MAFALDA AS A SITE OF REFUGE: QUINO’S COMIC, STATE REPRESSION, AND AUDIENCES IN ARGENTINA SINCE 1964

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Interdisciplinary Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

September 2018

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Argentina since 1964

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Abstract

My dissertation explores the ways in which Quino’s Argentine comic Mafalda functions as a site of refuge to Argentine audiences in three periods: from the birth of Mafalda to Quino’s last strip 1964-1973, the preamble to and during the dictatorship 1973-1983, and following the return to democracy in 1983. In my investigation of Mafalda as a site of refuge, via my examination of the changes in the editions of Mafalda compilations by Ediciones de la Flor in Buenos Aires allows, I arrive at a vision of who these audiences are, and what that shows about the evolution of Mafalda as a site of refuge.

I begin with contextualizing the birth of this comic in the sociopolitical history of Argentina with special emphasis on the themes of authoritarianism, censorship, and repression that characterize the cultural experience of the region. In the following chapters I analyze the different functions Mafalda rapidly acquired within Argentine culture, and how this comic denouncing and protesting against injustice and the tireless tug of war between the weak and the powerful is based on the relationship that develops between reader and author. Further, my project shows that Quino, through Mafalda, treats important issues that are both local and universal, thus making this comic strip as valid and current today as it was in the 1960s and 1970s. I examine the ways in which the characters and plots in Mafalda represent facets of Argentina’s social, cultural, and political truth of the sixties and seventies, concluding that they add to Mafalda the function of reporting witness of that era, and that this function justifies this comic to be regarded as primary source when studying cultural history of Argentina.
further conclude that this function, together with the strip’s cosmopolitan nature, propelled *Mafalda* to transcend cultural barriers of time and space.

I analyze select strips that illustrate those discussions, some in the main body when this does not obstruct flow, and others, by themes—such as the middle class, poverty, racism, the role of women, and war—in the appendices located in the end of the dissertation.
Lay Summary

This project’s focus is to show the ways in which three Argentine audiences found solace in the comic *Mafalda* by Quino in Argentina in the context of state repression in a free space I call site of refuge: first, from the birth of the comic in 1964 to the last strip in 1973; second, from the preamble to and during the last Argentine dictatorship 1973-1983, and third, following the return to democracy in 1983. I investigate the evolution of *Mafalda* as a site of refuge to its audiences in Argentina through analysis of select comic strips, as well as of different editions of *Mafalda* compilations by Ediciones de la Flor in Buenos Aires.
Preface

Ethics Certificate obtained on June 16, 2015 from the University of British Columbia Okanagan, the Panel on Research Ethics, Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB): *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

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Acknowledgements

“Caminante no hay camino
se hace camino al andar”

(“Wanderer, there is no path
the path is made by walking”)

Antonio Machado

When I began this project, I did not anticipate the enormous support and encouragement that was to come my way, and the many people who contributed, in so many ways, to its completion.

It is a very easy task to acknowledge and thank the good and great people in my life—human and canine—for the love, strength, and supportive guidance they have tirelessly provided, for serving as my role models to draw from when needed, for the inspiration, for the laughter, friendship, and companionship, for the intellectual stimulus and healing exchange, for their humanity, for caring, and most importantly, for the unconditional loyalty and pure interest in my wellbeing.

It was a challenge, however, to accept the need to equally acknowledge and thank the less kind ones—only human—for through their shortcomings I learned that I do not chip easily, and that I can persevere so much better than I ever knew.

I am so very grateful to my academic committee, sometimes one member, sometimes another, sometimes behind the scenes, always good advice. To Dr. Jessica Stites-Mor, I cannot begin to express my gratitude. Thank you so much for your sheer excellence and professionalism, for your expert advice, for always being there, for listening, for your time and energy, for the words of encouragement, for your passion, and for everything else! To Dr. Martin Blum, for the endless hours of productive
conversation, for your enthusiasm, and for allowing me to practice my German, vielen
dank. Dr. Bernard Schulz-Cruz, for always saying it as you see it, and for the
opportunity to present my work to your Latin American culture class, muchas gracias.
To Dr. Ricardo Trumper, for your guidance and support, and the coffees, muchas
gracias. To Dr. Grisel García Pérez, thank you for your excellent teaching. A very warm
thanks to our librarians, especially Jan Gatrell, Diane Stoliker, and Lori Walter, who
always made time for me, dug up material from the most aphotic spots possible for my
research, and guided me through copyright and obtaining permissions. To Dr. Ben
Nilson, Dr. Ruth Frost, Dr. Kristen Hopewell, Dr. Cristina Senn, and Regina Gayou-Tom,
it was an absolute pleasure to work with you. I learned so much from you all. To my
peers, especially Bethany Wade and Alexandria Krause, for the friendship and support,
and the talks about theory.

To the College of Graduate Studies of the University of British Columbia
Okanagan for the generous Graduate Fellowships that helped me on my academic
path. Special thanks to Rob Donald from the Skills Connect for Immigrants Program at
the North Okanagan Employment Enhancement Society NOEES for the sponsorship,
and for going the extra mile. I extend my warm appreciation to Linda Scotton, who made
my trip to Buenos Aires possible to conduct interviews and archive work.

To my extended family on both sides of the Riverplate—Buenos Aires and
Montevideo—I cannot thank you enough for your infinite hospitality; to my cousin
Gabriel Bursztyn, a special thanks for accepting my quirks—we do share most of them
after all—for organizing drivers for me every day, for your beautiful company. To Daniel
Divinsky, who offered me his time and opened the doors of Ediciones de la Flor in
Buenos Aires for me to conduct my research, and for answering my many questions. To
the staff of Ediciones de la Flor, especially to Jorgelina and Adrián for their assistance,
patience, and for the extra post-its, thank you.

To Cristina, the warmest of thanks for your beautiful friendship and
unconditional support, and for always making me laugh with that extraordinary sharp wit
I so admire. To Sarah, a very big thank you for reminding me that all my ideas are
available to me, and that they are “only a thought away” when I felt stuck.

But none of this would have been possible without my family: my wonderful
husband, Paul, who so many times took care of logistics so that I could write, among
the other million things you had to do, thank you for always believing in me, and for
tolerating my books everywhere, and my children: Liam, my calm voice of reason;
Noah, my creative scientist and emotional rock; Brendan, always happy and helpful;
Gabriella, the singing mathematician, and David, my engineer-mathematician-
philosopher-drummer, lover of the universe. To all my dogs, both here on earth and in
heaven: Cactus, aka Katty, the wise; Deanna, the ultimate loyal bodyguard; Tiger, made
of pure love, and Crystal, made out of goodness. I love you all. A very big smile of
appreciation to my garden for its beauty and the moments of peace that allowed me to
breath, find inspiration, and charge my batteries when I felt depleted or out of sources.

A special mention to my brother, Dr. Enrique Poradosú, for always being my role
model for excellence, and for the precious advice infused with that genius humor so
unique to you. It meant the world to me.

Finally, to my parents z’l, because you showed me—every day—what real love,
respect, and appreciation feel like, and because you were always right. I could not have
been more fortunate than have you as my parents. I know you walk with me, because you live in me, and in my children.
Dedication

To my parents,
~ Griselda y Gregorio, Gregorio y Griselda ~
because they were always right
Chapter 1- Introduction

Bearing witness to the sociopolitical realities of the 1960s and 1970s, the Argentine comic strip *Mafalda* speaks to the unrest and state violence of the time in the form of a precocious little girl who asks her parents hard questions of universal magnitude. Hanging out around the neighborhood with her gang, a group of friends who represent different facets of human character and nature, as well as of Argentine society, Mafalda, as the central character of the artwork by the same name, *Mafalda*,\(^1\) becomes the centerpiece of a work of social critique and art that was able to move mountains from the space of a weekly comic panel.\(^2\)

Existing research on the subject of this comic strip emerges from a variety of fields and perspectives, yielding material that varies greatly on multiple fronts, resulting in both lack of cohesiveness as well as lack of accessibility. These variations in depth, style, and language are related to the specific disciplinary fields of inquiry, the type of work in question, and the language in which it was conducted and written, which naturally includes the culture of the authors and that of their target audience. My work brings much needed cohesiveness in the overlapping topics of *Mafalda*’s influence, role, and power—on the one hand—and denunciation, protest, and refuge on the other, both studied in the Argentine context. In this dissertation, I broaden the scope of the existing research by marrying the existing relevant material to my own contribution to the body

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\(^1\) Henceforth, by “Mafalda” I will refer to the character, and by its italicized form, “*Mafalda*”, to the comic strip as a whole.

\(^2\) *Mafalda*’s debut was in September 1964 in Buenos Aires’ *Primera Plana*, where the strip was published for only six months due to copyright disagreements. Quino then moved the strip to newspaper *El Mundo*, where it was to stay for the next three years until its final move to *Siete Días Ilustrados*, where it remained until the very last strip in 1973. Compilations started being published by *Ediciones de la Flor* in Buenos Aires in 1970, and they are still running. For more refer to Chapter 3 under section “The Audience: the Birth of *Mafalda* and its Readership.”
of work with new material in the form of personal interviews I conducted in Buenos Aires with Daniel Divinsky, Quino’s\(^3\) publisher since 1970, and the addition of insights to the broad topics represented in and by *Mafalda*, with a focus on the relationship between *Mafalda* and Quino with both their contemporaneous Argentine audience and with audiences since.

Existing work on *Mafalda* spreads across the realms of sociological inquiry, political science, communication and media studies, as well as cultural history and comic studies. Scholarly research generally tends to present points on *Mafalda* as part of a wider study on comics under different disciplines such as comics studies or political history of Argentina. Research in these disciplines that does not touch *Mafalda* specifically is at times still very much applicable to different aspects of this comic. The present research facilitates the study and investigation of *Mafalda*’s fanning out multiple and complex angles by providing cohesion—both in content and language—depth, and new insights into the way in which the relationship between *Mafalda*—with Quino—and members of its audience catapulted this precocious little girl and her neighborhood friends into the status of international icon that transcends temporal and political boundaries both across time and political borders, thus making this comic strip as current today as it was when originally published in the 1960’s and 1970’s. These insights are to also serve as basis for further future inquiry into the understanding of the *Mafalda* phenomenon and its influence on Argentine culture and history.

In this study, I examine the themes Quino treats in his iconic classic and how this treatment affects the bond between this comic strip characters, their creator, and the

\(^3\) Joaquín Salvador Lavado Tejón, aka, Quino
readership across geopolitical borders and sociocultural boundaries from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. In addition, I investigate the comic’s influence and transcendence, its authority and power in its “conversation” with the Argentine public 1964-1976, and then again from 1983 to the present, while all along teasing dangerous authoritarian governments and their censorship by highlighting the tireless tug of war between the weak and the powerful as the strip’s sales sky rocketed decade after decade. The focal discussions of this work revolve around identifying the readership, the effects of censorship and resistance, the true meaning of soup, as well as the theoretical and philosophical discussions of the cosmopolitan nature of the comic and its authority as a witness, and, consequently, as an historical source for research. The main focus of this dissertation considers those points in the context of the relationship that develops between Quino and his readers across time, guided by specific focus questions such as: What kind of identification process took place between members of its audience and Mafalda and why? What is Mafalda’s influence in Argentina and how does it manifest itself? What is the relationship between that influence and Mafalda’s power and authority, and how did that affect her transcendence? Why does Mafalda act as both local and universal witness of a historic time period despite the protagonists being “just” fictional characters? What was the influence of authoritarian censorship and self-censorship on the topics at hand? In what way does Mafalda establish itself as a site of refuge, and why does this matter? In what way does the site of refuge change or evolve diachronically?

In the context of different degrees of state terror in Argentina, from 1964 when the first Mafalda strip was published throughout the last Argentine dictatorship 1976-
1983, I argue that a sense of recurring momentary safety develops between the readers and the strip’s creator as a result of a process that is twofold, and that both are of a reciprocal nature between creator and audience. The first one starts with Quino’s initial identification with the Argentine public that gives birth to this cycle in the first place, and closes with the audience’s identification with the characters and topics, themes, and issues Quino treats in this strip in the unsafe context of oppression, censorship, illegal imprisonment, and general instability of the period. The second factor in the development of this safe space that I call site of refuge, is the evolution of a mutual sentiment of complicity and comfort that develops between author/artist and his audience.

**State of the Field**

Through a new historicist lens, and with an interdisciplinary approach, I give special weight to Neil Cohn’s fundamental separation between how the human brain understands comics, on the one hand, and the study of comics as cultural objects on the other. The reason for this is that each approach will regulate both the research questions of academic inquiry and therefore also the methods used in a given investigation. As a neuroscientist, Cohn is an expert in the former, and highlights the importance of clearing what he sees as confusion in the treatment of the two. My work focuses on the second approach, looking into *Mafalda* as case study of a specific comic that I study as a cultural object. Cohn further warns against the confusion scholars

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mixing the two approaches engender regarding the definitions of the field of comics,\textsuperscript{5} which further contributes to the field suffering from the “state of indiscipline” that Charles Hatfield notes in his article \textit{Indiscipline, or, The Condition of Comics Studies}.\textsuperscript{6}

Drawing on Aaron Meskin,\textsuperscript{7} I examine \textit{Mafalda} as a “member” of the grouping of comics that is a non-transient distinct art as a tool to analyze this strip’s transcendence across cultural, temporal, and linguistic barriers that strongly contributed to this work’s power and authority in Argentine culture. I look into the subversive aspect of comics, building on Thierry Groensteen’s idea that comics have the power to allow the readership access to a world where the delineation between reality and the unreal is blurred,\textsuperscript{8} thus acting as portal to change. Matthew Pustz’s assertion that comics are cultural artifacts worthy of the status of primary source\textsuperscript{9} able to inform its audience of the discourses that were circulating at the time they were published intersects with Thomas M. Kemnitz’s concept that these reported discourses are able to provide both synchronic and diachronic perspectives of cultural and social history.\textsuperscript{10} These notions together serve as a basis to the discussion of \textit{Mafalda}'s power as an eye-witness reporting on her time and its value as historical source. None of these aspects of \textit{Mafalda} could be studied without taking into consideration Norman Fairclough’s position— within discourse analysis—that human communication is inherently social.\textsuperscript{11}

\footnotesize
simply because comics constitute a form of human communication. Furthermore, Barbara Johnstone’s view that discourse analysis is intrinsically interdisciplinary makes this framework ideal for a study that is also inherently interdisciplinary—particularly given the innate multidisciplinarity of the field of comics marked by Charles Hatfield. My work is an attempt to contribute to the further consolidation of the field of study of comics as an inherently interdisciplinary field.

In her book *El Oficio de las Viñetas*, Laura Vázquez treats the topic of comics as cultural phenomenon in Argentina. In this book, Vázquez examines the process of professionalization of comic makers and artists during the period between 1968-1984, comparing this industry in Argentina with its counterparts abroad in the form of “exiled” comics work, doing so through analysis of publishing houses, the training and professional formation of the comics artists, political positioning of artists, artistic innovations of the time, and technological modernization, to name a few. Her focus is to shed light on the origins of the industry of comics in Argentina and of the ways in which this industry established itself in that country, seeking to reconstruct the social and cultural process of that development during her chosen period. Born in Argentina and currently teaching in the United States, she nevertheless writes this book in Spanish, thus limiting access to non-Spanish speaking scholars.

Within the Argentine comic, Isabella Cosse specifically examines *Mafalda* from the perspective of the cultural historian in her book *Mafalda: Historia Social y Política*.  

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15 Ibid., 311.
16 Ibid., 221-230.
17 Ibid., 307.
As such, she concentrates her efforts in building a purely historical reconstruction of the dimensions of production, circulation, and meanings seen in, and uses of this comic from its inception to the present day. Additionally, and given the magnitude of the role politics played in Argentine cultural history, she lends focus to her treatment of the political aspect to *Mafalda*. In her analysis of the iconic comic, she additionally directs further attention to the significance the political processes have had in the consolidation of the identity of the middle class in Argentina, and sees this group portrayed as heterogeneous in *Mafalda*, though traversed by diverse and opposing ideologies. As a scholar that has done considerable work and published on gender, Isabella Cosse highlights the strong presence of this theme in *Mafalda* and expounds on the feminist aspect of the strip’s intersection with intergenerational confrontation. She seeks to reconstruct the production and circulation of this comic, with an emphasis on its transnational circulation—influenced by exiled Argentine artists in Italy, Spain, Mexico, and Cuba as a means to better understand the strip through the meanings attributed to *Mafalda* in those contexts.

Daniel Divinsky, Quino’s publisher since 1970, has invested his energy in *Mafalda*’s publication and circulation, even during the times where *Ediciones de la Flor*—his publishing house with partner Ana María (Kuki) Miler—was shut down by the dictatorship, when they were arrested by the same authoritarian forces, and

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19 Ibid., 26.
20 Ibid., 77.
23 Ibid., 26-27, 141-184, 239-243.
24 Closure for thirty days was ordered on *Ediciones de la Flor* by decree 1101 on April 26, 1977, which banned the distribution, sale, and circulation of Griselda Gambaro’s book “Ganarse la Muerte.” The book had been deemed by the dictatorship as nihilist and as opposing to family values. The publishers were found to be active participants in the injury to Argentine values and institutions. The closure took place while Daniel Divinsky and his wife and business partner Kuki Miler were still in prison for having published *Cinco*
imprisoned for 127 days,\textsuperscript{25} for having published the children’s book Cinco Dedos,\textsuperscript{26} which had been banned by the dictatorship’s censorship for “preparing youth to act subversively”\textsuperscript{27} or during their six year exile in Venezuela.\textsuperscript{28} Their arrests and closure of the Editorial took place despite the fact that Divinsky and Miler saw themselves as “generically progressive,” and concerned themselves with the mandate of their publishing house, which was—and remained—to disseminate an “eclectic” selection of work on Argentina and Latin America, displaying no militant behavior nor aspirations.\textsuperscript{29} As part of that mandate, Ediciones de la Flor became the editors and publishers for other renowned Argentine cartoonists, becoming the “home” of Roberto Fontanarrosa, and Caloi (Carlos Loiseau), among other “longsellers”\textsuperscript{30} that became the staple of Ediciones de la Flor.\textsuperscript{31} Humor in graphic form comprises thirty percent of the total


\textit{“Five Fingers”}


\textsuperscript{29} Divinsky, Daniel Divinsky Mi Mayor.
production of Divinsky’s publishing house. Between Quino’s multiple editions of all his work and Fontanarrosa’s, Ediciones de la Flor has published one hundred and twenty books and millions of copies. Having resisted multiple large offers to sell the Editorial throughout the decades in order to maintain its independence, Divinsky’s survival as a soul editor and publisher of work he believes in can mainly be attributed to work ethic, honesty, and most importantly, ideological conviction. This ideological conviction stems from the very beginning of his career when he started editorial work as a young dissatisfied lawyer in Buenos Aires in his disavowal of Onganía’s dictatorship.

Seeking to reconstruct the history of the comic strip industry in Argentina between 1968-1984, Laura Vázquez conducted research on publications of the time and interviews with personalities in the field that culminated in her book “El Oficio de las Viñetas” mentioned earlier. Although I also use numerous interviews as sources, I do not analyze publishers as that type of analysis would not be a useful tool to the discussions at hand in my work. In terms of the research foci, unlike Isabella Cosse’s, my work touches on the politics of historical events only when directly relevant to Mafalda through the lens of looking at the strip as a literary, cultural force. Contrary to this, Cosse writes about the social and political history of Mafalda, which, as the title of her book notes, will naturally lend weight equally to both the purely political element as well as the cultural sphere. In contrast, I do not write a history of Mafalda, as she does.

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32 Puerto Cultura Daniel Divinsky.
33 Not “just” Mafalda.
34 Zárranz, El Eterno Editor.
35 Divinsky loses track of time and reads endlessly in his “bunker,” i.e., his office at Ediciones de la Flor’s two story old house at Gorriti street in the Palermo neighbourhood in Buenos Aires, choosing new titles to publish. See Zárranz, El Eterno Editor.
36 Ediciones de la Flor is known for always religiously, punctually and accurately paying the royalties due to their authors, even when Daniel and Kuki Divinsky-Miler were exiled. Zárranz, El Eterno Editor; Puerto Cultura Daniel Divinsky.
37 Divinsky, Daniel Divinsky Mi Mayor. For more on the 1966 coup d’ état, see the section on historical background in this introduction.
My focus is in the relationship author/characters-reader, and the nature of the space this relationship creates as a liminal experience. Unlike Divinsky’s mandate of dissemination and circulation of intellectual work on Latin America— and Argentina in particular—as editor and publisher, mine contributes to a deeper understanding of Quino’s *Mafalda* as a cultural phenomenon, underpinned by my own experiences growing up in the Riverplate.\(^{38}\)

**Historical Context**

This section serves to situate Quino’s *Mafalda* in the socio-cultural register of the sixties and seventies in Argentina as the setting to *Mafalda*. The form is that of a diachronic development of the political situation in that country that brought about the multiple changes in Argentine society, those engendered, in turn, by the unstable economic circumstances created by ever-fluctuating democratic—or quasi democratic—and authoritarian governments. As such, this background section’s role is to offer a pragmatic presentation of events that treats historical events with reference to their causes, antecedent conditions, and the subsequent outcomes and consequences, underpinned by my own experiences growing up in the Riverplate, experiences that at times only made sense once my knowledge of the region as an adult connected the dots between my distant memories and acquired insights.

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\(^{38}\) The Riverplate, or in Spanish “Río de la Plata,” is the region that encompasses the estuary of the Uruguay River that opens into the South Atlantic Ocean, which functions as political border between Argentina and Uruguay. The capitals of these two countries—Buenos Aires for Argentina and Montevideo for Uruguay—lay at either side of this estuary, and share a specific dialect called Riverplate Spanish, as well as a culture that includes central cultural items such as tango and *mate*, which is a special tea that is sipped through a metal straw from a vessel made out of a non-edible dried fruit of the same name and is an originally indigenous custom.
Juan Enrique Graviz Prats was a gentleman of his time. Of French-Basque descent, when not wearing a beret, his thinning white hair—which had been snow white since his thirties—was always under his dark gentleman’s hat, only to be uncovered indoors, or in front of a church or a lady. He was a man of short stature, small feet, an insatiable hunger for books—especially Émile Zola—and an uncanny cinematographic knowledge of the first half of the twentieth century. He had a serious love of soccer and crossword puzzles, but his greatest love of all was tango, to which he listened day and night out of the 1940’s Bakelite Motorola with fabric front on his night table. The light in his hazel eyes sparkled every time my Grandfather opened the door to welcome my daily visits in the 1970’s. “¡Pimpollo!”, he would exclaim as he opened the white door,
smiling at me as Carlos Gardel,11 Julio Sosa,22 or his own brother—my great uncle—Juan Carlos Graviz,33 sang in the background.

It is communicated to the population that, from this date onward, the country finds itself under the operational control of the Junta of Commanding Generals of the armed forces. Strict submission to the instructions and directives that the military Junta, security forces, or police

41 Carlos Gardel, “El Rey del Tango” (“the King of Tango”) is by far one of the most influential figures in Riverplate culture. Born in 1890, his origin, fogyclad, is fervently disputed between various theorists: Argentina, Uruguay, and France are the main possible origins of Gardel's birth. According to Uruguayan researcher Martina Ríquez, Argentine historian and economist Erасto Silva Cabrera maintain Carlos Gardel was born in Tacuarembó, Uruguay while a French birth certificate from Toulouse notes a child by the name of Charles Romuald Gardés, aka Carlos Gardel, was born in that city on 11 December, 1890. Others refute the possibility that he was born in Argentina at all as he presented Uruguayan documentation in order to get Argentine citizenship, which he did in 1923. The great mystery surrounding his birth and early childhood, a mystery that he helped create—perhaps to protect his unmarried mother—combined with his sudden and tragic death in a plane crash in Colombia in 1935, only add to the myth and legend brought by the great fame and influence he achieved due to both his great talent as performer and his personal charm. For more information, as well as images, see Martina Ríquez, “El Uruguayo Carlos Gardel,” https://sites.google.com/site/eluruguayocarlosgardel/; Gerardo Bra, “¿Dónde nació Carlos Gardel?,” Revista Todo es Historia, December 1994, http://gardel.unsl.edu.ar/historia_5.htm; “El Documento Argentino que Probaría que Carlos Gardel era Uruguayo,” BBC Mundo, December 1994, http://gardel.unsl.edu.ar/historia_5.htm; 12 December, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/12/131212_gardel_documento_tacuarembo_amv; “Fin del Misterio: Muestran la Partida de Nacimiento de Gardel,” La Nación, 19 September, 2012, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1509532-fin-del-misterio-muestran-la-partida-de-nacimiento-de-gardel. To listen and watch Carlos Gardel in song see one of his most famous performances in “Carlos Gardel ‘Mi Buenos Aires Querido,’” You Tube video, 2:40, posted by Cacho el 22 on September 11, 2009 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSAQZRY1Jfs

42 Although born in Uruguay in 1926, it was in Buenos Aires where Julio Sosa reached fame. His passionate voice full of character got him the popular “title” of “Varón del Tango” (“Baron of Tango”). His family was so poor that immediately after finishing primary school he started working, but soon after he recognized his talent and pursued an artistic career. He first sang with several bands in Uruguay. Among other types of music, he sang Candombe (typical Uruguayan Carnival music with African origins) in Luis Caruso’s band in the 1940s. By the end of the decade he had moved to Argentina and was singing in cafés in Buenos Aires. He was soon after discovered by lyricist Raúl Ormaza and his great fame and popularity were soon to follow. Similarly to Gardel, his death was sudden and tragic. He loved racing fast cars and crashed three times. The third crash, however, was fatal, and he died, too soon, in 1964. For more on his life and work see “Biografía de Julio Sosa,” You Tube video, 6:35, posted by surmedios on August 30, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWKhLZXAv9w. For a compilation of his best ten performances, see Télam’s special for the anniversary of his death “10 Tangos de la Voz de Julio Sosa,” Télam, 26 November, 2013, http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201311/42218-10-tangos-en-la-voz-de-julio-sosa.html

43 My great uncle Juan Carlos Graviz Prats was my maternal grandfather's older brother. With big blue eyes and a slightly larger build than his younger brother, his smile and pleasant voice could charm anyone. As a child in Montevideo in the 1970s, I remember spending time with him and his wife—“Pitita,” both in their eighties, several times at my grandparents' house. I remember him being really nice to me, while his wife—although very friendly as well—scared me because she wore so much makeup that I wondered if she was wearing a mask. Idiosyncracies aside, the talk in the family was that Juan Carlos had been a tango singer, but when I researched him, I found documentation and recordings of him as composer and lyricist as well as performer on piano from the 1920s to the 1940s. References for him as composer of “Castillo de Naipes” (“Castle of Cards”), the waltz “Flor del Mal” (“Flower of Evil”), and “Orgánito” (“Little Organ”) can be found at http://www.todotango.com/english/artists/info/3701/Juan-Carlos-Graviz and http://www.elrecodo.com/music/?Ar=Juan%20Carlos%20Graviz&PHPSESSID=20c7ad2962d8ebeb97c0a385a824fb99. The original recordings of those three songs are at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and are, unfortunately, not available for loan. At the Biblioteca Nacional de España I found a recording with Juan Carlos Graviz as composer in Enzo Rietti's Jazz band, not available for loan either: “Manganga,” dated 1927. An entry for this song can be seen at Graviz, Juan Carlos, Discography of American Historical Recordings DAHR, n.d., http://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/detail/80891/Graviz_Juan_Carlos_composer. For more information on my great uncle’s recordings see “Lauro Ayestaran Collection 1830-1966,” 164, Box-Folders 50/2-50/5, http://lcnweb2.loc.gov/service/music/eadxmimus Aeaddpmusic/2003/mu003003.pdf. For a recording of one of his songs while playing with the Juan D'Arienzo band in the 1940s see “Today's Tango Is... Juan D'Arienzo - Flor del Mal 12-12-1940,” You Tube audio file, 2:11, posted by Paul Bottoner on December 12, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQlC0C0U8wek
issue is recommended, as well as extreme caution to avoid individual or
group actions or attitudes that could demand drastic intervention from
operation personnel. Signed, Jorge Rafael Videla, Lieutenant General,
General Commander of the Army.44

At the eve of the Argentine coup d’état of 24 March, 1976, the media conveyed
an usual evening: the soccer game between popular Argentine team River Plate and
Portuguesa of Venezuela for the Libertadores de América Cup45,46 The Three
Stooges47, and “The Six Million Dollar Man”.48 It was during the latter, close to midnight
of 23 March, that military troops were noticed in the building of Channel 7.49 At the same
time, Channel 13 was broadcasting the news program “Headlines”50 with anchor Sergio
Villarruel and Edgardo Mesa in the field at Plaza de Mayo. Mesa recalls:

44 All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. The first communiqué by the Argentine military junta on the day of the Coup
d’état of 24 March, 1976 in Spanish reads: “Se comunica a la población que, a partir de la fecha, el país se encuentra bajo el control
operacional de la Junta de Comandantes Generales de las fuerzas armadas. Se recomienda a todos los habitantes el estricto
acatamiento a las disposiciones y directivas que emanan de autoridad militar, de seguridad o policial, así como extremar el cuidado
en evitar acciones y actitudes individuales o de grupo que puedan exigir la intervención drástica del personal en operaciones.
Firmado, Jorge Rafael Videla, Teniente General, Comandante General del Ejército.” Source: Newspaper La Opinión, 25 March
1976, quoted in Biblioteca Escolar de Documentos Digitales, entry “Comunicado No. 1 de la Junta de Comandantes en Jefe de las
Fuerzas Armadas luego del Golpe de Estado Contra el Gobierno Constitucional de María Estela Martínez de Perón el 24 de marzo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7Nbci3wS54. Although her official name was María Estela, Domingo Perón’s third wife—who
succeeded him as president of Argentina following his death on 1 July, 1974—is better known as “Isabel”, or “Isabelita” due to her
artistic name “Isabel Gómez” from her days as cabaret dancer in the 1950s in Panama, where she met her future husband. For
more on “Isabelita” Martínez de Perón see “1974: First Female President for Argentina,” On This Day, BBC, June 29, 2008,
45 Literally translated: “Liberators of America Cup”. Ironic that this championship was being played at the time as the liberation from
violence the Argentine military joint chiefs’ promised to the public was nothing short of an oxymoron considering the massive and
brutal repression they exercised.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZw_rWJb0O
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoLs0V875AA
49 Bleijman, La Tele.
50 Titulares
Villarruel got a messenger on a motorbike [to] bring me a note telling me to say that Isabel was about to be overthrown. I did it, because he was my boss, and started saying that these were the last few minutes [of her administration]. I finished the piece and had to hide because they wanted to riddle me with bullets. Evidently, Villarruel was well informed.51

But not only television was being put under military control; the same was happening with the radio stations. Later that night, Carlos Gardel's voice was yanked out of the ether, mid-tango, to be followed by a military march that was respectively followed by the first communiqué by the joint chiefs informing the nation that they were now in power.52

“De espeluzno.”53 That's what my paternal porteña54 great-aunt Tita used to say when something horrifyingly lurid gave her a cold chill down her spine. The cultural construct the junta was after in their social engineering was one of a domesticated society where “obedience, discipline, respect for God, and awe of the nation's military leaders who had saved the country from a communist revolution and the loss of its Western, Christian civilization” replaced unifying solidarity.55 They chose this construct in order to control the population and if this population was more attached to its fabric than to its textile engineers, moulding it and breaking it was not going to be successful.

51 “Villarruel me hizo llegar un mensaje por una moto para que dijese que estaba a punto de caer Isabel. Le hice caso, porque era mi jefe, y comencé a decir que eran los últimos minutos. Terminé la columna y me tuve que esconder, porque me querían cagar a balazos. Evidentemente Villarruel estaba bien informado.” Blejman, La Tele.
53 Equivalent to the English word ‘chilling’ in the sense of being petrified with fear, often accompanied with a cold sweat.
54 “Porteño/a” meaning “of the port” and as extended meaning, “of the port of Buenos Aires”. In other words, born and raised in Buenos Aires, which implies all the idiomatic, dialectic, and cultural idiosyncracies of this city.
The fabric had to first be unthreaded in order for it to be re-designed, hence the attack on civilians who were armed “only” with socially inclined ideologies, such as student and labour union members, or people teaching literacy at the slums, doctors or teachers suspected of being ideologically inclined to the left, or anyone offering assistance to the poor, including priests. What better way to unravel the fabric of a society than from within, bottom up, instead of making partial, rather ineffective rough cuts in different parts by attacking armed guerrilleros? What Gardel represents was abruptly interrupted when his voice was taken off the air mid-song that night. Life, as it had been known to Argentineans, was interrupted. Interrupted was also the social thinking of the time. And this is only part of the chilling crimes caused by this disruption. Aye, Tita, “de espeluzno,” indeed.

**Situating Dictatorship in Argentina**

Unlike its neighboring Uruguay—which has a strong, long established democratic tradition—Argentina came down the generations with what had become a culture of alternating democratic, pseudo-democratic, military, civico-military, authoritarian regimes, and coup d’états, where minority presidents came to power for the most part supported by an ideologically divided army, which created, in turn, further instability.

Much of this self-perpetuating instability stemmed out of the ancient, ever ongoing

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57 Ibid., 205.
58 Guerilla fighters.
conflict between the landed class, the government,\textsuperscript{62} and the middle and working classes.\textsuperscript{63} Since its independence from Spain in 1818 under Generals Manuel Belgrano and José de San Martín,\textsuperscript{64} the country rule was mainly left to caudillos, local leaders—often of the landed elite—\textsuperscript{65} or, according to Robert Alexander, despots, with Manuel de Rosas as the most notorious.\textsuperscript{66} As the landowner\textsuperscript{67} who became governor of Buenos Aires from 1829 to 1833\textsuperscript{68} and again in 1835,\textsuperscript{69} and dictator of Argentina between 1835 and 1852,\textsuperscript{70} despite his greatest mark in Argentine history being his time in power being referred to as “the terror” due to his tyranny,\textsuperscript{71} he was, nevertheless, at the time described as saviour of Argentina from anarchy by his supporters.\textsuperscript{72} Rosas inherited an Argentina that, just as the rest of ex-Spanish, post-colonial America, was geared toward an economy dependant on both export of specialized products such as grains, meat, and wool, as well as on the import of manufactured products where economic expansion and material progress came at a high social cost.\textsuperscript{73}

It was under his hand that indigenous populations were pushed out of the fertile Pampas and Patagonia southeast of Buenos Aires,\textsuperscript{74} deepening the great social divide in rural Argentina by expropriating their land to divide it among the ranching elite who

\textsuperscript{62} Winn, Americas, 85.
\textsuperscript{63} Rouquié, The Military, 288-290.
\textsuperscript{65} Winn, Americas, 86.
\textsuperscript{68} Winn, Americas, 95.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{74} Alexander, Perón: A History, 3.
was to occupy it from this time forth.\textsuperscript{75} This resulted in the enrichment of the estancieros\textsuperscript{76} on the one hand, and the destruction of their subaltern class through partial extinction by mass murder, forced labour, and degrading living conditions on the other.\textsuperscript{77} The most dangerous social phenomena of all at this point was one that was to remain present as well as current throughout the next century: impunity becoming the norm, thus granting the military a free hand to commit crimes against humanity.\textsuperscript{78} In their discussion on the killings and illegal imprisonment of the indigenous populations by the military in the XIX century, Delrío et al point out that several newspapers vehemently protested against these actions, with La Nación warning that they were not an “isolated event” and that the impunity of these crimes against humanity “could become (...) normal” practice in the next “military campaigns.”\textsuperscript{79} Crímenes impunes\textsuperscript{80} against humanity and genocide committed by the military extended from the originally ‘only’ against the indigenous peoples to being against anyone who opposed to their goals, actions, or ideas, and by any means they deemed justified. Therefore, it was only natural that impunity, genocide, and crimes against humanity were to become the most significant debates in the region until this day.

On the one hand, in the countryside, the big estancieros, or ranchers, fenced their newly “acquired” estancias and branded the cattle that had previously roamed wildly in the undivided fertile lands. As if that was not enough damage to them, the estancieros reduced the mestizo gauchos, or cowboys, from free gauchos into mere

\textsuperscript{76} Wealthy ranch owners. Delrío et al, Discussing Indigenous, 144.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{79} La Nación, 16–17 November, 1878, quoted in Delrío et al, Discussing Indigenous, 141.
\textsuperscript{80} Crimes going unpunished, impunity.
peons working in those fenced ranches. Those now reduced to peons found themselves dependent on the patronage of the cattle barons, thus they not only worked for them but also fought fiercely for the elite’s causes. On the other hand, in the city, Rosas’ exercise of social control through populism secured him the loyalty of the ‘have-nots’. Mulattos, blacks, and other urban poor followed him. In return, he subsidized their interests, as well as not only lifting the ban on the religious practice of Candomblé but also taking part by attending ritual sessions. As a believer of the colonial social order of one man taking and exercising power over a subordinate and obedient society who respected “hierarchy, authority, and private property” as well as “order and unity,” it was Rosas’ populist style that secured him the support of the lower classes in a way that hinted at Peron’s a century later. By means of maintaining an open check book at the favour bank, he managed to add the support of both the rural and the urban poor to that of the landed elite to broaden his political base in order to remain in power.

81 Winn, Americas, 92-96.
82 Ibid., 96.
84 Winn, Americas, 98.
85 Ibid., 97.
86 Lewis, Dictators, 18.
87 Winn, Americas, 97.
88 Author Paulo Coelho exquisitely explains the favour-bank in The Zahir:
-“(...) I start making deposits in your account—not cash deposits, you understand, but contacts. I introduce you to such and such a person, I arrange certain deals (...). You know that you owe me something, but I never ask for anything.”
-“And then one day…”
-“Exactly. One day, I’ll ask you for a favour and you could, of course, say ‘No’, but you’re conscious of being in my debt. You do what I ask, I continue to help you, and other people see that you’re a decent, loyal sort of person and so they, too, make deposits in your account (...). They, too, will one day ask you for a favour, and you will respect and help the people who have helped you, and, in time, you’ll have spread your net worldwide, you’ll know everyone you need to know and your influence will keep on growing.”
-“I could refuse to do what you ask me to do.”
-“You could (...) but from then on, everyone (will know) (...) that you are not to be trusted. (...) You’ll grow only half as much as you could have grown, and certainly not as much as you would have liked to. At a certain point your life will begin to decline.” See Paulo Coelho, The Zahir, (London, UK: Harper Collins, 2005), 33-35.
Cultural and Intellectual Undercurrents

What is widely known as the “Generación del 80”—literally translated, “Generation of the 80s”—was a leading group during the 1880s who exercised excluding, anti-democratic practices to enable the different members of this group to take turns to govern in order for the “Generación del 80” to gain and remain in power. Electoral fraud, intimidation, and violence are but a few of their chosen methods of practicing politics, alongside the lack of political parties to represent the different streams of thinking present in the public. Argentine conservative politician Álvaro Alsogaray characterized their style of government as “familiar authoritarianism” where elite families with wealth and education as common denominator both supported and succeeded one another.90 They saw tradition as an obstacle in the way to social progress and industrial capitalism, and laid the foundation for the dichotomy between a poorly politically organized country, and a country that was well organized toward economic progress.91

One of the greatest contributions to the political organization of Argentina was by president Roque Sáenz-Peña in 1912: the Sáenz-Peña law.92 The importance of this legislation lays in the fact that it drastically changed the face of Argentine democracy by transforming the elections, if not yet to universal suffrage,93 at least from massively fraudulent and non-representative of the population to universal male suffrage,

90 “Generación del 80-Política Economía,” YouTube video, 8:12, posted by profeLBB, December 28, 2008, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKUJTd-9S1A
93 This happened under Juan Domingo Perón in 1947. It wasn’t until 1951 that women participated in the elections as voters. See Zablotsky, La Ley, 53.
mandatory, and secret. This changed the rules under which the different pressure groups competed, which, in turn, changed the equilibrium between those competing groups. The importance of Sáenz-Peña’s legacy is that from this time on, elections in Argentina were gradually more representative of the needs of its citizens.

During Hipólito Yrigoyen’s radical government of 1916-1922, Argentina encountered several problems in the social sphere whose roots stemmed, first, in political agendas of the different political actors of the time, and second, in WWI. First, the divide between the government and the elites deepened as a result of Yrigoyen’s government need for the support of the working class. Mainly because the workers were not yet part of the political process, Yrigoyen, who did not have congressional support, needed that of the workers in congressional disputes in order to maintain political control. In order to gain their support, the Yrigoyen radical government had to position itself against the labour exploitation by the elites and, subsequently, protect the workers’ wages. However, by doing so, the already existing friction flared by inflation that had created a clash of interests between the elite and the urban consumers further irritated Yrigoyen’s already strained relationship with the elites. This cost the president the elite’s support. The second root of the social problems that arose during the 1916-1922

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95 Zablotsky, La Ley, 17, 84.

Yrigoyen government was that, as part of the ramifications of WWI, the newly
developed constraints in foreign trade and the foreign withdrawal of investments
debilitated the social conditions that had already been strained by the outbreak of WWI.
This stagnation in export during the war, in turn, brought about bitter results for the
average citizen in the shape of inflation and rampant unemployment\(^97\) that turned great
numbers of immigrants back to Europe. The post-war demand increase for Argentine
export of primary products\(^98\) brought about prosperity in the 1920s that turned European
immigrants back into Argentina.\(^99\)

The 1920s

After a period of improvement in the relationship between the wealthy
estancieros, the rural lower classes, and urban society,\(^100\) and despite the fact that
conflict between the rural sector and the state in Argentina could already be seen during
the great agrarian expansion of the 1880s,\(^101\) its character in the 1920s was that the
estancieros were again seen as a “parasitic class,”\(^102\) void of functional purpose in
society who exploited workers.\(^103\) While the landed elite confronted difficulties in the
1920s such as an increased state expenditure directed toward the middle and lower
social classes\(^104\) and the negative view the rest of society held of them, the workers
throve. After a hard period of strike waves in both the city and rural sectors that

\(^98\) Rudolph, *Argentina*, 43.
\(^102\) Hora, *The Landowners*, 4, 133.
\(^103\) Ibid., 176.
\(^104\) Ibid., 163.
included the traditional frigoríficos\textsuperscript{105} and metallurgic industries as well as the transport system that were brutally repressed\textsuperscript{106} leaving the names “Tragic Week”\textsuperscript{107} and “Patagonian Massacres”\textsuperscript{108} echoing in history, industrial workers saw a wage increment of up to 40% by 1922 and labour relations remained calm for the rest of the decade.\textsuperscript{109} From a social point of view, the life of workers improved by the proliferation of social centers such as neighbourhood societies and clubs, and popular libraries where people could now gather and connect socially.\textsuperscript{110}

Marcelo T. de Alvear won the 1922 elections, inheriting from his Radical counterpart Hipólito Yrigoyen a system of favouritism and patronage with which he disagreed.\textsuperscript{111} In spite of that disagreement in government spending policy, where the results of Alvear’s political decisions resembled those of Yrigoyen’s was in the deepening of the divide between the landed elite and the workers. He passed protective laws for the cattle breeders that were detrimental to both the local consumer and the meatpacking industry, and while the Socialists’ efforts—acting as political spokespersons for the consumers—were ineffective, those of the meatpackers, consisting of cutting their purchases from the breeders, forced Alvear’s government to suspend those very laws that had caused the turmoil. The importance of these events lies in the fact that it shows the power both bodies on each side of the conflict had\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{105} Meapacking industry.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 154.
\textsuperscript{108} On the Patagonian massacres, see the last chapter in Anne Whitehead, Bluestocking in Patagonia (London: Profile Books, 2003), 273-283, and Osvaldo Bayer, La Patagonia Rebelde (Barcelona: Planeta, 2004).
\textsuperscript{109} Hora, The Landowners, 154.
\textsuperscript{111} Rudolph, Argentina, 43, 46.
\textsuperscript{112} Romero and Brennan, A History, 44.
and how much caught in the middle the Radical government was, just as much as its predecessor had been.\textsuperscript{113}

Just as Saéñz-Peña’s greatest legacy was his electoral reform\textsuperscript{114} one could say that the legacy of the radical era under presidents Yrigoyen and Alvear\textsuperscript{115} was the social reform that was to forever reshape the face of Argentine society. With a clear goal on social justice, Yrigoyen established the minimum wage laws,\textsuperscript{116} passed regulatory laws on rents and leasing, and supported the University Reform of 1918\textsuperscript{117} while Alvear passed social legislation as important as full recognition of the trade unions, regulation of women and child labour, and retirement plans for commercial employees and members of the railroad union.\textsuperscript{118} However, Yrigoyen’s second term tarnished this legacy by damaging the relationship with the working class to the point of suppressing strikes with government troops,\textsuperscript{119} strikes that were, ironically, rooted in the workers’ loss of real wages due to the very same inflation he had tried to mitigate when he first assumed power in 1916 in order to end political tension between the urban sectors and the landed elite.\textsuperscript{120}

During the 1920s, and with a promising renewal in exports, flow of foreign capital into Argentine industry such as meatpacking and automobile, and a state-owned railway expansion\textsuperscript{121} the domestic capital market was reset into the upward trend present prior

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Rudolph, Argentina, 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} See section “Into the XX Century” in the present chapter.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Yrigoyen: 1916-1922, Alvear: 1922-1928, and Yrigoyen: 1928-1930.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Rafael di Tella, Edward Glaeser, and Lucas Llach, eds., Exceptional Argentina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). I used the free online version of this book, unfortunately without page numbers, which can be found at http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/DiTellaetal2013.pdf
  \item \textsuperscript{117} “Yrigoyen y la Clase Media Urbana,” Yrigoyen: de la Ley Saénz-Peña al Golpe de Estado, Cuestión Social, Clarín, n.d., http://edant.clarin.com/diario/especiales/yrigoyen/index_social.htm
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Romero and Brennan, A History, 37.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Yrigoyen y la Clase Media.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} David Rock, El Radicalismo Argentino 1890-1930 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Amorrortu 1977).
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Winthrop R. Wright, British Owned Railways in Argentina: Their Effect on the Growth of Economic Nationalism 1854- 1948 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), 128-129.
\end{itemize}
to WWI.\textsuperscript{122} With one million immigrants arriving in Argentina during the 1920s,\textsuperscript{123} immigration’s regained impetus helped to provide the necessary manpower for that vigorous economic expansion. Argentina’s material progress since the turn of the century had been so favourable\textsuperscript{124} that, according to Jonathan C. Brown, by the end of the decade the country’s successful economic growth was comparable to that of France\textsuperscript{125} as one of the richest countries in the world.\textsuperscript{126} Not only was Argentina regarded as an economic success, but for academic contemporaries such as historian Lionel Cecil Jane, this success served base for Argentina to be also regarded as one of “the most stable and well ordered states not only in Latin America but in the world” where a revolution was “as improbable as one in England.”\textsuperscript{127} The end of this prosperous era came, however, by the end of the decade once president Hipólito Yrigoyen, unable to cope with the challenges of the Great Depression, was ousted in a military coup representing the oligarchic conservative export elites\textsuperscript{128} with conservative General Uriburu in the lead\textsuperscript{129} while crowds cheered in the streets.\textsuperscript{130}

Consistent with foreign affairs expert Eric Nordlinger’s idea that “(...) the most common aftermath of military government is military government,”\textsuperscript{131} this \textit{coup d’État} marked the dawn of a new era where military interventions resulting in military regimes

\textsuperscript{122} Brown, \textit{History of Argentina}, 174; Yrigoyen y la Clase Media.
\textsuperscript{123} Brown, History of Argentina, 148.
\textsuperscript{125} Brown, History of Argentina, 175.
\textsuperscript{126} Marieke Denissen, \textit{Winning Small Battles, Losing the War: Police Violence, the Movimiento Del Dolor and Democracy in Post-Authoritarian Argentina}, Latin American Research Series (Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2008), 44. http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/27156
\textsuperscript{127} Lionel Cecil Jane, \textit{Liberty and Despotism in Spanish America} (New York, NY: Cooper Square Publishers, 1929), 173. For online snippet version see https://books.google.ca/books?id=h0tBAAAAMAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=stable
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Argentina: a Country}, xvii.
\textsuperscript{129} Denissen, \textit{Winning}, 44.
\textsuperscript{130} Brown, \textit{A Brief}, 185, 187.
dominated Argentine politics in the twentieth century to such extent that the military became an indivisible part of the political landscape.\textsuperscript{132} Sadly, the Argentine population seemed to have conformed with this phenomena, perceiving it as the norm as they danced between the waves of contradictive policies and their consequences.\textsuperscript{133}

**The Depression and the “Infamous Decade”**

The collapse of international trade in 1929 that started in the United States\textsuperscript{134} ended material progress in terms of the economic expansion Argentina had experienced under the agrarian export model that had been developed since the 1880s.\textsuperscript{135} This end of economic growth brought by the Depression resulted in a decrease in customs income due to the contraction of international commerce\textsuperscript{136} that served, nonetheless, as incentive to industrialize the country.\textsuperscript{137} With 1928 as the Argentine “last golden year”,\textsuperscript{138} the Depression opened the way to a new economic policy that came to answer the mistrust in the existing “model of elite rule”\textsuperscript{139} that had previously governed the country: the development and growth of import-substituting

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133} For example, according to Edgardo E. Zablotsky, one of the most typical fluctuating waves of policy between the democratic and the military regimes in Argentina during the twentieth century is that while the former implemented economic policies aligned with import substituting industrialization, the latter implemented the opposite. See Zablotsky, *La Ley*, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{136} *Yrigoyen y la Clase Media*.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Audino and Thomé, *El Modelo*, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Winn, *Americas*, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Paul W. Drake, *International Crises and Popular Movements in Latin America: Chile and Peru from the Great Depression to the Cold War,* in *Latin America in the 1940s. War and Post War Transitions*, ed. David Rock (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 110
\end{itemize}
industries, with Torcuato Di Tella as key figure in its center. This strategy, albeit failing the aimed progress of economic growth, promoted the entrenchment of protectionist policies, which, in turn, later became an important factor in Argentina’s truncated economic path of progress.

Not only were the Argentine middle and lower classes the most affected by the economic crisis suffering rampant unemployment that reached 28% in 1932, but they were also marginalized from the political arena by the reintroduction of political fraud. Massive rural migration to the cities due to lack of market for produce and the transition from human to machine work marked the era by drastically transforming the urban physiognomy: the cities filled with migrants from the interior—pejoratively dubbed “cabecitas negras” by the urban elites due to their indigenous blood component—who contributed to the explosion in growth of conventillos as they moved to the urban

142 Winn, Americas, 123.
146 Solimano, Development, 10-11.
147 “Little black heads” in reference to their darker hair and skin colour.
148 de Luca et al, La Vivienda, 93. Conventillo was a converted Spanish style house of more glamorous past constituting of numerous rooms around a courtyard. Each family rented a room for an abusive price—about one quarter of a labour worker’s income—and cooked in the shared courtyard. Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, European immigrants and interior criollos (children of European parents born in the Riverplate) had lived under those squalid conditions where some even claim that lack of proper sanitation contributed to the spread of disease, and desperate immigrants worked very hard for crumbs, their families and themselves often living in a constant state of starvation. My own great aunt Tita, whom I mentioned earlier, grew up in such a conventillo in Buenos Aires, providing me with the testimony of her first hand experience. To depict the harsh conditions, poverty, and misery, I will just offer one example from the many she told me: her father worked countless hours doing changas (casual work, usually construction or handyman labour) literally for coins. They were hungry all the time, the children went hungry to school, and usually only finished primary school to join to work force to help feed their families, all cramped in the one conventillo room. But come one Christmas time and her father came home bearing gifts for his children: each child received one piece of candy (“(...) nos dio un caramelo a cada uno”). This was the only Christmas where she ever got a present as a child. Even when she later became a successful, wealthy business woman on her own right who could afford anything, this remained the happiest Christmas of her life. For more information on and images of conventillos, see Thomas M. Edsall, “Conventillos,” History Page, accessed November 1, 2015, http://edsall-historypage.org/html/conventillos.html, and “Los Conventillos,” Yrigoyen de la Ley Saénz-Peña al
centers to feed the need for manpower in the new process of industrialization,\textsuperscript{149} previously fed mainly by European immigrants.\textsuperscript{150} Popular culture reflected the deep preoccupation with the desolating poverty and misery of the times in pieces as blunt as the \textit{ranchera}\textsuperscript{151} “¿Dónde Hay un Mango?”\textsuperscript{152} (“Where is There a Buck?”), which debuted in the \textit{sainete} “Café Cantante” in 1933, and the very famous 1934 tango \textit{Cambalache} by the great Enrique Santos Discépolo,\textsuperscript{153} which denounces corruption and a general lack of hope to such extent that it gets banned by the various military regimes from 1943 on despite its being an indivisible part of the Argentine and Riverplate cultural identity.\textsuperscript{154}

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\textsuperscript{150} de Luca et al, \textit{La Vivienda}, 93, 152.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Ranchera} is a type of popular music in the Argentine folklore. Its name is rooted in “rancho”, which was the typical dwellings of the poor gauchos in the Argentine countryside. For more information see http://www.elfolklooreargentino.com/danzas/ranchera.htm and http://www.elfolklooreargentino.com/danzas/chacarera.htm#Indumentaria. For a sample of a ranchera listen to http://www.elfolklooreargentino.com/danzas/mp3/ ranchera.mp3.

\textsuperscript{152} Lyrics in Appendix. For a performance of ¿Dónde Hay un Mango? by Argentine \textit{cancionista} Tita Merello, see “Tita Merello-¿Dónde Hay un Mango?,” YouTube video, 2:30 posted by 2ochato on May 27, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6caWUX0sXtU. See lyrics in Appendix.

\textsuperscript{153} Lyrics in Appendix. For a performance of Discépolo’s Cambalache by “the Barón de Tango” (“El Varón del Tango”), Julio Sosa, see “Tango Cambalache Cantado por Julio Sosa,” YouTube video, 3:22, posted by Viejito Cibernético on July 5, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0kTiKCC3UI. Note in the beginning of the video the dialogue between Julio Sosa and the bartender:

\begin{itemize}
  \item [B:] (…) ¿Quiere un trago para calmar los nervios? (“Would you like a drink to calm your nerves?”)
  \item [JS:] Mire, sí. (“You know what, yes”)
  \item [B:] ¿Un Discopolin? (Tangos by Discépolo were dubbed Discopolinos, hence the name of the “drink” offered by the bartender)
  \item [JS:] (…) Hágame un Discopolin bien amargo. (“Make me a really bitter Discopolin”).
\end{itemize}

Tangos are known to sing lyrics of heartbreak, despair, and misery—the complete spectrum of bitterness is showcased in these songs. In the lead is one of the most desperate par excellence, Cambalache (“Bazaar”), a song about absolute lost hope for a better future, the natural choice for a very bitter drink, authored by Enrique Santos Discépolo, a man bitten by a difficult life that had started off with orphanhood. An expert in all Discopolín matters, Sergio Alejandro Pujol published a biography of Discépolo in 1997: \textit{Discépolo: Una Biografía Argentina} (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1997).

Marking the beginning of what became to be known as “la década infame”—“the infamous decade”—General Uriburu’s military dictatorship during 1930-1932 opened the dark chapter of population control by means of repression and illegal action against opponents to the regime. This was achieved, in the civico-political arena, by proscribing the opponent whereas socially—and protected by the typical Riverplate omnipresent impunity—by methods in crescendo of torture that increasingly became as more frequent as innovative and offered a base of practice through Perón’s terms in the 1940s to the horrors of the last dictatorship in the 1970s and early 1980s.

**Beginning of Perón’s Century: Populism and Mesianism in the First Peronism 1946-1955**

Due to an inconsistency in ideological composition and a dependency on its interpretation by the given social actors of each peronist period or faction, not only does the phenomenon of Peronism remain controversial even for the experts, but also substantial disagreement abounds on its ideology and social base as the latter was broadened by the movement’s incorporation of previously marginalized sectors to the political system, thus broadening the array of public interests and the subsequent conflicts.

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155 Denissen, *Winning*, 44.
157 With “a Century of Peronism” I am alluding to Alan Roquié’s book by a similar title where he examines the debates over the nature of Peronism since 1943 when Perón became Secretary of Labour. See Alain Rouquié, *El Siglo de Perón* (Barcelona: EDHASA, 2017), “El Siglo de Perón” means “Perón’s Century”.
160 Ibid., ix.
Although a fusion of fascism remnants and Depression weakened capitalism was the international climate for the emergence of peronism at the particular historical juncture in which the movement originated in the mid 1940s, the specific social conditions that rooted this campaign were national: the potpourri of discontent that had been concocted by the sequealae of the 1930s’ Depression amalgamated with the impact of Argentina’s particular cultural traditions, be that due to their ongoing impetus or their demise. On the one hand, the long lived hegemony of liberal ideology, which had been uncontested since de Rosas’ ousting by General Urquiza in 1852, entered a process of gradual but accelerated collapse in 1930 with the coup d’état that deposed Unión Cívica Radical –UCR—Hipólito Yrigoyen and, according to Latin America historian David Rock, brought about the “destruction of constitutional democracy.” On the other hand, the failures of Argentina’s left—despite the fact that this was also related to external factors such as the large numbers of male immigrants of the working class who did not become naturalized citizens and were not able to vote, thus limiting appeals of the left to the working class—its nationalist and populist traditions, mark the continuing traditions that became factors in the birth of the peronist movement.

In 1944, after the military lost its trust in president de facto Pedro Ramírez for partially giving in to pressure from the US to declare war on the Axis, replaced him

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169 Pressure from the United States during 1942-1949 included a massive general economic boycott on Argentine trade and interventions against Argentine interests in commercial negotiations between Argentina and other countries that greatly obstructed Argentina’s economic and material progress. Although Ramirez does not declare war on the Axis, he breaks relations with its
with General Edelmiro Farrell. The new Minister of War, Vice President, and Minister of Labour was no other than Colonel Juan Domingo Perón, who will strategically make use of these three positions to cement himself as leader of the Argentine people: in his first position as War Minister, Perón secured collaborative relationships with army officials thus acquiring military control. From his chair as Vice President, the emerging leader solidified political influence—but it was through the less conspicuous or glamorous of the three, the Ministry of Labour, that Perón consolidated what was to become the anchor of his power and his main social base: his close relationship with the working class via building tight connections with the labour leadership.\(^{170}\) Once elected president in February 1946 and assuming the presidency on June 4 of the same year, Juan Domingo Perón’s\(^ {171}\) populist style\(^ {172}\) and charisma\(^ {173}\) secured him the position of protector and savior of the laborers, with his wife, Eva, by his side playing a central role as the embodiment of charity as she established programs through—but not exclusively—her Eva Perón Foundation to support women and workers in the form of handing out sewing machines and medicine, creating more day care facilities and work opportunities, free medical care, and fomenting housing loans to name a few.\(^ {174}\)

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\(^{170}\) Argentina: Llegada.
\(^{171}\) Kriger, Cine y Peronismo, 41.
\(^{172}\) Bidart-Campos, El Primer Peronismo, 328.
The Latin America collective consciousness determines a general outlook of ‘we are not able to do it by ourselves,’ contends political scientist Gloria Álvarez. According to this stance, such perspective positions the thinking of Latin Americans at the natural disadvantage of feeling the need for a savior, a Mesias, in order to manage and improve their lives. Mesianism, thus, became a key concept in Latin American socio-political life, one that, logically, is closely interwoven with populism. As Juan Perón identifies this disposition in the people, he hitchhikes on it in order to gain full control in three fronts: first, by passing laws that protect the workers he acquires this sector’s loyalty and support. Second, under the umbrella of that close relationship with the workers, Perón is able to achieve two goals: on the one hand build what will become the pillar of the Peronist political doctrine: social justice, based on the idea of redistribution of wealth—which will serve as base for his Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista), and on the other, he was able to claim that his close relationship with the workers will prevent communism—the enemy from within—from creeping into the working class. Evita, herself of a humble background, stands in front of the ‘charitable branch’ of peronism, spreading her maternal(istic) wings over Argentine

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176 Álvarez, El Populismo.
177 Veigel, Dictatorship, 26.
179 Kriger, Cine y Peronismo, 41-42.
180 The peronist Justicialist Party’s philosophy was “Justicialismo,” term coined by Perón to denominate his political doctrine, which was constituted of a blend of nationalism, a “commitment to social justice and a vague ‘third position’ between capitalism and communism” with an important component of ‘virulent anticommunism.’ Winn, Americas, 154.
181 Kriger, Cine y Peronismo, 41-42.
182 Hernández, Evita Perón.
workers, the *descamisados*, women—to whom the vote is strategically granted under president Perón in 1947—and children.

Peronism had a unique, multi-dimensional way of affecting identity. First, in his strategy to secure the loyalty and support of the working class, Perón had to dance between the two plates of the scale with the workers on the first and the oligarchy on the other, creating a unique platform of peronism that includes both the left and right wings. Second, and despite other opinions, one of the main societal chasms in

183 According to Perón, in his answer to his biographer’s question —Enrique Pavón Pereyra—“What are Descamisados?”, descamisados (literally: “without shirt, shirtless”) are the disenfranchised, the have-nots, the marginalized of society who had no political voice and later became the main component of the Montoneros. Despite the name having pejorative origins towards this social stratum, it was later adopted by Eva Perón herself as a term of endearment. In his answer he included what he called “My dear descamisados”—that became an indivisible part of their identity. The Montoneros were a guerrilla group that was part of the Peronist Movement, mainly active in the 1960s and 1970s. This militant wing of Peronism was dismantled under Videla at the beginning of the military dictatorship of 1976-1983. See Jorge Castañeda, “Los Descamisados de Perón,” Agencia Digital de Noticias ADN, June 2, 2013, http://adnrioNegro.com.ar/2013/06/los-descamisados-de-peron--jorge-castaneda; “El Descamisado,” El Ortiba, accessed June 6, 2015, http://www.elortiba.org/descamisado.html; Eva Perón, “Mis Queridos Descamisados: May 1, 1952,” Textos y Discursos de Evita, Colección Cuadernos de la Memoria, El Ortiba, http://www.elortiba.org/pdf/TextosDiscursos_Evita.pdf; Vazquez, *El Oficio*, 174.

184 Generally believed to be under Eva’s influence, president Perón passed the Women Suffrage Law 13010 that granted the vote as well as the right to get elected to Argentine women in 1947, when they were able to exercise for the first time in the 1951 elections. Although this political move was venerated as Peronism’s understanding of equality between men and women in their civic rights, it is interesting to note two other crucial factors: first, Evita, in her *avant garde* role of feminine political leader created, in 1949, the Partido Peronista Femenino PPF (Peronist Women’s Party) that quickly gathered half a million members. It is only logical to infer, as political scientist Carolina Barry does, that if granted the vote, the PPF—who achieved massive incorporation into the political sphere—would vote to reelect Perón in the then upcoming 1951 elections. Second, years later, Perón himself in a 1971 interview expresses a completely different reason: because a child’s subconscious gets formed in his first six years of life, it is imperative for mothers to start the Peronist indoctrination from the crib. This is essential to form new Peronist leadership for the upcoming generations in a process he called “trasvasamiento generacional” (“generational transfer”—my translation) in order to perpetuate the Peronist Movement. See Winn, Americas, 151; Vanesa López, “El Voto Femenino: Io que Eva nos Dejó,” Clarín, 2012, http://entremujeres.clarin.com/2012/05/24/evita-voto-femenino-60-anos-duelo-voto-femenino-sufrage-peron-historia-derechos_0_1334868948.html; “23 de Septiembre, Día del Voto Femenino,” Suteba, accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.suteba.org.ar/23-septiembre-dia-del-voto-femenino-132268.html; Carolina Barry, “Eva Perón y la Organización Política de las Mujeres” (paper presented in the Marco del Ciclo de Seminarios Permanentes del Departamento de Ciencias Sociales) Universidad de San Andrés, Buenos Aires, Argentina (November 17, 2011), http://www.udesa.edu.ar/sites/default/files/paperbarry.pdf; Carolina Barry, “Puntos y Contrapuntos de la Militancia Femenina Peronista en el Barrio de Belgrano (1946-1955),” (Centro de Estudios de Historia Política CEHP, Escuela de Política y Gobierno, Universidad Nacional de General San Martín UNSAM), Buenos Aires, Argentina, http://historiapolitica.com/datos/biblioteca/jornadas/barry.pdf; Juan Domingo Perón, “Educación Peronista,” interview by Fernando Solanas, 1971, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbhCmVgC0.

185 Not having children of her own, Eva appears to have extended her maternalistic wing to education, this being a fundamental field that Peronism redesigns in order to implant Peronism already in the minds of young children. See Perón, *Educación Peronista*.


Argentina until the present day is the identity dichotomy 'peronist' vs. 'anti-peronist.'\textsuperscript{188} This polarization is the politicized end result of the socio-cultural differences between social classes having "entered the political realm" so that what once was a purely socio-cultural identity became a political one, with the former serving as base to the latter.\textsuperscript{189} While for many Evita remains the saint protector of the \textit{descamisados} and women as well as represents the personification of charity and compassion embodied in her title of "Jefa Espiritual de la Nación" ("Spiritual Leader of the Nation") granted to her by Congress, and her husband is solidly remembered as savior of the workers, for numerous others such as intellectuals,\textsuperscript{190} landowners, parts of the Church,\textsuperscript{191} and aristocrats,\textsuperscript{192} the picture is very different. For them, Peronist methods of "persuasion," information extraction, and repression such as illegal imprisonment, torture, as well as


\textsuperscript{190} Although the exact number varies according to the source, about one thousand professors had to part ways with their teaching positions at universities in Argentina during the 'first peronism.' Valeria Martínez Del Sel, "¿Forasteros o Establecidos? Los Profesores de la Facultad de Derecho UBA Durante los Primeros Gobiernos Peronistas (1945-1955)," (paper presented at the XI Jornadas de Sociología, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires UBA, Buenos Aires, 2015), 5, http://www.aacademica.org/000-061/927

\textsuperscript{191} Seoane, \textit{El Hombre}.

\textsuperscript{192} Bidart-Campos, \textit{El Primer Peronismo}, 330, 333; Cusick, \textit{Perspectives}, iv.
both corruption and extortion ideological control in the education system, equal ruthlessness against opponents, socialist and communist union leaders as well as callous disloyalty to former allies, in addition to the eternal dance between censorship and propaganda, obstruct any possible sympathy with the Peronist doctrine, apart from perhaps also disagreeing with Peronist policies due to their conflict with their own interests. Nonetheless, Argentine society of the 1950s opened a new era immersed in the novel “political religion” that was the peronist doctrine where the only question had become whether one worshipped the Peróns or opposed them. It is for these reasons that it is no simple task to define peronist ideology, nor its social base as they fluctuated in accordance of the ever-changing interests of the factions, as well as those of Perón himself.

The End of the First Peronism - 1955

The nine years of the “first peronism” left the country with a negatively spiraling chain of events: the reserves that had accumulated during WWII were now empty.

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194 Winn, Americas, 149-150.
195 Pablo Alabarces, Fútbol y Patria: el Fútbol y las Narrativas de la Nación en la Argentina, 2nd. ed. (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2007), 68. See also Eva Perón Evita, Libro de Lectura; Libro Primer Grado.
196 Seoane, El Hombre; Bidart-Campos, El Primer Peronismo, 331; Plotkin, Mañana, 198.
198 Alabarces, Fútbol y Patria, 68; Plotkin, Mañana, 198.
199 Bidart-Campos, El Primer Peronismo, 331.
201 Plotkin, Mañana, 45.
202 Buchrucker, Interpretations, 3.
203 Seoane, El Hombre.
generating an aggravated distributional conflict also because there was nothing left to
distribute, a rise in social tensions as well as of inflation—which in turn, left the workers
with reduced real wages—and protectionist policies that had been deepened204 where
toward the end of this era loosened by Perón due to the renewed need of the very same
foreign investments previously demonized as “imperialist.”205 All this exacerbated the
already existing socio-political dichotomy of proclaiming oneself either “peronist” or
“anti-peronist,” depending in great part on one’s positions on the receiving spectrum:
either favoured or disadvantaged.206 As mentioned earlier, Perón’s loyalties oscillated in
consonance with his needs in that very moment, so where one stood in that receiving
range fluctuated according to the circumstances, such as the workers’ strikes being
repressed by Perón toward the end of his political decline illustrates207 as opposed to
his earlier vehement support of workers’ demands. The “first peronism” also left,
however, the workers organized and unionized, with a sense of identity and social
belonging208 like never before, as well as women suffrage. In the new military regime
that came after Perón’s ousting, the “implicit coalitions”209 that stemmed from the
process of change of governments continued to polarize for and against both peronism
as well as left and right peronism until opposing groups became mortal enemies, and
this antagonism would have fatal consequences210 best expressed in the Ezeiza
Massacre,211 and that culminated in the plummeting violence that lead to the 1976 coup.

204 Brambilla et al, Argentine Trade; Cortés Conde, La Economía, 211; Winn, Americas, 154.
205 Winn, Americas, 154.
206 Cortés Conde, La Economía, 211.
207 Winn, Americas, 154.
208 Schneider, Los Compañeros, 358-390.
209 Cortés Conde, La Economía, 211.
210 Veigel, Dictatorship, 26-27.
211 The June 1973 bloodbath that ended what was supposed to be a mobilization to Buenos Aires Ezeiza International Airport to
welcome Juan Perón back to the fatherland in 1973 entered the annals of history as the “Ezeiza Massacre,” as left and right factions
of peronists shot each other down leaving between three and sixteen dead and hundreds injured (numbers vary according to
After Perón

The process of collapse of liberal ideology that had started in 1930 with the coup d’état led by general Uriburu, ousting president Yrigoyen ended in 1955 with another coup d’état, this time by the Revolución Libertadora that deposed Perón of his second term leaving the ephemeral Lt. General Eduardo Lonardi in power. Ironically, as its name marks, the “Liberating Revolution” made an unfulfilled promise of return to freedom starting by process of “desperonization,” dissolving the Justicialist Party and banning all propaganda of the deposed government, illegally imprisoning and torturing peronists, executing suspected opponents, ending military officers’ careers by decree of mandatory early retirement, and ending with passing Decree 4161 that proscribed peronism with a ban to the very mentioning of Perón’s name under de facto president Aramburu—who had overthrown Lonardi on 13 November, 1955—and sending its leader into exile for the next seventeen years.

According to Law Professor Justo López, the ideological confusion and the, at times, irreconcilable disagreements among the ‘revolutionaries’ themselves were so great that the coup would have never been successful without the Catholic Church and

212 Nállim, Transformations, 106, 188.
213 “Liberating Revolution.”
214 Schneider, Los Compañeros, 11, 72.
220 Veigel, Dictatorship, 204.
221 Global Security, The Liberating Revolution.
222 Winn, Americas, 156.
the Armed Forces “decisive action” as well as the important role of the nationalists.\(^{223}\)

Although it is understandable that due to its wide array of protagonists the “Liberating Revolution” lacked in the beginning a solid doctrine,\(^{224}\) the fact that they failed to consolidate one even once in power thus setting their fate for failure\(^{225}\) could be linked to the same lack of intelligence in which the rather erratic military dictatorship of 1976 was infused,\(^{226}\) as they underestimated the massive economic, social, and political force of the workers, at least until president’s Frondizi’s assumption of power in 1959.\(^{227}\)

Similarly, the ‘revolutionaries’ set themselves to a “suicidal auto-elimination”\(^{228}\) just as the last Argentine dictatorship did, especially with the Malvinas/Falklands War against the United Kingdom in 1982,\(^{229}\) whose planning stemmed mainly as an attempt to regain support for de facto president, General Galtieri’s military government.\(^{230}\)

In Perón’s own premonitory words of 1955—at the beginning of his exile in Paraguay—when asked what he was going to do to in order to go back to Argentina, “(a)bsolutely nothing. My enemies will do everything (that is needed for that end).”\(^{231}\)

The new regime under Lonardi and Aramburu—his successor—froze workers wages, which resulted in an unavoidable drop in their purchase power, which in turn resulted in a growing labour unrest in the form of strikes, sabotage and terrorist


\(^{225}\) Daniel Divinsky, interview by author, July 28, 2015.

\(^{226}\) Camarero, De la Estructura, 29.

\(^{227}\) Justo López, La Revolución, 343, 347, 349.

\(^{228}\) Justo López, La Revolución, 343, 347, 349.


\(^{230}\) Seoane, El Hombre.
bombings\textsuperscript{232} that the government found itself unable to control. Despite the disbandment of the peronist movement, February 1958 elected president Frondizi understood the importance to including peronism in his government due to its popularity among the people.\textsuperscript{233} His demise was largely connected to the fact that, although he upheld his promises to peronists in the form of restoration of peronist based social and economic plans for the workers, general amnesty, and reinstitution of peronism in the legal sphere, his approach to industrialization was based on the contrary to the original peronist ideals of preventing foreign investments.\textsuperscript{234} He was ousted from office by a military coup that left civilian José María Guido as acting president until elected president—although controlled by the military—Arturo Umberto Illia assumed power in 1963. Juan Carlos Onganía’s 1966 coup d’état deposed Illia and marked the beginning of yet another infamous “revolution,” this time, the “Revolución Argentina.”\textsuperscript{235} Onganía’s government style of repression and censorship strongly contributed to the brooding of the eruption of violence embodied in 1969 \textit{El Cordobazo}, where a peaceful protest against Onganía’s military dictatorship turned into a blood bath when police started shooting at civilians, and the city of Córdoba had to be occupied by the army in order to put an end to the mass mobilization of protestors.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{232} Global Security, The Liberating Revolution.
\textsuperscript{233} Cusick, \textit{Perspectives}, 35.
\textsuperscript{234} Global Security, The Liberating Revolution.
\textsuperscript{235} “Argentine Revolution.”
\textsuperscript{236} The CGT (Confederación General del Trabajo—General Confederation of Labour) of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and other cities, decided to implement a general strike May 30, 1969 in protest against Onganía’s politics of repression and economic adjustments. The Córdoba CGT chose to effect the strike one day early on May 29, 1969. It started with four thousand workers peacefully marching and several hundred university students. After police attacks the civilians with tear gas, violence erupts as neighbourhoods residents join in and help arm the workers and students by handing them bottles, sticks, and chains to defend themselves. The escalation of violence is massive and the first victim is claimed by the police: factory worker Máximo Mena is gunned down. His death, instead of becoming a deterrent for further violence by the protesters, quickly turned into a catalyst to further escalation as protesters begin to throw stones at the police, who can now no longer contain the growing crowds, which by the afternoon had grown into fifty thousand protesters, many of them on the roof tops, armed with molotovs. The following day, the army marched into the city, and occupied it, shutting down the violent turmoil and detaining the protest organizers—who within twenty-four hours are judged and sentenced by a military tribunal to several years in prison. Named El Cordobazo, these events marked the beginning of violent civilian rebellion in Argentina, a spiral of violence that offered additional excuses to the coup of 1976
Meanwhile, and from his exile, Perón, convinced that what will soon lock the demise of the new regime are its own mistakes, instructed his followers in Argentina to take arms in order to further debilitate Onganía and precipitate the dictators’ fall. They responded, and by means of guerrilla fighting, sabotage in factories and railways, bombings, and strikes, formed the newly configuring reality in Argentina with an exacerbation of class conflict and escalation of violence.

**Culture under Dictatorship**

Perón’s prophetic words materialized, though not as early as he had originally believed. Following the two generals and three civilians that served the truncated

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239 The peronist social resistance served as base for the future Montoneros, who was a peronist organization that came to light in May 1970 with their abduction, trial by the Montonero “revolutionary tribunal,” and consequent execution of General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu—operation which they code named “Pindapoy.” Aramburu had been instrumental in the 1955 coup d’état that deposed Juan Domingo Perón, and had been self designated president between 1955-1958. During that presidency, he signed the decree that ordered the execution by shooting squad of military generals loyal to the constitutional president—Perón—as well as civilian executions. It was also under Aramburu that Eva Perón’s body, which had been embalmed by order of her husband and rested at the Confederación General del Trabajo (“General Confederation of Labour”) CGT headquarters in Buenos Aires was stolen and damaged during its malicious shipment to Italy. In 1970, Aramburu was a threat to peronists as rumors circulated about his plans to depose president Juan Carlos Ongania in order to become, once again, president himself, and represent the wealthy sectors of society. For the workers, such shift of power and the emotional baggage that the disrespect to everything Evita represented, incapsulated in the contempt toward her body, was unthinkable and became pivotal in the “Pindapoy operation” as well as the escalation of violence this operation marked. Julieta Pacheco, “Acerca del Programa de la Organización Montoneros: ¿Reformistas o Revolucionarios?,” Trabajo y Sociedad, no. 23 (2014): 251, http://www.unse.edu.ar/trabojosociedad/23%20Pacheco%20Julie%20Montoneros.pdf; Ricardo Grassi, “A 40 Años del Asesinato: Relato Secreto de la Confesión por el Crimen de Aramburu,” Clarín, May 29, 2010, http://www.clarin.com/zona/asesinato-relato-secreto-confesion-Aramburu_0_271173111.html; Hernández, *Evita Perón*.
presidencies of 1955-1966, military president Lanusse’s lifted the proscription of peronism that permitted peronist Héctor José Cámpora with the Justicialist Party to be elected and assume power May 25, 1973. Despite this lift of proscription by Lanusse, it was the oppression against peronists that, ironic and ultimately had the already predisposed population in the Villas Miseria and the working class unite with the unions and demand Perón’s return, which took place in 1973 to end Raúl Alberto Lastiri’a interim presidency. From this point on, repression in its various forms best paints the picture of the socio-political reality of Argentines as José López Rega—minister of Social Welfare during Perón’s third administration and his right hand—plants the ominous seed of organized state terror with the creation of the infamous death squad Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance), or Triple A, who, acting with impunity, aimed at ‘ridding’ Argentina of ‘undesirables,’ mainly left peronists, ideologically opposing intellectuals, and regime opponents.

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243 Slums. See de Luca et al, La Vivienda, 95, 97.

244 Moyano, Argentina’s, 15-16, 63-64.

245 Ibid., 11.

Repression and Censorship

As a tool to reshape society into a system that will better serve the regime *du jour* holding the strings, censorship has been applied in Argentina by different regimes to various extents. Be that by forcing intellectuals to choose between exile\(^{247}\) and self-censorship, regime opponents choose between torture and giving up names of other “subversives,” or directly murder numberless victims for fear to their ideas, repression and censorship have changed the physiognomy of Riverplate society forever.

Rooted in the unavoidable economic crisis after the country’s reserves accumulated during WWII had “evaporated,” under Perón, and as an attempt by the president to control the escalating social discontent of 1951, censorship was intensified by means of hardening policies against the opposition and the press by different means. Press control became, then, commonplace by methods of expropriation, closure, or censorship of publications such as *La Vanguardia*, opposition’s newspaper *La Prensa*, and *La Nación*,\(^{248}\) purchase of important publishing houses by either third parties close to Perón such as the acquisition of 51% of the shares of Haynes Publishers as well as by the Peróns themselves such as Eva’s purchase of the newspaper *Democracia*—where she then published her own articles, converting the newspaper into a government “mouthpiece.”\(^{249}\) *Democracia*, however, was not the only publication whose destiny was manipulated into channeling peronist ideology onto the masses: only ten months after

\(^{247}\) Forced exiled included comics artists. See Vázquez, *El Oficio*, 221.
coerced into closure closing its doors, newspaper La Prensa’s doors were re-opened after expropriation under new management in the service of peronist propaganda.\textsuperscript{250}

As part of the sophistication of press censorship under Perón, his government-controlled broadcast via media censorship. He built a strong peronist radio monopoly that transcended his own overthrowing as it was held hostage by the military regime that succeeded him: the “Liberating Revolution.”\textsuperscript{251} Introducing television in 1951, he kept the one existing station in Argentina at the time under strict government control until his ousting in 1955 with actors and directors feeling forced into exile as their only alternative to exercising rigorous self-censorship.\textsuperscript{252} Also during peronism, the attack against 	extit{lunfardo}—slang—was massive, with strong cultural repercussions because censorship distorted and contaminated one of the pillars of Riverplate culture: the tango. Tango lyrics were either upright banned or ‘purified’,\textsuperscript{253} deforming popular culture into a farce as it no longer portrayed the people for whom, nor by, it was written.

During the “Revolución Argentina”—which started in 1966—General Onganía,\textsuperscript{254} on his mission of morally ‘cleansing’ Argentine society, undertook the burning of books, closing of cabarets that were a staple of Argentine cultural life for their ‘indecent’ character, and tasked censorship commissions with the elimination of ‘inappropriate’

\textsuperscript{251} Bethell, The Cambridge, 535.
\textsuperscript{252} ibid., 479; 535.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid., 479; 535.
\textsuperscript{254} In a May 1949 interview published in Noticias Gráficas of the great Enrique Santos Discépolo, alias “Discepolín,” author of the tango Cambalache mentioned in this chapter, among numerous others, he expresses his frustration with the censorship of his tangos by Perón’s government’s “Secretaría de Prensa y Difusión” (“Ministry of Press and Broadcasting”) due to his use of lunfardo in his lyrics. Says Discépolo: “I can accept criticism on my tangos. What is impossible to accept is a certain type of protection and advice, ‘put such word instead of the one you used.’ Popular language is alive (...). What many call lunfardo is the sheen of popular imagery, it’s a new form of metaphor, it’s the language of song par excellence” (“Puedo admitir críticas a mis tangos. Lo que resulta imposible de aceptar es cierto tipo de protección y consejo ‘ponga tal palabra en lugar de la que usted ha usado.’ El lenguaje popular es vivo (...). Lo que muchos llaman lunfardo es brillo de la imagen popular, es un a nueva forma de metáfora, es el lenguaje propio de la canción”). Oscar del Priore and Irene Amuchástegui, Me Gusta Leer, Cafetín de Buenos Aires, n.d., accessed February 2, 2016 http://www.megustaleer.com/fragmentos/22620/Text?cap01_92.xhtml; Arcángel Pascual Vardaro, Censura Radial del Lunfardo Con Especial Aplicación al Tango del 1943 (Gobierno Militar) al 1949 (Gobierno Peronista) (California, USA: Windmills Editions, 2014); Winn, Americas, 151; Varela, Peronismo.
\textsuperscript{254} Ongania’s autocratic regime lasted four years: 1966-1970.
elements in the visual arts and television. The press industry was forced to refrain from publishing cartoons of the dictator\textsuperscript{255} as well as communist material and those who did were closed down.\textsuperscript{256} Bridging the time between the “Liberating Revolution” of 1955 and the “Second Peronism” of 1973, anyone in the broadcasting media associated with peronism was banned from working neither on radio nor television, be that as actor, writer, producer or technician.\textsuperscript{257} The “Argentine Revolution” was also responsible for their infamous intervention in the universities in what is recorded in history as “The Night of the Long Batons” that started July 31, 1966, at the Faculty of Exact Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) where professors, students, and staff were brutally beaten by the police with batons.\textsuperscript{258}

The historical cascade of different political ideologies that had been streaming in the waterfall of Argentine history collided with each other with a force that exceeded that of other countries where ideological diversity created balance.\textsuperscript{259} In Argentina, military intervention—both overt and covert—had become a \textit{de facto} way of doing politics to the extent that the military became an indivisible part of the political landscape. The ubiquitous extreme forms of those ideologies often resorted to violence, which—fitting Sir Isaac Newton’s Third Law of Motion that “for every action there is an equal and

\textsuperscript{256} Moyano, \textit{Argentina’s}, 18.
\textsuperscript{257} Bethell, \textit{The Cambridge}, 535.
opposite reaction—“were met by a vortex of counter violence that culminated in the “Dirty War.”

The “Dirty War:” the Scars of a Family

Individual paths taken by family members during the madness of the last dictatorship engendered potentially confrontational situations within families, which, at times, sadly materialized. Other times it unified and redefined them. For others, both were true. My family was no different.

Etel was, like many others at the time, a young militant active against the military regime. I don’t know much about her other than she was the taboo cousin my mother preferred not to talk about. Etel’s brother, José, was a pilot with the rank of Captain in the Air Force, and my uncle Ricardo—my mother’s brother—was a police officer in the city. It was in that capacity that my uncle learned his cousin’s Etel’s name was on the list of the next batch to be arrested, and most probably, tortured and disappeared. He told José. In the middle of the night, José took an Air Force aircraft and flew Etel across the Andes to Chile himself. She ended up as a political refugee in Sweden, where she was to marry a Chilean political refugee like herself, have a family, and a thriving academic career. José, at his return, got to keep his life, but with a truncated career. He was never to advance past the rank of Captain. My uncle Ricardo left the police force, then the country. I remember my grandmother saying that he didn’t

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262 In respect to the wishes of my family, I have changed some of the names in this section. The accounts here related, however, remain true to the actual events that took place in the 1970s.
like “the raids”. The consequences of the bittersweet sacrifice of these cousins were to reverberate through the entire family for years to come.

My maternal grandmother and her sister married my grandfather and his brother, respectively. And so, in the best Latin tradition of having one’s mother’s family name follow that of one’s father’s after your given name,\(^\text{263}\) my mother and her brother shared both family names—and their order—with their cousins. Among all the unnamed topics, muttered conversations,\(^\text{264}\) and whispered jokes in my house, every now and then a subject surfaced that my parents did not want to discuss, usually prompted by an innocent enquiry on part of the youngest member of the family: me. This way I learned from my mother that both my parents had been taken into “questioning”, hooded, out of my father’s business downtown because my mother shared the family names, and their order, with Etel, who was wanted, and, presumably, the “authorities” thought they could extract information on her whereabouts from family members.

According to my mother—my dad never spoke of this—they were released ‘unharmed’ at the end of the day with the only physical injury of my mom getting one painful kick in the shin by a female “officer”. Although I always found this slightly bizarre, I let it be and accepted her version. For such an articulate person, her replies about anything related to this particular cousin—while she spoke lovingly of all the others—

\(^{263}\) The surname arrangement is legally permanent, as women do not change their surname to that of their spouse’s when they get married. Some married women choose to follow the tradition of going by their father’s surname following their given name, followed by “de” (“of”, as in, belonging to) and their husband’s surname but this is not a must. For example, if a woman’s name is “Marcela Rodríguez-Martínez”, and she marries “Juan Herrera-Hernández”, she officially remains Marcela Rodríguez-Martínez and this will forever be the name in all her legal documents, but she may opt to go by “Marcela Rodríguez de Herrera.”

\(^{264}\) Always afraid to be heard and reported, it was a common occurrence that people didn’t feel safe to have conversations about politics even in the privacy of their own homes. In his Prologue to his 2008 book *Argentina. 1955-2005. Como el Ave Fénix*, Argentine historian Hugo de Campo—who was kidnapped in 1974 and imprisoned for five years by the military dictatorship—explains how as a teenager in 1955 he was sent to the sidewalk by his parents to watch that no one was listening to his family’s discussions about politics that were taking place in the home’s dining room. (Luis Alberto Romero, who asked the author to write this book as part of a series he was preparing, explains in his Preliminary Note why the book was not published in the end and is, instead, online, available to all, courtesy of Programa Buenos Aires de Historia Política del Siglo XX). See http://historiapolitica.com/datos/biblioteca/Del%20Campo%20libro.pdf
was more than obscure and vague. She seemed to resent her cousin Etel enough because of that day, so much so that later, in the post-dictatorship days in our exile, she was not interested in ever seeing her again, and I wasn’t going to bother my mother any further with a topic that clearly disturbed her.

But, alas! Things that are not settled continue to raise questions, and so, in the second decade after my mother’s death, I saw my Riverplate extended family again. One of my aunts with whom my mother had enjoyed a good friendship during my childhood unlocked my doubts making part of me wish I had let it to rest the way I use to know it: not knowing it. That one day in prison (was it just one day?) had displayed a catalogue of abuse and torture against my mother—and most probably also against my father—of the same kind one reads in the reports of the Nunca Más265 that landed my mom in psychotherapy for a couple of years, and left her with a fierce aversion to ever going back even to visit her mother—after we emigrated—to the country she had so loved and served as a teacher and school principal. And it left me—decades later—a little bit broken.

In the first day of 1980, my grandfather died in Montevideo. I can see and feel that day play out in my mind like one of the many movies he had seen in countless matinées. My world collapsed. My favourite person was no longer here. No more afternoon visits, no more sharing glasses of milk and roasted peanuts, no more

crosswords, soccer, or tango, no more stories of his youth. No more hazel eyes full of light. No more pimpollo at the white door. My uncle Ricardo and his family flew in from Buenos Aires. I remember them arriving at the house hours after the expected time. Someone said something about them missing the plane. Years later I found out straight from him and my cousins—who, like me, were also children in 1980—that they had been detained at the airport because Etel was still wanted, and my uncle shared with her the same family names, and their order.

**Mafalda as a Case Study**

Despite the fact that, according to Daniel Divinsky, Quino’s publisher since 1970, “there was no intelligent machinery” in place for censorship during the last military dictatorship of 1976-1983, military intervention still had massive impact on education, press, and the arts—and consequently, on social reality. While the Argentine cinema industry was left with little room to express its art as a form of resonance of social reality of the time, and as a result produced a myriad of politically safe comedies and musicals, foreign movies were censored to the point of mutilation. As the military dictatorship advanced its quest for eradicating any and all kind of thinking that differed from its own, numerous journalists, writers, and intellectuals were “disappeared.” Such was the case of Rodolfo Walsh, who, as painfully as ironically, joined the long list of

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266 Joaquín Salvador Lavado, alias Quino, Mafalda’s creator.
267 Divinsky, Interview.
269 Journalist Rodolfo Walsh had long been fighting state terror and repression as well as occupied leading positions such as the direction of the CGT magazine De los Argentinos during Onganía’s military dictatorship in the 1960s. There he utilized other means of expression such as comics as tools of political intervention. He lost his daughter, María Victoria on December, 1976 in what was officially reported as a clash between the Montoneros—where she was a militant and the dictatorship’s armed forces, who, in turn, had lost her husband, Emiliano Costa, when he was detained in 1975 to never be seen again. “Investigaciones Rodolfo Walsh,” Rodolfo Walsh, accessed January 15, 2016 http://www.rodofowalsh.org/spip.php?rubrique2; Beatriz Sarlo, *La Batalla de las Ideas* (1943-1973) (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2007), 135.
missing persons shortly after publically condemning the military dictatorship’s politics of censorship and “disappearing” people\(^{270}\) in his 1977 open letter to the Military Junta.\(^{271}\) Paradoxically, his denunciation had a contrary effect from the one he had intended: instead of a deterrent for the military it became a deterrent for the intellectuals, who were now torn in front of the choice between exile on the one hand, and self-censorship on the other if they wanted to stay. Either way, a deal with Mephisto. For the regular person at home, self-censorship as part of self-preservation resulted in many whispered conversations and jokes. One such joke that illustrates the spirit of the time lives in my memory of me as a child, looking at my father, who is smiling amused, as he whispers in our dining room: “\textquote{Inventaron una nueva unidad de medir inteligencia: tares. Hay deci-tares, centi-tares, y mili-tares.}”\(^{272}\)

As can be seen in the strips below,\(^{273}\) Quino, through \textit{Mafalda},\(^{274}\) has had his hand in political intervention just as Rodolfo Walsh but in his own way, be that against the government (fig. 1) or policies of repression (fig. 2), among several other themes such as social injustice or the struggles of the middle class, also treated in this dissertation. This raises the question of why was, then, the fate of some like Rodolfo Walsh so different from Quino’s. Why was Quino, and his work, spared in Argentina, where censorship was so fierce?\(^{275}\) For Daniel Divinsky, the reason lays in the fact that

\(^{270}\) Bethell, \textit{The Cambridge}, 211-212.
\(^{272}\) “A new unit was invented to measure intelligence: \textit{tares} (\textquote{tah-rehs}/). There are deci-tares, centi-tares, and mili-tares,” meaning that army members participating in the dictatorship were of the lowest intellectual capacity. I can still see, and hear, my Dad’s laughter after telling us this joke at home, with his voice lowered.
\(^{274}\) Mafalda was originally published between 1964 and 1973. Ever since she keeps on being re-printed. Quino, \textit{Toda Mafalda}, 29\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2014), 533.
\(^{275}\) Quino’s work was never directly banned nor modified by the censorship of the last dictatorship, although in other places the omnipresence of censorship was felt. Such was the case of Spain, where Mafalda was published with a banner warning that the contents were meant for adults. The censoring influence of the different governments under which Quino lived and worked was
Mafalda was already “established” in Argentine society, and that the military dictatorship might have realized that removing her and/or Quino could have counterproductive effects.276 This hypothesis contradicts a different theory of Divinsky’s, ergo, that the militares simply lacked the necessary intelligence to spot the ‘dangers’ of Mafalda and Quino to their ideology. It aligns itself, however, with the plausible eventuality that Mafalda’s material was dismissed by the dictatorship’s censorship for the sole reason of its being a comic; its cultural impact and possible effects were not taken seriously and, therefore, not even considered as a candidate to be censored.

Figure 1.1 Mafalda and friends pretend to be the government. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Mother (Raquel) asks the children: “Children, what are you playing?” Kids answer: “We’re playing government.”
Panel 2, Raquel: “Ok, but don’t make any mess, o’right?”
Panel 3, Mafalda: “Don’t worry. We’re going to do absolutely nothing.” (bold in the original)

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indirect as the artist was forced to apply self-censorship as means of safety and self-preservation for his work as well as himself.
While Daniel Divinsky sees her as having been already “established” in Argentine society, Umberto Eco anchors her within this society as a character that embodies Argentine society of the 1970’s, and Isabella Cosse maintains that *Mafalda* solidifies the identity of the Argentine middle class from the moment Quino created her in the sixties on. A comic not for children due to its epigrammic character, *Mafalda* and her friends still entertain young readers, but it is only once a reader reaches enough maturity, experience, and world knowledge that a smile cannot be avoided when even just thinking of Quino’s characters as they help us, the audience, paint our portrait of reality.

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Panel 1, Mafalda to Miguelito: “See? This is the...with... [words covered by foliage]

Last Panel, Policeman repeats to himself in thought: "The little stick with which ideologies are to be dented?"

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277 Divinsky, *Interview*.
278 Eco, *Prologue to Italian Edition*.
280 One of Laura Vázquez’s premises is that the emergence of an “adult” concept of comics took place in the 1970’s. Vázquez, *El Oficio*, 206.
281 Divinsky, *Interview*.
Organization of the Dissertation

In the introductory chapter, I delineate the topic, scope, and limitations of my work, as well as offer a socio-historical background section to illuminate the Argentine sociopolitical climate into which Mafalda was born. This introduction is particularly relevant to non-expert reader in Argentine culture and history, and it, therefore, offers a contextualization of Mafalda in the climate of the region.

In the following chapter, I explain the theoretical frameworks that inform my methodological choices, including my choice to approach my work interdisciplinarily. It is here relevant to point out that as part of my method, and from a structural point of view throughout my dissertation, I analyze select strips that illustrate and support those discussions, some in the main body when this does not disrupt flow, and others, by themes—such as the middle class, poverty, racism, the role of women, and war—in the appendices located at the end of the dissertation. I refer to all comic strips in the main body discussions. An accompanying analysis of the strips in the appendices supports the core discussions in the chapters. Footnotes in the main body indicate the location of each such comic strip in the appendices by its relevance to the discussion at hand in each given chapter, and it is easy to locate via footnotes in the main body.

Chapter three examines the themes Quino treats in his iconic classic and how this treatment affects the bond between the strip characters, their creator, and the readership across geopolitical borders and sociocultural boundaries. In addition, I examine the comic’s influence and transcendence, its authority and power in its “conversation” with the Argentine public. I discuss relevant aspects for the understanding of the phenomenon that Mafalda has become such as identifying the
readership, the effects of censorship and resistance, and the true meaning of soup, as well as a discussion on the cosmopolitan nature of the comic and its authority as a witness, and, consequently, as an historical source for research.

The fourth chapter constitutes the core of this dissertation, and analyzes the concept of site of refuge in four parts: first, I explain the concept of site of refuge, and how it applies to my work. Born out of a twofold identification process of firstly, the author with the argentine public 1964-1973, and secondly, that of the readership's with Mafalda's characters, themes, and plots, a sense of complicity develops between reader and author in a context of instability, lack of personal security, and general state terror. It is within that sense of complicity that a free space unfolds in which the audience feels a sense of comforting safety. I explore if and how this very same site of refuge works for Mafalda's creator, Quino, as well as for audience after 1973 when new Mafalda strips stopped appearing on the newspapers. Second, how this concept operates from the position of Joaquín Salvador Lavado—Quino—as creator-thinker, author and artist. Third, what are the workings of this site of refuge from the perspective of the contemporaneous reader 1964-1973, and fourth, how this concept operates for audiences since.

The fifth chapter brings forth the conclusions drawn from the research and analyses in the previous chapters, expounding how they come together, as well as noting distinct results yielded by differences in approach. A bibliography organized by type of source follows: academic articles, and books and book chapters, as opposed to newspaper and magazine articles—interviews, movies, and podcasts, and sources for strip images. In the appendices, I have organized Mafalda comic strips by theme as
treated throughout the chapters that would have disrupted flow if inserted in the main body.
Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework and Methodology

As part of his critique of the post-war Hegelian paradigm of liberalism present in West Germany of the 1950s, Theodor W. Adorno fervently objected to books with images in them to the extent of considering those kinds of “objects (...) not books at all.” For him, the images were nothing more than mere advertisements of a culture whose inherent character was that of a reflexive advertisement such as catch words in songs advertising the song itself. In light of comics being “the most sociologically typical” manifestation of mass culture, and opposing Adorno’s view, I assert that comic books are books and they do not circularly advertise themselves or the culture that generated them. Instead, and given the “considerable cultural freight” any attempt at constructing a definition of ‘book’ must carry, comic books both reflect and constitute the culture in which they are embedded and ingrained, and of whose fabric they constitute an integral factor.

The relevance of this lays in Mafalda’s special status of both comic strip and comic book. While the former is a more immediate expression of social reality where

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288 As noted in Chapter 3, section “The Audience: the Birth of Mafalda and its Readership,” Mafalda was published first as weekly, and then daily cartoon first in newspaper Primera Plana, El Mundo, and magazine Siete Dias Ilustrados during 1964-1973. From 1970 on, publishing house, Ediciones de la Flor, under the direction of Editor in Chief and co-founder Daniel Divinsky, ten books of compilations by season were published, followed by numerous editions of compilations mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation were also published by de la Flor. Other publishing houses such as Spain’s Lumen also published compilations, though those are not used in this study.
news topics are interwoven in the plots and circulation is of daily character thus allowing for more exposure and visibility to a wide audience, the latter normally consists of longer plots that circulate specifically among readers who purchase these books with the direct goal of reading said plots. The concept of transcendence is also present with the expectation that a newspaper cartoon will be disposed of and perhaps forgotten whereas a comic book is expected to be kept. *Mafalda*’s multiple compilations offer audiences selections of the shorter plots in a way that functions as themed collections such as, for example, book 9, which is summer vacation themed.²⁹⁰ It starts with Mafalda’s family preparations for their summer vacation trip to the beach, the actual vacation, and ends with Mafalda and her friends going back to school and what happens during the school year. *Mafalda*’s first ten compilations gather the strips originally published in newspapers and magazines, and the larger, later collections are ‘compilations of compilations’ with additional related material—as discussed in detail in chapter 4—which endow *Mafalda* with both qualities of comic strip and comic book.

Until the late nineteen seventies, the analysis of comics was based on mere deconstruction to allow an allocation of value so that comics could become “worthy” of study.²⁹¹ It wasn’t until the recent past, however, that comics started to receive a “broader acknowledgment within the context of culture as well as in academic debate”²⁹² that allowed for scholarly writing on comics to become increasingly prominent

²⁹¹ Sasturain, *El Domicilio*, 47.
²⁹² Ahrens and Meteling, introduction to *Comics and the City*, 1.
and gradually more abundant after the long history of considerable lack of cultural legitimacy that governed the way in which comics were viewed.

Due to the still nascent character of the field of comics one of the prevalent discussions among scholars involves identifying the best approach to comic analysis. The lack of consensus regarding best practice yields an animated, ongoing conversation, as well as broad freedom in the choice of a theoretical framework to tackle the study of comics. An important reason for the disagreement on this issue is an underlying debate over a definition of comics, as well as the question of whether or not it is important to define comics at all. While M. Thomas Inge defines comics as “an open-ended dramatic narrative about a recurring set of characters, told in a series of drawings, often including dialogue in balloons and a narrative text,” Will Eisner offers the definition of “sequential art” deserving to be considered as a “distinct discipline,” and Scott McCloud sees them (or “it”, according to McCloud) as a plural noun spoken of using a verb in singular form constituted of “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.” Neil Cohn makes a central point, warning against a confusion in the debate over the definition of comics in which scholars like Groensteen and McCloud conflate the structural notions of comics as a medium with the role of

296 M. Thomas Inge, introduction to Comics as Culture (Jackson and London: University of Mississippi Press, 1990), xi.
298 In order to prevent confusion, I only use “comics” as a plural noun count with the corresponding verbal conjugation in plural.
comics as a socio-cultural object or artifact. Hatfield notes that for as long as the definitions remain this broad across the criteria spectrum, it is their occluding role what makes them responsible for the field of comics study to remain in a state of “indiscipline” in a field already markedly unique by its inherent multidisciplinarity. In order to bring cohesiveness to comics studies, researchers must embrace pluralism as means to secure the flourishing of this field beyond disproportionate definitorial formalist debate deemed by Hillary Chute as a “useless debate.”

The increasing interest in popular discourse reflected in the explosion of scholarly criticism and investigation of the past two decades has generated dedicated forums for comics scholarship. Over time, these forums have established themselves solidly as sites for the study of comics, knowledge exchange, and dissemination of comics scholarship involving scholars dedicated to the teaching and studying of comics, as well as publishing academic work on the subject, and university departments offering complete graduate degrees in the field. Although in the past there was a general disregard for comics as art, the study of comics has emerged mainly from literature and cultural studies in an attempt to counter the idea of comics as mere “mass culture” with

302 Ibid., 17.
303 Cohn, Review of The System, 2.
305 At the University of Dundee in the UK, comic expert, Dr. Chris Murray, is also co-editor—with Dr. Julia Round—of the peer reviewed journal Studies in Comics, an important source for any comics scholar. See “Dr. Chris Murray Profile,” School of Humanities, University of Dundee, http://www.dundee.ac.uk/humanities/staff/profile/chris-murray. The University Press of Mississippi has led the way in publishing numerous books that tackle scholarly questions about comics. For “Comics and Cartoon Studies,” offered at the University of Oregon, see 2016, http://comics.uoregon.edu. The University of Lancaster offers a doctoral program in comics studies. See Nick Clark, “Lancaster University Offers Doctorate in Comic Books,” The Independent, November 25, 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/student/lancaster-university-offers-doctorate-in-comic-books-a6748651.html, to name but a few examples. Neuroscientist, comics scholar, and author Dr. Neil Cohn runs the Visual Language Lab website, where he presents his research and publications. For more on Neil Cohn’s work, see http://www.visuallanguagelab.com/about.html and http://www.visuallanguagelab.com/vitae.html.
juvenile content with the sole purpose of negatively connoted escapism born at the margins of culture in the “high” and “low” culture divide and deserving no philosophical attention to the point of “blanket dismissal.” The field is maturing with a continuing increase in academic debate to remedy the gap.

While comics act as witness to and reflection of a society on the one hand, they simultaneously influence that very same society that brought them to life and received them. They become an indivisible part of the socio-cultural identity—both collective and individual—by becoming a component of the social construct of reality in the members of that group, which, in turn, contributes to the construct of reality of the same social group. They, therefore, reveal multidimensional, elusive ‘truths’ that, depending on both the perspective of the observer and that of each actor in the situation or issue—will illuminate ‘realities’ that are ever changing like iridescent paint in the sun. It is, therefore, due to that very multidimensionality of perspectives inherent to comics—and their study—that an interdisciplinary approach that fuses discourse analysis with visual elements, and cultural analysis, demands to be used in their examination, and that broad approach is underpinned by a new historicist lens.

Theoretical Approach

Moving away from what scholars describe as both institutional rigidity and scholars’ own “internalized cognitive schemata and conventions” of their home

Versaci, This Book, 2-4, 12.
Gociol and Rosemberg, La Historieta, back cover.
Foster, From Mafalda, 1-2; Bart Beaty, Comics Versus Art (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 7; Versaci, This Book, 3, 9.
Hannah Miodrag, Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourses on the Form (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 5: Project MUSE.
discipline,”\textsuperscript{311} interdisciplinarity “emerges as an approach to broad issues or problems that don’t fit neatly into a single discipline”\textsuperscript{312} to resemble “the problem-solution approach, as opposed to more traditional research” that “usually sets out from a specific question emanating from a specific discipline.”\textsuperscript{313} Although Messer et al’s focus is on migration, and Darbellay’s is on interdisciplinarity applied to children’s rights studies, their points remain valid to any academic work across fields undertaken from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Specifically applied to my dissertation, and drawing on Darbellay’s contrast between the research questions driving a given academic research above mentioned, examining \textit{Mafalda}’s influence in Argentine culture can simply not be done without building a theoretical model that intersects frameworks from different disciplines. Only this way an accurate view can be provided on \textit{Mafalda}’s multidimensional facets as a comic strip, a work of art, a witness, a journalist, and a Site of Refuge offering the reader safe passage into the realm of virtual safety in the context of state terror—each facet of Quino’s comic strip corresponding the relevant framework, or frameworks.

\textbf{New Historicism}

So as the creator of a literary work or a work of art, a cultural artifact, cannot uncouple himself\textsuperscript{314} from his voice and intent, neither can the scholar when studying such cultural artifact. He will inherently bring his personality, beliefs, system of values,

\textsuperscript{312} Darbellay, \textit{interview}.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{314} Even in instances where I choose the masculine form in this dissertation, I most absolutely include both men and women equally. My choice is merely due to a desire for simplification in language for the sake of both simplicity and clarity.
knowledge of the world, and personal experience into his study. The researcher’s personality will affect all aspects of a research product, bottom up, from what they deem to be significant enough to research in the first place, to their conclusions and their applications. This reasoning is so solidly fundamental that for any quality scholarly work it is imperative its author evaluate his/her sources as well as their reliability. Strictly speaking, one must discern the underlying biases that may be inherent in the study being used as reference. Even when identifying those biases in the source, the process will be done under the influence of those of the reviewer. There is no escape.

Therefore, and drawing on Perspectivism, there is no such thing as absolute truth any more than there is no such thing as objectivity. The only things that exist are kaleidoscopic, fragmented views of a notion of truth that derive from different perceptions stemming from different perspectives. No underlying objective truth exists to act as standard against which these perspectives can be measured and compared.

New Historicism assigns more than the roles of only context and background to the history involved in the birth of a cultural product. With the understanding that the product does not merely act as a reflection of that history, as well as that history is not an absolute collection of solid facts, New Historicism showcases the multiplicity of perspectives at play when interpreting that product. This approach seeks to highlight that mutual influence between the circumstances and conditions present at the time of

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315 And the object of enquiry may also be subject to additional, external influences such as censorship.
316 English professor and comic expert Rocco Versaci considers his own biases so relevant that he turned them into an entire section in his thirty-three pages long introduction to his book *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature* in the form of intertwined information, as ‘announced’ on page 6. (New York: Continuum, 2007).
production and the cultural product itself. Further, “to do justice to the artwork and its import,” in an Adornoan sense, “critical judgments need to grasp both the artwork’s complex internal dynamics and the dynamics of the sociohistorical totality to which the artwork belongs.” It celebrates the plethora of perspectives involved in every step of the interpretive process, the multiplicity of voices—those of “the dead” as well as of the self—be that the interpretation of a certain “reality” the author applied in his work, the perspectives the work itself put in motion, or the perspectives of “truth” the reader infers from it as they conflate with his own lens. Hence, no matter what theoretical approach I consolidate to analyze Mafalda, the underpinning framework must be that of New Historicism.

Because for the New Historicist scholar aesthetic work is a social product, unlocking meaning out of said product automatically directs the scholar’s efforts to the “cultural system,” which is constituted by “the interlocking discourses of its author, the text, and its reader.” Consequently, the methodological approach is to investigate the three respective areas of concern, i.e., “the life of the author, the social rules and dictates found” in the object of enquiry, and how this social decorum is reflected in the cultural artifact being studied. Hence, this dissertation studies Quino himself, the Argentine sociocultural context, and how Mafalda reflects that context in the comic’s panels.

321 Ibid.
322 Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations, 20.
324 Ibid.
Comics and Aesthetics

Based on earlier works by Christian Wolff, Alexander Baumgarten, and Moses Mendelssohn, aesthetics as a discipline emerged in the late XVIII century, mainly with Immanuel Kant, as the delineation of philosophical paradigms that concern themselves with the study of what makes an experience emotionally intense as a response to a work of art. From the more structure oriented aspects of aesthetics such as typography to the more abstract ones like ink traces, aesthetics has the power to influence affect to the point of manipulating mood and even improving the performance of certain cognitive tasks.

The discussion of aesthetics applied to comics concerns itself with how to regard the medium. The debate about whether or not comics are art, and if so, what kind and how valuable is both ongoing and spirited. Some of the arguments made against viewing comics as art are, first, that due to its character of product for mass culture, it is inherent that its aesthetic quality is of lesser weight when compared to works of fine art, and second, that the medium is disposable, and as such, transient. More significant, however, is the third argument, namely, that comics lack the capacity to express emotion and represent content. Aaron Meskin makes a case for comics to be regarded as a distinct art form that is not necessarily transient because it does have

325 While Wolff adhered to Rationalist Metaphysics, which attributed lesser value to sensual experiences, and, as a rationalist, Baumgarten brought aesthetics to light as a pre-condition to the possibility of reason and cognition, Mendelssohn emphasized the emotive side of aesthetics. See Kai Hammermeister, The German Aesthetic Tradition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7, 13-15.

326 Ibid., 3-4.


328 Beaty, Comics Versus, 17, 36.


330 Ahrens and Meteling, introduction to Comics and the City, 2.

331 Beaty, Comics Versus, 8, 19.

332 Meskin, The Aesthetics.
the capacity to express emotion and represent strong content as well as elicit an emotional response in its audience while intending to do so,\textsuperscript{333} and its aesthetic qualities are not compromised for belonging to the category of mass art,\textsuperscript{334} especially when he considers comics “not essentially mass art” to begin with.\textsuperscript{335} So comics are a distinct art form, then—yet they are often studied and discussed under the rubrics of, for example, ‘comics as literature’.\textsuperscript{336} Consensus has not been reached, and perhaps it also should not be, as it keeps the passionate debates alive and producing ideas about comics across the disciplines.

Comics and Film: a (Natural?) Aesthetic Comparison

Due to the relatively recent interest of academia in regards to the study of comics,\textsuperscript{337} theoretical approaches are still in the process of defining themselves as interest in this field continues to grow. As mentioned earlier, when at all, comics were taken into consideration only as a “lower” cultural manifestation with the sad consequence of their aesthetic value as art being dismissed\textsuperscript{338} and when considered as art then as a minor one.\textsuperscript{339} Scholars have been closing this gap, however, producing a body of work on the aesthetic aspect of comics. As part of that work, comics are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{333} Ibid, 575-577.
\item \textsuperscript{334} Ahrens and Meteling, introduction to \textit{Comics and the City}, 2; Meskin, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 578.
\item \textsuperscript{335} Meskin offers the examples of Art Spiegelman’s \textit{Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@*!} as evidence that not all comics are inherently mass art, and Joe Sacco’s \textit{Safe Area: Goražde} for the case of strong content in comics. See Meskin, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 577-578. Joe Sacco’s work is an example of a genre within comics called Comics Journalism. He draws dramatized comics based on real events that both inform and increase awareness on serious issues. His work in general is of strong political content that elicits an intense emotionally charged response, but he is not the only one. For more on Joe Sacco, see section “Comics as (Political Reportage” in this paper. For more examples of content in comics, see Charles Hatfield, Alternative Comics: an Emerging Literature (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).
\item \textsuperscript{337} Chute, review of \textit{Comic Books}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{338} Christiansen and Magnussen, introduction to \textit{Comics and Culture}, 7; Gociol and Rosenberg, \textit{La Historieta}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{339} Meskin, \textit{The Aesthetics}, 575.
\end{itemize}
compared to other art forms such as literature, painting, and the moving image—which includes television, computer animation, and film, among others. In view of the ubiquitous role film plays in daily culture, I chose the comparison between comics and film to illustrate some of the debates at hand relative to the aesthetic nature of comics.

Due to their shared nature of sequential images and plausibility of being considered hybrid art forms that marry narrative with visuals, film and comics are considered as having much in common, and are consequently often compared. Here, Thierry Groensteen cements the ground in 1990 by offering an analysis of the aesthetic and narrative differences between comics and film. Groensteen argues that certain canonical concepts proper to comics contribute to distinguishing the art as a specific and sovereign language. In a rather hermetic style, he propounds that the images in comics are allowed a certain whimsy that is not present in film as words and text are added to the panels in order to convey essential elements. This, ultimately, yields a certain leeway to the images in comics, which can then concern themselves with more fantastical elements. For Groensteen, therefore, images are not bound to represent literally. In film, however, this is not the case because the decoupage—the act of cutting visual action into units or vignettes—is different for film and comics. While for comics a certain freedom and dynamism is imparted by the art form as the artist is free to choose layouts that best convey the intended telling goals, in film the layout is limited by the linear frame that constrains this art form to tell a story in a given way. He continues to contrast the immediacy that exists in comics from pen to publishing that is more

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340 Ibid., 580-582.
341 Sasturain, El Domicilio, 47; Meskin, The Aesthetics, 579.
343 Ibid.
complicated in film where preparation, filming, and editing comprise a long and complex “elaboration process.” In the middle ground, Pascal Lefèvre grants that a drawn image may be less loyal to reality than a filmed image but assures the irrelevance of that fact as each drawing delivers a perspective of reality that expresses a philosophy or visual ontology no less than a film shot. However, he considers the notions of time and space as vital in the narration differences it creates in comics and film: due to its inherent layout of panel sequences on a page, comic’s readership automatically looks for interrelations between panels on the page as provider of larger space while film audiences will only see one image at a time in a linear, chronologically forward-ordered sequence. Opposing Groensteen’s and Lefèvre’s views, some scholars see more similarities between the two art forms than differences. Scott McCloud maintains that looking at an unprojected celluloid film reel resembles a “very slow comic,” and Henry John Pratt claims not only that both comics and film are strongly narrative oriented, but also that this very parallel is the main cause for film adaptations of comics, although these films can, in turn, be seen as artifacts in their own right instead of mere adaptations. Finally, and in alignment with McCloud’s observations above, Cohn et

344 For Groensteen, one of the major differences between comics and film is that cinematographic language is the product of the “invention of a process” (technology) and the “introduction of a procedure” (editing). For comics, there is no such process as equivalents to pen and paper have existed since time immemorial. In cinema, however, the process comprises several steps: writing the scenario, preparation (casting, rehearsals), filming, editing, and mixing. Grosso modo: filming and editing. Filming implies scene composition, which informs, in turn, the actual shooting of the scene impacting the final editing process that determines which scene is shown in what order. Comics, conversely, can be written directly: the artist does not have to constrain him/herself to these procedural conventions as s/he is free to compose images according to his/her vision and whims. For Groensteen, the simplified—and purer—process for comics consists of only two steps: idea to pen, then publication. An immediacy exists in the creation process of comics that is absent in that of film. For more on differences between comics and film see Groensteen, Du 7e.


346 Ibid., 24, 26.

347 McCloud, Understanding, 8.


350 McCloud, Understanding, 8.
found that comic panels are not isolated narrative units despite the fact that
cognitively they are separate attentional units. Instead, they are analogous to film shots
as they are both created and meant to be read, and watched, in sequence, thus
creating a parallel between the seventh and the ninth arts.\textsuperscript{351}

Hans-Christian Christiansen continues examining this comparison by arguing
that although cinema and comics are two distinct manifestations of culture that differ
fundamentally in the way in which each depicts the ‘world’: the inherent to comics “anti-
naturalistic iconography” and “parodic tradition” depart from the more realistic character
of cinema—their parallels in narrative style and cultural history elude postulates of
essentialism.\textsuperscript{352} Works on the strong connection between cinema and comics continue
to touch on various topics, including film adaptations of comics, where superheroes
reign\textsuperscript{353} as the embodiment of truth and justice,\textsuperscript{354} sometimes as outlaws,\textsuperscript{355} and usually
behind the veil of a secret identity under which they have a socially prestigious
career.\textsuperscript{356} Finally, considering the differences between the two art forms, one could also
conclude that comparing comics to cinema is an altogether fruitless endeavor as their
differences are too deep.

\textsuperscript{351} Neil Cohn, Amaro Taylor-Weiner, and Suzanne Grossman, “Framing Attention in American and Japanese Comics,” \textit{Frontiers in Psychology} 3 (2012): 244. https://mindmodeling.org/cogsci2012/papers/0054/paper0054.pdf. Comics are referred to as the ninth art by some scholars such as Groensteen (while film is more widely referred to as the seventh), hence the title of his article “Du 7e au 9e art, l’inventaire des Singularités” mentioned in this paper. Another scholar using this denomination for comics is Pascal Lefèvre in, for example, \textit{Architectuur in de Negende Kunst/Architecture dans le Neuvième Art} (Antwerp, Netherlands: NBM Amstelland Bouw, 1996). For more on this, see Matthew Screech, \textit{Masters of the Ninth Art: Bandes Dessines and Franco-Belgian Identity} (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2014).


\textsuperscript{354} Matthew David Young, “Musical Topics in the Comic Book Superhero Film Genre” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2013), 47, https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/21430/YOUNG-DISSERTATION-2013.pdf?sequence=1

The Subversive Function of Comics

Approaching subversiveness as an invitation to readers to shed preconceived expectations, Thierry Groensteen addresses the subversive character of comics through aesthetics. Although his discussion focuses on comic book covers by Marc-Antoine Mathieu, he nevertheless makes points that can be easily applied to the content of said books, just as Jeff Williams does with his example of a specific cover of a Superman comic book. Groensteen argues that Mathieu’s artistic propositions destabilize readers and pulls them in by defying a number of comic book cover art conventions. Namely, an almost complete lack of color (black and white are prevalent), much use of circular and spiral forms which are almost nonsensical, leaving much to the reader’s imagination and inference, featuring a main character in an unstable pose such as falling, tripping, or out of place, and ominous use of light and shadow. Groensteen attributes Mathieu’s propensities to a wish to prepare readers to enter a world in which clear delineations between what is real and what is not are not so clear after all. This world is subversive in the sense that it invites readers to shed those preconceived expectations and to enter the story in a state of availability and awareness to allow a change in the readers’ worldview. This is where the aesthetic aspect of comics and their subversive function overlap as the latter is conveyed in the former.

In his groundwork on the subversive function of comics, Jeff Williams analyzed comics ranging from thematically non-subversive in content on the one hand, through a

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spectrum of magnitudes in the relationship between hegemony and subversive tendencies, to fully subversive comics on the other, seeking to establish whether or not comics are subversive. Williams based his theoretical framework on Antonio Gramsci’s parameters of hegemony and subversion, where hegemony “implies (...) that all aspects of society and culture are tools of the current dominant order (...) on a conscious or subconscious/subliminal level,”\textsuperscript{359} ergo, the \textit{status quo} of the normative notions of what is socially and culturally acceptable. Williams quotes Gramsci as he expounds on counter hegemony. Because for Gramsci the propelling force of “true revolution” is counter hegemony, this force is the only one able to subvert "the capacity of dominant elites to manipulate attitudes, values, and life-styles through media, education, culture, language, etc."\textsuperscript{360} Consequently, the way to shift the hegemony in place is to create a “new ‘integrated culture,”’\textsuperscript{361} i.e, a counter hegemonic culture,\textsuperscript{362} whose role is to facilitate change in the current hegemony by means of altering a given society’s worldview. With these parameters of subversion and hegemony in mind, Williams concludes that although the results of his analysis suggested that comics are not subversive, one must beware of generalizations due to ever fluctuating data including publishers’ market coverage and sales percentages as well as thematic diversity of the comics themselves. His analysis, however, was on American comics published in the United States. It would prove more than interesting to conduct a pan-American contrastive analysis of this kind to see if the same conclusion is true for Latin American

\textsuperscript{359} Williams, \textit{Comics, a Tool}, 131.  
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid.  
comics, or a diachronic comparative study between different eras in the same region to see whether a pattern of either increased or decreased subversion in comics occurs in the correspondent cycles of democracy and dictatorship. The results of such research could shed light on the question of whether or not comics serve as venting valve for oppressed societies, and how the issue intersects with central forces such as censorship.

Subversion, therefore, consists of challenging those normative notions of what is socially and culturally acceptable in order to assign new meaning to those notions by means of a process of resignification that will yield a converted vision of the world. In the world of humor, what may be a transgression in one culture can be perfectly acceptable in another. Directing particular attention to what is “allowed” in humor—or what transgresses—it becomes clear that this allowance or transgression depends also on the occasion as well as on the “social and professional class of the participants,” as the various registers are shaken—or not—in the diverse situational varieties. Despite the fluidity of agency in the sense that assigning it during interpretation is elusive in order to resist hegemony, taking agency is key. Without it, the process of resignification cannot take place, leaving the existing hegemonic worldview intact.

In his further criticism of the pursuit of theorists of a “reassuring essentialism,” Bart Beaty brings an interesting point to light when he presents novelist and comic book writer Robert Rodi’s allocation of comics within “lower,” “popular

365 Assigning agency during interpretation is elusive because the reader may ask who took agency: the comic artist who created the piece, the editor who permitted its publication, its audience when they incorporate that piece into their registers, or all of the above?
culture” instead of with the arts — such as film — as advantageous in the sense that with that allocation they can automatically be attributed a subversive function in a way consistent with Gramsci’s idea of breaking with hegemonic control. This idea materializes Matthew Pustz’s position that comics are cultural artifacts able to inform its audience of the discourses that were circulating at the time they were published, be those subversive or not, and as such, they are able to provide both synchronic and diachronic perspectives of cultural and social history.

Although comics as an art form in its own right is strongly connected to aesthetics, its social impact constitutes yet another important area of academic debate. From an essentialist point of view, comics are inherently subversive, an idea dually dismissed by comics scholar Bart Beaty, first, as a mere “defense mechanism” vis à vis the long disrespect toward comics. His second argument against the alleged inherent subversive character of comics is that although he concedes that a minor argument could be made for what Charles Hatfield deemed as a high culture message delivered in a low culture form and as such, automatically subversive, it is nevertheless invalid due to the historical and geographical limitations of this phenomenon. Additionally, as seen above in Williams’ research, while some comics may have a subversive message, others will not, but being viewed as not mainstream to begin with contributes to their

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368 Beaty, *Comics Versus*, 46.
369 Gramsci, Selections, 17, quoted in Williams, *Comics, a Tool*, 132.
372 Beaty, *Comics Versus*, 46-47.
374 Hatfield, introduction to *Alternative Comics*, xii. For a thorough discussion see Beaty, *Comics Versus*, 131-151.
375 Beaty, *Comics Versus*, 47.
being regarded as dissident,\textsuperscript{376} and as such, for some, automatically subversive. In sum, comics are not inherently subversive but because they have the capacity to creatively engage with “morally serious” and political content,\textsuperscript{377} they can have a subversive function and serve as vehicle for subversion both in that manner and when protagonist characters of comics are mobilized for this end.\textsuperscript{378}

**Discourse Analysis**

Before presenting the discourse analysis theoretical perspectives that govern this section, and how they apply on comics, I must first define the parameters of ‘discourse’ used here, and I do so by taking Fairclough,\textsuperscript{379} who restricts discourse to semiotic systems,\textsuperscript{380} and Laclau,\textsuperscript{381} who includes all that is social practice\textsuperscript{382} in the term,\textsuperscript{383} as points of departure.

Because social life is communication,\textsuperscript{384} I take discourse to be “coterminous with social life”\textsuperscript{385} and as such, not limited to a mere “extended stretch of connected speech or writing (i.e.,) a text,”\textsuperscript{386} but as enclosing “all systems of signification,”\textsuperscript{387} thus implying


\textsuperscript{378} Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 19.


\textsuperscript{382} Social practice is here understood according to Michael Esfeld’s definition of “Social practices are distinguished from mere social behavior by normative attitudes. For social behavior, a disposition to at least partial coordination of one’s own behavior with (...) (that) of one’s fellow is necessary and sufficient. Sanctions mark the transition form social behavior to social practices: If sanctions in the sense of reinforcements or discouragements of certain forms of behavior are a manifestation of normative attitudes of taking something to be correct or incorrect, then there are social practices in distinction to mere social behavior.” See Michael Esfeld, “What are Social Practices?”, *Indaga, Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas* 1 (2003): 12. http://www.unil.ch/files/live/sites/philo/files/shared/DocsPerso/EsfeldMichael2003/Indaga03.pdf


\textsuperscript{385} Laclau, *Ideology*, 106.


\textsuperscript{387} Laclau, *Ideology*, 106.
that communication is more than the mere use of language. While for Norman Fairclough a dialectical relationship exists between the discursive and non-discursive elements of the research object on the one hand, and other social dimensions on the other, for Ernesto Laclau all aspects of social practice are discursive.\textsuperscript{388} Jørgensen and Phillips mention Fairclough’s examples to illustrate: the physical building of a bridge is primarily non-discursive whereas journalism, on the other hand, is primarily discursive.\textsuperscript{389} In contrast, it would be logical to infer that Laclau would consider the physical building of the bridge as discursive as journalism. Contrasting the apparent contradiction of stance between Fairclough and Laclau, and drawing on Nietzschean Perspectivism once more, I, as the analyst, may take the building of my artifact (the bridge) as either discursive or not, depending on my perspective, which will, in turn, yields a certain perception, that can be regarded as discursive or not depending on the ‘take’ at the given moment of the observation and analysis, logically, resulting in a different type of analysis with every turn of the kaleidoscope. Applied to the study of comics, select elements in the strip/s are viewed as part of the systems of signification at hand that house the discourse/s to be analyzed; which ones are included and which ones excluded might influence the outcome of the inquiry altogether just as every turn of a kaleidoscope yields a different pattern.

Due to its innate social nature, then, the study of discourse will have multiple applications in different disciplines such as linguistics, cultural studies, or psychology, to name but a few. In addition, each discipline will examine human interaction and its

\textsuperscript{388} Jørgensen and Phillips, Discourse Analysis as Theory, 65.
\textsuperscript{389} Ibid.
effects in accord with the discipline’s inherent approach.390 The commonality lays in the study of language and its effects391 through the lens of each one of those disciplines, and therefore, the character of discourse analysis as a method of research is intrinsically interdisciplinary.392 By the same token, and interdisciplinary approach can be taken when applying discourse analysis to the research at hand that will magnify the different perspectives dwelling in the construct of ‘reality’ an artifact may offer.

To consider, then, the effects of human communication means to examine how the discourse entailed in that human communication enacts social and cultural perspectives and identities. Namely, in comics—unless the researcher agrees with Groensteen’s unitary system approach—communication is a fusion of ‘text’ in its most basic sense as what’s classically understood by ‘language,’ and other semiotic systems such as drawings.393 Analyzing the discourse of the selected artifact will therefore disclose the axes around which the audience still drew meaning from that given artifact despite human communication facing constant obstacles, especially across social and cultural divides.394 This simple fact will also point to the reasons why it had an audience in the first place by elucidating the social and cultural perspectives and identities present in the analyzed piece that caused its audience to emotionally connect with it, perhaps even beyond the initial affect involved in an aesthetic response in front of a work of art. Evidently, this philosophical question of whether the audience’s emotional response can surpass the limits—if such limits exist—of what would be expected within

390 Such as, for example, the basic distinction of psychology concerning itself with the individual while sociology concerns itself with social relationships. See Peggy Thoits, “Social Psychology: The Interplay between Sociology and Psychology,” Social Forces 73, no. 4 (June 1995): 1231-1243. doi: 10.2307/2580444
393 Magnussen, The Semiotics, 193.
the parameters\textsuperscript{395} of an affective response in front of a work of art deserves treatment that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Specifically, when applied to comics, discourse analysis can shed light onto the particular dance between semiotic data in the given artifact, or artifact selection, and its context,\textsuperscript{396} where by context I mean two distinct facets of context. First, the context that gave birth to the piece to begin with, namely, the circumstances and conditions present in its genesis, and second, the ways and reasons why audiences, identify—or not—with the characters and themes in the piece.

**Comics as Political Reportage**

Visual language has been used in history to influence public opinion, with one of the most notable examples being Martin Luther. Luther, in conflict with pope Leo, was seeking to gain the support of the peasantry for the reforms he wanted the church to assume. His friend and supporter, Lucas Cranach,\textsuperscript{397} crafted woodcuts with scatological images ridiculing the pope and the Catholic Church that shocked even fellow contemporary protestants.\textsuperscript{398} The acrid texts by Philip Melanchthon on those earlier political comics,\textsuperscript{399} although contributing to the message, were not completely necessary in those specific ‘comics’ as the latter were presumably designed to favor the visuals due to the simple fact that illiteracy was so common at the time. Since images transcend linguistic barriers such as illiteracy, the wide public would still be able to

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\textsuperscript{395} What would those parameters be and how to demarcate them, or why?


\textsuperscript{397} Cranach was but a pseudonym inspired in the name of his birth city, Kronach, in today’s Germany. His real family name was Maler or Moller. See Emil Krén and Dániel Marx, “Cranach, Lucas the Elder,” Web Gallery of Art, *Biography*, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.wga.hu/bio_m/c/cranach/lucas_e/biograph.html


\textsuperscript{399} For an example of Cranach’s and Melanchton’s work for Luther’s Reform see Appendix G of this dissertation.
understand the intended humor and message, thus greatly broadening the reach of that message and gaining potential supporters.

It is, therefore, precisely because of their unique code of generally uniting visuals and text lending comics their inherent accessible character that goes beyond the consideration of verbal language\textsuperscript{400} that comics are more effective at getting their message across. The effectiveness of the medium lies in the fact that it “conveys its message quickly and pungently,”\textsuperscript{401} thus magnifying its impact. Since comics, then, have the ability to do so they are a suitable vehicle to awaken or increase public awareness to social issues that make a difference in the daily life of both audience and author. This desire to inform lends the comic strip its character as witness because if the strip is not representative of what is happening in the society where it is created and/or distributed it cannot act as wake up call to the conscience of the members of that same society. Why not? Simply because in order to have an impact in the thinking of the readership, this readership has to first understand, and then identify with the emotions elicited by the issues ‘poked’ by the comic strip. This readership must be able to decode the symbols, idiosyncrasies, linguistic choices—if present—all elements channeled by the characters in the strip—who act as puppets to their ventriloquist author—and/or by their surroundings within the cartoon of opinion, and if said strip is not offering an eye witness account as basis for those socio-cultural elements in a localized way, its effect will be null as the issues and perspectives the strip is trying to illuminate will remain undetected. For a news report to be effective in informing be that in order to increase awareness or even spin a story in a certain (ideological) direction, the reporter

\textsuperscript{400} Versaci, \textit{This Book}, 115.
\textsuperscript{401} Kemnitz, \textit{The Cartoon}, 84.
must be a witness to the story or at least be either immersed or versed—or both—in it. This is how history is woven, as comics, due to their ability to reveal “the societies that produced and circulated them,” including the spirit of the time that is crystallized in the opinions that materialize in the strips, serve also as historic source. From Martin Luther to Joe Sacco, when done properly, comic books have had an important impact as reportage to the extent of it becoming a genre within the field of comics studies referred to as “comics journalism.”

Because the political strip puts visual imagery to work in order to achieve a broader understanding of an issue or event by fictionalizing the facts, it not only shares the ability to engrave a strong impression in its audience with new journalism but it actually also activates the mind of the readership beyond the scope of only text new journalism through its fusion with the visual component. That dramatization chosen and designed by the author both showcases the interpretive nature of comics journalism and shapes the story in a way that provokes thought well beyond the way a dry account of the mere facts of the same story would. As seen in the strips below, Quino, as witness and journalist, presents his take on the increase of force in government in Argentina during the time Mafalda was originally being published that culminated in the brilliantly implied Cordobazo in Miguelito’s threat. These examples showcase that “(a)s

\[\text{\footnotesize{402 Ibid, 81-82.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{403 Ibid.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{404 See Appendix G of this dissertation.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{405 Originally from Malta, Joe Sacco reports in comics form from volatile areas such as the Middle East and the Balkans. Coining the term “comics journalism”, Sacco’s work offers a witness account that serves as historic reference. For more on Sacco, see relevant footnote in section “Comics and Aesthetics” in this chapter, and Chute, Disaster, 197, 201.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{406 By ‘properly’ I mean the work must include in depth research as well as meticulous presentation as means of aiming at accuracy. For example, Joe Sacco’s work is several years in the works before publication. See Chute, Disaster, 201.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{407 Term coined by Joe Sacco. See Chute, Disaster, 197.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{408 Versaci, This Book, 112.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{409 Ibid., 115.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{410 Quino, Mafalda: Todas, 396; Quino, Toda Mafalda, 442.}}\]
an internal form of discourse, political cartoons possess an unapologetic capacity to capture the emotionally charged, contentious and emergent⁴¹¹ that explodes in the audience’s smirk of quasi complicity with the author as the readers identify the issues illuminated by the panels through humor.

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**Figure 2.1** Increasing government violence 1. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

| First panel, man: | “All the country needs is time! In some things, slowly but surely, one can notice some development.” |
| Fourth panel, Mafalda: | “And in others, sudden growth.” |

In this strip, Quino creates a pun that is quite untranslatable: the Spanish word for a police or military baton in Riverplate dialect is *porra* or *cachiporra*. At the same time, a popular saying to convey a sudden character to something is “*de golpe y porrazo,*” which literally means “(in the manner of) a hit and a stroke”. By means of using this expression, Quino alludes to the growing baton (second and third panels), thus adding an extra side serving of humor that both showcases his intelligence and wit.

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as well as accentuates the element of increasing government violence he is trying to
denounce.

Figure 2.2 Increasing government violence 2. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

| First panel, man: “What is yet to be seen is what is the government going to do to stay strong.” |
| Third panel, Mafalda: “Well, for the moment, a bottle of vitamins just passed by.” |

Similarly to the previous strip, Quino—here via the use of metaphor—shows that force
is the chosen method of the government of the time in order to either prevent or repress
a possibly imminent coup d’état.
First panel, Felipe: “(Do you think) Miguelito is home? He lives on the 2nd. floor, right?”

Third panel, Miguelito screaming in the distance: “… and one of these days I won’t clean my feet before coming in, nor will I put my toys away, or be careful with the carpet, or with…”

Fourth panel, Miguelito’s screaming voice getting louder (larger font) as Mafalda and Felipito get closer to the 2nd. floor: “…the curtains, nor will I wash my hands, or my ears, or anything at all!!”

Fifth panel, Miguelito at his loudest (largest, thickest font): “One of these days, I will ‘give the great Miguel’!!”

As in the strips about increasing government violence, this fictionalization of Quino’s plays with language to magnify his message, but this can only be understood and appreciated with both historical context\textsuperscript{412} and related linguistic knowledge. In 1966, Juan Carlos Onganía deposed president Illia via a coup d’état marking the beginning of the infamous “Revolución Argentina.” Onganía’s government style of repression and censorship strongly contributed to the brooding of the eruption of violence embodied in the 1969 Cordobazo, where a peaceful protest against Onganía’s military dictatorship turned into a blood bath when police started shooting at civilians. The city of Córdoba had to be occupied by the army in order to put an end to the mass mobilization of

\textsuperscript{412} Ziv, *Humor as*, 357.
On the linguistic side, the suffix “azo” (/’ah-soh/) is one of the basic masculine, singular forms of the Spanish augmentative. Keeping these two pieces of information in mind, then, Miguelito screaming he’ll ‘give’ a “Miguelazo” (“great Miguel”) in the heat of his ‘rebellion’ against the ‘establishment’—embodied in his home and the rules his parents have in place—is a clear allusion to the Cordobazo of 1969. This, automatically, exponentially magnifies the reach of impact for this particular strip as it catapults the reader of the time to the midst of the turmoil of emotions involved in and around the Cordobazo, and today’s reader to the emotions involved in the collective memory of the region.

Comics, acting as witness to, reflection of, and influence on (a) society, represent a ‘truth’ and a ‘reality’ as elusive as an image in a kaleidoscope. They illuminate facets and perspectives that are ‘true’ to one individual, but not another, true to a social group but not another, to a situation, but not another, to a synchronic point in history, but not another, and so on. Like society, comics, sprinkled with humor, showcase the reciprocally ever evolving multidimensionality of the dance between the individual and social construct of reality. In addition to that, it is paramount to consider the standpoint of the researcher, the lens through which s/he conducts his/her study. Therefore, in order to study comics as a social object it is necessary to analyze strips from an interdisciplinary stance that fuses discourse analysis with visual elements and cultural analysis, and that is underpinned by New Historicism.

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413 For more on the topic see Introduction chapter.
Although the importance and relevance of comics as cultural artifacts has been questioned in the past to the point of blanket dismissal, the discipline has been in a process of shaping, especially in the past two decades. From a content point of view, the depth to which comics have come to analyze and illustrate socio-political issues through fictionalization and dramatization justifies their categorization as philosophically rigorous, and consequently, worthy of academic enquiry as an academic discipline in its own right.

In order to delineate the study of comics as an academic field it is important to separate the two co-existent domains as point of departure: first, the intra-brain domain that concerns itself with how the human brain understands both verbal language and its visual counterpart present in comics. Examining comics in this domain operates in terms of a strongly cognitive view of linguistics. The grammar of the visual language system sets the terminology—an otherwise excessively debated area—for analysis. Moving from that introspective realm outward toward examining comics as artistic, cultural artifacts that are a social product, the second domain involved is the exo-brain. In this paradigm, elements with the ability to potentially influence society and public opinion such as subversiveness and the use of journalistic devices are analyzed and carefully examined in order to establish the power comics can exercise over public opinion, identity, and affect.

The dual character of comics as a social product lies in the fact that they are simultaneously a reflection of the society that produced and embraced them and an influence of that very same society. As such, they reflect that same society by showcasing the issues that were active in the group of people at the time of their
creation and first publication, and are a source of power that influences and affects that very same group. This influence can range from a subliminal level—as it becomes an indivisible part of the socio-cultural identity of a given society—to an open influence both in affect and thinking of a given group of people who share the same social and cultural experience/s.

It is, therefore, due to that dual character of comics that to solely apply journalism, linguistic, or aesthetic theories would only prove to yield unifaceted, partial results that do not contribute to a rounded analysis of the art form, and its intended role in a society. Consequently, the multidimensionality of comics calls for a theoretical framework of an interdisciplinary, integrationist character underpinned by a new historicist perspective; only through an eclectic approach I can examine and showcase each facet taken into consideration in my study of Mafalda’s influence and meaning as cultural artifact of Argentina.

Informed by the theoretical orientation above, my methodology involved using, first, primary sources in the form of newspapers and magazines such as Clarín, La Nación, and Siete Días Ilustrados found online and at Ediciones de la Flor’s archives. I also rely on numerous interviews with the author himself, Quino, as well as with his editor, Daniel Divinsky, which includes the interviews I conducted with Daniel Divinsky in Buenos Aires. The third pillar upon which I built my analysis is the body of Mafalda images I selected by theme and divided into categories—namely, soup, torture and censorship under repression, role of women under feminism, and poverty and child labour under social injustice, to name a few. Other categories present in the strip were not used as they were not relevant to the discussions at hand such as intergenerational
observations, namely older one-time characters criticized the younger generation’s “hippie” look of bell bottom pants and long hair typical of the 1960s and 1970s, and other strips under the used categories provided sufficient material as evidence of Mafalda’s witnessing and reflecting the spirit of its time. These three pillars apply to all three audiences examined in this dissertation. Finally, I applied the fourth method specifically for the third audience after 1983: retrospective method. As the name implies, this method looks back and it was therefore an effective tool to identify the third audience by using the original strips as point of departure and closely examine the changes in later editions of Mafalda compilations by Argentine publishing house Ediciones de la Flor. These changes are two-fold: first, in text form, the editors added information as a means to providing historical context to some Mafalda strips as the newer audience was not expected to understand them otherwise simply because they did not live through those experiences, and letters written by other Argentine artists to Quino.414 Second, in image form, relevant work by other Argentine artists were published in those very same compilations as well as social media, and one painting in Daniel Divinsky’s office. All of this sources, selected, organized, and applied as described above, provided a fountain of evidence to support the claims made in this dissertation.

414 These texts were published alongside the images produced by other Argentine artists in the later compilations. For more on this topic refer to chapter 4 of this dissertation.
Chapter 3- *Mafalda* as Witness: Her Authority and Power

*Painting is not done to decorate apartments, it is an instrument of war against (...) brutality and darkness*

Pablo Picasso

In 1982, *Mafalda: La Película (Mafalda: The Movie)* was released. Directed by Carlos Márquez and produced by Daniel Mallo, the film was based on Quino’s *Mafalda* and complimented the ongoing cultural importance of this comic. However, the tone was “sweetened”, probably gearing toward a younger audience because *Mafalda*’s humor is not necessarily for children. All the subtleties about the reality of the Riverplate of the mid-sixties and seventies, when Quino gave *Mafalda* life, are not meant for children to understand, but for the generations of their parents and grandparents. The only ‘pre-requisite’ to a better understanding of Quino’s work is to have lived that crude reality of oppression where the public was emasculated and the power laid with authoritarian dictators who brutally misused and abused that stolen authority creating a catalogue of crime that includes, but it is certainly not limited to rape, oppression, and torture, with murder having its own wide array: killing with forced oblivion, murder by eradication of...
thought, murder by manipulation of the masses, murder of identity by fear, and the
classic, murder of the body. It is for those people that Quino originally wrote *Mafalda*, to
contribute his “grain of sand” toward change.\(^{420}\)

In the same way as Joseph Stalin was depicted as friendly “uncle Joe” in the post
Second World War morning cartoons, and the Japanese were depicted as the opposite,\(^{421}\) the characters of *Mafalda* represent facets of the Riverplate’s social,
cultural, and political truth of the sixties and seventies that make *Mafalda* function as
witness of that era. In what way the strip’s function as witness affects the authority,
power, and transcendence of Quino’s work is the core of this chapter. In addition, I
examine the comic’s influence and transcendence, its authority and power in its
“conversation” with the public, as it teased dangerous authoritarian governments and
their censorship by highlighting the tireless tug of war between the weak and the
powerful as the strip’s sales have been sky-rocketing for decades. In the main body I
delineate the historic period on which I focus, discuss aspects of relevance to
understand the phenomenon that *Mafalda* has become such as identifying the
readership, the effects of censorship and resistance, and the true meaning of soup, as
well as discussions on the cosmopolitan nature of the comic and its authority as a
witness, and, consequently, as an historical source for research. I analyze select strips
that showcase those discussions, some in the main body when this does not obstruct

\(^{420}\) In the original: “Es el pequeño granito de arena que uno puede aportar para modificar las cosas.” See Quino, interview by

\(^{421}\) Maurice Williams, lecture on The Cold War, UBCO (Kelowna: April 1, 2014).
flow, and others, by themes—namely racism, the middle class, the role of women, and war, to name a few—in the appendices located in the end of the dissertation.

**Mafalda and Soup**

That Mafalda hates soup is a known fact to all her readers. Despite the fact that he enjoys it, soup was Quino’s choice of metaphor to embody all things unpleasant the public was “forced to swallow every day” by its own society and government, mainly the authoritarian regimes that almost seamlessly succeeded each other until the reinstating of democracy in Argentina in 1983. While a consensus exists that soup is a major theme in *Mafalda*, divergent hypotheses as per its concrete message abound. Román Gubern equates the soup with amniotic fluid, thus positing that Mafalda’s hate of soup is actually a Peter Pan style refusal to become an adult on her part. For journalist Ricardo Bada, *Mafalda’s* individualism cannot but abhor the mix of ingredients that is soup while historian Isabella Cosse’s more specific view is that through her refusal to have her soup, Mafalda opposes the authoritarianism of the new Onganía government. Whatever the viewpoint, one of the main recurrent topics in *Mafalda* is her dislike of soup. She does not merely dislike soup, however, she hates soup, she

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427 Román Gubern is Director of the Instituto Español de Cultura de Roma (Institute of Spanish Culture of Rome) and professor of communications at the University of Barcelona-Spain. For more on his work see his official site at http://www.romangubern.com
429 Bada, Quino, 80.
despises soup, she is most absolutely appalled and sickened to her stomach by it.

There are other recurrent themes, such as the TV or the Citroën her father buys at one point, both items pinpointing the social status of Mafalda’s family as, and Quino’s identification with, the middle class. But it is the soup that is central, because it represents all the ghastly ideas and circumstances that the people are forced to swallow by the military regimes. In the following strips, Mafalda’s language is allegorical to the paradigms of swallowing truly unpleasant realities, and the effect that stomaching that ‘swallowing’ has on the integrity of the self. This is particularly evident in the strip below, with Mafalda’s mention of her conscience:

![Figure 3.1 Mafalda resists soup. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.](http://www.elcondimentariodemargarita.com/2013/01/mafalda-y-la-sopa/)

| Panel 1 | Mafalda: “What tasty food have you made today, mommy?”
| Mother: “Soup.” |
| Panel 2 | Mafalda: “Chst! We don’t say bad words at the table!” |
| Panel 3 | Mother: “Soup is not a bad word!” |
| Last panel | Mafalda: “We don’t tell lies at the table either!” |

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433 Elola, *Universo Mafalda*.
In the strip above, Quino alludes to the divide between the “soup swallowers” and those who refuse to ingest the broth. Mafalda feels the trust she had in her mother as her protector has been betrayed as Raquel serves her daughter soup as source of nourishment, literally feeding her with it. This is emphasized by the distance embodied in the polite form of “your”, “su” that Mafalda chooses, instead of the typical, colloquial “tu” that one will typically use when talking to one’s own mother in this generation as opposed to earlier generations where it was widely accepted to use the polite form when addressing one’s parents as a sign of respect. There’s a parallel drawn between trusting parents to protect and trusting governments to do the same. The same parallel is drawn between the betrayal of trust Mafalda feels in regards of her mother and that the people feel with an authoritarian government that instead of feeding its people properly, feeds them “soup.”

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Quino’s humor being political, it is bound to deal with politicians and their behavior. In the following strip, where the paradigm of ‘swallowing’ stars, the subtheme of political speeches is brought to the spotlight when Mafalda’s father, unknowingly, gives the reader advice as per how to deal with political speeches in order to survive with one’s integrity and conscience undamaged:

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436 Quino, Mafalda: Todas las Tiras (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2013), 125.
Clearly, Mafalda’s father is schooling Guille on how to chew gum. His educating his son about the correct way to chew gum includes the instruction of not swallowing it as an integral part of the practice. Despite Quino’s strong apolitical position, he is, nonetheless, offering advice to the public in terms of how to process political speeches and narratives. Although it may initially appear that this instruction contradicts the artist’s non-partisan political viewpoint, it is his cosmopolitan human quality and both his despise for ignorance, discrimination, and authoritarianism on the one hand, and his suffering to the point of depression for the suffering of others, especially in the hands of violence and injustice on the other, that harmonize with the political advice he offers in this strip.

Through Mafalda’s resistance to ingest soup and her vehement protest against it, Quino critiques the refusal of governments to remain factual and their unnecessarily
heating up the soup with which they persistently try to feed the citizenry. Unfortunately, Dr. Siegrist’s request to stop needlessly heating up that soup remains as relevant and as applicable today while the Mafaldas among us continue resisting to ingest the swill and feel as aggravated when witnessing the “soup takers” ingest the broth as much as she is when she sees how happily her little brother Guille takes it,439 with Guille as embodiment of all the people who take it.

439 Quino, Mafalda, Todas, 455.
Mafalda’s Power and Transcendence

Figure 3.5 Adaptation of Mafalda maintaining original message and signed by Quino. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Popular 1973 poster inspired by one of Quino’s Mafalda strips. Mafalda points at the police officer’s baton and says: “See? This is the little stick that dents ideologies.” The poster “inundated” the kiosks, adding to the high sale rates of all of Mafalda’s publications.

Although day in, day out, in Quino’s earlier days of publishing Mafalda on Primera Plana he had no “precise goals for the strip,” let alone an intention to change Argentine reality, Mafalda soon acquired incredible power through identification as

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440 For the original strip, see Fig. 2 in Déborah Boyd, “And then Came Mafalda... to Stay: Socio-political Background to the Phenomenon Mafalda in Argentina,” unpublished Doctoral Comprehensive Paper, University of British Columbia Okanagan, 2016, 37.

441 More on the early days of Mafalda under this chapter’s section Birth of Mafalda.
readers saw themselves in the characters and situations depicted in the comic strip. It is her popularity and familiar feeling that add to Mafalda’s power. Her political power is—still today—such, that appropriation of the character has been a recurrent phenomenon since her creation by Quino. The most salient example is the appropriation of a popular poster created in 1973 that showed Mafalda in a teaching stance pointing at a policeman’s baton saying “See? This is the little stick that plants ideologies.” Almost four months after the fateful coup d’état that deposed weakened president Isabel Perón and marked a new dimension of state terror in Argentina with the infamous launch of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* lead by dictator General Jorge Rafael Videla, a horrific act of terror was perpetrated by his government. On July 4, 1976, a military squad of the *Fuerzas de Seguridad del Gobierno* cold-bloodedly murdered three priests and two seminary students at the San Patricio church in the Belgrano neighborhood in Buenos Aires. The perpetrators took that poster from an adjacent room’s wall in the church and placed it on the murdered bodies, thus making a statement as clear as it was macabre about what happens to those who laugh at the power of the oppressive forces of authoritarianism.

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444 In the Spanish original: “¿Ven? Éste es el palito de abollar ideologías.”

445 “National Reorganization Process.”


447 “Security Forces of the Argentine Government.”

448 St. Patrick’s.


450 For an original photography taken by the police investigators at the time see Cosse, *Mafalda: Historia*, 190.

451 Cosse, *Nodal Entrevista.*
Cosse makes the important point of emphasizing that this force not only “dented ideologies” but also murdered with impunity.\textsuperscript{452} And the impunity of those murders lasts, indeed, until the present day, as no one has ever been charged and tried in a court of law for these crimes.\textsuperscript{453} The death squad appropriated Mafalda’s poster as a morbid mockery of the citizenry that was on affront with the state’s power and had bonded in complicity with each other—and with Quino—every time a reader smiled with \textit{Mafalda}. \textit{Mafalda} had been appropriated and used against the very people who enjoyed her soul saving humor as an instrument of terror.\textsuperscript{454}

But not only did appropriation of \textit{Mafalda} take place after 1976. Adulteration of images and text produced by Quino were used to serve political purposes, something that, already in itself, violated Quino’s neutral position in regards to politics. \textit{Mafalda} utilized as political tool was already an insult to Quino—and his audience—but this was amplified when an adulterated version of the same comic was produced.

\begin{quote}
Figure 3.6 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It showed an adulterated image of Manolito pointing at the famous police baton, i.e., the “little stick to dent ideologies,” and a dialogue bubble reading, in Spanish: “¡Ves, Mafalda! Gracias a este palito, hoy podes ir a la escuela (“See, Mafalda! Thanks to this little stick, you get to go to school today”). Full analysis and discussion of this image following this statement in main body below. For image source refer to footnote 455 in the caption below.
\end{quote}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure3.6.png}
\caption{Adulteration of Mafalda 1975\textsuperscript{455}}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{452} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{454} Cosse, Nodal Entrevista.
\item \textsuperscript{455} Cosse, \textit{Mafalda: Historia}, 138.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The wrongs of this adulteration, apart from the adulteration itself, are twofold. Two issues erupt from the image: aesthetically, Manolito’s face and font and grammar on the one hand, and to whom he addresses his line on the other. The ratio, perspective, and position of Manolito’s visible eye seem off, making it appear that Manolito’s face here was not drawn by Quino’s hand. The font and punctuation used are off as well. The font is stiff, implying a certain motoric deficiency, and while Quino’s grammar and orthography are flawless,456 here the comma between “Ves” (“see”) and “Mafalda” looks more like an accidental ink speck, suggesting that it could be missing altogether, as well as a missing accent on the dialectically changed conjugation of “poder” (“to be able to”), “puedes,” “podés” (“you can”). In addition, whereas a question mark after “Mafalda” would be grammatical—as the original in Fig. 5 above shows a question mark after the verb “ves” (“see”)—even with the addition of an exclamation mark for emphasis, the exclamation mark alone is atypical and is indicative of the author lacking basic grammatical and rhetorical skills, a sad state idiomatically referred to in Spanish as to being un ignorant.457 The fact that he specifically addresses Mafalda, and not a different character from the comic cast, or its readership, is a double kick in the stomach for Quino and anyone familiar with his character and that of his work. Clearly, Manolito addresses Mafalda as a contestation to Quino’s original strip where it is she who shows the baton to Miguelito as a vehicle to indirectly communicate with the public. The cruelty of the distortion deepens in a cacophonous twist of fate for both the

456 So much so that Quino does not skip the tilde (accent) even in abbreviations. For an example of this see Appendix C, Fig. C-2, where the tilde is clearly seen on the abbreviation “teléf” for teléfono (telephone).
457 Literally, “an ignorant,” or lacking education and/or manners, be that education formal or autodidactic in nature. The Spanish word “educación” encompasses both education, and social behavior and manners.
original strip\textsuperscript{458} and the first poster as a lose type of \textit{complexio}\textsuperscript{459} produces the macabre
effect of turning the original message of denunciation of the power of violent force over
the power of ideas against itself. “Denting ideologies” becomes, consequently, a
weapon against the very resistance fighting authoritarianism that created the idea in the
first place. A cold slap in the face.

Quino discusses additional cases of appropriation and adulteration of \textit{Mafalda}
strips that left him “perplexed.”\textsuperscript{460} The artist finds most disturbing appropriations that are
used in right wing political campaigns—clearly, without his permission—where the
supported stances are opposite to the very essence of Quino’s work. He specifically
mentions receiving a sticker from Spain where Guille, Mafalda’s little brother, appears
holding a Francoist flag,\textsuperscript{461} in itself absurd, as Guille inherits his older sister’s urge to
denounce all things encapsulated in fascism. Locally, another “punch in the stomach”
for Quino was the appropriation of a few \textit{Mafalda} strips by a member of the Argentine
military who used to be the Buenos Aires chief of police. This man stole \textit{Mafalda} to use
the comic strip for his political campaign, leaving the \textit{maestro}\textsuperscript{462} to wonder if “these
people read (my work) and didn’t understand anything or if they did and purposely
wanted to denaturalize it.”\textsuperscript{463} Again, the taste of morbid mockery makes itself present.
Even as recent as 2013, Mafalda’s face was appropriated once more, this time in the
Argentine province of Neuquén by the provincial political party of the Movimiento

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{458} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{459} \textit{Complexio} is a rhetorical figure in which \textit{anaphora} and \textit{conversio} are simultaneously done in the same clause, with \textit{anaphora}
being a kind of super \textit{alliteration} (repetition of a sound usually at the beginning of successive words), in which the same word or
phrase is repeated at the beginning of a series of phrases, and \textit{conversio} being a kind of super \textit{assonance} (repetition of a
consonant), in which the same word or phrase is repeated at the end of a phrase. See John Paul Adams, \textit{Rhetorical Figures},
\textsuperscript{460} Quino, “Quino, El Humor Libre,” Interview by Lucía Iglesias Kuntz, \textit{Correo de la UNESCO}, July-August (2000): 71,
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001201/120152s.pdf#120188
\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{462} Quino is widely referred to as \textit{maestro}.
\textsuperscript{463} Quino, \textit{El Humor Libre}, 71.
\end{flushright}
Popular Neuquino MPN (“Neuquén’s People’s Movement”). During the electoral campaign for the Argentine senate, the image on one of the posters shows Mafalda saying “I vote for (the duo) Pereyra-Crexell.” Quino, in his outright opposition to lend his work to political campaigns, outraged, stated that he wished “they had asked for my permission and I would have said no.” This type of behavior displayed by politicians engenders mistrust in Quino, as he reasons that if they have to steal already during the campaign, “how will things turn out later (once they are in power)?” The fact that Mafalda’s image has become so popular does not mean that whoever wishes to use it may do so, affirms the artist. It is her popularity and sense of familiarity as a comforting figure that adds to her power.

Mafalda’s transcendence lies in the very fact that her creator has her elegantly protest issues that reflect a universal reality, rather than one that is specifically localized in Argentina or the Riverplate. He does so in his attempt to contribute to change by means of bringing social awareness to the fore. His humor is of a social nature because the reader must have a certain knowledge of the world in order to understand it. That is the cultural predisposition that escapes children readers in strips such as the following, where Mafalda is trying to feed her turtle, named “Burocracia” (“Bureaucracy”).

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464 In the Spanish original “Yo voto Pereyra-Crexell.” Pereyra-Crexell refers to oil magnate and candidate to the senate Guillermo Pereyra and politician Lucila Crexell, both members of the MPN. (Movimiento Popular Neuquino, Neuquén’s People’s Movement). See Andrade, Usaron a Mafalda.
466 Ibid.
467 Ibid.
470 Sosa Abeya and Reyes, Political Humor, 1.
471 Quino, Toda Mafalda, 379.
Quino has Mafalda address her pet turtle in a way that balances distance with a sense of familiarity through the grammar the artist chooses for Mafalda’s voice. She says “your” in the Spanish polite form “su” as opposed to the familiar “tu,” and “lettuce” in the diminutive form, adding endearment in her approach to her pet in spite of using the polite form “su,” which creates distance through a tone of respect. The fact that Quino chooses a turtle to embody bureaucracy adds elements of humor as well as truth to the strip as it denotes the slow motion of bureaucratic processes, a theme that is here reinforced by the alluded air of aloofness with which the turtle responds when it keeps Mafalda waiting for four panels out of six when all the little girl is seeking is to feed it.

Mafalda’s transcendence also lays, perhaps, in much less of a mystery than one could otherwise deem. Her universality, even in the strips that touch on more local events,\textsuperscript{472} stems from a simple thematic dichotomy that Quino took upon himself to treat, through her: a tireless, perpetual confrontation between the weak and the

\textsuperscript{472} For example, the one frame comic strip with a perplexed Mafalda in close-up that was published in the newspaper one day after Onganía’s coup d’état. See Appendix B under “Protest and Censorship.”
powerful,\textsuperscript{473} fed by his own profound, genuine suffering for the abuse the weak
endure.\textsuperscript{474} Poverty, unemployment, women’s role, war, and oppression, are but a few of
the recurrent topics in \textit{Mafalda} that have global application due to their diachronic global
presence.\textsuperscript{475}

The reason why this confrontation between the weak and the powerful make her
as current today as she was when first published\textsuperscript{476} is simple: Quino’s own corollary on
this question is two-fold: first, the fact that \textit{Mafalda} is still being read indicates that—
despite Quino’s efforts to make a change for the better—the world did not evolve\textsuperscript{477} as
he had hoped. The globe is still plagued with conflict and injustice,\textsuperscript{478} with “(m)an
continually doing the same stupid things,”\textsuperscript{479} simply because “we humans are very
stupid.”\textsuperscript{480} This, in turn—making the second point—is indicative of \textit{Mafalda}’s failure to
make that hoped for change.\textsuperscript{481} So, the issues \textit{Mafalda} questions continue to be
unresolved,\textsuperscript{482} which coheres with Quino’s own contention that \textit{Mafalda}’s mission is to
“solve the dilemma of who are the good guys and who are the bad.”\textsuperscript{483} Perhaps one
needs to examine the patterns of sociopolitical behavior instead of the issues
themselves. For Umberto Eco, who wrote the preface for the first Italian \textit{Mafalda} edition

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{474} Quino, Quino, el Maestro.
\item \textsuperscript{475} See examples and analysis in Appendix.
\item \textsuperscript{476} Cosse, Nodal Entrevista.
\item \textsuperscript{478} Quino, interview by \textit{Revista Viva}.
\item \textsuperscript{479} Quino, “Si no Dejaba de Pintar a Mafalda me Pegaban un Tiro,” interview by Paula Arenas, \textit{20 Minutos}, April 14, 2014, http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2094169/0/entrevista-quino/malfada/cincuenta-aniversario/
\item \textsuperscript{480} Quino, \textit{Quino: Un Cardenal}, interview.
\item \textsuperscript{481} Quino, interview by \textit{Revista Viva}.
\item \textsuperscript{482} Ibid.
in 1968, the comic became popular in Europe because the strip’s “approaches to life are European.” Quino points out that in one of the Italian editions of *Mafalda*, organized by topics such as ‘politics’ and ‘economics,’ the reader could easily find the strips alluding to Silvio Berlusconi’s campaign. This is evidence of how current and valid the strip is in any period and across cultural barriers. The social and human problems that *Mafalda* treats are never passé. Mafalda’s applying bandaids to the globe in her living room acquires a new dimension as she becomes a cultural bandaid aiming to heal the ailments of the world.

In that she masterfully models how to speak to others across difference, *Mafalda* embodies the very concept of cosmopolitanism. It is, therefore, no surprise that the influence of this comic is so widespread, as its sales and multiple awards show. Quino, together with Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar can be found on the most read list in *Goodreads*. Quino’s *Mafalda: Todas las Tiras* alone is ranked third on the “20 Best Books of all Times” list, the same list in which *Harry Potter* is ranked sixth. A quick Google search in either Spanish or English with key words such as “Mafalda dolls,” “Mafalda magnets,” and so on, yields a myriad of hits with *Mafalda*...
collectibles to buy. On the streets of Buenos Aires, tourists and locals alike can purchase a multitude of *Mafalda* products such as shirts, bags, magnets, key chains, and pen holders. She continues to live also through these items.\textsuperscript{494} Below a picture with some of the *Mafalda* items I purchased from vendors on Florida street in Buenos Aires: \textsuperscript{495}

![Mafalda memorabilia](image)

Figure 3.8- Mafalda memorabilia. Photography © Deborah Boyd

One of the latest awards Quino has received summarizes *Mafalda’s* influence and transcendence best: Spain’s prestigious *Príncipe de Asturias* for the humanities and communication, awarded based on the “educative value and universal dimension” of his work, apart from noting that *Mafalda’s* “lucid message (...) is still current for wisely combining the simplicity” of the drawings with profundity of thought.\textsuperscript{496} To have a lasting


\textsuperscript{495} Photography Déborah Boyd, 2015.

\textsuperscript{496} “Quino: ‘Hay Páginas de Humor que me Gustan más que Varias Tiras de Mafalda,’” *El Cultural*, May 21, 2014, http://www.elcultural.com/noticias/letras/Quino-Hay-paginas-de-humor-que-me-gustan-mas-que-variars-tiras-de-Mafalda/6292
presence beyond fashion is something that only a classic can achieve,\(^{497}\) and that is exactly what *Mafalda* is: a classic of iconic dimensions.

*Mafalda: Between Fiction and Reality*

Even in recent years, with mobility and vision issues,\(^ {498}\) “el papá de Mafalda—”\(^ {499}\) as her creator is often referred to—\(^ {500}\) continues to answer questions about *Mafalda*’s influence, meaning, and significance in Argentine cultural history. Both Mafalda and *Mafalda* have grown and become larger than life. A “flesh and bone character,”\(^ {501}\) this oxymoron encapsulates the entity that Mafalda has become, to the point that Quino himself has felt distraught at the thought of “leaving her like that, by herself” on the bench in San Telmo after the inauguration of the statue that honors the character and her creator.\(^ {502}\)

For their being “just fiction,” fictional characters and plots should not be dismissed as historical primary sources,\(^ {503}\) which validates their application in education just as the rationale for awarding Quino with the *Príncipe de Asturias* award mentioned earlier states. Specifically for the study of history, the use of *Mafalda* as historical fiction in history class becomes especially relevant because if historical fiction is defined as a plot that is “wholly or partly about the public events and social conditions which are the

\(^{497}\) Peralta, Quino: Intento, 19.


\(^{499}\) “Mafalda’s dad”


\(^{501}\) Cosse, *Mafalda: Historia*, 263.

\(^{502}\) Ibid. For images of the statue, see section on Mafalda as cosmopolitan in the present chapter.

material of history, regardless of the time at which it is written,”504 then *Mafalda* is it for the strip’s acting as a reporting eye witness of exactly those public events and social conditions that perfused Argentine reality at the time of *Mafalda*’s creation, i.e., “the truth within the imaginary.”505 It is irrelevant that at the time of the strip’s creation it was Quino’s present that he was reflecting and weaving into his comic. It is still historical because he was writing and creating history that was going to be looked at as such later on. *Mafalda* exemplifies how a comic strip becomes a “constituent of the social and artistic history of Argentina,”506 and, as such, so much more than a mere fictional character.

This is exactly what makes *Mafalda* lend itself so well as educational material that can be applicable to a wide variety of courses, namely, in the field of linguistics: Spanish language instruction,507 with the possibility, in applied linguistics, for a comparative linguistic course on sociolinguistics or translation. In history and sociocultural fields,508 the strip is applicable in a course on Argentine history, culture, cultural and social history, or a section on Argentina in a wider course on the Riverplate, Southern Cone or Latin America.

**Identity and Stereotypes as Reflections of Culture in *Mafalda***

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In Riverplate culture, an immigrant from Spain named ‘Manolo’ who owned a convenience store is a strong stereotype rooted in the ubiquity of the convergence of these three factors of provenance, name, and occupation. Identity, strongly related to a social sense of belonging, is used in *Mafalda*\(^{509}\) as discursive device to critique the social codes of the time. The stereotypical Argentine collective identity of “el argentino vivo” (“the cunning Argentine”)\(^{510}\) is markedly contrasted by the population influx. Immigration waves into Argentina saw a great number of European immigrants in the twentieth century.\(^{511}\) Specifically relevant for this point is the great number of immigrants from Spain, who were struggling with low labor remuneration and social and political tensions at home, and were, therefore, looking to improve their lives, mainly in Argentina.\(^{512}\) Due to the common lower level of education of the majority of these immigrants, as well as their ‘simple’ occupations,\(^{513}\) they were labeled as “gallegos brutos” (“the brute Galicians”),\(^{514}\) which is, already in itself, before looking at the pejorative generalization, an aberration to the understanding of identity as this phrase is still used today in regards to all and any immigrant from Spain,\(^{515}\) and not only those whose provenance is the Autonomous Community of Galicia in the Spanish Northwest.\(^{516}\) No matter how artificial a category this may be or how negative a

\(^{509}\) Cosse, *Nodal Entrevista*.


\(^{513}\) González Achaval, *La Inmigración Española En*.


\(^{515}\) González Achaval, *La Inmigración Española En*.

The connotation it carries, cultural division by contrast of ‘own’ and ‘foreign’ ended up greatly enriching the cultural construct of nationality, and, by extension, the national-collective identity of Argentine society.

Society in Argentina is one markedly affected by the dynamism of migratory waves, both inward as well as outbound. This demographic fluidity inspires questions regarding cultural identity, its maintenance and evolution, and the construct of social reality, the latter creating, in turn, stereotypical archetypes in the socio-cultural quotidianity of Argentina in the 1960’s and 1970’s when *Mafalda* witnessed the ‘real world’ that is reflected in the strip. In this manner, Manolito’s identity finds refuge in his father’s neighbourhood convenience store, thus perpetuating the stereotype with the triad ‘Man from Spain’-‘Manolo’-‘convenience store’. It is in that refuge that the stereotyped immigrant can maintain his identity in order to reflect this aspect of urban Argentine society that will allow for the reader to identify with *Mafalda*’s universe through aspects of it. Manolito displays an array of behaviors that belong with his stereotyped characterization: he is a “brute”, dishonest in business, stingy, and shows capitalistic interests to the extreme of equating money to a romantic partner. In considering the amalgamation of the identities present in that society at the time as a site of inevitable cultural blending, a broader experience of Argentine mentality is unveiled.

**The Fluidity of Race in Riverplate Society: Historical Background**

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518 For an example on this facet of Manolito’s characterization see Appendix A.

519 For an example of Manolito allocating romantic value to money see Appendix A.
Looking at race and whiteness, anthropologist Gastón Gordillo makes an essential point of these not “[being] biological objects but bio-political constructs used to divide up human beings in units allegedly different from each other. Whiteness, blackness, mestizaje, or indigeneity are shifting, conjunctural social positionings whose meanings and boundaries are arbitrary, negotiable, slippery, and policed.” As such, the perception of race in a culture is left to the construct that members of that culture choose to create throughout time. For today’s Argentina, that construct started with how the XVI century Spanish invaders saw the native peoples whose culture was already established in the region.

The response of the Spanish colonizers to the existent racial and cultural plurality of XVIII century Riverplate was to segregate the different ethnic groups according to their arbitrary categorization, which planted the seed for a social construct of race that will remain in place for generations to come. Based on the pre-conquest Spanish tripartite social order consisting of royalty, clergy, and commoners, this social construct of race was a transatlantically transplanted system of casts where any and all whites took the place of the absent Spanish blue blooded in the Riverplate. The adapted cast system of social hierarchization was originally constituted by four main such

523 Quarleri, Mestizaje, 34.
“categories”: “Indians,” Europeans, Spanish or “whites,” “Africans or blacks,” and the general blanket term of “pardos" for any mix in between, including mestizos, mulatos, and a combination of mestizo and mulato. With the addition of other dividing elements, what started, then, as an adapted social order during colonial times continued to solidify and establish itself till becoming the intrinsic social matrix still in place in today’s Riverplate. Together with religious sectarianism and political division—especially after this chasm being accentuated by the two Perón administrations in the 1940s, dictatorships, and the 1982 Falkland/Malvinas War—the construct of race not only failed to view the new, usually darker skinned, “criollo," as the ‘new race’ with which the new generations of Argentine born could identify and feel a sense of belonging, but it continued to act as a divisive agent that remains active today: darker skin is socioculturally associated with lower socioeconomic—and by extension, rural sectors—of Argentine society. In that society, whiteness is widely

525 In modern Spanish, pejorative for “brown skinned.”
527 A person of combined “white” and “black” blood, heritage, and/or culture.
530 See Introduction for more on the topic.
532 First generation of Hispanic Americans of European, mainly Spanish, ancestry—however, not always “pure blooded” as a result of inter-racial unions. See Leonardo Strejilevich, Sociología Argentina Criolla: Dolores y Amores de una Argentina Invertebrada (Madrid: Editorial Académica Española, 2013), 2.
accepted as the ‘non-racial,’ natural norm.\textsuperscript{534} The fact that “(t)he widespread perception that Argentina is essentially white has meant that (...) Argentines of mestizo, indigenous, and African ancestry are perceived as foreign,\textsuperscript{535} whether they are immigrants or not.\textsuperscript{536} This strong, alienating sense of ‘otherness’ is markedly reflected in \textit{Mafalda}, usually in the contrast expressed in the constant opposing positions about race between Susanita\textsuperscript{537} and Mafalda—the cosmopolitan.

\textbf{The Meaning of Being Cosmopolitan}

Cosmopolitanism understands the inherent egalitarian quality of the human condition that seeks to learn from other cultures instead of perceiving them as a threat, seeks to intensify and increase mutual respect and compassion among peoples and extinguish sectarian opinions and behaviors.

Though a moral position,\textsuperscript{538} cosmopolitanism has resulted in the creation of international bodies of law such as the United Nations or the Claims Resolution Tribunal\textsuperscript{539} that act as enforcers of the maintenance of human rights transnationally. Though rather a paradigm of ideas geared toward dual obligations to one’s compatriots as well as to one’s co-earthlings than a concrete, established, and consolidated political theory \textit{per se},\textsuperscript{540} the general contention of cosmopolitanism is a need to expand from a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{For an example see strip under subheading “Racism” in the appendix.}
\footnote{The Claims Resolutions Tribunal, located in Zurich, Switzerland, and New York, is “responsible for processing claims relating to assets deposited in Swiss banks by Victims or Targets of Nazi persecution prior to and during the Second World War.” The Tribunal processes claims by Holocaust victims or their heirs in asset litigation against Swiss Banks and “other Swiss Entities.” See “United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, Chief Judge Edward R. Korman Presiding (CV-96-4849),” \textit{Holocaust Victims Assets Litigation (Swiss Banks)}, n.d., http://www.crt-ii.org/index_en.phtm}
purely, or mainly, localized sense of belonging toward an expanded, more humanistic\textsuperscript{541} universalism. This manner of "planetary conviviality,"\textsuperscript{542} therefore, is underlined by the one idea common to all the "disparate views"\textsuperscript{543} offered under the umbrella of cosmopolitanism, namely, that "any adequate political outlook must (...) comprehend the world as a whole" in one form or other.\textsuperscript{544}

Cosmopolitanism, therefore, interpreted radically or not, is more than an identification of the self in the other\textsuperscript{545} and invoking human rights;\textsuperscript{546} it is the responsibility\textsuperscript{547} to abolish "the divisions between people that are created primarily by religion, race, nationality and ethnicity."\textsuperscript{548} As this characterization of cosmopolitanism is defined by what not to do, ergo, not to subscribe to discrimination, for example, a more positive delineation would be to respect all people equally simply because all human beings are fundamentally equal,\textsuperscript{549} without alluding to ignoring or negating cultural differences.\textsuperscript{550} On the contrary, not only does cosmopolitanism not negate nor reject cultural differences, but for philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, the necessity of cultures maintaining a dialogue with each other is an integral part of being a
cosmopolitan. Hence Appiah’s assertion that “culture as (...) plural,”551 which concurs with Pollock et al’s fundamental concept of pluralism for cosmopolitanism manifested in the very title of their work: “Cosmopolitanisms,” with the noun in plural form.552 For Appiah, the cosmopolitan strives to find balance between his/her both simultaneous and intertwined duties to co-nationals and/or members of the same culture on the one hand, as well as to all fellow humans on the other, in a way that not only respects but also celebrates cultural differences,553 as well as taking these as learning opportunities554 that result in so called cultural “contamination,” though said contamination is essential to, and an integral part of the “homo sum555 credo”, of being human.556

Mafalda, the Cosmopolitan

Where cosmopolitanism relates to justice—a crucial theme in Mafalda—is rooted in the idea that “the accident of where one is born” should bear “no effect on one’s economic prospects” and that no just society can allow such influence of arbitrary factors on a person’s destiny557 because “accidents of history” such as borders are “morally irrelevant” as they have “no rightful claim on our conscience.”558 On the same token, just as where an individual starts their story should bear no weight on how that story is lived, the reverse is also true as “(v)alues aren’t birthright. (One) need(s) to keep

551 Appiah, Mistaken Identities; Appiah, Cosmopolitanism: Ethics, xxi.
552 Pollock et al, Cosmopolitanisms.
553 Appiah, Trump, Brexit; Appiah, Cosmopolitanism, Ethics, xv, 113.
554 As concrete expressions of this didactic dialogue among cultures, philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah presents the case of Enlightenment thinkers being receptive to other peoples’ literature and lives. Such one example is (today’s) Germany’s Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s career as poet being anchored by a wide spectrum of inspiration ranging from Roman Elegies to XIV century Persian poet Hafiz, or Edinburgh’s David Hume’s work on “the ways” of China and Egypt, among other places. See Appiah, Cosmopolitanism, Ethics, xv, 4-5.
555 Latin for “I am human.” See Appiah, Cosmopolitanism, Ethics, 113.
557 Scheffler, Cosmopolitanism, Justice, 69.
558 Appiah, Cosmopolitanism, Ethics, xvi.
caring about them” for them to carry moral significance in life. In *Mafalda*, Quino dissolves the accident of birthplace into an emulsion of universal dimensions as they are naturally infused with central moral facets with that rightful claim on our conscience.

Although Quino had painted his local picture, the themes were universal, such as injustice, war, and bureaucracy, as well as censorship and political change or stagnation, among others. Likewise, the sociocultural phenomena on which he shines light were happening in other parts of the world as well, not only in Argentina: rebellious youth, the role of women—with Raquel, Mafalda’s mother, vastly presenting the frustrations of housewives—and the economic preoccupations of male providers, embodied in Mafalda’s father, as well as race and discrimination. Wherever *Mafalda* went, she incarnated local issues across borders.

Perhaps the best way to explain Mafalda’s cosmopolitanism is to relate to an article by culture journalist Marcelo Moreno, which encapsulates the essence of that sentiment of familiarity that *Mafalda* elicits as well as that sense of belonging, even to a neighbourhood. Moreno claims to be Mafalda’s neighbour because her statue “looks onto the passersby” while resting on her bench at one of the corners in San Telmo neighbourhood, near to where he resides. Through his expressing part of Argentine cultural idiosyncrasy such as figuratively claiming to be Mafalda’s neighbour, Moreno establishes Mafalda’s strong cultural importance. And Mafalda’s physical presence, together with that of Susanita and Manolito, have become one of the staples of Buenos Aires.

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559 Appiah, *Mistaken Identities: Culture*.
560 See Appendices for examples.
561 Cosse, *Nodal Entrevista*.
563 Ibid.
Aires’ sight seeing, where so many locals and tourists get their picture taken, including Quino himself. The very location of the statues reinforces the fluidity between reality and fiction. Quino’s inspiration for Mafalda and her surroundings was San Telmo neighbourhood, and it was on that very block that a younger Quino first resided with his wife, Alicia Colombo, as newlyweds. Just as Borges, maintains Moreno, Mafalda remains both profoundly Argentinean and simultaneously she “belongs to us all” as the international visits to her statue and pan-global sales demonstrate.

Mafalda as a Witness

For a witness report to be of any value, the report must be believed. Consequently, for a witness to be credible, authority must be adjudicated to the witness’ word. Mafalda possesses these key elements of witnessing and reporting because the comic strip “speaks” to its readership by means of reflecting and shaping their every-day reality both in its most immediate local “pond” in Argentina and the Riverplate, and across geo-political and cultural borders. Mafalda’s power as a witness, therefore, lays in the fact that the strip acquired the ability to shape and to become an integral part of Argentine and Riverplate culture. It lent the strip with political power: the audience listens to Mafalda because the comic unmistakably shows the daily truths with a bittersweet humor that makes the readership both smile—at times, in complicity—as

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565 See Appendix.
566 Moreno, Mafalda, Nuestra.
567 See minute 20:50 of “Puerto Cultura - Quino (720p),” You Tube video, 51:38, posted by sirjohndigweed on November 19, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7Hh65hW01Y. This program was originally broadcasted by Channel 9, Buenos Aires, with Jorge Coscia as host.
568 Ibid.
well as think about important world issues brushed with existential tones that are indivisible from human nature.

Historian Yuval Noah Harari investigated the relationship between experience and authority in regards to credibility of witness reports and its effect on the understanding of historic events. He concluded that while the Middle Ages and the modern era were dominated by the eye-witness, who "drew their authority from the observation of objective facts," the late modern era is characterized by the "flesh-witness, who draws authority from undergoing subjective experiences."\(^{569}\) Drawing on Harari’s research, Quino—via the fictional characters in *Mafalda*—draws his authority from his actual undergoing of the subjective experiences that were an integral part of life in Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike the earlier eye-witnesses, whose credibility depended also on reviews by reputed contemporaries,\(^{570}\) *Mafalda*’s character’s witnessing is indirectly validated by the point in time in which it was produced and published through her audience simply because many audience members are still alive, as *Mafalda* continues to be re-printed, translated,\(^{571}\) and internationally sold out.\(^{572}\)

*Mafalda*’s—and Quino’s—authority as a witness is trifold: first, the knowledge to be reported consists of objective facts that are independently verifiable. Second, eye-witnesses will know more facts revolving the event/s said individuals have witnessed than others, and third, they will "know these facts with more certainty than others."\(^{573}\)


\(^{570}\) Although it is noted that such reviews were at times meant to support and promote sales of false witnessing for the sheer sake of financial gain. See Annerose Menninger, *Die Macht der Augenzeugen: Neue Welt und Kannibalen-Mythos, 1492-1600* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1995), 237-238.


\(^{572}\) Even during my visits in *Ediciones de la Flor* in Buenos Aires, the publishing house itself, where the books are also printed, was out of copies for *Mafalda* items, including some of the recent English translations to the ten compilations originally published in Spanish in the 1960s and 1970s. Cosse, *Mafalda Historia*, 15, and back cover; Daniel Divinsky, *Daniel Divinsky Mi Mayor*.

\(^{573}\) Harari, *Armchairs*, 81.
The flesh-witness *Mafalda* is credible to the strip’s readers because they identify with the representations the panels showcase. The ideas represented in the comic are authenticated by contemporary flesh-witnesses that are simultaneously part of the readership. The resulting authority *Mafalda* earns through that authenticating process endows the strip with power: power to raise awareness to issues of the time across social, political, and cultural boundaries, power to resonate with people beyond the immediate local “pond” and throughout the decades, power to denounce and protest, to shock and shake the ground, power to make people smile and laugh despite oppression, power to make the masses think, power to offer that hope and optimism incarnated in some facets of the characters, and, most importantly, power to communicate with the audience\(^{574}\) at times where free speech was truncated by heavy censorship and self-censorship. *Mafalda*’s “reports” encapsulate universal historic moments, snapshots diachronically carried into the strip’s future; a time capsule that remained relevant beyond merely being a cultural artifact worthy of study mainly due to its universality and humanism.

**The Audience: the Birth of *Mafalda* and its Readership**

Although one could think that the pairing of the two elements in this subsection is odd, namely, *Mafalda*’s genesis and the strip’s readers, they are so tightly intertwined with each other that their marriage is unavoidable. Who and what inspired Quino to create the characters, their surroundings, their conversations and utterances, automatically make the comic represent facets of Quino’s reality as an Argentine thinker

\(^{574}\) Quino: *Mafalda, Enfant*, 56.
who happens to draw comics. As such, it is only natural these facets resonate with the audience as members of that same sociocultural and political reality. However, at least in the very beginning, the publications in which the strip was published also influenced who this readership was going to be, where the vortex of the Mafalda phenomenon was about to begin.

Quino explains that Mafalda was born out of a request by an advertising agency on behalf of the well-known home appliances company Siam, who had decided to market its regular products under a new name: Mansfield. The product Mansfield was interested in was one of advertising on a subliminal level: a strip about a typical Argentine family where Mansfield’s products were not named but “if the mom was vacuum cleaning, that the (Mansfield) model was more or less depicted, the fridge also,” and the strip would be given to newspapers as a free gift. As part of the character of the contract, Quino was asked that the name of his character sounded similar to that of the consigning company, using the letters “M”, “F”, and “L” so that the character’s name suggested the Mansfield name. He found the perfect match in the 1962 Argentine movie Dar la Cara (Facing It), based on a novel by David Viñas and directed by José A. Martínez Suárez, where there was a baby called Mafalda. Quino is unaware of the reasons, but the Mansfield campaign never came to fruition and was abandoned by the mother company. Instead, the artist stored the strip in a drawer until he sold the “ten,
twelve strips” to the magazine Primera Plana for publication in September 1964 through friend Julián Delgado, after ten years of having been publishing other works of humor. Mafalda’s “address” at Primera Plana was short lived, and after 6 months Quino moved the strip to newspaper El Mundo due to copyright disagreements, where it was to stay for the next three years until its final move to Siete Días Ilustrados, where it remained until the very last strip in 1973.

Although Quino does not feel Mafalda was innovative, the readership will surely disagree. The artist explains that Mafalda did not innovate simply because his own style is the “continuation of others” such as Lino Palacios, Divito, and Saúl Steimberg, and, in addition, he was asked to follow certain guidelines when creating Mafalda. The main character, Mafalda, was the result of a contract that specified certain markers that delineated Mafalda’s family as a regular family of the time where the mom cleaned the house, and that the strip followed the concept behind Charles M. Schultz’s Peanuts. Until Peanuts, characters manifested only one or two characteristics. Where Schultz especially innovated was in endowing his characters with naturally conflictive abilities that humanized them: they were able to hate and love, they were good and bad, and they were capable of anger. Furthermore, he made the strip more tangible and real by changing the graphics: when the characters yelled, the font was bigger to denote both volume and the accompanying emotion. Quino humbly maintains he merely followed his own analysis of these innovative elements in Schultz’s work and emulated

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582 Quino Cuenta. Quino, Mafalda, Enfant, 53.
583 Quino Cuenta.
584 Soria, Casi Medio.
585 Quino, La Pausa.
586 Ibid.
587 Ibid.
them, and he goes as far as to assert that “(w)ithout Schultz, Mafalda would not have been what she is.”\textsuperscript{588} That may all very well be so for Quino, but Mafalda’s role as an advocate of the weak, the earth, peace, freedom, among numerous other genuinely noble causes, cast her into the mold of heroin for her audience and a source of comfort in a historical context of danger and uncertainty. Umberto Eco specifically refutes resemblances between \textit{Mafalda} and \textit{Peanuts} and contends that while the latter deals with the interior of individuals and lacks the presence of adults, \textit{Mafalda} projects itself toward society as well as toward other members of said society, and children measure themselves with and emulate the adults in their lives and surroundings.\textsuperscript{589} \textit{Peanuts} may have well been a forced model for \textit{Mafalda} but it is the particular to \textit{Mafalda} content in the strip that made her the icon that she is, and that is all Quino, not Schultz.

\textit{Mafalda}’s beginnings are very well documented and have been widely covered by both journalists and academics. I offer but a time line to prevent repetition. Given the official character of her work, as it is included in Quino’s own \textit{Toda Mafalda},\textsuperscript{590} it is a natural choice to take journalist Sylvina Walger’s investigation as starting point. In consideration of the different circumstances of Argentine society surrounding Mafalda, I divide Mafalda’s history in three periods. The first period is between 1964\textsuperscript{591} and 1973, the years during which Mafalda’s was being produced by Quino, and published first weekly, bi-weekly, and then daily\textsuperscript{592} in \textit{Primera Plana}, \textit{El Mundo}, and \textit{Siete Días}

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\textsuperscript{588} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{589} Marín, \textit{Mafada Recibe}.
\textsuperscript{590} 29\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2014).
\textsuperscript{592} Cosse, \textit{Mafalda: Historia}, 44, 62.}
Ilustrados, which were established publications. The second period includes the preamble to and the last military dictatorship in Argentina, ergo, 1973-1983, and the third is from the return to democracy to the present day. In this chapter I deal mainly with the first and second periods.

In the first period, while the weekly, “opinion forming” Time magazine style Primera Plana, founded in 1962 by journalist Jacobo Timerman, focused in political, financial, and cultural news as well as current events, weekly magazine Siete Días Ilustrados featured domestic and world “valuable stories of current interest.” The readership of these publications was, therefore, interested in politics and current events, and for Quino, this journalistic constraint meant that he had to adjust the topics in Mafalda to ensure they contained elements related to these interests in order to reflect the concerns of the time, though he still weaved them with “incursions” into more domestic themes such as family relations, school, and neighborhood friends that had characterized the original strips he had created for Mansfield. Through the mass media, these young, intelligent, educated, middle class readers learned

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596 Daniel Divinsky, Mi Mayor.
597 Cosse, Mafalda: Historia, 53.
598 Quino, Mafalda: Enfant, 53.
599 Walger, Mafalda Inédita, 538.
601 Quino, Mafalda: Enfant, 53.
603 Quino, Mafalda: Enfant, 53.
about the latest political events that shaped their daily reality. Quino’s method was simple: read the newspaper, take note of important news, and comment in the form of Mafalda. By the time Quino gave birth to Mafalda, he was already one of the most renowned artists in the world of comics in the Southern Cone with a rich publishing curriculum with newspapers and magazines publishing his political laden strips, and a book, Mundo Quino, which saw light in 1963. To Quino’s surprise, Mafalda’s social criticism swiftly spread first inside of her native Argentina, and then internationally, but it was the Italian edition in 1969 with a foreword by Umberto Eco that opened the big doors. Due to the strips popularity, Mafalda has been translated into approximately thirty languages, including Braille.

I spoke earlier of the complicity that had developed between Quino and his readership. Until the strip’s disappearance in 1974, Mafalda specifically played a special role in this unique relationship for having been the main socio-political reading for many. Within that relationship of complicity with Mafalda—and her creator—the readers identify themselves with the characters, their feelings and opinions, also

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604 Cosse, Mafalda: Historia, 35, 37; Bartolucci, La Contestación.
605 Quino, Mafalda: Enfant, 53.
606 Cosse, Mafalda: Historia, 37, 38.
607 Quino, Mafalda: Enfant, 53.
608 Ibid., 52.
609 Cosse, Nodal Entrevista.
610 Mafalda was an instant success. Its sales rates sky-rocketed fast, and remained very high throughout the years till the present day, where the strip still ranks at the top positions for sales with thousands of copies being sold every year in Latin America alone. According to Isabella Cosse, Mafalda’s first compilation in book form, published in 1966 by Jorge Álvarez sold out in one day, with 40’000 copies sold within the first three months, with the regularly published on the newspaper comic raising even wider readership across Latin America. By 1973, this very same first compilation had sold hundreds of thousands of copies. Multiple editions of all compilations of Mafalda have been published, and sold. In Argentina alone, 1994 sales of Mafalda compilation books is estimated at 20 million copies. See Cosse, Mafalda: Middle, 35-36, 58.
611 Moreno, Mafalda, Nuestra; Quino, Quino, el Maestro.
614 This identification is aided by trade skills Quino puts to use such as his application of geometry for the face shape and contour of each character for this very purpose. See Quino, Quino: Si no Dejaba.
because the characters, their feelings and opinions, reflect those of the readership as Quino’s inspiration is the daily life in and for Argentine society. That being so, the readers see themselves in Mafalda’s characters: middle class problems, hopes, and fears. Mafalda’s resonance with its audience is of such magnitude that the strip’s presence and influence in every day life is ubiquitous: the comic is used to frame popular articles on unrelated topics from gardening through how chefs infuse delicious flavors into exquisite soups that would “even conquer Mafalda’s heart,” and urban architecture to reporting a feud among two Argentine divas, and even creating neologisms such as “mafaldismo” when referring to idiosyncracies typical to the precocious little girl. Two adjectives describe Mafalda’s influence best: massive and pervasive. In a good way.

On Censorship, Protest and Resistance, and Exile

As someone who has lived together with censorship since the beginning of his career, Quino’s protest against censorship is clearly depicted in Mafalda. When asked about his relationship with censorship, Quino’s position is that of caution as he...
proceeds to explain that he had always lived in countries under military regimes and had, hence, learned what was “utterable” and what was better to ‘leave in the inkwell.’\textsuperscript{627} As Isabella Cosse asserts, the artist’s response both presupposes censorship as a given, as well as delineates the parameters of what may be safe to say—or not—in the context of an authoritarian regime. For the readership, what Quino did say through \textit{Mafalda} resonated—and still does—with the great part of the public opinion that was against dictatorship.\textsuperscript{628}

Due to its ability to capture the growing public opinion against authoritarian regimes, \textit{Mafalda} engendered a political and personal security\textsuperscript{629} issue for Quino to the point where, by the time he stopped producing new \textit{Mafalda} strips, he feared to get shot by the dictatorship: “If I didn’t stop drawing \textit{Mafalda}, they would have put a bullet in me, or two, or four.”\textsuperscript{630} Although Quino repeatedly explains that he stopped drawing \textit{Mafalda} due to creative reasons,\textsuperscript{631} the fact that he thought he was in danger to be murdered or ‘disappeared’\textsuperscript{632} must have played an important role in his decision, as he adds that Mafalda could never stop saying what he (through her) was thinking, and that, given the cascade of bloodshed that had so intensified after Pinochet’s coming to power,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cosse, \textit{Mafalda: Historia}, 180.
\item Ibid; Cosse, \textit{Mafalda: Middle}, 57.
\item Quino, \textit{Quino: Si no Dejaba}.
\item Quino, \textit{La Pausa}.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Mafalda’s talking would have gotten him killed, so he decided to stop drawing her. An additional major decision followed the first, and Quino left Argentina shortly after.\textsuperscript{633}

Daniel Divinsky, Quino’s editor since 1970, makes a point of Quino’s exile to Milan in 1976 being voluntary in the sense that Quino and his wife, Alicia, decided to leave Argentina because they were scared for their safety and not because they were explicitly told to leave.\textsuperscript{634} The main event that precipitated his exile was a break-in into his home. Never having found out who had kicked his door open or the reasons behind it, Quino felt his life was threatened and opted to find safe haven abroad.\textsuperscript{635} In that sense, one could call it a self-imposed exile, though considering it was common knowledge that to find one’s front door broken meant that one had twenty-four hours to leave the country—a quasi ‘courtesy’ notice by the \textit{militares}—it was not self-imposed at all.

At a time were censorship was rampant, another cultural staple of Argentine culture, soccer, became “sad” when the crowds screaming “goooooaaaaaaal” during the 1978 world cup was arranged to be louder than illegally imprisoned and the tortured political prisoners’ screams near-by.\textsuperscript{636} In the “land of tango and Mafalda,”\textsuperscript{637} the nature of censorship during the world cup was such that it was forbidden by decree of law to criticize the national team or its head coach, Luis César Menotti. Although the international community looked the other way, including FIFA—then lead by João

\textsuperscript{633} Quino, \textit{Quino: Si no Dejaba}.
\textsuperscript{634} Divinsky, \textit{interview}.
\textsuperscript{635} Quino, \textit{Quino, el Maestro}; Divinsky, interview.
\textsuperscript{636} Ten blocks away from the soccer stadium, thousands of illegally detained people were being tortured at the clandestine detention center that was situated at the building of the army’s School of Mechanics (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada). “El Mundial 78, Manchado de Sangre,” \textit{La Gaceta}, May 17, 2013, http://www.lagaceta.com.ar/nota/545081/politica/mundial-78-manchado-sangre.html
Havelange—and western governments, teams such as Holland and individuals such as the German goal keeper publicly showed displeasure with the regime and support for local entities fighting the dictatorship and its actions of horror such as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.\textsuperscript{638}

Other forms of protest were more subtle. The very hanging of the Mafalda poster pointing at the “little stick that dents ideologies” is one.\textsuperscript{639} Deeper into the quasi “safer” realm of privacy, resistance can take place in the intimacy between reader and literature, or in this case, comic. The quotation marks around “safer” represent the vulnerability of the reader within the volatility of that safe private space where readers had been dispossessed of the freedom to choose what to read, as the readers could easily lose their freedom, or worse, vanish to never be heard of again on the charge of ‘subversion’.

Quino is finding growing old a rather difficult task that has imbued his wit with a new degree of intense black humor: “Old age is a piece of crap that really scares you. I give old age a political sense. It is as if all of a sudden Pinochet descends upon you and starts to forbid things (to you) (....).”\textsuperscript{640} An excellent analogy.

Drawing on Appiah’s cosmopolitan dual concept of duty and responsibility both toward local culture as well as fellow humans everywhere, \textit{Mafalda} is not only truly Argentine and an integral part of that nation’s pride and identity, but she is also patrimony of the world. As a vehicle for Quino to positively communicate with the public, even when alluding—subtly or bluntly—to negative aspects of Argentine reality, which

\textsuperscript{638} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{639} Cosse, \textit{Nodal entrevista}.
\textsuperscript{640} “La vejez es una porquería que te asusta mucho. Yo le doy un sentido político a la vejez. Es como que te caiga Pinochet y te empiece a prohibir cosas,” Quino, \textit{Quino, el Maestro}. 
included negative aspects of human universal reality, *Mafalda*'s key to power lays in the fact that it brought social awareness to the fore via highlighting the constant tug of war between the weak and the powerful. Through identification of the readership with *Mafalda*, a bond between the audience and the comic strip was born and reinforced with time. The readers sense of complicity with the strip’s characters, especially Mafalda herself as the most outspoken in her advocacy for the weak against the powerful, becomes a source of comfort as they dare say things the readership is but too afraid to utter out of fear for their own personal security and that of their families in a context of state terror.

Both for Quino and the audience, appropriation and/or adulteration of *Mafalda* to serve any political purpose is, by definition, a denaturalization of *Mafalda*'s essence, especially when done by right wing political factions, politicians, or governments. Such political actors twisted *Mafalda*'s original message—a message of denunciation of the power of violent force over the power of ideas, a message of protest and resistance against authoritarianism—against itself, thus creating a morbid mockery of Quino’s intent. It was precisely via these means that such agents—be that either aspiring to be or already in power—turned the sanctuary of “freedom” that *Mafalda* had become and the site of refuge the strip offered to readers into an instrument of manipulation and terror by the very agents that *Mafalda* denounces.

Though a fictional character, Mafalda, embodying the other fictional characters in her gang, not only transcends synchronic cultural and idiomatic boundaries; it diachronically transcends sociocultural and political boundaries that translate into transcending coordinative boundaries of time and place as if *Mafalda* belonged to a
different dimension where entities live beyond the linearity of time and space as routinely perceived by daily human reality: the dimension of ideas, that realm of timelessness where ideas live, ever so valid and applicable to the daily reality produced by some aspects of human nature such as power, violence, injustice, war, poverty, racial and gender discrimination. This precocious little girl and her friends are both witnesses and reporters of an era, and, under Quino’s masterful hand, they do so in a timeless fashion that lives in the realms of a universal dimension.

It is through its established authority that Mafalda remains iconically current and valid across cultural barriers also because Quino’s artistry showcases the sociocultural conditions and reality of Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s via his portrayal of social stereotypes. Social identity, strongly related to a sense of belonging, is a discursive device present in Mafalda that critiques the social conventions of the time. Immigrants from Spain are represented by Manolito and his father, Manolo, and stereotypically depicted as “brutes,” uneducated, and ignorant. This sort of depiction, though abominable, is an example of how Quino’s comic strip presents the reader with a broader experience of Argentine mentality that includes a social commentary that critiques the social codes of the time in addition to political critique.

Armed with a sharp sense of justice, Mafalda “talks” to its audience, who no longer feel alone. Readers identify with both the characters and the issues presented in Quino’s comic, seeing themselves in them. Providing the readers with a sense of hope, Mafalda offers safe passage through the storm as she dares say what the audience cannot: calling out injustice, racism, and inequality, and standing up to tyranny in the form of authoritarianism and state terror. Able to bring a voice to the repressed,
intelligently weaved in masterfully crafted humor, *Mafalda* rapidly acquired lasting authority and power to communicate with the audience and offer comfort and refuge across time, space, and culture. Due to that very same authority and credibility, the strip has proven itself more than worthy as an historical source to study a myriad of subjects from authoritarianism, censorship, and social issues of Argentina during the 1960s-1970s that are still relevant today as governments still feed citizens that soup Mafalda so cares to resist. *Mafalda* is a classic of iconic caliber simply because she is *everyman*.641

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641 By using the word “everyman” here, I allude to the XV century English morality play “The Summoning of Everyman” because, just as the play talks about how “Man” is to attain salvation, Mafalda is the way to get there (by speaking up intelligently, by calling out injustice and abuse, by protecting the weak, by giving voice to the oppressed: by being just and doing what is right). For full text of the Leipzig, Insel Verlag edition of 1921 of “The Summoning of Everyman” see Library of University of California, Los Angeles, https://archive.org/stream/summoningofevery00leip/summoningofevery00leip_djvu.txt
Chapter 4- Site of Refuge

“What the artist has seen we shall probably never see again, or at least never see in exactly the same way; but if he has actually seen it, the attempt he has made to lift the veil [between the senses and the deeper self] compels our imitation. His work is an example which we take as a lesson.”

Henri Bergson

When research work investigates readers’ response, or literary theory is either applied or developed to study the effects of art work on its audience, it does so based on the assumption that a relationship between author/creator and reader exists, yet this relationship appears to be taken as a given without sufficient examination of its dynamics, and how they may influence the readership when studying aesthetic responses in audiences. Where my work differs is precisely in this area as the examination of the author/character-reader relationship is one of the main foci of my dissertation due to its being an indivisible part of any attempt at an explanation to Mafalda’s power and influence as art that mediates social agency via visual “entities”—in Mafalda’s case, a little girl—and non-visual, such as the themes Quino treats in and through his work.

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642 Bergson, Laughter, 162.
644 Alfred Gell, Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 27, quoted in Nick J. Fox and Pam Allred, Sociology and the New Materialism: Theory, Research, Action (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2017), 26, 83. In Alfred Gell’s system of art ‘actors’—be those active, ‘agents,’ or passive, ‘patients’—the audience is the ‘recipient’ of the art work, whereby both artwork and creator are ‘indices,’ with ‘prototypes’ standing for any aspects of society represented in the ‘index,’ be those visual ‘entities’ or non-visual. Gell hierarchizes indices between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ agents, whereby the difference lays in intent; while he attributes the ability of having intent to animate beings—thus deeming these ‘primary’—secondary ones remain categorically different in their nature as ‘artifacts’ such as “dolls, cars (or) works of art,” and will, therefore, be ‘secondary’ agents. Primary agents “distribute” their agency through the secondary ones. See Gell, Art and Agency, 20, 26.
According to philosopher Henri Bergson, a member of the audience can interpret the artist's passion "only by analogy with what we have ourselves experienced," given that "our souls are impenetrable to one another." In the perception process of a piece of art by the observer "(w)e may, indeed, give general names to these feelings, but they cannot be the same thing in another soul," so a process of identification must take place for the emotional bond between audience and creator to happen. Such identification is a "multidimensional construct" where the "basic dimensions" are "cognitive and emotional empathy" on the one hand, and "the sensation" of merging with the fictional character on the other. In order to tighten this identification, the perception of the art object by the observer is enriched when this observer sees said object as a "living character," i.e., art as a living entity, not static. A process of (symbiotic?) identification, therefore, between audience and artist, mediated by a living character, must take place in order for the bond of the kind existing in the case of Mafalda to follow.

The process of identification starts simple: sameness or similarities, i.e., an audience member will better relate to a character whose 'life experience' is similar to his/her own, such as "facing similar problems." A communications expert specialized in identification with media characters at the University of Haifa, Jonathan Cohen lists

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645 Ibid., 166.
646 Ibid., 161.
649 While describing his work with youth in the juvenile prison system, developmental psychologist Gordon Neufeld delineated the steps to building an emotional connection that can lead to trust with the most basic being what he calls "samesies:" finding basic commonalities with the subject—for example, if they are wearing a green hoodie, he'd say he also liked green, i.e., establishing a basic level of sameness. Gordon Neufeld, "Teaching the Unteachable: Reaching Troubled Kids" (Keynote Lecture, Challenge and Change Conference, British Columbia Alternate Education Association, Vancouver, Canada, 19-21 February, 2014); Gordon Neufeld, "Heart Matters: the Science of Emotion," (presentation, Challenge and Change Conference, British Columbia Alternate Education Association, Vancouver, Canada, February 17-19, 2016.
character traits as an important category within what he calls identification “determinants;”\textsuperscript{651} while the specific looks of the characters appear to not impact audience identification with them, age of audience members does, affecting their identification with either a character of the same or the opposite sex with the younger the audience members the more they identify with same sex characters. Similarly, audiences identify more with heroes than with villains.\textsuperscript{652} Makes sense, therefore, that Mafalda herself is the one with whom readers most identify within Quino’s \textit{Mafalda}, given her noble nature, instead of Susanita, for example, who could easily be seen as a villain. With that being said, audiences can also identify with characters seen as villains also on the basis of these audience members’ personal partial identification of the “villain” side of themselves,\textsuperscript{653} as in—with Susanita as example in mind—an audience member identifies a racist aspect in his/her own character, even when this aspect is well hidden.

In his discussion on the theory of catharsis applied to drama in the form of analysis of audience relationship with characters, sociologist Thomas J. Scheff asserts that characters are a “device independent of the plot (…) and the characteristics of the audience” that the author can manipulate to either “increase or decrease audience identification with characters, including those not expected to be very popular among audiences such as villains.”\textsuperscript{654} The importance of this lays in the core of Scheff’s argument: the ideal balance between an audience member’s simultaneous awareness


\textsuperscript{652} Cohen, \textit{Audience Identification}, 188.

\textsuperscript{653} Thomas J. Scheff, \textit{Catharsis in Healing, Ritual, and Drama} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 158.

\textsuperscript{654} Ibid.
of his/her “past distress and present safety,” which he calls “aesthetic distance,” is vital for catharsis to take place.\textsuperscript{655} The connection between Scheff’s catharsis and \textit{Mafalda} is humor: in Humor Relief Theory, humor is understood as a mechanism that allows for relief through the release of tension or energy that would otherwise be used in continuing to repress emotions;\textsuperscript{656} Scheff’s catharsis process releases the tensions created by repressed, distressful emotions rooted in past events.\textsuperscript{657} This cathartic process is closely related to audience identification with fictional characters, including villains, as audience members can release the guilt or embarrassment of their own past villain-like behavior.\textsuperscript{658} Using specifically Susanita as example again, this translates to the instances in which individuals from the readership recall themselves, perhaps, having made a racist remark such as plague the attitudes and utterances of this character. Through laughter and perhaps an additional sense of horror when confronted with Susanita’s darkness—and their own—these individuals are able to release their own distress, with laughter, as they make the “involuntary discovery” of the wanting moral sphere of both Susanita—the character—and themselves,\textsuperscript{659} as they are revealed to themselves as the “persons” they “rather not be.”\textsuperscript{660}

Identification of audience members with fictitious characters is important in the process of narrative persuasion\textsuperscript{661} as “getting people to think and reflect can help

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{655}Ibid., 50, 60, 62.
\item \textsuperscript{656} Simon Critchley explains this theory of humor as understood by Herbert Spencer in the XIX century: the release of bottled up energy, and clarifies that the theory is best known through the lens of Sigmund Freud in his 1905 \textit{The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious}. See Critchley, \textit{on Humor}, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{657} Scheff, \textit{Catharsis}, 50, 59-60.
\item \textsuperscript{658} Ibid., 160.
\item \textsuperscript{660} Critchley, \textit{on Humor}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{661} Igartua, \textit{Identification with Characters}, 369.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
persuade them” and have “attitudinal impact,” even when Quino’s primary intent was not to persuade but to “contribute his “grain of sand” toward change instead. It is, therefore, logical to speculate about the readership becoming more in accord with Quino’s views, mediated by *Mafalda*, about the issues he denounces and against which he vehemently protests, though on the other hand perhaps that is not the case necessarily because the Argentine readership of *Mafalda* was living the same oppression that the comic strip portrayed and depicted in its plots. Perhaps instead of persuasion per se, one could posit that what took place was a mere sharpening of a possibly more blurred awareness in the conscious mind of these readers as identification affects audiences by increasing their “attention to events surrounding the character, or messages delivered by the target of identification.”

This change against oppression, censorship, and torture that the maestro attempts to achieve is reachable through the channel of audience members’ identification with the strip’s characters and plots, both of whom mediate messages that affect the life of these audience members as well as the society in which they live.

Only after artist/character-audience identification is established, entertainment may come in, with empathy—an essential element present in identification—appearing to fortify the level of entertainment. After all, comics aim at entertaining an

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665 These constitute but a fraction of the issues present in *Mafalda*, some of which are discussed elsewhere in this dissertation.


audience, and an additional foundation of Mafalda’s power and transcendence lays in her ability to entertain multiple audiences across boundaries of both culture and time.

**Why Mafalda Entertains: the Strip as Art, Tragedy, and Comedy**

Drawing on Henri Bergson’s theory of art, tragedy and comedy, not only does the identification process between reader and creator/characters not begin with Quino’s observation of his perceived Argentine reality of the time nor with his identification with his fellow Argentine members of the public, but neither does it begin with the artist’s versions of that public and its reality in his choice of characters and plots for the strip. It begins with the amalgamation of his perceptions of these things on the one hand, and the versions of (him)self that could have been on the other, producing—or reproducing—life. It is here that we discover Mafalda, a fictitious little girl who allows Quino to speak up through her by means of skilled ventriloquism, through his art. She is not ridiculed. Quino leaves that for her fellow neighborhood friends. It is through them, and Mafalda’s reaction to them, that he brings out the comedy, those that are not possible facets of himself of which he is aware, those that are not consciously aware.

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670 In his seminal work on the comic, philosopher Henri Bergson theorizes that “art is (...) a more direct vision of reality,” whereby artistic production can only take place when the “veil” clouding the contact and full perception between “our selves and our own consciousness” is “thin, almost transparent,” where the actual feelings themselves reach our consciousness instead of merely their impersonal, general, aspects. In this space, the artist “absentmindedly” and naturally—as opposed to purposely and systematically like in logical philosophical reflection—detaches him/herself “from life.” It is through the partial lifting of that veil that some of the artist’s senses perceive color and form for their own sake instead of for that of his/her own, “induc(ing) us to make the same effort ourselves, they contrive to make us see something of what they have seen” through the production of that sharpened sense. It is according to which sense has opened up that the art product takes the form of—for example—a painting, or text, granting the rest of us-audience access to the life in their art, a life that “speech was not calculated to express,” a life that is “reality itself,” thus “laying bare a secret portion” of the artist’s truth, laying bare a “deeper reality.” Art “always aims at what is *individual*, a certain mood, a specific light that will never come back. As works of art, the “essential difference between tragedy and comedy” is that while “the former (is) concerned with individuals,” “the latter [is] with classes’ or ‘types.’ The protagonist of a tragedy will represent “an individuality unique to its kind,” and while it would be “possible to imitate him,” taking this step would mean trespassing into the realms of comedy. See Bergson, *Laughter*, 164-177.

671 Ibid., 167-168.
introspective threads because these are not ingredients of the comic. It is precisely for this reason that these other characters such as Susanita and Manolito, who display generalities instead of individualities, represent types of people, hence, part of the comic aspect of Mafalda. While Mafalda is tragedy because she is individual, the others in her gang are comedy because they are ‘class’ characters displaying generalities.

If, indeed, according to Bergson, the function of laughter is to turn “rigidity” into “plasticity,” to “readapt the individual into the whole,” then this is precisely what Quino achieves through “class” characters like Manolito or Susanita; they are rigid and inflexible in their beliefs and behavior but through them, the audience is finally able to see a little bit deeper into their own souls, identify their own failings in the angles of their own soul that are painted with similar colors to those of these characters. Correction being a goal of laughter, it is its aim to reach as many individuals as possible, says Bergson, and therefore, class or type characters like Manolito and Susanita will reach, by definition, more individuals. When a reader laughs at Susanita or Manolito, and sees perhaps a bit of their color in him/herself, correction is at their reach. Possible change as potential plasticity.

Site of Refuge: Mafalda as Museum

A painting smiles from the wall in Daniel Divinsky’s office dedicated to him by Argentine artist Decur. As can be seen in the image below, the painting portrays

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672 Ibid., 147, 168.
673 Ibid., 168-170.
674 Ibid., 163-165.
675 Ibid., 177.
676 Ibid., 170.
678 Guillermo Decurgez, aka, Decur.
Daniel Divinsky holding a flower, sitting on one of the many shelves in Divinsky’s office, and reads in Spanish “To Daniel Divinsky, lord of the books and guardian of treasures,” signed by Decur. It is of interest to note that Decur painted a small Mafalda doll on one of the shelves to keep Divinsky company among the multitude of volumes that inhabit the editor’s shelves.

679 The flower in the painting looks like the one constituting the logo of the Editorial, a clear allusion to the name of his publishing house Ediciones de la Flor, literally translated, “Editions of the Flower.” The name was born by an observation by friend Piri Lugones, who, at the birth of the publishing house said “Lo que ustedes quieren es una flor de editorial,” meaning that they wanted a great publishing house. “Una flor de…” (a flower of…) is an idiomatic expression in Spanish signifying that whatever follows in the sentence is of high magnitude, be that in intensity or quality. Ediciones de la Flor became both.
Photograph of image by Mariana Eliano printed in a double, separated interview to estranged couple Daniel Divinsky and Kuki Miler, where also Divinsky’s partner—post 2009 separation and later divorce from Kuki—Liliana Szwarcer is interviewed. As a result of a painful legal dispute over Ediciones de la Flor, Divinsky handed over his part of the successful publishing house to his ex-wife and business partner in September 2015 for what he deems “a laughable price.” See Daniel Divinsky, “Daniel Divinsky. Las Ondas Expansivas de Mafalda,” interview by Leila Guerriero, El País, 11 June, 2017, https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/06/11/eps/1497132316_149713.html
Acting as a refuge “for world truths,” from old and precious films to rare and unique historical artifacts, the museum offers shelter to both physical, cultural artifacts, and abstract ones like memories, as well as to emotions rooted in the histories displayed. Just as Decur’s painting demonstrates, this provision of refuge to culture and history, however, does not reside exclusively in a physical site, a cultural institution such as the museum to guard art, knowledge, culture, and history. A site for refuge can also exist in a tactile, though simultaneously ethereal, form as well.

Travelling from interdisciplinary approaches such as Haverty’s—who intersected anthropology and theology—to history of science and social history, the museum conceptualizes the idea of a physical place that offers refuge to abstract, spiritual, and affective memories on top of physical artifacts. Such shelter, as mentioned earlier, does not necessarily have to be the institution of the museum in its classical sense of a building guarding artifacts that have value well beyond the one they directly represent, i.e., memories and emotions. An artifact also safeguards these very same elements within itself. The difference between this concept and that of the building-institutional museum is that the museum will offer a collection of artifacts, or several collections, while the artifact alone protects and represents its precious elements independently from the context of a curated collection and a building. Taking Mafalda as a museum that displays a collection of histories and cultural narratives as artifacts within the mother-artifact-Mafalda that encapsulates and encapsulate the memories of the 1960s-1970s in Argentina, Quino’s comic strip offers them all shelter from the physical

682 Laleen Jayamanne, “The Museum as Refuge for Film: the Case of Kumar Shahani’s Epic Cinema,” *Post Script* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2006). Online source, Gale database, offered no page numbers.
elements in both the strip’s digital forms and the body of knowledge it has generated, to sheer oblivion in any of the strip’s forms. The *raison de vivre* of such shelters is, as Haverty pointed out, to *safeguard these treasures for future* generations who will also, in turn, safeguard them for the next future generations “so as not to be lost” to future observers and viewers.

*Mafalda’s Readers as Museum Viewers: Creating Meaning*

When asking whether the creator of the piece of art is also the creator of meaning through their work or if it is, instead, the audience who creates meaning is the wrong question altogether because those are partial meanings, though perfectly legitimate and valid in themselves. The superlative meaning, however, gets created as a result of the interaction between the two. It is when that interaction becomes culture in itself, such as in the case of *Mafalda* and Quino, that this additional layer enters the higher dimension of becoming an active constituent of culture.

In terms of the relationship between artist and audience, meaning is constructed out of the marriage of expressions and perceptions of both artist and observer, of author and reader. This leaves the interpretation avenue open for understandings, perceptions, and interpretations that can be unique to one given observer, *insularly*—as “(v)iewers make their own meaning from an encounter with a work of art”—or become

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685 Wolfgang Iser revolutionized literary criticism by departing from the previously established view that literary meaning had to be “dug up” from the text. He moved onto the position that meaning gets created in an interface between text, reader, and context, whereby the reader’s imagination is called into activation and whose memory—in the form of life experience—provides a platform on which, as the reader travels through a given text, meanings continually adjust and adapt as they encounter each step of the text, yielding the possibility for multiple meanings. Aesthetic response is paramount for Wolfgang Iser. For more on Iser’s Reception Theory, see Wolfgang Iser, “Do I Write for an Audience?,” *PMLA* 115, no. 3 (May, 2000): 310-314, http://www.jstor.org/stable/463451; Jürgen Schlaeger, “Wolfgang Iser: Legacies and Lessons,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 7, no. 2–3 (2010): 311–324, DOI: 10.3366/E1744185410001151

quite plural as more individuals share similar aesthetic responses, and ideological conglomerates form after their interaction with the piece in question.

According to communications expert Patricia Harkin, it “is theoretical commonplace”\textsuperscript{687} that “(r)eaders make meaning:

\begin{quote}
readers [she continues]—and not only authors—engage in an active process of production (...) in which texts of all kinds—stories, poems, plays, buildings, films, TV ads, clothes, body piercings—are received by their audiences not as a repository of stable meaning\textsuperscript{688} but as an invitation to make it.”\textsuperscript{689}
\end{quote}

From that author-reader common engagement to making meaning, to the next level of that meaning transforming itself into an essential and indivisible part of culture—in our case, a specific culture, Argentine culture—it must be understood that “reading acts are ideological.”\textsuperscript{690} This is how it became to be that Mafalda’s trajectory rapidly, powerfully and steadily, evolved from ordinary weekly newspaper appearances to become the paragon and ultimate Argentine recent history symbol for the fight of the weak against the powerful, as the patroness of and advocate for the oppressed, the ultimate voice of universal social justice.

Past the more classically understood as semiotic aspects of meaning-making inherent to comics and graphic novels discussed in chapter two, the multimodal\textsuperscript{691}


\textsuperscript{688} My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{689} Harkin, \textit{The Reception}, 413.

\textsuperscript{690} Ibid., 418.

coding and decoding of *Mafalda*—the information coded in the strip from Quino’s mind, and the interpretations by the Argentine audiences across time—the sociocultural resonance lays in a pragmatic reading. Such pragmatic view of audience meaning making offers pivotal insights into the “complex combinations of clues and gaps” in the comic strip “that interface with the cognitive processes out mind runs when reading fiction” on the one hand, with the interface between that construction of meaning with what that very same construction means plurally on the other, which results in what it becomes a constituent of culture. For example, an Argentine *Mafalda* reader in the 1960s and 1970s would have had to first decode that complex combination of clues and gaps in Quino’s frames, utilizing his/her cognitive processes typical to a brain reading fiction. The result of that interface would then pass to become an indivisible part of the given reader’s insular meaning making in accord to the social experience of the time. As that experience of the time was that of oppression, it stands to reason that under this umbrella, many readers will have created similar meanings off of *Mafalda* that constitute the strip’s cultural resonance. No matter which kind of engagement will be in the fore for an observer—be that intellectual, emotional, or historical—the sociological engagement will always be underlying all the others when reading *Mafalda* because this comic embodies Argentine society, and culture.

As established earlier, *Mafalda*’s witnessing reflects Argentine reality of the 1960s and 1970s. The comic strip’s enmeshing in the production of that reality, however, is not in the form of influence on the events of the time but in that the strip contributes to the evolution of existing ideology and creation of culture in that she

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becomes an indivisible part of it. In its role as museum, *Mafalda* conserves and safeguards the experience of that culture. This remains intact as time passes by. What changes and evolves, however, is its function of denunciation and of site of refuge. In the first two periods examined in this dissertation—namely 1964-1973 and 1973-1983—denunciation was important as genuine and valid fear prevented others from doing the same and call on governments to stop injustice and human rights abuse. This became an integral part of the nod of complicity on part of the reader that was paramount in the process of identification with *Mafalda*, the process that gave base to the emotional bond developed between the audience and author via the characters and plots and allowed for that site of refuge to exist in the first place. As safety gradually increased after 1983 with the end of the last Argentine dictatorship, denunciation became important in the healing process of a traumatized nation that became involved in legal battles to hold the dictatorship accountable for the atrocities they had committed. Travelling to a time closer to the present, *Mafalda*-the museum hosts elements of nostalgia to a time that can feel long gone to the third audience after 1983. *Mafalda*’s role as museum does not change with time. What evolves with time is what the audience, the viewers, looks for in its visits.

**Site of Refuge as Liminal Space**

Isabella Cosse sees *Mafalda* as liminal.\(^{693}\) To me, beyond the belief that any artistic product will be liminal in the sense that it functions as meeting point between the

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imaginary and reality—and from there proceeds to engender further such meeting points between thought and perception, imagination and expression, between the art product in front of the observer and his/her perception, thought, and aesthetic response—this artistic product is not liminal in its existence, nor is it in its power as aesthetic product capable of eliciting an emotional response in its audience, and neither is it liminal in its ability to become an institution and cultural artifact such as *Mafalda*. In contrast, what I see as liminal is the space where author/character and reader meet because liminality “captures in-between situations and conditions characterized by the dislocation of established structures.”

In *Mafalda*, this dislocation of established structures manifests itself in that space where reader meets author via characters and finds refuge in expressions of a reality they are escaping through the very activity of reading. *Mafalda*’s readers found solace by immersing themselves in expressions of a reality they feared.

**Method of Analysis: Reader-Author Relationship**

When seeking to examine the relationship author-reader in a work from the past, two levels of retrospectivity—and with it, retrospective method—come into play: first, the original work situated in a specific era, and second, the changes in each edition that denote the changes in readership. Similar to the process of textual criticism—which analyzes the different versions of a work from the past done by various scribes in order to elucidate which one is the closest to the absent original, or, alternatively, create a conglomerate yielding a new version that is believed to be the closest—I analyze the

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different editions of *Mafalda* by *Ediciones de la Flor*, supported by additional relevant works of art by other renowned Argentine artists, but without seeking to arrive at the closest version to an absent original because our original is not absent. What I use this methodology for is to illuminate the diachronic changes in the readership divided in three periods: first, the contemporaneous audience of the 1963-1973; second, the audience at the dawn of and during the last Argentine dictatorship 1976-1983, and third, the post-dictatorship audience after 1983. The two last ones are organized under “audiences since.” This way I examine the changes in the author-reader relationship and the Site of Refuge function I ascribe to it in the case of *Mafalda*.

Although *Mafalda* is not what could typically be understood as a work from the past, the original comic strips were born 1964-1973. These strips were then compiled in ten books by *Ediciones de la Flor* in Buenos Aires and other publishing houses with headquarters in other countries such as *Lumen* in Spain and Mexico.695 *Ediciones de la Flor* produced additional compilations of the ten books, including an edition of *Mafalda Inédita*,696 a compilation of *Mafalda* strips never before published. The edition I use in this dissertation is the twenty ninth, 2014, *de la Flor* edition of a full compilation of Quino’s *Mafalda* that includes *Mafalda Inédita* in its pages.697 The fact alone that this specific compilation was re-edited twenty-nine times until 2014 speaks to *Mafalda*’s high sales volumes throughout the decades as well as to the rightfully bestowed title of “long runner” that Quino earned decades ago.

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695 *Editorial Lumen*, with headquarters in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, was under the direction the Divinsky-Miller duet’s friend Esther Tusquets for almost forty years since its creation in the 1950s until Tusquets sold 80% of the house in 1996 to make more time for her own writing career. It was under her mandate that *Lumen* acquired the rights to publish Quino’s *Mafalda*. Divinsky, interview; Carles Geli, “Muere la Editora Esther Tusquets,” *El País*, July 23, 2012, https://elpais.com/cultura/2012/07/23/actualidad/1343031556_256578.html

696 “Unpublished Mafalda”

697 Quino, *Toda Mafalda*. 
Given that Ediciones de la Flor is the Argentine Editorial with whom Quino has been publishing his work since 1970, my work concerns itself only with the editions by this publishing house—also for the sake of coherence—but mainly due to the fact that de la Flor is the Editorial that created multiple editions of Mafalda compilations throughout the decades, and it did so with the Argentine reader in mind as part of its mission statement of publishing books on Latin America and Argentina.

**Mafalda as Site of Refuge: Readership During Active Production 1964-1973**

In Mafalda’s site of refuge as liminal space, the paradigm of liminality inhabits the existential crises experienced by Argentines during the various coups until 1976 where loss of meaning took place. No better proof of this displacement of trust in the established world knowledge, and consequent disorientation, than the following Mafalda frame:  

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698 This particular strip was published —on newspaper El Mundo ("The World")—on Wednesday, June 29, 1966, one day after the “Onganiato”. Image also appears in Appendix "Universal Themes in Mafalda" under rubric "Protest and Censorship" in this dissertation. For more on Ongania’s coup and its background, as well as images—including this one—see section “Mafalda Inédita” by Sylvina Walger on Quino, *Toda Mafalda*, 560, 563-564.
Referred to as the “Onganiato,” General Juan Carlos Onganía deposed the constitutional president Arturo Umberto Illia in a coup d’état June 28, 1966, marking the beginning of the “Revolución Argentina.” In this frame, a distraught Mafalda clearly protests the dictatorship while alluding to the Civics school curriculum, which—paradoxically—taught students about democracy while school boards publicly both supported the military dictatorship that had just taken over through the “Onganiato,” and “called on citizens to recognize it.” No wonder Mafalda is confused.

Onganía was harsh toward opponents. Argentine cartoonist Landrú had drawn a caricature of Onganía as a walrus because of his moustache that was published in the popular magazine Tía Vicenta (Aunt Vicenta), which was “the most famous humor

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700 Cosse, Mafalda: Middle, 57.
701 Juan Carlos Colombres, aka Landrú.
magazine of the country,” on June 29, 1966, one day after Onganía’s coup. Tía Vicenta was the Wednesdays supplemental to newspaper El Mundo (The World). The dictator was offended, thus ordering the closure of the magazine. This begs the question of how Quino’s Mafalda went through undetected as a threat by the new dictator. A possible answer could be that it was because when Onganía took over, newspaper El Mundo, home to Quino’s Mafalda at the time, reported on Onganía’s new status as president of the country in a non-antagonist manner, thus indirectly protecting Mafalda, and Quino.

In terms of the fact that Mafalda was neither banned nor censored by the Argentine authoritarian regimes from 1966 to 1973, two logical threads of reasons come to mind. First and foremost, and as mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, comics were regarded as a minor art, and as such, their content was either disregarded or dismissed. Additionally, Quino was not perceived as an integrative element of the artistic milieu of the time, and was, consequently, not perceived as a threat. Second—as mentioned in the analysis box of the strip where Mafalda appears confused, distraught, and disappointed following president Illia’s ousting by General Onganía’s coup—newspaper El Mundo, home of Mafalda at the time, reported on Onganía’s new position as president of the Argentine Republic in a neutral manner. Perhaps by choosing to avoid an antagonistic or openly non-supportive tone, the newspaper, despite its reputation as a left leaning publication—or perhaps because of it—

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705 Linares, Landrú, la Morsa.
706 For an image of El Mundo’s title page of Wednesday, June 29, 1966, see Appendix.
707 Divinsky, interview.
strategically and wisely chose that tone to protect the newspaper, thus indirectly protecting *Mafalda*, and Quino. Accepting the hypotheses above or not as per how *Mafalda*, despite content that could have easily been deemed as “subversive”, and its direct disbelief in the way by which Onganía took power illustrated above, the fact remains that the comic ‘dodged’ official censorship, thus remaining in open circulation in Argentina.

*Mafalda* as Site of Refuge after End of Active Production and under Dictatorship 1973-1983

Just as the presence of Argentine audiences to see plays “under surveillance” during the last dictatorship was seen and perceived both by public and military leadership of the time as an act of resistance, a “movement by the opposition”—despite their producing no physical sound—708—the same function can be easily attributed to the space in which Quino and *Mafalda* met with their audience. That very same silent complicity in every smile on part of the readership in every instance in which *Mafalda* denounced hard realities of the time such as torture,709 the demise of democracy,710 or that soup with which the Argentine public was being force-fed in a similar fashion as suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst,711 has the same defiant function that challenges the powers of censorship and self-censorship in place at the time. So the question becomes how noisy is this silence? What power is it born with? What power does it acquire over time? For me, the answers to these questions are incrusted in the internal process of

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709 See appendix.

710 See appendix.

dialogue and questioning that Mafalda’s denunciation stirs in its readers more than in the denunciation itself, and the implicit dialogical, complicit, bond that readers developed with each other. Until today, a certain understanding is established as soon as an Argentine stranger mentions Mafalda to another. It is a cultural bridge.

Despite content that could have easily been perceived as incendiary and “subversive” by the dictatorship, Mafalda was never banned or officially censored in Argentina, thus permitted to openly circulate in her native country. Interestingly enough, the strip did not meet such benign destiny in other countries where it circulated. For example, in Spain, Editorial Lumen was forced by the Francoist censorship to print a banner that read “Sólo para adultos” (“For adults only”) on the front cover. Despite Mafalda’s free circulation, the strip’s meaning was twisted and distorted in the especially cruel appropriations and adulteration that occurred in 1975 and 1976—respectively—that I discuss in detail in chapter three in the section “Mafalda’s Power and Transcendence.” As I mention in that section, a popular poster signed by Quino—based on one of the original Mafalda’s comic strips—that shows Mafalda pointing at a police officer’s baton and addressing the reader by saying “See? This is the little stick that dents ideologies” was abused by a killing squad of the military regime. After they coldbloodedly murdered three priests and two priest seminary students at the San Patricio church in the Belgrano neighborhood in Buenos Aires, the perpetrators

712 Divinsky, interview. I strongly advice the reader to not try to get an image online for that Spanish front cover using such tricky search words. When I first asked Daniel Divinsky about censorship and Mafalda he knew that the comic had never been banned nor censored in Argentina but was not sure about other countries. He visited Quino that afternoon—who had grown increasingly weary of interviews—and asked him this question on my behalf. The information on the Spanish banner on Mafalda’s cover comes directly from the maestro himself, and I cannot imagine a more reliable source. This information also appears in Juan Cruz, “Encuentro de Mafalda y el Vampiro,” Página 12, October 21, 2008, https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/2-11720-2008-10-21.html

713 For images and more detail, refer to chapter three of this dissertation, section “Mafalda’s Power and Transcendence.”

714 St. Patrick’s.
placed that very same poster on the murdered bodies as measure of intimidation to “subversives.” *Mafalda’s* meaning of the idea of freedom was violated, twisted, and betrayed by the enemy of that very meaning, and used against those for whom Quino drew and created. The travesty of the theft of an idea escalated beyond mere appropriation in the 1975 adulteration of the same poster. In the adulterated version, it is Manolito who speaks, but he does not address the reader directly. Pointing at the same police officer’s baton, he addresses Mafalda instead, and says “See, Mafalda! Thanks to this little stick you get to go to school today,” thus reaffirming the dictatorship’s general message that violence was needed in order to eradicate the dangers and violence that, according to them, the ‘subversives’ were causing in the country; the ideologies that needed denting as opposed to the original message by Quino that denounced those ideologies being dented by representatives of the law in the first place.

The very same loss of meaning I mentioned earlier in this chapter, illustrated by Quino’s strip of a distraught and disoriented Mafalda following the 1966 Onganía coup, has a desensitizing effect on the social sensitivities of Argentines. The repercussions of this effect linger in Argentine society, thus rendering the shock following the 1976 coup mitigated, and leaving the population desensitized to the further loss of meaning as the military dictatorship voided basic freedoms beyond what the previous mix of democratic—and quasi democratic—governments and dictatorships had produced. Despite the official dates of fear laying between 1976-1983, state terror and violence with the complete gamut of crime and oppression—illegal imprisonment, torture, forced

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715 For image and full analysis refer to Chapter 3 of this dissertation, section “Mafalda’s Power and Transcendence.”
716 For more on this mix see section “Historical Context” in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation.
exile—had been well established in Argentina since 1968. The fact that the military dictatorship “that began in 1976 is not an isolated experience, but the most extreme expression of a series of military interventions,” then, led to gradual shifts in meaning that engendered a social climate and a culture where seeing “the recourse to violence as an efficient, legitimate means to resolving conflicts” became the socially legitimized norm. In turn, desensitization toward violence and the importance of human rights manifested itself in an invigorated tolerance in the face of treatment of others and the self “through repressive measures.” Logically, loss of meaning and disorientation brought a general lack of trust in the government that became exacerbated following the fiasco of the unnecessary 1982 Malvinas/Falkland War and brought about the final decomposition of the military regime. The Argentine public had much more reason to trust Mafalda than it had to trust the military dictators governing them, especially after the Falkland/Malvinas War. The image of this little girl had already become emblematic of the concept of good—as opposed to evil—but moreover, she had been consistent in representing that camp at a time where the most marked consistency was present in the form of deficiency of ‘good’. This produced a unique

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717 Vázquez, El Oficio, 226.
718 Ibid.
721 Catoggio, the Last, 2/20.
723 For more on the Malvinas/Falkland War see section “Under Perón” in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation.
724 Romero, la Violencia, 53, 64; Quiroga, La Democracia Después, 21.
725 Quiroga, La Democracia Después, 21.
position for Mafalda in the Argentine thought that allowed for the comic to do more than denounce and protest; it allowed it to provide solace in the face of a “criminal regime.”

Despite Mafalda’s neither banned nor censored by the fierce censorship of Argentina’s last dictatorship thus allowing for the comic to circulate freely, instances of its meaning being stolen and distorted took place. By violating Mafalda’s meaning and the subsequent audience sense of safety, the dictatorship reinforced the comic’s position as paragon of freedom, thus further establishing the need for a space where the readers can feel safe, a site where refuge is unconditional, a place where violations are denounced and protested against, not perpetrated.

Mafalda as Site of Refuge Post-Dictatorship after 1983

Concurrent with the inherent increase of freedom that came with the 1983 reinstatement of democracy in Argentina, an increase in the audience’s focus on the humoristic aspect of Mafalda took place. One could posit that this increase is parallel—albeit in opposite directions of linear time—to the one Daniel Divinsky mentions for the Argentine audience pre-dictatorship. The focus of post-dictatorship audiences shifts from the now less relevant element of refuge toward the component of joy and fun with a nostalgia to childhood and the era in which the comic first appeared. Such a shift is logical considering the reverse relationship between oppression, state terror, and fear on the one hand, and freedom and relief on the other; as the former decrease, the latter will increase, thus the audience not needing a sheltering refuge.

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726 Ibid., 16.
727 Divinsky, interview.
728 Romero, La Violencia, 78.
729 Divinsky, interview.
complicity between author and reader softens, allowing more space to the sheer enjoyment of Quino’s genius. No longer does the reader need protection—or at least not as much—and is now allowed to freely enjoy freedom of expression, a freedom that manifests itself also in the type of reading the audience can now undertake. What changed was the attitude of the reader from guarded to freed.

Despite Argentina’s considerable journey since its beginnings in urbanization, industrialization, and education, in 1985—only two years after the end of the last military dictatorship—Argentine sociologist Juan E. Corradi described his native country as a peripheral capitalist society marked by “dependency, stagnation, political decay and violence.” His characterization illustrates the wretched state in which the “Dirty War” had left the nation, tasking the (re)entering democratic leaders with the monumental responsibility of re-inventing Argentine culture and society. The first post-dictatorship, democratic governments thus inherited that monumental task of rebuilding a broken country, a country that had just been so violated by state terror, left in economic shambles, and its traumatized population in a state of despair and distress. Raúl Alfonsín was the first democratic leader of Argentina after the last dictatorship, and he assumed the presidency on December 10, 1983. One of the central tasks Alfonsín had to carry out within that superordinate, monumental one of rebuilding the country under democratic governance, was the restoration of justice. Such duty included the pivotal process of bringing military leaders and members of the military responsible for

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730 Corradi, The Fitful, 2.
731 Ibid., 206; Quiroga, La Democracia Después, 14.
732 Ibid., 206; Quiroga, La Democracia Después, 14.
the illegal actions of oppression, torture, and systemic state terror to justice. As the investigations and their subsequent charges brought members of the military to stand trial, and be sentenced by Argentine courts of law, other members of the military—not charged yet—became increasingly worried. A climate of uprisal was brewing, and despite attempts by the democratic government to end it, an attempt to oust Alfonsín led by lieutenant colonel Aldo Rico to oust Raúl Alfonsín took place during Easter 1987. Fortunately, a combination of movement of masses to the squares, encouraged by Alfonsín, as well as negotiations, brought the group led by Rico to surrender.

For as long as Quino, son of Spanish immigrants, drew Mafalda, he kept in mind what his parents had told him about the Spanish Civil War, what was happening in Argentina—and the world—at each instance in which the drawing was taking place. This resulted in Mafalda’s capacity to think “as a child whose experience is almost always dramatic.” Quino, on his part, had stopped creating new Mafalda strips in 1973, and sporadically drew new frames for special events such as commemorations or special humanitarian campaigns. So ingrained was and is Mafalda in Argentine culture that Quino deemed that 1987 botched coup such special event that justified new

733 In 1986, Congress passed the law of the Punto Final (“Full Stop”), which dictated that a period of thirty days was granted to press charges against members of the military for human rights violations, and a period of sixty for a judge to begin “the correspondent process.” “Punto” in Spanish means “point”, used as ‘period’ in writing. “Punto final” is the last ‘period’ in a piece of writing. The sense of finality brought forward by the use of the “final” is self-explanatory for the denotation of both the end of a text, and the end of pressing charges against members of the military. The problem with this law was that a massive amount of charges was put forward in a short period of time, causing further INQUIETUD among the military that concatenated in an attempted coup against Alfonsín in 1987. See De Campo, Argentina 1955-2005, 107. This was not the only instance in which active members of the military attempted to oust the democratic government. Many of them did not accept the post-dictatorship justice processes that brought some of the responsible of human rights violations to justice and therefore attempted to disrupt the “constitutional authorities.” See Romero, la Violencia, 52.


735 Cruz, Encuentro de Mafalda.
drawings. The *maestro* created a series of three frames, which he sent to the president.\textsuperscript{736}

\textsuperscript{736} Quino, *Toda Mafalda*, 41-43.
Frame 1- Mafalda, looking worried, sitting on her little chair so familiar to her readers, addresses president Raúl Alfonsín by saying: “Such (tough) moments, Don Raulito!” That Quino has Mafalda address the president in such colloquial, though respectful, terms as “Don” and adding a diminutive to the president’s given name emphasize Quino’s supportive stance.

Frame 2- Mafalda forces a timid smile of encouragement in a difficult situation and says to the president: “But know that we are with you!”

Frame 3- Mafalda, now more enthusiastic, stands on her chair and exclaims: “Yes to democracy! Yes to Justice! Yes to Freedom! Yes to life!”

The three-frame series was included in the compilation Toda Mafalda by Ediciones de la Flor. The reader gets to, thus, see Mafalda actively involved in the support of a post dictatorship fragile democracy, in a decade she wasn’t expected to utter new words. The enrichment of the twenty ninth edition of Toda Mafalda by previously unpublished strips is furthered by explanatory texts that offer context to

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737 As explained earlier in more detail, the male form ‘Don’, or female ‘Doña’ used to be titles denoting a privileged social stature of individuals, to which access was possible through monetary payment, thus remaining reserved for use by royalty and clergy. Its sociolinguistic use, however, evolved into a common title used by members of different sociocultural circles in the XVII century both in Spain and in the then Spanish colonies, becoming a mere respect treatment across societies and their layers. Francisca Medina Morales, “Las Formas Nominales de Tratamiento en el Siglo de Oro. Aproximación Sociolingüística,” in Memoria de la Palabra: Actas del VI Congreso de la Asociación Internacional Siglo de Oro, Burgos, La Rioja, July 15-19, 2002, vol. 2, ed. Francisco Domínguez Matío and María Luisa Lobato López (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2004), 1335-1336, http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aio/pdf/06/aio_6_2_033.pdf. Although archaic, the title is still current when talking or referring to an older person as a token of respect. It is also common for smaller neighbourhood restaurants and convenience stores to use “don” or “doña” followed by a given name to connote familiarity as a subtle device of marketing. Clearly, Quino’s use of the term is to denote respectful familiarity and its subsequent support for president Alfonsín in those difficult moments of 1987.

738 Quino, Toda Mafalda.
panels that are both familiar as well as others unknown to the reader. Just as a modern reader of Cervantes needs annotations in order to better understand *Don Quijote*, Divinsky annotated the newest *Mafalda* edition. Edited in 2014, this collection offers explanations and clarifications for the “newer” reader who did not live through nor experienced the original publications of *Mafalda* first on newspapers nor the series of the original ten books that followed in the 1970s. The first edition of this collection was in 1990, and, as Divinsky reports, there were mistakes in it such as repetition of strips and omission of others. These editing mistakes stemmed from the pre-digital era where cartoonists submitted their original drawings on paper with the inherent misplacement and difficulty on part of the artists to get those originals back, and the technology used by Daniel and Kuki to put the book together comprising of scissors and the floor.\(^{739}\)

Part of this extra material is of special interest as it also includes later *Mafalda* strips that Quino drew and created for special occasions and events such as the celebration of the Argentine Week in Madrid, Spain in 1990\(^{740}\) or a special program for the *Teatro Colón (Colón (Columbus) Theatre)* in Buenos Aires,\(^{741}\) as well as of support of democratic order illustrated above. However, not only explanations and previously unpublished comic strips provide context to the uninformed or less informed reader in the 2014 *Toda Mafalda*. Of invaluable worth are drawings, notes and letters submitted for publication in *Toda Mafalda* by other renowned Argentine artists. That very fact alone, before even getting into what they drew and wrote, provides critical cultural insight into the significance that *Mafalda* and Quino—almost synonyms—have in

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\(^{739}\) Divinsky, *interview*.

\(^{740}\) Quino, *Toda Mafalda*, 640.

\(^{741}\) Divinsky, *interview*. 
Argentine culture. Once examining their messages, the depth to which Quino and *Mafalda* are ingrained as indivisible part of Argentine culture becomes evident. These artists display a tremendous amount of love, admiration, and respect for Quino, who, despite being mostly known for *Mafalda*, has also been prolific in producing incredible work outside that frame, both prior to and after *Mafalda*. Among the most powerful of these pieces, cartoonist Fernando Sendra, aka, Sendra\(^{742}\)—for example—honored Quino’s *Toda Mafalda* by submitting a touching note soaked in humor and a panel starring the character he is most famous for: a little boy named Matías. Matías is reading a *Mafalda* comics book and exclaims “Quino exists and Mafalda is his prophet!”\(^{743}\) Rep\(^{744}\) provided the book with a long letter, which, infused in his humor, presents the readers with an autobiographical recount of his personal history with *Mafalda*, and a drawing of Quino surrounded by descriptive text boxes that invoke the artist’s creative genius and unmistaken value as human being. The latter is especially evident in a text box behind the *maestro’s* back. It reads: “Jacket to hide (his) wings”, implying Quino is an angel.\(^{745}\) On his part, cartoonist Daniel Paz, aka, Rudy, writes in his letter “What else can I tell you about Mafalda that you don’t already know? (…) That a quarter of a century ago it opened a [whole] new world inside the world of every day for a [certain] nine year old boy. Viva Mafalda!”\(^{746}\) Obviously, he is referring to himself. Rudy continues to address the reader through his comic on the following page.

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\(^{742}\) Sendra started publishing his work in 1973 in *Siete Días Ilustrados*. For more see Fernando Sendra, YouTube Video, 6:54, posted by PAHO TV, September 28, 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y56nf7y5L38](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y56nf7y5L38)


\(^{744}\) Cartoonist Miguel Repiso. The prolific artist published numerous books, including Cervantes’ *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, and painted numerous murals throughout the world, apart from designing covers for music albums and other work. For more on Rep, see his official site Miguel Rep, Rep, n.d., [http://www.miguelrep.com.ar/rep.html](http://www.miguelrep.com.ar/rep.html)

\(^{745}\) Quino, *Toda Mafalda*, 29.

\(^{746}\) Ibid., 30.
ingeniously meshing Quino’s characterization of, and plots with Manolito with the historical-cultural significance of *Mafalda*. See images below.\(^{747}\)

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Figure 4.4 Sendra “Quino existe y Mafalda es su profeta, Quino exists and Mafalda is his prophet.” Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Sendra’s Matías, reading a *Mafalda* comics book, exclaims: “Quino exists and Mafalda is his prophet!” The reader will note Matías is reading a *Mafalda* comics book because Sendra drew her face on the left page.

\(^{747}\) Ibid., 27, 29, 31.
The descriptive text box in question lays between the horse’s tail and Quino’s shoulder. The bottom half of this text box reads: “Campera para ocultar las alas,” (“Jacket to hide (his) wings”), thus implying that Quino is an angel.
Rudy’s documental yoghurt is emblematic of the historical dimension of Quino’s characters. *Mafalda*’s influence is so far beyond entertainment that, if it didn’t influence the actual thinking of Argentines, it most certainly has had a unifying effect where single, separate, individual voices flowed toward unison in a site of safety and strength, of refuge, a space where these voices could “scheme” Quino’s style, almost subliminal: have a good laugh, and put that non-violent, positive energy to use toward constructive
I have spoken earlier in chapter 3 of Quino’s sensitive character and cosmopolitan nature that has brought him to the point of “weeping attacks” in the face of injustice and oppression, war tragedies, or the tragedy of war altogether. It is no coincidence that Mafalda—for the most part—is the personification of empathy. The heroin, armed with a noble nature, strives to elevate values of universal love and peace for the betterment of human kind. I would go as far as to venture the claim that this is Quino’s mission, and his audiences are very well aware of this fundamental element of his character. It is this central component that Rep is showing in his cartoon above, thus reflecting not only that the readership knows Mafalda’s ‘dad’, but also that they love him for it, hence Rep’s fictitious and humorous claim that Quino’s wings are hidden under his jacket. He ‘hides’ the wings as an allusion of Quino’s famous shyness and innate, humble character. No better way to seal this selection than with Sendra’s cartoon.

Speaking for itself, Sendra’s Matías’ declaration crosses realms into the religious-philosophical domain, and it does so as a mere expression and manifestation of the monumental significance of Mafalda that inhabits the hearts and opinion of its readership across time. Defying the ‘non-belivers’, Matías announces to the world that Nietzsche was wrong, and that this Argentine thinker who happens to draw comics is the proof, and Mafalda his evidence.

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748 Quino, *Interview by Revista Viva.*
750 Fernández, *Cumple 75.*
Outside the *Mafalda* editions themselves, evidence of audiences focus shift from the refuge element toward the fun, though not less serious, component comes from other artists expressing their respect for Quino and his creation, and the deep philosophical implications their frames bring to light, and the warm reception by the readership. For me, the most salient illustration of that expression is by Spanish cartoonist team Idígoras y Pachi, as they wrap up *Mafalda*’s massive influence as a figure of intelligence, especially social intelligence, by producing a panel depicting the greatest philosophers in the history of the world that includes Mafalda. The artists honor both Quino and *Mafalda*—another instance in which they are both treated as equal, living, entities—by dedicating this image to them both in the heading. In addition, on the left bottom corner, underneath their signature, they wrote “Homage to Quino.”

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752 Ángel and Francisco Rodríguez Idígoras.
753 Alongside “philosophy”, the cartoonist duo dedicate their creation to both Quino and Mafalda in their tweet’s heading. See Idígoras y Pachi, Twitter Post, May 21, 2014, 9:55 AM, https://twitter.com/pachi_idigoras/status/469159448851009537
754 “Homenaje a Quino” Idígoras y Pachi, Twitter Post, May 21, 2014.
The duo tweeted their frame in 2014, and re-tweeted it in 2016 to honor Quino in his 84th birthday, and then again in 2017 for the ‘International Day of Philosophy’. As can be seen in the original tweet, the image has been re-tweeted hundreds of times by readers just in that one occasion, and it has been shared on Pinterest, Facebook, and blogs countlessly on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the comments to that first 2014 tweet reinforces the admiration audiences universally have for Mafalda, reading “Marx is missing (in the panel) but since Mafalda is on I am satisfied.”

What is particularly remarkable about Mafalda is that its continuing success throughout the decades relied exclusively on reproduced originals. Unlike other comics that continue to sell today such as, for example, Archie, Quino stopped creating new Mafalda strips in 1973. What this means is that Mafalda has continually sold compilations of the original newspaper strips—only and always by Quino—over and over again. In contrast, Archie’s ever evolving team of writers kept not only producing new strips and stories but also updated the looks of the characters to match the times in which the new strips were created. In this sense, and this sense only, Mafalda remained static; hence the particular value of the additional later frames, which speaks to the eternal character of this precocious little girl and her urban gang of friends.

Not only was Mafalda neither banned nor censored by the authoritarian regimes in Argentina since the strip’s beginnings to 1976, but neither was Quino’s most famous

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755 The heading mistakenly congratulates Quino on his 80th birthday. The error is later corrected in the comments as it was the artist’s 84th birthday. See Idigoras y Pachi, Twitter Post, July 17, 2016, 6:16 AM, https://twitter.com/pachi_idigoras/status/754666028165201921?lang=en
756 Idigoras y Pachi, Twitter Post, November 16, 21, 2017, 8:17 AM, https://twitter.com/Pachi_Idigoras/status/931194450168238082
757 Divinsky, interview.
masterpiece banned nor censored by the fierce censorship of Argentina’s last dictatorship. As such, the ways in which refuge functioned with this audience despite free circulation was one where violation of that refuge took place by means of appropriation and adulteration by the military regime, creating a double edged sword where distorted meaning might have intimidated ‘subversives’—as intended by the dictatorship—on the one hand, and reinforced the resistance that lived in the liminal space of refuge, thus reinforcing resistance in general, on the other. For the post-dictatorship readership, nostalgia to the 1960’s and 1970’s was added to the comforting effect that reading this strip brought to its original audience, thus maintaining the label of “long runner” for Quino to the current day.

As a rhizomatic, living museum formatted in figurative hypertext style, it doesn’t matter where one starts reading Mafalda, or even if one moves onto other parts of the obra because each frame points at something meaningful in itself, each part is independent and yet, simultaneously, a constituent of the whole. It is in its inherent character of boundlessness that a rhizomatic Mafalda provides comfort as the pleasant experience that never ends. This is how the reader, across cultural boundaries of time and place, keeps on enjoying the same, original, valid—and current—panels that Quino created over half a century ago.

760 Divinsky, interview.
762 Ibid, 134.
Chapter 5- Conclusion

Bearing witness to the sociopolitical realities of the 1960s and 1970s, Argentine comic strip *Mafalda* speaks to the unrest and state violence of the time in the form of a precocious little girl who asks her parents hard questions of universal magnitude. Hanging out around the neighborhood with her gang—a group of friends who represent different facets of human character and nature, as well as of Argentine society—Mafalda is the central character of the comic by the same name by Argentine cartoonist and thinker, Quino, *Mafalda*. This middle class little girl rises to become the centerpiece of a work of social critique, a work of art whose dwellings progressed from the space of a weekly comic panel to international classic of iconic dimensions as champion of freedom, advocate of the disenfranchised, and paragon of justice, and she does so yclad in moving, masterful humor rooted in Quino’s own innate compassionate nature and cosmopolitan profound care for all life. It is because she embodies everyman that she possesses that multifaceted, multidimensional capacity to speak to her fellow-everym[e]n—women and men—who aspire to be more like her and less like other characters of the strip, transcending boundaries of time, place, and culture, and solidly remaining as valid and current today as she was over half a century ago when she was born. A classic.

The aims of this research branched into two levels that, although distinct, are married to each other. While the primary goal of this work was to deepen the study of the relationship between author and characters on the one hand, and the reader on the other, in order to do so, I had to consider an eclectic selection of sources that could
appear disparate at a first glance due to the wide spectrum of type, style, content, medium, and language of their form.

In terms of the relationship author/characters-reader, the main questions governing this study concerned themselves with identifying the type of identification process that took place between members of the audience and Mafalda, and how that identification bestowed Mafalda with influence. The logical thread continued by investigating the relationship between that influence and Mafalda’s power and authority, and how that affected her transcendence. Additionally, I asked why Mafalda acts both as local and universal witness of a historic time period—thus also becoming an historical source—despite the protagonists being “just” fictional characters, and what were the ways of influence of authoritarian censorship, and self-censorship in the topics at hand. All these questions work toward the center of this investigation, which is to show the ways in which the Site of Refuge is established in Mafalda, how is it related to authoritarian governments in Argentina, and why it matters, as well as elucidate how the Site of Refuge change or evolve diachronically and the reasons for that change.

However, in order to productively and efficiently answer those questions, I had to look into multiple types of sources. Aiming at remedy the present state of lack of cohesiveness and accessibility in the study of Mafalda within the field of Comics Studies, this research examined different types of sources that were both designed to present a varying spectrum of depth and style, and that were written in different languages. Sources were selected according to relevance, and they vary in type, thus content, style, and language, as well as target audience. From informal and informal interviews—both in print and online, in text and in video format—, including my own in
Buenos Aires with Quino’s editor since 1970, Daniel Divinsky, newspaper and popular magazine articles, through paintings, drawings and comic strips, my archival work at Ediciones de la Flor in Buenos Aires, to academic and scholarly articles, chapters, and books, theses and dissertations, all these sources could never provide enough basis without the actual Mafalda editions by Ediciones de la Flor. These editions provided a golden fountain of invaluable information in their different formats and additional information included in them for the newer reader of the later Mafalda audience that followed the last Argentine dictatorship.

Given that on the one hand the questions asked in this study do not fit into a single discipline, and due to the multidimensionality inherent to comics on the other, examining Mafalda’s influence in Argentine culture calls to building a theoretical model that intersects frameworks from different disciplines. Through an underpinning New Historicist lens, that interdisciplinary approach provided the necessary tools to address Mafalda’s multidimensional facets as a comic strip, a work of art, a witness, a journalist, a museum, an entertainer, a comic, and a Site of Refuge able to provide the reader with safe passage into the realm of virtual safety in the context of state terror.

With graphic and textual elements as vehicle to reflect the concerns and news of the time—both locally and universally—from her position of representing the Argentine middle class, Mafalda critiques injustice on the one hand and reports on world pivotal events on the other, while both delineate the Zeitgeist of the era in which Quino created the comic in the 1960’s and 1970’s. In its social critique, Mafalda points out the wrongs of the time—which transcended that time through the universality of issues and behaviors—such as racism, poverty, and the role of women, with a marked emphasis
on critique on both forms of governing and those in power, especially the militarization, censorship and torture, as well as foreign interference and consequent influence in the country. As a witness-journalist, *Mafalda* reports on crucial world affairs of the time such as space-age related topics, the Vietnam War, and the Middle East crisis where she refers to Israelis and Palestinians as “Tom and Jerry.” It is through the comic strip’s facet as witness—despite its characters being but “mere” fictional entities—that it acquires credibility, thus gaining its own power, authority, and influence, underpinned by a cosmopolitan view of universal compassion and responsibility, and strong desire for peace.

Via an interfaced process of meaning making between author and audience that became a constituent of Argentine culture, *Mafalda*’s trajectory evolved from ordinary weekly newspaper appearances to be the paragon and ultimate icon of the endless fight of the weak against the powerful in recent Argentine history. Mafalda, the character—representing *Mafalda*, the strip—progressed to become patroness of and advocate for the oppressed, and ultimate voice of universal social justice, and peace. It is within that universality that *Mafalda* masterfully models how to speak to others across difference, thus embodying the very concept of cosmopolitanism.

From one pseudo democratic government to another, from authoritarian, autocratic government to another, and the broad cultural frameworks that facilitated them, by the 1960s—when *Mafalda* first appeared—the way of the Argentine regimes was to ban, control, distort and manipulate information in order to mold society into their ideology, with little to no tolerance for opposition, and brutal consequences for those who dared resist. *Mafalda* transcended all of this, safely, and therein lies her greatness.
This begs the question, therefore—a question that cannot be answered—of how *Mafalda*, with its infinite wit and at times incisive fangs, and Quino, remained untouched by Argentine dictatorships and their oppression, free to roam the realms of defiance, brush-striking society against authoritarianism as it offered its audience a Site of Refuge, a space that provided a safe haven from the dangers that engaging in protest and denunciation could otherwise easily trigger. Looking at the dislocation of established structures as the liminality in *Mafalda*, this dislocation manifests itself in that in-between space mediating fiction with reality. It is in that mediating site where reader meets author via characters and plots, and paradoxically finds refuge in expressions of a reality they are escaping through the very activity of reading. *Mafalda*'s readers found comfort in this Site of Refuge Mafalda offered; they found solace by immersing themselves in expressions of a reality they feared.

In order to examine the relationship between Quino and *Mafalda*—author/character—on the one hand, and its readers on the other at different points in time, I have applied retrospective methodology by analyzing the difference in formats of the various *Mafalda* editions by *Ediciones de la Flor* in Buenos Aires. Just as a modern lay reader needs an annotated version to adequately understand *Don Quijote*, a reader who did not experience the state terror in Argentina will need annotations, and those are provided by the editor in the form of explanations, background information, and comic strips dedicated to Quino and Mafalda by other Argentine renowned cartoonists in later editions of *Mafalda*. I look into three audiences by periodizing them according to relevant political contexts: first, the contemporaneous audience 1963-1973; second, the audience at the dawn of and during the last Argentine dictatorship 1976-1983, and third,
the post-dictatorship audience after 1983. This way I examined the changes in both the author/character-reader relationship and the Site of Refuge function I ascribe to it in the case of *Mafalda*.

The current study has aimed at deepening the understanding of the relationship author/character-reader through the comic strip *Mafalda*. The applications of this research are as plural as *Mafalda* itself. In the classroom, the strip’s analyses in this work can be applied in several fields. Taking *Mafalda* as historical source, it can provide either the backbone or supportive guideline in a class on Argentina’s recent history. Looking at this comic as cultural expression, a cultural studies class could greatly benefit from this research as focus on the Southern Cone, the Riverplate, and Argentina specifically. From a linguistic viewpoint, the actual strips, and their context, can be valuable tools to teach and learn Spanish, with similar applications in translation studies. Finally, within comic studies, this study contributes to the growing body of work in this nascent interdisciplinary field as representative of the most influential comic strips in the Spanish Speaking world.

In aiming at deepening the understanding of the relationship author/character-reader through the comic strip *Mafalda*, I have examined the strip’s transcendence and power, its role as historical social critic but it is not a comparative study, nor was I able to treat problems that lie outside the scope of this research, such as the implications of the effects of language in translated versions, discerning whether other comics function in a similar fashion as providers of a Site of Refuge in comparable dangerous contexts, and investigate how other comics negotiate state terror and navigate censorship, and in what way those factors determine circulation, or investigate how cultural markers may
alter that Site of Refuge, in what ways that safe haven might transform under different circumstances, if at all. These are left for future research to unveil, and I remain hopeful that this study might assist those researchers interested in pursuing further exploration of these and other related topics. The fact that subjectivity is inescapable implies the possibility of other researchers to disagree with my observations. I regard that possibility in a positive light, as such differences of opinion often serve to motivate further exploration and improvement of previous research. In this respect, the present research may be regarded as bridge in the search for a better understanding of the relationship between author/character and reader.

With an ultimate message of hope, and transcending time and localism, Mafalda’s cosmopolitan nature speaks to the betterment of human kind, offering a glimpse of optimism in a world plagued with tragedy, war, and injustice that comes to the reader embedded in masterfully crafted humor that leaves the audience in deep thought across the boundaries of time and culture, wherever this little girl and her friends go.
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**Images: Mafalda Strips**


Images: Other


Appendices
Appendix A

¿Dónde Hay un Mango?, 1933

Lyrics: Ivo Pelay
Music: Francisco Canaro

Viejo Gómez, vos que estás
de manguero doctorao
y que un mango descubrís
aunque lo hayan enterrao,
definíme, si podés,
esta contra que se ha dao,
que por más que me arremango,
no descubro un mango
ni por equivocación,
que por más que la pateo,
un peso no veo en circulación.

¿Dónde hay un mango, viejo Gómez?
¡Los han limpiao con piedra pómez!
¿Dónde hay un mango que yo lo he buscado
con lupa y linterna y estoy afiebrado?
¿Dónde hay un mango pa' darle a la cana,
si es que se la deja dar?
¿Dónde hay un mango,

que si no se entrega lo podamos allanar?
¿Dónde hay un mango,
que los financistas, ni los periodistas,
ni perros, ni gatos,
noticias ni datos de su paradero no me saben dar?

Viejo Gómez, vos que sos
el Viancarlos del gomán,
concretame, si sabés,
los billetes... ¿dónde están?
Nadie sabe dar razón
y del seco hasta el bacán,
todos en plena palmera,
llenan la cartera
con cartel de defunción
y jugando a la escondida,
colman la medida de la situación.

Where is there a buck?

Old Gómez, you, who have a doctorate in getting money,
and a buck you can find even if buried,

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765 My English version.
define for me, if you can, this non sequitor
that has emerged,
coz no matter how much I pull my sleeves up
I cannot seem to discover a buck not even by mistake,
coz no matter how much I kick the situation around
I don’t see a buck in circulation.

Where is there a buck, old Gómez?
They have cleaned them out with pumice!
Where is there a buck, coz I’ve looked
with magnifying glass and flashlight
and I’ve now come down with a fever?
Where is there a buck to bribe the cops,
if they even let themselves be bribed?
Where is there a buck, coz if it doesn’t surrender we can raid?
Where is there a buck, coz neither financiers now journalists,
neither dogs nor cats,
have no news or information about its whereabouts for me?

Old Gómez, you, who are the Viancarlos766 of the buck,
tell me concretely, if you know,
the bills... where are they?
No one can explain it,
from the broke to the wealthy, all in the open
have their wallets behind signs of (closed due to) bereavement
and playing hide and seek
are the straw the brake the camel’s back in this situation.
Cambalache, 1934

Lyrics: Enrique Santos Discépolo
Music: Enrique Santos Discépolo

Spanish:

Que el mundo fue y será una porquería,
ya lo sé…
En el quinientos diez
y en el dos mil también!
Que siempre ha habido chorros,
maquiavels y estafaos,
contentos y amargaos,
valores y dublés…
Pero que el siglo veinte
es un despliegue
de maldad insolente
ya no hay quien lo niegue.
Vivimos revolcaos en un merengue
y en un mismo lodo
todos manoseaos…

Hoy resulta que es lo mismo  ser derecho que traidor..!
Ignorante, sabio, chorro,  generoso o estafador!
Todo es igual! Nada es mejor!
Lo mismo un burro  que un gran profesor!

No hay aplazaos ni escalafón, los inmorales nos han igualao.

---

Si uno vive en la impostura y otro roba en su ambición, da lo mismo que sea cura, colchonero, rey de bastos, caradura o polizón…
¡Qué falta de respeto, qué atropello a la razón!
¡Cualquiera es un señor! Cualquiera es un ladrón!

Mezclao con Stavisky\textsuperscript{767} va Don Bosco\textsuperscript{768} y “La Mignon,”\textsuperscript{769} Don Chicho\textsuperscript{770} y Napoleón, Carnera\textsuperscript{771} y San Martín…\textsuperscript{772}

Igual que en la vidriera irrespetuosa de los cambalaches se ha mezclao la vida, y herida por un sable sin remache ves llorar la Biblia contra un calefón.
¡Siglo veinte, cambalache, problemático y febril!

El que no llora, no mama, y el que no afana es un gil.
¡Dale nomás! ¡Dale que va!
¡Que allá en el horno nos vamo a encontrar!

No pienses más, sentáte a un lao.
¡Que a nadie importa si naciste honrado!

Que es lo mismo el que labura noche y día, como un buey,
que el que vive de las minas, que el que mata o el que cura
o está fuera de la ley.


\textsuperscript{769} “La Mignon” is a fictional character representing a prostitute or well kept lover. Parise, “Los Mezclados.”

\textsuperscript{770} Of real name Giovanni Galiffi, Don Chicho was one of the first important Italian \textit{Mafiosi} in Argentina. He emigrated from Italy at the age of eighteen in 1910, and was deported by the end of 1934 for his crimes. For a brief but detailed account of his life see Luciano Álvarez, “Don Chicho, el de Cambalache,” El País, n.d., http://www.elpais.com.uy/opinion/don-chicho-cambalache.html

\textsuperscript{771} Primo Carnera, popular Italian heavyweight boxing champion in the 1930s. For more about Carnera’s life and boxing career see Joseph S. Page, \textit{Primo Carnera: The Life and Career of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion} (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

\textsuperscript{772} José de San Martín was Argentina’s general who led the War of Independence from Spain that ended successfully for Argentina in 1818, and was also a key figure in both Chile’s and Perú’s independence. He is seen as national hero and liberator of Argentina. See Obuka, \textit{Argentina} and Lynch, \textit{San Martín}. 
That the world was and always be filth, 
I already know…
In the year five hundred and ten 
and in the year two thousand too!
There always have been thieves, 
traitors and victims of fraud,
happy and bitter people,
valuables and imitations
But, that the twentieth century
is a display
of insolent malice,
obody can deny it anymore.
We lived sunk in a fuzz 
and in the same mud
all well-worn…

Today it happens it is the same to be decent or a traitor!
To be an ignorant, a genius, a pickpocket,
a generous person or a swindler!
All is the same! Nothing is better!
They are the same, an idiot ass and a great professor!
There are no failing grades or merit valuations,
the immoral have caught up with us.
If one lives in a pose and another, in his ambition, steals,
it’s the same if it’s a priest, a mattress maker, a king of clubs, a cad or a tramp.

773 My English version.
What a lack of respect, what a way to run over reason!

Anybody is a gentleman! Anybody is a thief!

Mixed with Stavisky, you have Don Bosco and La Mignon,
don Chicho and Napoleon, Carnera and San Martin.

Like in the disrespectful window of the bazaars
where life has become a mix,
(and) where wounded by a sword without rivets
you can see the Bible crying next to a water heater.

Twentieth century, bazaar, problematic and feverish!

If you don’t cry, you don’t get fed and if you don’t steal, you’re a fool.

Go ahead! Keep it up!

That there, in hell we’re gonna reunite.

Don’t think anymore, move out of the way.

Nobody seems to care if you were born honest.

That is the same the one who works, day and night like an ox,
than the one who lives from women, than the one that kills, or heals,
or the one who lives outside the law
Appendix B: Manolito’s Characterization as a Materialistic “Brute,” and his Relationship with Money

Figure B.1 Characterization of Manolito as “brute Galician”, “gallego bruto.” Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Manolito writes “I must be neater in my homework, I must be naeter in”
Panel 2, Mafalda: “Naeter?”
Panel 3, Manolito appears to be searching for something under the table
Panel 4, Manolito uses the sole of his shoe as eraser
Panel 5, Manolito continues writing: “neater in my homework. I must be.”

Figure B.2 Manolito characterized as materialistic. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Mafalda: “Look here, this little pigeon doesn’t know what money is and it’s still happy.”
Panel 2, Mafalda: “Do you think that money is everything in this life, Manolito?”
Panel 3, Manolito: “No, of course money is not everything”
Panel 4, Manolito: “...there are also cheques.”

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775 Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
Figure B.3 Manolito allocates value by material possessions. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Manolito reads: “No one’s worth is measured by what they own but by what they are”
Panel 2, Manolito exclaims: “Come on! He who doesn’t own, not even is!” (underlined in the original)

Figure B.4 Characterization of Manolito as dishonest in business, but wittingly charming in marketing. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 2, reads: “Canned in 1957”
Panel 4, on wall, graffiti by Manolito (implied), with Mafalda reading in disapproval: “Tomatoes with curriculum? “Don Manolo’s” convenience store”

778 Quino, *Toda Mafalda*, 386.
779 The male form ‘Don’, or female ‘Doña’ used to be titles denoting a privileged social stature of individuals, to which access was possible through monetary payment, thus remaining reserved for use by royalty and clergy. Its sociolinguistic use, however, evolved into a common title used by members of different sociocultural circles in the XVII century both in Spain and in the then Spanish colonies, becoming a mere respect treatment across societies and their layers. Francisca Medina Morales, “Las Formas Nominales de Tratamiento en el Siglo de Oro. Aproximación Sociolingüística,” in Memoria de la Palabra: Actas del VI Congreso de la Asociación Internacional Siglo de Oro, Burgos, La Rioja, July 15-19, 2002, vol. 2, ed. Francisco Domínguez Matito and María Luisa Lobato López (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2004), 1335-1336, http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aiso/pdf/06/aiso_6_2_033.pdf. Although archaic, the title is still current when talking or referring to an older person as a token of respect. It is also common for smaller neighbourhood restaurants and convenience stores to use “don” or “doña” followed by a given name to connote familiarity.
Manolito allocates romantic/sexual value to money: "money is sexy." Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Manolito’s face is neutral
Panel 2, Manolito’s face lights up and he smiles as he sees something approaching
Panel 3, on van/truck signs reads: “United Bank of the South”
Panel 4, Manolito, smitten, smiles at vehicle as it drives away
Panel 5, Manolito thinks (symbolized by the “thinking” cloud and bubbles): “Sexy, the truckling!” (bold in the original)

Quino, Toda Mafalda, 418.
Appendix C- Universal Themes in Mafalda

Injustice, Confrontation Between Weak and Powerful

Panel 1, Raquel: “And?... How did your little brother behave?”
Mafalda: “Good”

Panel 2, Mafalda: “Only that I got the idea to take the pacifier away from him and you should have seen how upset he got”
Raquel: “Oh, how nice!”

Panel 3, Raquel: “You should be ashamed of yourself! A much bigger girl making a defenseless tiny little boy suffer. Where on earth have you seen that?”

Panel 4, Mafalda pauses

Panel 5, Mafalda exclaims: “At the UN?”

With Mafalda’s curiosity as vehicle, Quino implies that the United Nations, as powerful agent, bullies small, defenseless bodies. This specific accusation is as current today as it was when this strip was originally published. The readership was introduced to Mafalda’s baby brother, Guille, in June, 1968. Quino brings him to life in March, 1968, during a hiatus of five months in the strip’s publication between the closure of El Mundo, where it had been published, and Mafalda’s move to Siete Días, which occurred in June, 1968, where Quino was to draw Mafalda four times a week.

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781 Ibid., 329.
782 Sasturain, El Domicilio, 171.
783 Latxague, Lire Quino, 129.
Poverty and Child Labor

Figure C.2 Poverty and child labor. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Miguelito: “In reality, being a child also has its advantages”
   Mafalda: “Yes, sure”
Panel 2, Miguelito: “One doesn’t have to work...”
   Mafalda: “Your parents are constantly looking after your health...”
Panel 3, Miguelito: “And als...”
Panels 3 and 4: They both astonishingly stare at a working passing child smoking a cigarette.
Panels 5, Mafalda and Miguelito abruptly stop talking
Panel 6, Miguelito: “Should we go shut up at my house?”

Mafalda and Miguelito are bluntly faced by the crude reality of the unprotected as they were innocently rejoicing in recounting their blessings for the sole fact of being (protected) children. In Quino’s fierce denunciation of the economic crisis, he emphasizes the shock of this encounter, first, by marking their silence with the absence of mouths altogether in panel 5, implying a myriad of feelings the two children might be experiencing such as sadness, confusion due to the irony of the situation, or perhaps even guilt. Second and less subtle, Miguelito’s last line in panel 6 is a fulminant slap to society that acts as wake up call to bring awareness to social inequality.

784 Quino, Toda Mafalda576.
785 Latxague, Lire Quino, 89.
Panel 1, Mafalda and Susanita walk up through the street corner and spot a homeless person
Panel 2, Mafalda: “It breaks my heart to see poor people”
   Susanita: “Me too”
Panel 3, Mafalda: “Things like a roof, work, protection, and wellbeing should be provided to the poor!”
Panel 4, Susanita: “Why so much? It would be enough to hide them”

Susanita’s repulsion for the poor and the *other*, which often result in racist feelings and comments on her part, is one of the axes around which Quino built her character. Another example is the following strip below:
Panel 1, Susanita: “My soul also bleeds when I see poor people, believe me!”
Panel 2, Susanita: “That’s why when we are señorás\(^788\) we shall become members of a foundation of assistance to the unprivileged”
Panel 3, Susanita: “And we will organize banquets in which we’ll serve chicken and turkey and lechón\(^789\) and all that stuff! This is how we will raise funds”
Panel 4, Susanita continues: “in order to be able to provide the poor with flour and semolina and noodles and that crap that they eat”

Due to Susanita’s endless platter against the poor or the non-‘white’, Mafalda looks at her pleased in the first panel, probably pleasantly surprised at Susanita’s apparent compassion. As Susanita’s monologue progresses, Mafalda gradually looks less and less happy to the point of shock in the last panel, achieved by Quino’s tracing her visible eye larger, conveying her dismay at Susanita’s statement.

In full accord with Susanita’s general characterization, she presents an allusion to tradition with the word choice señorás—a title traditionally reserved for married women—in the second panel, instead of merely saying “when we grow up”, for example. This allusion serves to round up and compliment the conservative social position Susanita embodies, namely, that the poor are bad and they must be made away with, a position the last Argentine dictatorship felt strongly about (see section on the St. Patrick’s Massacre (Masacre de San Patricio) under section “Mafalda’s Power and Transcendence” of Chapter 3.


\(^{788}\) Married women

\(^{789}\) Roasted piglet, a Spanish and Latin American specialty.
Racism

Figure C.5 Susanita’s racism represents racism in society. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Susanita: “I can’t wrap my head around it! Racism is something that I just cannot understand! I find it inconceivable!”

Panel 2, Susanita continues: “I find it terrible to consider others inferior for the sole fact of their not being like us!”

Panel 3, Susanita: “On top of their having that misfortune, are we to look down on them as well? We need to be more charitable!…”

In the first and second panels, Mafalda seems pleased at Susanita’s apparent change of position in regards to racism. In the last panel, however, Mafalda is quickly disenchanted and her facial expression denotes nausea as Susanita delivers her “punch line,” which is, indeed, a punch for both Mafalda and the reader who cares about an egalitarian society without discrimination.

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790 Quino, *Mafalda, Todas*, 541.
Unemployment

Figure C.6-Mafalda fears unemployment in her future. Reprinted with permission from Ediciones de la Flor

Panel 1, Mafalda: “Kindergarten, is that a career, mom?” (bold in the original)
Raquel: “No! How can that ever be a career!”

Panel 2, Mafalda: “So when I’m done I won’t have to...thank god!”

Panel 3, Mafalda: “I swear to you that being so little I didn’t want to, mom! Didn’t want to! I swear to you!”
Raquel: “You didn’t want to what?”

Panel 4, Mafalda: “To have to leave the country, like everyone who finishes (studying) a (professional) career!”

Although here Mafalda speaks about professionals in particular, this strip clearly reflects the poor state of an employment situation that forces potential workers to emigrate, especially the professional, younger sector of the population, a phenomenon known as “brain drain”. The migratory exodus from the Riverplate due to the miserable economic situation was so massive during the 1970s and early 1980s that I clearly remember a comic on the magazine El Dedo where the reader could see a bulb and a dialogue bubble bringing a voice from outside the frame saying “The last one, turn off the light!”
The duster in Raquel’s hand symbolizes the traditional, conservative role of women in society that the character represents. See more examples on this subject under “Role of Women, Feminism.”

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791 Quino, Toda Mafalda, 267.
792 El Dedo (The Finger) was a Uruguayan humor magazine published during the last dictatorship in that country (1973-1985). It became an important vent under the sharp oppression of the military dictatorship, whose censorship closed the doors of this magazine after only seven issues. Physical copies of this magazine are now rare and have become collector items. I was, therefore, prevented from finding the particular comic I mention. It, however, lives in my memory. For more on this important magazine see Gerardo Carrasco, “Con Antonio Dabezies, fundador de “El Dedo,”” Montevideo, July 27, 2012, http://www.montevideo.com.uy/contenido/Con-Antonio-Dabezies-fundador-de-El-Dedo—173497. For examples of original images of El Dedo magazine covers see “Revista El Dedo Nº 4, Noviembre 1982, Humor Uruguayo,” http://articulo.mercadolibre.com.uy/MLU-443070716-revista-el-dedo-n4-noviembre-1982-humor-uruguayo-_JM; “Cuatro Hitos de Revistas de Humor,” Comigráfica, n.d., http://comigráfica.tripod.com/humor.htm
Role of Women, Feminism

![Image of Mafalda and Raquel in a comic strip]

Figure C.7 Social constraints for women, the role of women. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panels 1 and 2 show Mafalda dreaming that she is flying happily. Panel 3 depicts Raquel, her mother, joyfully joining her, but with part of her limbs chained to home appliances, namely, an iron and a washer. Mafalda’s facial expression is that of sadness as she looks at her mother in that state.

In panels 4 to 7, Mafalda is awake, and proceeds to her mother’s bedroom—where Raquel is still asleep next to her husband—to kiss her, and goes back to her bed.

As a protected and loved child, Mafalda has the freedom and privilege to follow her imagination and vision to explore life and seize opportunities that are and will continue to be presented to her. As the compassionate person that she is, she instantly loses the joy of doing so as she sees her own mother having lost her flight, her freedom, having lost her imagination, her vision, and having wasted her opportunities to find herself captive to social conventions. This is an issue that Quino has felt strongly about as Mafalda’s harsh critique of her own mother for having done so is present throughout the collection, especially when, through the characters, he contrasts Raquel’s choices to those of Libertad’s mother, who is a professional French-Spanish translator of works by important authors such as Sartre.

The fact that Raquel is characterized as an intelligent woman (see Fig B-11 below) probably just adds to Mafalda’s frustration with her mother’s choice of becoming a housewife and stay at home mom instead of finishing her university degree and pursue a career like Libertad’s mother.

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794 Ibid., 383.
Figure C.8 Truncated careers of women.\textsuperscript{795} Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Mafalda says to her mother: “I saw Libertad’s apartment, it’s tiny!”
   Raquel: “Uh huh?”
Panel 2, Mafalda: “I also met her mother; she works, the mom”
   Raquel: “Uh huh?”
Panel 3, Mafalda: “Yeah, she is a French translator”
   Raquel: “Uh huh?”
Panel 4, Mafalda: “Because, clearly, when she got married she didn’t abandon her studies like many others”
Panel 5, Mafalda, walking away: “Evidently, she had more will than uh huh’s”

Mafalda is sharing her perceptions of Libertad’s environment with her mother. In the beginning, it all appears to be innocent, but by the fourth panel it becomes a harsh criticism of her mother’s decision to drop out of university when Raquel married Mafalda’s father. This change of tone is highlighted by Quino’s decision to draw a close up on Mafalda without Raquel in the frame. The line that leaves Raquel in a severe state of sadness and, possibly, also regret is Mafalda’s last, especially because it is probably true. Evidence to this are the strips in which Raquel’s regret, is evident or instances where nostalgic moments to her university days, piano lessons, or projections into a professional present and future that could have been are depicted.

\textsuperscript{795} Ibid.
Panel 1, Mafalda looks at a pile of freshly ironed clothes
Panel 2, Mafalda looks at the shiny floors
Panel 3, Mafalda looks at a large amount of freshly washed dishes
Panel 4, Raquel is doing laundry, and Mafalda says to her: “Mom, what would you like to be if you lived?”

The strip is self explanatory.
Panel 1, Mafalda, walking, starts talking. Her line expands throughout the four panels of the strip as she passes by and looks at:
Panel 2, Mafalda looks at a pile of freshly ironed clothes
Panel 3, Mafalda looks at a rolled up carpet. Behind her, a broom or mop, a cleaning rag, and a duster are visible.
Panel 4, Mafalda bumps into her mother, who is on fours scrubbing the floor wearing her apron and a head scarf.

Mafalda's line is printed with letters that gradually decrease in size from panels 1 to 4. It reads: "Mom, what future do you see for this movement for the liberation of women? Nevermind, forget it"

The clash between the feminist movement and the daily life of many women is evident in this strip. Mafalda's classic preoccupation with world issues showcases the confrontation between feminist ideas as she asks her mother for her opinion about it on the one hand, and her mother as a representative of women in society at the time on the other. The decreasing size of the letters conveys Mafalda's gradually becoming aware of the crude irony of her question to her mother, which climaxes in the last panel with a physical face to face realization of Raquel's unhappiness, depicted on both character's facial expressions.

Though not my reality growing up, as a reader I felt as if hit with a bucket of cold water with this strip. I can imagine the magnitude of the emotional impression it must have on the directly affected. Again, this is Quino bringing awareness to social issues that transcend time, place, and culture, as they are ubiquitous throughout those sites and coordinates.

Figure C.11 Raquel's characterization as an intelligent woman.© Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Raquel's voice in the distance: "Mafalda, pick up the cardigan that you left on the floor!"
Panel 2, Mafalda: "I don't have any reason to obey anyone, mom, I am a president!"
Panel 3, Raquel's voice: "And I am the World Bank, The Paris Club, and the International Monetary Fund!"
Panel 4, Mafalda thinks: "I must admit that she was astute"

War

Figure C.12 Protesting against war. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

On the cover Mafalda’s second book the readers can see Mafalda’s friends wearing helmets and carrying guns. Of particular interest is Miguelito’s rifle, whose butt clearly reminds the shape of that of the M-16, the US rifle of choice in the Vietnam War. A grenade and a toy cannon complete the bellicose theme as Mafalda, holding a stuffed animal in her arms as a mother holds her baby, looks away in emotional distress. Mafalda’s parents, displaying saddened facial expressions, stand in the background as a reminder of a universal public who is forced to become an audience to the war. Felipito’s body language appears explicative as if he were trying to cheer Mafalda up, or as if he were making an attempt at explain (the necessity of?) this war to her. The printing of his particular edition ended on July, 1972, thus pointing at the sad time in history congruent with the Vietnam War. Quino’s dedication of Mafalda 2, “to humanity, but not all humanity,” shows again the artist’s true character of a man who genuinely suffers when fronted by tragedy and loss of life discussed earlier in this paper. His dedication accuses the parts of humanity who are responsible for the unnecessary suffering of many, and considers them undeserving to his work.

Although specific to the Vietnam War, the denunciation of war, suffering, injustice, and tragedy inherent to it in this collection of strips is easily transferable and applicable to any other situation of military conflict as denunciation and protest remain valid. This is exactly how Mafalda transcends both human constructed boundaries of culture or language and boundaries natural to our human reality such as time and space. This is how she speaks to people and situations beyond the locally inspired reality.

800 See last page of second book in Quino, Mafalda 2.
801 “A la Humanidad, aunque no a toda.” Ibid.
Figure C.13 Global repercussions of the Vietnam war. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Mafalda dreams that she wakes up to the loud sound of automatic guns shooting
Panel 2, Mafalda, in her dream, walks over the Atlantic Ocean from Latin America direction East
Panel 3, still in her dream, Mafalda angrily approaches a white/Western soldier holding a machine gun across from an Asian looking person hiding in the high grass while she yells at this soldier: “Do you want to be done with this racket already and let humanity sleep in peace?!?”

Clearly protesting the Vietnam war, Quino masterfully showcases the echo with which this war was resonating in the rest of the world: worry, anger, and fear are the emotions mirrored in and by Mafalda in this anti-war strip. The theme of destruction is emphasized by the broken tree trunk next to the soldier, which appears to have violently snapped. Her demand for war to stop and “let humanity sleep in peace” calls for the human need for inner peace, which cannot be but absent during times of war, in an appel to those causing war to stop so that all humanity’s souls can be at peace and all people can placidly rest even while being most vulnerable: during their sleep.
Neoliberalism

Figure C.14 The muses refuse to bless Felipito.\textsuperscript{802} Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

| Panel 1 | Mafalda: “Hi, Felipe, did you write the essay on (our) National Independence yet?”
         | Felipe: “Not yet” |
| Panel 2 | Felipe: “So I went out for a walk to inspire myself” |
| Panel 3 | Felipe: “But I am getting no ideas” |

Showing the impact of neoliberalism on the national identity, and as a direct result, in the identity of the self, Quino takes us to the street, where Felipito is trying to find inspiration to write his essay on Argentina’s (National) Independence for school only to find that dependency is rampant in the streets of Buenos Aires. This is, of course, easily transferable to the streets of any Southern city in the North-South Divide at which Mafalda’s finger is often pointed. What inspiration can Felipito possibly get to praise the independence of his country when the city is dominated by signs of companies, stores and products from the First World, all in foreign languages? As Nouzeilles and Montado assert, “(t)he rapid spread of malls and shopping centers displaying imported goods and the promise of happiness embedded in certain brands constitute the bright, if hollow, side of neoliberal Argentina.”\textsuperscript{803}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Quino, \textit{Toda Mafalda}, 386.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Protest and Censorship

Mafalda, in close up: “So, that (which) I was taught at school...”

Referred to as the “Onganiato,” General Juan Carlos Onganía deposed the constitutional presidency of Arturo Umberto Illia in a coup d’état June 28, 1966, marking the beginning of the “Revolución Argentina.” In this frame, Mafalda clearly protests the dictatorship while invoking the Civics school curriculum, which—paradoxically—taught students about democracy while school boards publicly both supported the military dictatorship that had just taken over through the “Onganiato,” and “called on citizens to recognize it.” No wonder Mafalda is confused.

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805 “Argentine Revolution.” Ongania’s presidency lasted 1966-1970. For more on Ongania and the “Argentine Revolution” see section on historical background in the Introduction Chapter.
806 Cosse, Mafalda: Middle, 57.
Figure C.16 Mafalda denounces censorship.\textsuperscript{807} Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, Mafalda walks by a wall with graffiti on it that reads: “Enough censorship!”
Panel 2, Mafalda thinks: “Either they ran out of pai(nt) or they weren’t able to fini for reason that are of publi domai”

This masterful denunciation of and protest against censorship is self explanatory. Multiple layers of wit produce an ingenious example of one of those instances where the readership will nod to themselves in complicity with Quino, and Mafalda.

\textsuperscript{807} Quino, Toda Mafalda, 489.
Appendix D- Middle Class in *Mafalda*

Figure D.1 Middle class problems in Mafalda’s family. Reprinted with permission from © Ediciones de la Flor.

Panel 1, a man's hand is opening a door

Panel 2, Guille and Mafalda look in the direction of the door as the reader becomes aware that it must be their father coming in.

Panel 3, the children bring an exhausted father to their mother, and Mafalda says: “Every day we deliver a father for that cursed office to send us this back? (bold in the original)

Mafalda’s father works at an accounting type office. The family lives in an apartment like many others in Buenos Aires, and sometimes they are able to go on summer holidays by train. In the beginning, they do not own a TV or a car, and when they do, those purchases mark their economic progress in the parameters of a middle class family. The car is a Citroën 2 CV, a typical middle class car of the time. Since Raquel, the mother, is a stay at home mom, the father’s income is the only financial source for the family of three—and later four, with the arrival of Guille. The father's job is depicted as flat and boring, with an economic ceiling.

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A preoccupied Mafalda’s father holds his empathetic daughter in his arms. The images in the background showing charts and calculations imply that his worries related to finances and budget problems typical to the middle class, namely “Watch out! Car payment” (“¡Ojo! Cuota auto”), electricity, gas, telephone, and rather high pharmacy costs\(^{810}\) visible to the character’s right. To his left, a note that reads “(is) the butcher crazy?” (“(está) loco el carnicero?,” as well as denotations of debt,\(^{811}\) showcase further daily issues a middle class family regularly encounters.

It is interesting to note that this particular frame was never part of a comic strip per se. Instead, Quino drew this specific one for the December 28, 1971, cover of *Panorama* magazine\(^{812}\) as a symbol of the “average Argentine” (“el argentino medio”), whereby the Spanish word “medio” serves as signifier for “average” as well as “middle,” which brings the reader perhaps even a tad closer to the concept of *Mafalda* representing the middle class. Implied by the banner on the right hand side corner of the cover, this particular December was, presumably, dedicated to offer a yearly summary of events to mark the end of 1971: “Person of the year: the average Argentine” (“Personaje del año: el argentino medio”).

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\(^{809}\) Cosse, Mafalda: Historia, 122.

\(^{810}\) The particularly high pharmacy costs are a nod to the numerous times the family is forced to buy “Nervocalm,” an invented medicine that, as alluded in its very name, aims at calming the nerves.

\(^{811}\) Ten thousand pesos owed to a “Panchito,” an open tab at Don Manolo’s convenience store to the father’s left, as well as a (bank) credit payment to his right, right above “insurance.”

Appendix E- Mafalda’s Statue in Buenos Aires

Figure E.1 Quino and Mafalda's statue in San Telmo, Buenos Aires. Reprinted with permission from © La Voz del Interior

813 Quino, Quino: ¡Extraño Dibujar!
Figure E.2 This researcher and Mafalda statue in San Telmo, Buenos Aires, 2015. Photography © Deborah Boyd
Appendix F - Martin Luther: 1521 Political Cartoon by Kranach and Melanchthon

An example of Lucas Kranach and Philip Melanchthon’s political comics as part of the campaign for Martin Luther’s Reform:

During the Reformation, Lutheran artists in Wittenberg and Nuremberg anonymously produced pamphlets satirizing the pope, clergy, and Catholic beliefs. As part of the campaign for Martin Luther’s Reform, Lucas Cranach illustrated and Philip Melanchthon supplied the text for a picture book—*Passional Christi und Antichristi*,

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Wittenberg, 1521—that compared the passion of Christ with that of the Antichrist: the pope. Using visual antithesis, thirteen pairs of woodcuts clearly distinguished their respective behavior.

In the twelfth set above, Christ drives the money changers out of the temple in Jerusalem. The bankers and vendors recoil as Christ knocks over a table and wields his knotted scourge. Opposite, the Antichrist sits in God's temple and displays himself as God. In exchange for money, the pope sells dispensations, indulgences and church offices, dissolves marriages, makes and breaks law, and blesses or damns. While his actions are listed in the inscription, Cranach's simple image immediately distinguishes the pope's interest from that of Christ's.