad y del Concilio Vaticano, a la noble víctima del liberalismo y de la impiedad, al legítimo soberano de los estados pontificios, al inocente, al bondadoso, al apostólico y amable Pio el Grande en el vigésimo nono aniversario de su feliz exaltación al solio pontificio Dedica, Ofrece y Consagra este número la Redacción.”

³⁶ “Pio Augustus Papæ IX”, Joannes Anchorena, filius (en latín); “Ruego por vos”, Nicolás María Anchorena (hijo); “Octave”, Estanslada Anchorena, (en inglés); “Quatrain”, Josefa Anchorena, (en francés) (*El Católico Argentino* 19 de junio de 1875, 752-753)

³⁷ The initials are: J.C.; V. R. A.; Z.; M. de V.; R; S. A.; E. G. B.; T. B; the pseudonym, “Una hija espiritual.”

³⁸ “para siempre suprimida la publicación de La Tribuna, como incompatible con la paz y el orden de la República.” El fanático cura de la campaña, “Los Jesuitas y La “Tribuna””, *El Católico Argentino*, 18 September 1875, 182.

This section also included a certain transnational space. For example, the murder of Ecuadorian President Gabriel García Moreno, in August 1875, took up space in several issues of the magazine in September of that year, as well as a study of New York mediums in three instalments, also in September of 1875. Finally, this section also included articles on Freemasonry, an organization that also maintained a strong transnational network which needed to be combated³⁹.

THE PERFORMATIVE POWER OF REPETITION

In order to delve into the different poetic repertoires included in *El Católico Argentino*, I will start by looking into a poem by Cayetano Fernández (1821-1901), a priest and poet from Cádiz. Fernández had also been a member of the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española) since 1871. Two of his poems are included in *El Católico Argentino*⁴⁰; my particular focus will be on one titled “El Siglo XIX y el Solitario” (“The 19th Century and the Loner”), an allegorical poem that was published on June 5, 1875⁴¹. Here, I read the poem as articulating a debate surrounding the idea of progress.

The poem is a *silva*, composed of hendecasyllabic and heptasyllabic verses with free consonant rhymes. This form,

of classical origin, assumed a central place in Spanish poetry beginning in the XVI and XVII centuries⁴². The long poem *Las soledades* (1613) by Luis de Góngora introduced innovations, appropriating the form into the Spanish tradition; later on, in *Primero sueño* (1692), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz gave another imposing example of how the form could be used for philosophical and allegorical reflection⁴³. The *silva* also played a foundational role in the literature of the new Spanish-American nations in the years following independence. Andrés Bello transformed or “translated” the metropolitan model both thematically and formally, creating an “Americanist *silva*” that reunited neo-classical and romantic stances⁴⁴. His long *silva Alocución a la poesía*, from 1833, had a privileged place as the opening poem of the aforementioned *América Poética*⁴⁵.

But let us turn back to “El Siglo XIX y el Solitario”, the intention of which is already established in the epigraph, which is written in Latin. In the epigraph, we hear the voice of Satan tempting Christ in the wilderness – words that serve as a guide to understand the structure of the poem’s dialogue between a personified ‘nineteenth century’ (“el siglo diez y nueve”), dressed up as a hunter, and an ‘old penitent’ (“viejo penitente”) who lives in the wilderness (“andurriales”). In the biblical account, Satan tests Jesus three

³⁹ Anónimo, “La Masonería, juzgada por los Protestantes”, *El Católico Argentino* 19 (Buenos Aires 1874).

⁴⁰ The other one is a shorter poem in redondillas (octosyllables with consonant rhyme abba), called “La Fe y las Obras” *El Católico Argentino* 76 (Buenos Aires 1876): 474.

⁴¹ Cayetano Fernández, “El Siglo XIX y el Solitario”, *El Católico Argentino* 45 (Buenos Aires 1875): 719.

⁴² Daniel Mesa Gancedo, “El poema extenso como institución cultural. Forma poética e identidad americana en Bello, Heredia y Echeverría”, *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica (NRFH)* 56/1 (Ciudad de México 2008): 91.

⁴³ Miguel Gomes, “Las silvas americanas de Andrés Bello: una relectura genológica”, *Hispanic Review* 66/2 (Philadelphia 1998): 185-186.

⁴⁴ Gomes, “Las silvas americanas de Andrés Bello...”, 193.

⁴⁵ Andrés Bello, “Alocución a la poesía. Colección escogida de composiciones en verso escritas por americanos en el presente siglo. Parte lírica”, in *América poética.*, ed. Juan María Gutiérrez and Santos Tormero (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1846), 11-16.

times. In the first two tests, Satan evinces his power; with the final test, he offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. In a similar way, “the nineteenth century” offers the old man a life of pleasure and to “enjoy the charms / Of [his] rare inventions and advances” (“gozar los encantos / De [sus] raros inventos y adelantos”). As Satan, “the nineteenth century” offers things in sets of three, presenting three amazing inventions of modernity: the use of gas for lighting, the use of steam for transportation, and the use of telegraphy for communication. The old man resists these temptations with a firm argumentation that undermines what the century offers, presenting the gifts as chimeras or false promises. In the end, frustrated with not being able to convince the old man, the “nineteenth century” shoots him to death.

“El siglo diez y nueve y el solitario” is, like the baroque *silvas*, an allegorical poem. Here, Fernández re-stages the biblical story of the temptation of Christ. The classical topic of the *beatus ille* is, in turn, characterized by the old penitent in his quiet life, threatened by the talkative and tempting “siglo diez y nueve”. Admittedly, this topic was also employed in some of the early Americanist *silvas*, such as for instance in Andrés Bello’s (1823). In that case, the innocent American nature was made the site of the *beatus ille*, while European greed appeared as a threat to it⁴⁶. Interestingly, in Cayetano

Fernández’s poem, the *beatus ille* is set in a religious landscape, and greed and violence are enacted by the “nineteenth century” dressed as a hunter and offering the old penitent a world of modernity and technical advances. In comparison with the American *silvas*, which seek to represent the American geography⁴⁷, “El siglo diez y nueve...” depicts a landscape that could belong anywhere: “wilderness” (*andurrial*), “scrubland” (*breñas*), a landscape that is recognizable by repetition.

In order to better understand the importance of recognition by repetition, let us turn to Bruno Latour’s reflections on the felicity conditions of different types of “activities that, in our cultures, are able to elicit truth”⁴⁸. Latour approaches religious discourse, asking himself what kind of truth condition this speech act presupposes, for the purpose of which he introduces the distinction between “information talk” and “transformation talk”. According to Latour, this latter type of speech act, within which he places religious discourse, differs from the former in its performative capacity: “when the latter is uttered, something happens”⁴⁹. It is a form of speech that, among other things, “seems to be able to shift the way space is inhabited and time flows”⁵⁰, creating closeness and presence through repetition and re-staging: “It is not what [is said] that is original, but the movement that renews the presence through the old sayings”⁵¹.

⁴⁶ Gomes, “Las silvas americanas de Andrés Bello...”, 188.

⁴⁷ Mesa Gancedo, “El poema extenso como institución cultural...”, 92.

⁴⁸ Bruno Latour, ““Thou shall not freeze-frame” or, how not to misunderstand the science and religion debate”, in *Science, religion and the human experience*, ed. James D. Proctor. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

Drawing on religious iconography, Latour refers to the central difference between “reproduction as the referential meaning of the world” and “reproduction, in the re-presentational sense of the world”⁵². Commenting on the faces of Christ, painted by Philippe de Champaigne in the mid-seventeenth century, he argues:

“Although this face seems to look back at us so plainly, it is even more hidden and veiled than the one God refused to reveal to Moses. To show *and to hide* is what true reproduction does [...]. But what is hidden is not a message beneath the first one, an esoteric message disguised in a banal message, but a tone, an injunction for you, the viewer, to redirect your attention and turn it away from the dead and back to the living”⁵³.

Latour’s proposal thus highlights the absence of a prototype—the absence of an origin—and, instead, the performative power of repetition.

I believe that this notion of representation is crucial for our understanding of the role of poetry in the doctrinal context of *El Católico Argentino*. That is, as noted above, the vast majority of the poems published resort to religious themes repertoires⁵⁴. In the particular case of Cayetano Fernández’s poem, the description of the landscape is deprived

of local colour and it is obvious that no efforts are made to depict it as part of the national or American territory, as, for instance, the tradition of the *América Poética* did⁵⁵. As a matter of fact, Cayetano Fernández is not even specifically writing for a Spanish-American or Argentine audience; he even places the scenery on Spanish soil, or, at least, away from the American continent, by making “el siglo diez y nueve” say:

“Just wait until you touch the wonders
Of my ELECTRIC WIRE!
Into its magical instant empire,
Before which there are no distances in the
[world,
If you have a friend back in the Americas
You can chat with him wonderfully
As if in a chimerical joke
The two of you will talk from chair
to chair”⁵⁶.

Added to the situating power of the epigraph, the utilization of words such as ‘wilderness’ and ‘scrubland’ makes the setting recognizable as a biblical one. This allows me to posit the pre-eminence of representation over referentiality, which opens up a kind of reading that not only re-stages the biblical story of Jesus in the wilderness, but also creates a transnational and ahistorical landscape in which the struggle against liberalism loses contingency and becomes global.

⁵² Latour, ““Thou shall not freeze-frame” or, how not to misunderstand...”, 42.

⁵³ *Idem*.

⁵⁴ Besides the large series of poems about the Virgin Mary and Santa Teresa de Jesús, there are two specific poems I would like to study more closely from this Latourian perspective, namely “La Resurrección,” by the Italian Alessandro Manzoni, translated by the Spanish Catholic journalist, José M. Quadrado (Alessandro Manzoni, “La Resurrección”, trans. José M. Quadrado, *El Católico Argentino* 35 (Buenos Aires 1875), and “La niña piadosa. Meditando durante la labor la pasión de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo” by an anonymous author (Anónimo, “La niña piadosa. Meditando durante la labor la pasión de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo”, *El Católico Argentino* 36 (Buenos Aires 1875):576.

⁵⁵ “Hemos preferido aquellas composiciones que tienen relación, por el asunto y por el colorido, con el genio, la índole y la naturaleza de nuestro continente, desechando las inspiraciones de la pasión en las luchas civiles y ahorrando, en lo posible, las exageraciones del entusiasmo en los himnos de triunfo nacional”. Gutiérrez and Tornero, eds., *América poética...*

⁵⁶ “¡Qué será, cuando toques los portentos / De mi ELÉCTRICO ALAMBRE! / A su mágico, imperio sin segundo, / Ante el cual no hay distancias en el mundo, / Si tienes un amigo allá en América, / Charlar puedes con él á maravilla, / Cual si en broma quimérica / Conversáseis los dos de silla á silla.” Cayetano Fernández, “El Siglo XIX y el Solitario”, *El Católico Argentino* 45 (Buenos Aires 1875): 719.

At the same time, a temporal tension structures the poem. By putting forward advances such as gas, steam and the telegraph, the hunter imposes the conception of the forward-moving time of modernity and places the old penitent as being stuck in the past. The old man, for his part, privileges the (immutable) virtues of faith (“the light of Faith”), hope (its “strength and power”) and charity (“to speak with [...] God from this ground”)⁵⁷ above and beyond the many nineteenth-century inventions. He places “divine laws” before the law of progress, which “advances as a crab does”⁵⁸. In this way, he regains a place in the present, while also stressing the perpetuation and stability of the divine laws, and reducing progress to being a mere fabrication⁵⁹.

At the end of the poem, the old man is shot by the irritated “siglo diez y nueve”:

“When the tired old man was done
The century, irritated
By such colossal truths
Pointing the evil barrel
He pierced [the old man’s] entrails
And the poor old man... fell at once:
He died for truth, he died in joy”⁶⁰.

With the murder of the old man, the poem gives aesthetic form to the cruelty of liberalism, changing the direction of the ferocity to which the hunter alludes at

the beginning of the poem, when he says:

“How is it possible that alone and without
[shelter
In this wilderness,
You want to live among fierce animals
When you could pleurably live with
me?”⁶¹.

In this way, the poem stages an idea of liberalism as a mendacious doctrine in line with Pius IX’s appeal, and consonant with the declaration of principles in the first issue of the newspaper:

“*Liberalism* is a universal evil that has become a chronic condition. It inspires all regions, where modern humanity can exercise its authority. *Liberalism*, justly condemned by the Holy See, is the political falsification of freedom; the source and essence of the *Revolution*”⁶².

However, unlike doctrinal texts, the poem, through the representation and re-staging of the biblical story, invites the reader to *experience* or *take part in* the problem, in a setting beyond the nation, placing it in the transnational space of Catholic globality. Ultimately, it is a temporary space that is thought of as permanent and stable. Instead of focusing on the building up of something new, as was the focus of the new national literatures, the poem focuses on the threat of an eternal world being destroyed, thus morally taking distance from the euphoria

⁵⁷ “la luz de la Fé”; su “fuerza y poder”; “[p]ara hablar con [...] Dios desde este suelo” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁵⁸ “adelanta lo mismo que el cangrejo”; “las leyes divinas” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁵⁹ “desatinas”, “no te cuadra el progreso ni en el nombre”, “Tu mentido adelanto”, “adelantas lo mismo que el cangrejo” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁶⁰ “Así termina el viejo, ya cansado, / Cuando el siglo irritado / Con verdades tamañas, / Apuntando el cañon endemoniado, / Pasó de un balazo las entrañas, / Y el anciano ¡infeliz!... cayó al momento: / Murió por la verdad, murió contento.” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁶¹ “Es posible que solo y sin abrigo / En estos andurriales, / Vivir quiera entre fieros animales / Pudiendo con placer vivir conmigo.” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁶² “El liberalismo es un mal universal y que ha pasado al estado crónico. Inficiona todas las regiones, donde la humanidad moderna puede ejercer su autoridad. El liberalismo, justamente condenado por la Santa sede, es la falsificación política de la libertad; la fuente y la esencia de la Revolución.” Anónimo, “La última trinchera del Liberalismo”, *El Católico Argentino* 21 Buenos Aires 1874): 325.

of novelty that came together with the faith in progress⁶³.

A COMMUNAL SUBJECTIVITY

This eternal world is also one that offers a shared or communal subjectivity. At the beginning of the poem, the “nineteenth century” poses an opposition between life “among fierce animals”⁶⁴ and the life of “pleasure” offered by modernity. As an answer to this, the old man argues that this life of pleasure, whose glories “are based on telegraphs and smoke,” is a life separated from communication with God and from divine laws. According to his argument, a distinction can be established between two divergent types of subjectivity. On the one hand, there is a liberal subjectivity – characterized by individual decisions, played out in action and desire, time for leisure in “cafes, [...] theatres and lounges,” the desire to travel “to remote countries”. And, on the other hand, there is a communal subjectivity – characterized by contemplation, and whose path “reaches heaven” and can already be traced⁶⁵. The latter is the subjectivity of the flock of sheep that walk through the wilderness, cared for by the shepherd (remember Pius IX as “Pastor of the shepherds”), but always threatened by “fierce animals”. As already suggested,

the poem cleverly lets the “the nineteenth century” be right about one thing, since he turns out to actually *be* the fierce animal that is lurking in the wilderness, first by threatening and then, finally killing the old man.

Michel Foucault reflects on pastoral power as a kind of relationship between God and his people, introduced in the Western world by the Christian Church⁶⁶. The power of the shepherd – in the case of this period of pontifical infallibility, the Pope – is both a collective and an individualizing power: “*omnis et singulatis*”, i.e. “the shepherd directs the whole flock, but he can only really direct it insofar as not a single sheep escapes him”⁶⁷. The pastor guides his flock to salvation, prescribes the law and teaches truth. He must answer for the salvation of each and every one: “at the end of the day, at the end of life in the World, the Christian shepherd, the Christian pastor, will of course have to account for every sheep”⁶⁸. In this context, the murder of one constitutes the murder of all. In the case of the poem, the murder of the old penitent dramatizes the potential effects of liberalism in not “defending and vindicating with the august Catholic Religion the privileges of truth and of justice”⁶⁹. Arguably, the poem seeks to reach its readers not only through recognition, but also through fear –namely, the fear of destruction.

⁶³ About the enthusiasm of novelty see Víctor Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América. Prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX* (La Habana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2016)

⁶⁴ “entre fieros animales” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁶⁵ “[s]e fundan en telégrafos y en humo”, “cafés, [...] teatros y salones”, “a país remoto”, “que al cielo alcanza” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Security, territory, population: lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 129.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶⁹ Pope Pius IX, “Quanta Cura”.

Nevertheless, the poem does not seem to target a wide audience. Rather, it appeals to a cultured audience, given, on the one hand, the *silva* as a learned poetical form, and, on the other, the fact that the voice of the old man – who loses his life while morally winning the dispute – is clearly distinguished from “the masses”⁷⁰. In fact, unlike the old man, “the masses” are easily fooled by the modernity of “the nineteenth century” (“Well, if in this, like a madman, you rave, / Although the masses be amazed, / You will not fit in with progress, not even by the name”).

Similar themes are dealt with in another poem found in *El Católico Argentino*, even if it adopts a very different tone. “The century of the lights ... off” (“El siglo de las luces... apagadas”)⁷¹, signed with two initials that I have yet to identify, is composed of nine stanzas of eight pentasyllable verses – a more popular type of stanza than the *silva*– with assonant rhyme in the even verses.

As the title suggests, the poem has a humorous tone and, although there are several references to Christian morals (“eternal God”, “looks up to heaven”, “virtue”, “ungodly century”), there are no explicit references to a biblical repertoire; that is, there is no representation or re-staging of stories or characters. Taking into account all these aspects, the poem seems intended to appeal to a less learned reader. In contrast with Cayetano Fernández’s poem, we do not observe here a highly-

placed subject that looks down on the easily-fooled masses, but rather a poetic self that, by employing the grammatical first person (switching between the plural and the singular), involves each of its readers against a common enemy: the nineteenth century. For example, in the fourth stanza the poetic voice is part of a ‘we’:

“Never before
has history seen
an evil century
like ours.

What awaits us...?
What will we leave
To our children...?
Disgust and disdain”⁷².

But towards the end of the poem, the first person takes the lead, offering an identification between the poetic voice and the individual reader. For instance, in the seventh stanza:

“Damn you,
Ill-fated century;
Your blinding light
I abhor;
Your evil science
I loathe;
I seek another science (knowledge)
I seek another light”⁷³.

In spite of the differences from the more learned “El siglo diez y nueve y el solitario”, we can observe that “El siglo de las luces... apagadas” makes use of similar figures and imagery, figures and imagery that they both share with the more doctrinal texts in *El Católico Argentino* and in similar contemporary publications.

⁷⁰ “el vulgo” Fernández, “El Siglo XIX...”, 719.

⁷¹ T. B., “El siglo de las luces... apagadas”, *El Católico Argentino* 62 (Buenos Aires 1875): 218.

⁷² “Nunca en la historia / Se ha visto ejemplo / De un siglo impío / Como es el nuestro. / ¿Qué nos espera...? / ¿Qué legaremos / A nuestros hijos...? / Asco y desprecio.” T. B., 218.

⁷³ “Maldito seas, / Siglo funesto, / Túluz que ciega, / Yo la detesto, / Tu ciencia impía, / Yo la aborrezco, / Otra es la ciencia, / Y otra luz quiero.” T. B., 218.

In his article about the image of liberalism in the Chilean newspaper *El Estandarte Católico* (1876-1881), Javier Muñoz Salas describes five principles around which the image of liberalism is structured, in this publication on the other side of the Andes that shares the same struggle as *El Católico Argentino* and its successor, *La América del Sud*. These principles are that liberalism:

- a. Is the greatest possible threat to the Church,
- b. Is a paradox – to which I would like to add the oxymoron and the antithesis, two related figures that link the poem to the aesthetic of the Spanish baroque,
- c. Is an error and prelude for moral disorder,
- d. Is seduction,
- e. Is Evil⁷⁴.

Bearing in mind that *El Estandarte Católico* had a longer life span than *El Católico Argentino*, extending beyond the death of Pius IX in February 1878⁷⁵, and that the political situation in Chile and Argentina were different⁷⁶, the principles described by Muñoz Salas are also recognizable in the *El Católico Argentino* in general and in the poems studied here in particular.

As already seen, liberalism as a threat and as Evil appears, for example, in the fourth stanza of “El siglo de las luces... apagadas”, quoted above, and

in the personification of the nineteenth century, who carries a gun and finally uses it to kill the defenceless old penitent in Cayetano Fernández’s poem. The figure of the paradox is used to create a comic effect in the title of the second poem, “The century of the lights... off”, or in “If light, it is only / Light from hell”; “Virtue is farce, / Boldness is merit”⁷⁷. In this same poem, there are examples of oxymorons, as in the “blinding light” and perhaps also in the “evil science” of the ninth stanza, quoted above, “Who loses faith / Lives dying”⁷⁸. Examples of antithesis are also found:

“After pleasure
We keep running,
Pleasure that masks
Deadly venom”⁷⁹.

Liberalism as error and prelude to moral disorder finds expression in the *silva*, as used by the old penitent to disarm the arguments of the “siglo diez y nueve”:

“¿Does not the spirit govern man?
¿Doesn't he have moral divine laws?
Well, if this, as a madman, you ignore,
Although the masses be amazed,
You will not fit in with progress, not
even in the name”⁸⁰.

Also emblematic of the principle of liberalism as seduction is the presence of the masses, who are fooled by the ideas of modernity and progress.

⁷⁴ Muñoz Salas, “La imagen del liberalismo...”, 123–133.

⁷⁵ Muñoz Salas identifies this date as one in which “the struggle acquires transcendental taints, attributing the blame of all suffering and the fruit of all evil spirits to Liberalism”, 123.

⁷⁶ Chile, for eg., witnessed the first National Convention of the Conservative Party, which took place in December 1878, its programme being very close to the anti-liberal programme of the Catholic Church. Muñoz Salas, 134. See also Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, Partido Conservador: https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/partidos_politicos/wiki/Partido_Conservador (retrieved on 25 March 2020).

⁷⁷ “Si hay luz, es solo / Luz del infierno”; “Virtud es farsa, / Audacia es mérito” T. B., 218.

⁷⁸ “Quien la fe pierde / Vive muriendo” T. B., 218.

⁷⁹ “Tras de los goces / Vamos corriendo, / Goces que encierran / Mortal veneno.” T. B., 218.

⁸⁰ “¿Qué! ¿no reina un espíritu en el hombre? / ¿No tiene la moral leyes divinas? / Pues si en esto, cual loco, desatinas, / Aunque el vulgo se asombre, / No te cuadra el progreso ni en el nombre.” T. B., 218.

By giving aesthetic form to these principles, the poems contribute to an identification of the reader with the struggle of the newspaper, which is also the struggle of the Catholic Church under the pastoral power of Pious IX.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In one of his works on Baudelaire and his time, Walter Benjamin reflects on the effect of an “increasing atrophy of the experience”⁸¹ produced by the periodic press, and explains it as an intentional objective to:

“isolate what happens from the realm in which it could affect the experience of the reader. The principles of journalistic information (freshness of the news, brevity, comprehensibility, and, above all, lack of connection between the individual news items) contribute as much to this as does the make-up of the pages and paper’s style. [...] Another reason for the isolation of information from experience is that the former does not enter ‘tradition’⁸².”

As an antithesis to this kind of alienation caused by “information”, Benjamin proposes literature, taking as primary examples the works of Marcel Proust and of Charles Baudelaire. “It is not the object of the story to convey a happening *per se*, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life

of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening.” From this, “one of the oldest forms of communication”⁸³, Benjamin will develop his thesis on how Baudelaire’s poetry elaborates the experience of shock in the face of the “sensation of the modern age”⁸⁴.

El Católico Argentino also expresses, through its texts – both doctrinal and literary – modernity’s capacity to shock; but one far from the individual experience that Baudelaire describes:

“Lost in this mean world, jostled by the crowd, I am like a weary man whose eye, looking backwards, into the depths of years, sees nothing but a tempest which contains nothing new, neither instruction nor pain”⁸⁵.

On the contrary, *El Católico Argentino*, guided by the “infallible” direction of Pius IX, seeks to fill the emptiness of modernity by re-staging and recreating feelings, teachings and stories of the Catholic tradition, a transnational tradition with clear claims of exclusivity offering the “only source of true health” and the “only podium of truth and wisdom”⁸⁶.

Arguably, poetry in *El Católico Argentino* appealed to the intimacy of the individual – to a private axis that would defy the public axis of liberalism⁸⁷ – offering an experience of community that, as an emergent force, counteracted both the national community created by the national state⁸⁸

⁸¹ Walter Benjamin, “Some motifs in Baudelaire”, in *Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Harry Zohn (London & New York: Verso, 1997), 113.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 112.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Benjamin, 153-154.

⁸⁶ “verdadera salud”; “única catedra de verdad y de sabiduría”. La Redacción, “Una palabra y un saludo”, *El Católico Argentino*, (Buenos Aires 1874): 1.

⁸⁷ Muñoz Salas, “La imagen del liberalismo...”, 135.

⁸⁸ “Así lo íntimo, lo particular, el individuo empezará a constituirse como el nicho legítimo de la Iglesia y por ende el Estado como contrapartida.” Muñoz Salas, “La imagen del liberalismo...”, 135.

and the regional community created by the series of anthologies inaugurated by the first *América Poética*. By these means, the subordination of subjectivity to the ideas of eternal and global law and truth effectively counteract the possibility of a liberal subjectivity closely linked to the national – and regional – territories.

As a matter of fact, laicism did not lead to a separation between church and state in Argentina, as it did, for example, in Brazil in 1889, in France in 1905 or in Mexico in 1917⁸⁹. *El Católico Argentino* was far from being the only agent in the struggle against the advances of liberalism. Nevertheless, considering that it established a platform for the Catholic press, and for a literary tradition that had lost relevance in the variegated landscape of the modern press, its significance should not be underestimated.

THE STUDIED POEMS IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

El siglo XIX y el solitario

Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adora-
veris me.

(MTTH. v. 9.)

Subiendo montes y saltando peñas
El siglo diez y nueve iba cazando
(Con su cañon rayado por mas señas)
Cuando oculto entre breñas,
Vió al umbral de su asilo venerando.
Un viejo penitente,
Que á la sazón oraba,
Y perdon para el siglo demandaba.
Al ver el cazador tan raro ente,
En sus tiempos sin fé desconocido,
Quedó sobrecogido:
Y mas bien que tirar y herir la presa,
Quiso astuto cazarla por sorpresa.
Así fué que, pidiendo mil perdones,
Y tomando elegantes proporciones,
Se le acerca, y le dice: –«Buen amigo,
Es posible que solo y sin abrigo
En estos andurriales,
Vivir quiera entre fieros animales,
Pudiendo con placer vivir conmigo,
Y gozar los encantos
De mis raros inventos y adelantos?» –
–«¡Adelantos, decís! (responde el viejo)
Mostrádmelos, señor, si no os aburre;
Aunque bien se me ocurre
Que son los adelantos del cangrejo.»–
.....Y entra el siglo charlando por los
codos:

⁸⁹ Roberto Di Stefano, "Por una historia de la secularización y de la laicidad en la Argentina...", 16.

– «El mas ruin de todos
 Es el Gas, del que saco luz tan bella
 Que ilumino con ella
 Mis ricas poblaciones,
 Los cafes, los teatros y salones,
 Derramando en la noche la alegría,
 Cual si estuviera el sol en mediodia.
 Sigue luego el vapor, que, comprimido
 En mis locomotoras,
 Màquinas voladoras,
 Arrebato, anunciàndolo el silbido,
 En su alìgero carro á país remoto.
 ¡Qué poder! no es verdad? Ya tienes hambre
 De admirar mis inventos;
 ¡Qué será, cuando toques los portentos
 De mi ELÉCTRICO ALAMBRE!
 A su mágico, imperio sin segundo, _
 Ante el cual no hay distancias en el
 mundo,
 Si tienes un amigo allá en América,
 Charlar puedes con él á maravilla,
 Cual si en broma quimérica
 Conversáseis los dos de silla á silla.
 Conque ¡ven sin demoras!
 De todo gozaras, si al fin me adoras.»—
 —«¡Basta ya, tentador! Si todo es eso
 (Replicó el buen anciano inalterable)
 Voy ¡Oh Siglo! A mostrarte el retroceso
 Que ese mundo variable
 Sufre hoy apesar de tu progreso.
 Otra luz mas radiante
 Que la luz de tu gas tan ponderado
 Tuvo el mundo en un tiempo ya pasado:
 Y esa luz penetrante,
 De que el hombre sacó mas ricos bienes
 Es la luz de la Fé que tu no tienes.
 Ni tampoco el vapor se conocia,
 Que hoy arrastra viajeros y quintales;
 Mas el hombre tiraba de sus males
 Con cristiana alegría,
 Y mas veloz corria
 Por la senda feliz que al cielo alcanza,

Con la fuerza y poder de la Esperanza.
 Y en defecto de màquinas parlantes
 Para hablar con los pueblos más distantes
 Tuvo la Caridad, hija del cielo,
 Para hablar con su Dios desde este suelo.
 ¡Qué! ¿no reina un espíritu en el hombre?
 ¿No tiene la moral leyes divinas?
 Pues si en esto, cual loco, desatinas,
 Aunque el vulgo se asombre,
 No te cuadra el progreso, ni en el nombre.
 Y si todas tus glorias, cual presumo,
 Se fundan en telégrafos y en humo,
 Y el espíritu gime en la miseria;
 Tu mentido adelanto
 Del de siglos mejores dista tanto
 Cuanto distan el alma y la materia.
 Y con esto probado ya te dejo
 Que adelantas lo mismo que el cangrejo.»—
 Asi termina el viejo, ya cansado,
 Cuando el siglo irritado
 Con verdades tamañas,
 Apuntando el cañon endemoniado,
 Pasóle de un balazo las entrañas,
 Y el anciano ¡infeliz! . . . cayó al momento:
 Murió por la verdad, murió contento.
 Desde entónces, a todo el que se empeña
 En probarme que el mundo va adelante
 Cuando misero y loco se despeña,
 Yo respondo al instante
 Lo que aquel sabio viejo:
 ¡Adelante! lo mismo que el cangrejo.

Cayetano Fernández.

El siglo de las luces... apagadas

¡Qué siglo es este,
Oh Dios eterno!
Nadie levanta
La vista al cielo,
De donde emana
Todo lo bueno,
Do solo tiene
La virtud premio.

—
Todos se fijan
En lo terreno,
Que es humo solo
Que lleva el viento.
Tras de los goces
Vamos corriendo,
Goces que encierran
Mortal veneno;

—
Va en torbellino
Todo revuelto,
La desvergüenza
Suple al talento;
Virtud es farsa,
Audacia es mérito,
Y hasta á Dios guerra
Declaró un ... nécio.

—
Nunca en la historia
Se ha visto ejemplo
De un siglo impío
Como es el nuestro.
¿Qué nos espera...?
¿Qué legaremos
A nuestros hijos...?
Asco y desprecio.

—
De la luz siglo
Llaman á eso,
Sarcasmo horrible

Que bien comprendo:
¿Dónde está ella
Que no la veo?
Si hay luz, es solo
Luz del infierno.

—
Libertad quiere,
Ama el progreso,
Y á viva fuerza
Lo va extendiendo:
Tala los campos,
Arrasa pueblos,
Quema ciudades,
Derriba templos.

—
Maldito seas,
Siglo funesto;
Tú luz que ciega
Yo la detesto;
Tú ciencia impía
Yo la aborrezco;
Otra es la ciencia,
Y otra luz quiero.

—
Sufre quien duda
Martirio fiero,
Quien la fe pierde
Vive muriendo;
¡Desventurados!
No hallan sosiego,
Lloran con sangre
Lo que perdieron!

—
Aleccionado
Con el ejemplo
Que ante mis ojos
Presente tengo,
Antes que dude,
La muerte quiero;
Que ha de ser dulce
Morir creyendo.
T. B.

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