

From Writer to Journalist: An Analysis of the Weekly Magazine Caras y Caretas from 1915 to 1925

De escritor a periodista: un análisis del semanario Caras y Caretas de 1915 a 1925

De escritor a jornalista: uma análise do semanário Caras y Caretas de 1915 a 1925

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Abstract

This article aims to address the professionalization of writing to identify aspects that motivated this process in the field of journalism by an analysis of Buenos Aires' weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas* focusing on the period 1915–1925. In particular, we discuss the factors that allowed this process to develop, within the framework of the social, political, and cultural transformations that characterized emerging modernity. To achieve our goal, this article is divided in two sections; in the first section, we present some relevant concepts to understand our topic, and in the second section, we proceed to identify the factors that contributed to the creation of a field of literary production that served as a platform

for the professionalization of writing in the field of journalism, as we have stated.

Keywords

Cultural industry; cultural goods; publishing industry; reading; writing

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo abordar la profesionalización de la escritura para identificar los aspectos que motivaron este proceso en el campo del periodismo, mediante un análisis de la revista semanal de Buenos Aires “Caras y Caretas”, enfocándose en el período de 1915-1925. En particular, discutimos los factores que permitieron el desarrollo de este proceso en el marco de las transformaciones sociales, políticas y culturales que caracterizaron a la modernidad emergente. Para alcanzar nuestro objetivo, este artículo se divide en dos secciones; en la primera sección presentamos algunos conceptos relevantes para comprender nuestro tema, y en la segunda sección identificamos los factores que contribuyeron a la creación de un campo de producción literaria que sirvió como plataforma para la profesionalización de la escritura en el ámbito del periodismo, tal como hemos señalado.

Palabras clave

Industria cultural; bienes culturales; industria editorial; lectura; escritura

Abstrato

Este artigo tem como objetivo abordar a profissionalização da escrita para identificar os aspectos que motivaram esse processo no campo do jornalismo, por meio de uma análise da revista semanal de Buenos Aires *Caras y Caretas*, com foco no período de 1915–1925. Em particular, discutimos os fatores que permitiram o desenvolvimento desse processo, no contexto das transformações sociais, políticas e culturais que caracterizaram a modernidade emergente. Para alcançar nosso objetivo, este artigo está dividido em duas seções; na primeira seção, apresentamos alguns conceitos relevantes para entender nosso tema, e na segunda seção, identificamos os fatores que contribuíram para a criação de um campo de produção literária que serviu como plataforma para a profissionalização da escrita no campo do jornalismo, como afirmamos.

Palavras-chave

Indústria cultural; bens culturais; indústria editorial; leitura; escrita

Introducción

This article aims to address the professionalization of writing to identify relevant aspects that motivated the process of the professionalization of writing in the field of journalism by analyzing Buenos Aires's weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas* focusing on the period 1915–1925. In particular, we discuss the factors that allowed this process to develop, within the framework of the social, political, and cultural transformations that characterized emerging modernity. To achieve our goal, first, it is important to specifically contextualize the theoretical concepts and the political, technological, and sociocultural factors that influenced the spread of such magazines in the Argentine society in the beginning of modernity. To do so, our presentation will focus on the following two aspects; the first is related to the development of theoretical concepts, and the second one focuses on (a) describing the factors that allowed the creation of a field of literary production that emphasized its material conditions of circulation and autonomy and (b) linking this to the idea of emerging modernity.

From Writer to Journalist: Fundamental Concepts

To begin with, we will explain the fundamental concepts that will enable a theoretical understanding of the professionalization of writing in the context of Argentina in the 1920s, in the weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas*. In this respect, we highlight the work of Pierre Bourdieu—*The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1995)—as necessary to understand concepts such as professionalization and autonomy in the literary field. In this work, we clarify the emerging relationship between the structure of the European society and the various coexisting powers that impacted the profession of writers in the beginning of the 19th century.

Bourdieu's work begins by clarifying which social function was the most important for writers at that time. He shows his fellow citizens the reality of their interactions and the structure of their functioning, with language closer to that of science, but with more truth. In this way, "The charm of the literary work lies largely in the way it speaks of the most serious things without insisting, unlike science according to Searle, on being taken completely seriously. Writing offers the author and the reader the possibility of a mature understanding which is not half-hearted." (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 64).

The context of his reflection is marked by the coexistence of strong economic and political powers.

The rising middle class marks a trend in which exercising intellect—i.e., practicing it—is not considered acceptable in light of its apparent inability to generate money or politically powerful relationships. Here, what the author calls genesis of the literary field means its creation "as a world apart, subject to its own laws" (p. 48), similar to what the economic and political world were. The "field" is understood as a "space with a type of capital at stake whose shortage creates forces that act on its members according to the positions they hold and participate in obtaining, conserving, or transforming them. That is why this space moves throughout history" (Figueroa, 2003, p. 522).

The challenge for writers, and for the creation of the literary field, means vindication and "the struggle for independence, when the virtues of revolt and resistance had to assert themselves clearly in the face of a repression exercised in all its brutality (especially during the trials), also means rediscovering the forgotten - or repudiated - principles of intellectual freedom." (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 80). The writer and intellectuals in general are now surrounded by power dynamics in which culture becomes an almost dangerous asset, which diverts the attentions from the ideal goals of life, money, and power.

Bourdieu states that these relationships between those who are able to produce culture and those with the ability to finance and influence it led to the imposition of a structural subordination of authors to these powers according to their position in the field. The said subordination is established through several mediations, as described below:

on the one hand, the market, whose sanctions and constraints are exercised on literary enterprises either directly, by means of sales figures, numbers of tickets sold and so forth, or indirectly, through new positions offered in journalism, publishing, illustration and all forms of industrialized literature; and on the other hand, durable links, based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, and operating especially through the intermediary of the salons, which unite at least a portion of the writers to certain sections of high society. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 82)

In this context, the press, as a paradigmatic case of cultural expression, in addition to becoming increasingly profitable, now becomes an instrument of the powerful to adjust the truth to their needs. Thus, this subordination becomes more clearly visible because as a means of expressing the cultural interests of the wealthy, journalist-writers and editors—as representatives of the cultural

industry of that time—hold special power with regard to their colleagues interested in forging a future from this profession. Mass media is a platform of interest for any writing project for those who seek to make a living with writing. However, in this power game, “through their roles as critics, the writer-journalists set themselves up, in all innocence, as the measure of everything in art and literature, thereby authorizing themselves to disparage everything that surpasses them” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 88).

Although the emergence of the middle class and the political power’s desire to support channels to disseminate its events and activities fostered the publishing and journalism industries, consolidating it as a field of professional writing, being subordinate to these economic—political dynamics, obscured the flourishing of other literary manifestations. Then, there was a process of resistance motivated by the large number of new writers who sought to make a living with their creations, which did not necessarily converge with the established model. In this way, with the transformation of social relationships between cultural producers and economic power, the emergence of a process of autonomization of the field began to develop.

Thus it is clear that the literary and artistic field is constituted as such in and by opposition to a ‘bourgeois’ world which had never before asserted so bluntly its values and its pretension to control the instruments of legitimation, both in the domain of art and in the domain of literature, and which, through the press and its hacks, now aims to impose a degraded and degrading definition of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 95).

The indisputable need for the independence of the literary field, i.e., the need to be an autonomous field that defines its own rules of operation, is then considered. This autonomy should enable its members to establish themselves as a constituent of it and must vindicate “the right to define for itself the principles of its legitimacy” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 99) before other actors involve. In the process of autonomization, the following two trends in cultural production are clarified; the first trend involves the works intended for a broad public, without much knowledge, which pays to access the product and whose goal is rapid commercialization and dissemination; the second trend aims at a knowledgeable public, whose creation is guided by almost anti-economic values, favoring the recognition of intellectuals and the accumulation of symbolic capital.

The professionalization of writing begins to make its way in this context, as it is the artist, the cultural producer par excellence, who chooses the most appropriate means to disseminate their work and the symbolic and monetary costs that this entails. This goes hand in hand with the expansion of the publishing industry, increasingly consolidated and technologically developed. Now, with the field’s independence, writers, in this case, are autonomous when it comes to choosing the means to guarantee the type of success they desire: either symbolic or economic. It is important to repeat that the professionalization of writing is possible only insofar as the physical and symbolic conditions for it are provided, e.g., strengthening technology to ensure the circulation of print media and creating means to expand the horizon of writers’ participation, as in case of the cultural press.

We have listed the concepts of literary field and autonomy and outlined the context in which the professionalization of writing takes place. Now, we mention the work of Jacques Dubois, *La institución de la literatura* [Literary Institution] (2014). Based on this, we wish to complement the concepts reviewed thus far and develop the idea of literary institution. In this regard, the author begins by indicating that “literature as such does not exist; there is rather a whole series of special and unique practices that are carried out both in language and in imagination and whose unity is carried out, only at certain levels of operation and inclusion within the social structure” (Dubois, 2014, p. 19).

In general, institutions are ways of organizing practices and roles within a social sphere. They define the activities and functionalities that allow individuals to stay connected, in addition to the forms of production that respond to their own needs. In this sense, “institutions, as organizations, can exercise an unequal control over the practices that they define and, on the other hand, that only integrate them insofar as they comply with a model of behavior that is, in turn, a model of power and ideology” (Dubois, 2014, p. 35). The literary institution, like other social institutions (educational, family, religious, etc.), is pierced by these ideological elements.

According to Dubois, a literary institution preserves the elements of the field established by Bourdieu, that is, it recognizes an internal organization of actors involved in the production and circulation of cultural, literary products but differs in a key aspect—ideology. Introducing the issue of ideology implies recognizing, within the dynamics of production, the intervention of values, social practices, and representations that guide social

Panorama

movements and interactions at a given moment. An institution is “the other great form of structuring the social field regarding the world and production relationships” (p. 35).

Specifically, on autonomization, Dubois (2014) indicates that this process “places writers in a reactionary position (...) that prompts their protests against the mercantilism of cultural practices. Establishing a separate literary field, as opposed to a production space in which market laws prevail, leads writers to make a living from their work and activity under constant rejection, rejection that translates into a state of exclusion” (p. 33). In addition to this, Dubois indicates that it is precisely this autonomy that allows the term “institution” to be applied to the literary sphere because these two concepts insist on defining their own conditions of legitimacy.

In the following section, we will focus on explaining how everything is applied to the case of Argentina in the decade 1915–1925, regarding the weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas*. These concepts are connected and allow us to understand how the professionalization of writing also depends on the creation of readers who revitalize cultural production and circulation.

The Creation of a Literary Production Field: Argentina

The process of the professionalization of writing in Argentina was directly related to its entry into modernity. It had a set of material conditions, mainly referring to the rise of publishing technology, which constituted a production field; circulation conditions, which deal with educating a general public capable of reading; and, finally, conditions that favor the autonomy of the Argentine literary institution, i.e., that it will achieve its own rules of legitimization distancing itself from European influence.

Material conditions: The development of the printing press in Buenos Aires

Next, some important aspects related to the development of the printing press and its use in the province of Buenos Aires will be presented, as one of the technological factors that significantly influenced the proliferation of serial publications, which contributed to the professionalization of writing, in the field of journalism, in 1920s Argentina, analysing the case of the magazine *Caras y Caretas*.

The first issue of this magazine was published in Montevideo on July 20, 1890, under the management of Eustaquio Pellicer, a Spanish immigrant. Using advances in photo reproduction

techniques and keeping in mind pre-existing methods such as caricature and engraving, *Caras y Caretas* was first published in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on August 19, 1898, when the editor of the weekly magazine, Pellicer, agreed to the invitation offered by journalist Bartolomé Mitre Vedia to disseminate this publication in the capital of Buenos Aires.

Caras y Caretas was described as an “artistic, literary, humorous, and current news weekly publication” and quickly positioned itself in the Buenos Aires editorial sphere of that time. It was “what was called a ‘weekly variety publication’,” with news about national and international politics, unique news stories, humor, and literary texts, along with drawings and photos” (Moraña, 2008, p. 249). Its weekly delivery was usually characterized by the depiction of a cartoon in color that filled its cover. This publication that began to make extensive use of “photographic images offered as visual evidence of political, social, or cultural news, trusting in their informational capacity and becoming one of the first means to use technological reproduction processes that promised widespread availability of images in a modern way in [the] country” (Szir, 2009, p. 80).

This publication quickly enriched its pages with the advances that had been visually developed in the first half of the 19th century in England and France, some of which made it possible for text accompanied by photographic images to be printed on the same typographic box (Roman). In this regard, Sandra M. Szir, in an eloquent work entitled “Reporte documental, régimen visual y fotoperiodismo. La ilustración de noticias en la prensa periódica en Buenos Aires (1850–1910)” says that until 1880, images in illustrated newspapers were used through techniques such as wood engraving and lithography. Later, in the 1890s, the development of “photoengraving, e.g., halftone, was imposed due to its low cost and because it provided the technological possibility of the printing of images and text on the same page, achieving an acceptable reproduction quality” (Szir, 2013, p. 11).

In this way, images as technological and cultural artifacts began to determine, better than written language, the conditions of its time, that is, of a modernity in which capitalism, the city’s development, and industrialization flourished. In her book “Una modernidad periférica” (1988), Beatriz Sarlo clearly narrates the changes that indicated Buenos Aires’ transition toward modernity, indicating that one of the main aspects was “the city’s speed.” Thus, for example, some of the events that marked this transition included implementing new means of transportation such as the tram, installing electricity

Panorama

in public lighting, and constructing new shopping centers far from the city center.

Speed and light regulate a new set of images and perceptions; those who were just over 20 years old in 1925 could remember the city at the turn of the century and recall the differences (...). I believe that the impact of these transformations has a subjective aspect that unfolds in a relatively short timeframe. In fact, men and women can remember a city different from the one in which they are living; this different city was also the setting for childhood or adolescence; the biographical past underscores what has been lost (or what has been gained) in current modern city. (Sarlo, 1988, p. 13)

It is in this context of transitioning toward modernity that new technologies were incorporated in the publishing world. Therefore, it is important to understand at what point of development the printing press found itself when *Caras y Caretas* was published. Consequently, it is necessary to provide an overview of the main technological advances that preceded its publication.

The development of press in Buenos Aires was possible due to the somewhat late incorporation of printing's main technological advances, which were interlinked worldwide, due in large part to the strong presence of European immigrants on colonized land, and which we will briefly present, as it is an important factor in the development of this text's central topic.

The first transcendental event occurred in 1773 when Didot invented the iron press to replace the wooden press, which considerably improved the machinery's durability. Later, in 1811, Koenig improved printing speed by converting the "process from flat to rotating by using cylinders" (Barros-Lémez, 1985, p. 141).

By 1814, steam was already being used in papermaking processes. Although the paper continued to be made from cloth, the availability of paper significantly increased for the publishing industry as a result of the development of this technology. Thus, for example, in "1696, 1,400 tons of paper was produced per year, made by hand and from cloth. In 1805, the figure reached 17,000 tons. By 1865, using the steam engine and with its origin not in fabric but wood pulp, production reached 104,000 tons" (Barros-Lémez, 1985, p. 141).

Additionally, Bodoni invented mobile metal types in 1818. Later, around 1880, the photogravure technique began to be used, which allowed for the integration of image printing processes, facilitating the creation of graphic and textual material

simultaneously. Around this time, the following was done:

halftone photoengraving was used to print largescale photographs and represented a massive mechanization of visual information that the graphic arts had long pursued. Photoengraving could not only industrially reproduce a photograph in a visually satisfactory way but also affordably reproduce any type of image, also compatible with text (Szir, 2009, p. 79)

In addition, the "use of inventions that arose from the steam engine and the use of electricity in the industry, using Hoe's rotating presses," was a factor that allowed editorial production speed to increase (Barros-Lémez, 1985, p. 141). However, this development process did not occur simultaneously in Latin America because many of these advancements, developed in Europe and the United States, would only reach Argentina at the end of the 19th century. However, the development of Buenos Aires' printing press was significantly rising; There were only 12 printing presses in Buenos Aires in 1860; by 1879, the number reached 33, and by 1895, it reached 111 (Szir, 2009, p. 76).

This meant that the Argentine capital could develop editorial projects and understand the importance of having mass media that enabled not only informing the reading public about what was happening in the city and in the country but also having a panorama of the major world events and educating readers' tastes for different forms of art (painting, sculpture, critique training, literature, poetry, language, etc.). This exemplifies what Dubois suggests as enhancing conditions of readability. It is no longer about the dissemination and use of printed books as the favored medium for reading but other forms of communication that attract readers, such as the press, because cultural newspapers adopt new forms of content production while entering modernity. At the same time, they connect it to their editorial practices. This will be seen later when analyzing the participation of artist associations in the editorial outlook.

To show the impact of these technologies on the emergence of different publishing projects in Argentina, we will present a timeline that represents the emergence of some publications that preceded *Caras y Caretas* (Table 1). This will provide readers with the background to help understand how these publications paved the way for the development of an industry in which the role of the journalist-writer, the immigrant workforce, the political system, trade, and the implementation of images as artifacts

Panorama

capable of attracting a reading public—which was increasing due to national literacy policies—would play an important role. We will briefly refer to this later in the text.

Table 1. Timeline of the Emergence of Serial Publications in Argentina

1801: The first Argentine newspaper, *Telégrafo Mercantil, Rural, Político, Económico e Historiográfico del Río de la Plata* is published.

1802: *Semanario de Agricultura, Industria y Comercio* is published.

1835: *Diario de Anuncios y Publicaciones Oficiales de Buenos Aires* is published.

1851: *Guía de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires y Manual de Forasteros* is published for the first time.

1853: Newspaper edition of *La Ilustración Argentina*.

1863: The satirical-political newspaper *El Mosquito*, founded by Henry Meyer, is published¹.

1865: “Canillitas²” emerge in Buenos Aires.

1869: *La Prensa* is published for the first time. With a system of 2,000 correspondents, in Argentina and abroad, it was the first newspaper to cover direct reports, via cable, on an event such as the Battle of Sedan, during the Franco–Prussian War (1870–1871).

1886: Emergence of *La Ilustración Infantil*. This newspaper aimed to attract new readers (children) who could make up an interesting market niche due to laws such as Law 1420, which introduced compulsory education in the country for children aged 6–14 years. Essentially, this publication was instructive; therefore, the newspaper contained fables, poetry, history, and articles on hygiene, agriculture, and good manners—among other topics.

1870: Emergence of the newspaper *La Nación*.

1872: *El Correo Español*, a newspaper aimed at Spanish immigrants living in Buenos Aires, is established.

1892: *El Cascabel*, a weekly satirical publication, managed by Enrique Coll, is published.

1894: *Buenos Aires Ilustrado*, managed by José Luis Cantilo and Julián Martel. Although this publication had a magazine format (i.e., a smaller

size different from the traditional four-page spread), it was presented as a newspaper on art, literature, theater, the social world, history, and news.

1898: The Argentine version of the weekly publication *Caras y Caretas* is published when its director, Eustaquio Pellicer, accepted the invitation from Bartolomé Mitre y Vedia to found the first widespread weekly Argentine magazine.

1900: The first news agency in is founded Argentina, Saporiti.

1905: Publication of the satirical editorial project, *Don Quixote*, founded by Spanish immigrant Eduardo Sojo.

As it can be seen, the development of the Argentine publishing industry was linked to different sociocultural aspects of that time. Written culture's expansion meant understanding that “it was not worth investing in the quality of the printed material if its dissemination and the structure of a reading public accustomed to its consumption-reading was not guaranteed” (Marín 139). The role of Spanish immigrants who brought with them knowledge acquired in Europe and whose political ideals permeated the work they did in Buenos Aires's publishing workshops was fundamental. Some Europeans who came to Buenos Aires to enrich the publishing landscape with their technique include the following:

Casimiro Prieto Valdés (born in Spain in 1847) was the editor of the *Almanaque Sud-Americano*. Antonio Atienza y Medrano (born in Almería, Spain, in 1852) was the managing editor of *Ilustración Sud Americana*. Carlos Malagarriga (born in Barcelona in 1860), lawyer and socialist and republican activist, also a collaborator for *El Correo Español*, participated in the Argentine socialist paper *La Vanguardia* and published his own newspaper at the beginning of the 20th century, *La República Española* (Garbedian, 2009, p. 14).

Thus far, we have presented the technological developments and innovations that favored the emergence, preservation, and proliferation of serial publications in Argentina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Without the technical advances in printing and the consequent reduction of production costs, the contemporary publishing industry would highly differ, and the roles of the reader and writer would suffer the same fate. We can find advances in educational legislation related to this. A relevant factor that enabled the practice of reading in much of Buenos Aires' population and facilitated the

¹ Henry Meyer was a French cartoonist and lithographer “who collaborated on different newspapers and illustrated books. [...] The visual designs and the format were clearly taken from European satirical newspapers *La Caricature*, *Le Chirivari* and *Punch*” (Szir, 2009, p. 68).

² Children selling newspapers in the streets.

Panorama

development of processes that interest us will be seen below.

Circulation conditions: Educating a reading public

The development of publishing in Argentina is important for emphasizing its informative and educational function. Specifically, regarding the role of the printing press in this educational process, Rocca points out the following: at the apex of Western Enlightenment, a peripheral revolution that assumes itself as liberal, anti-monarchical, and anti-clerical will use the printing press to expand its audience; however, it will find itself limited by overwhelming illiteracy. At this crossroad, the creators of a poetry that was projected onto the elusive public body moved for decades.

Considering the education of a reading public also requires considering the education of a written culture. As Parada points out, “the discourse on readers only exists and has ontological roots in its insoluble relationship with writing” (2013, p. 32). The author points out that the consolidation and diversification of publishing practices are fundamental in understanding the entire education process of readers. Roger Chartier adds that beyond written, typographic culture, other ways of communicative expression make people constantly familiar with what is written. Therefore, the following holds true.

...its presence on walls and facades through posters, notifications, advertisements, or graffiti, the importance of reading aloud that allowed written text to be transmitted to the illiterate..., or the creation of a new market and a new public for printed texts. The cordel literature sold by peddlers (blind or not) spread to the humblest layers of society, these included romances, stanzas, success stories, and comedies. For the illiterate, the continuity of traditional forms of sharing knowledge and information went hand in hand with a strong familiarity with writing, at least in cities. (Chartier, s.f.)

As we have seen, although technological advances and the public's familiarity with the culture of writing were important in circulating this media, they face a significant obstacle: illiteracy. Next, we will briefly comment on how the approval of an education law in Argentina in 1884 favored the processes of reading and writing in the population, a fact that ultimately resulted in reducing illiteracy levels, while contributing to the dissemination and proliferation of targeted publications to a general public constituted

by all sectors of society rather than to a privileged, elite public. This is analyzed as an important political factor to think about the incorporation of Argentine writers in the journalism.

In this sense, and as with contemporary media, serial publications from the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in Argentina were strongly influenced by the environment and conditions of the current political environment or by the contemporary administration. However, regardless of the ideological view held by the publications, they all used discursive strategies to try to capture a reading public that was continuously growing due to the State's policies promoting education and that, in parallel, needed to see its own representation in said means.

In this scenario, within the country's political culture, informing the public of national and international events became important, which led to “constructing a public opinion [that] was closely linked to creating a community of readers” (Garbedian, 2009, p. 14) and a community that was also seen as an opportunity to expand a growing market, largely because the State had passed the law of July 8, 1884, known as “Law 1420 on ordinary, free, and compulsory education,” through which compulsory education was decreed for people of school age under the administration of President Julio Argentino Roca. Chapter 1 of this law states that “primary school has the sole objective of simultaneously favoring and overseeing the moral, intellectual, and physical development of every child from 6 to 14 years of age” (Biblioteca Nacional de Maestros, 1999, Ley 1420). Later, in article 6, it is established that reading and writing must be part of the basic teaching core in public schools in the country.

In Argentina, by that time “less than one in five inhabitants knew how to read and write” (Fraga). In 1869, the country had a population close to 1,737,000 and the illiteracy rate was 78%; the foreign population represented 12% of all inhabitants. However, the impact of Law 1420 really became clear toward 1914, when the country had a population of 7,875,000, an illiteracy rate of 35%, and a foreign population that represented 30% (2,358,000 inhabitants) (Ford, Rivera & Romano, 1984, p. 25). Particularly, this high percentage of foreign population, from its migratory origins, had a direct relationship with the emergence of artist associations, as discussed below.

Autonomy conditions: Emergence of artist associations

Before the impact of this legislation on literacy rates in the Argentine population was analysed, another type of event took place in Buenos Aires, revealing the role that serial publications would play in educating a reading public. Here, I refer to the emergence of associations such as the Stimulus Society of Buenos Aires (SEBA for its Spanish acronym), in 1876, whose artistic exercise included “not only obtaining financial funding [for example, from the government through student abroad scholarships in Europe] but also journalistic critique” (Malosetti, 2007, p. 97). In general, for this “association,” the following aspects were significant:

...creating a place to socialize and meet [to discuss the development of the arts], which will avoid isolation and favor the exchange of information and ideas. The next two points specifically concern this information’s circulation, either by receiving foreign publications and magazines or by developing exchanges with European artistic centers. We know that even during times of great hardship, SEBA subscribed to a significant number of European magazines (mostly French). (Malosetti, 2007, p. 97)

As Malosetti states in his book *Los primeros modernos. Arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX*, the founders of societies such as SEBA found themselves immersed in a global dynamic in which the development of the arts distinguished the “civilized” or advanced societies, from “savage” or simply inferior ones. In this sense, it was essential for artist associations in Argentina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to know the trends from European centers because this guaranteed, up to a certain point, recognition as an artist in Buenos Aires. In other words, “[...] either they belonged to a mainstream led by Europe (and particularly France) or they simply did not exist in relation to art, unless they could be valued as an exotic or ethnographic rarity, a path that did not seem satisfactorily possible or attractive to the inhabitants of Buenos Aires” (p. 98).

On this point, my opinion differs a bit from Malosetti’s position because although the links with Europe were due to immigration processes and educational trips taken by many artists who received grants from the Buenos Aires government, particularly to France, there was already intense concern about the passive incorporation of Central European models that Argentine culture could depend on. This concern took place, specifically,

with the election of the first Argentine president elected by popular vote. During the first presidency of Hipólito Yrigoyen, which began in 1916, the Radical Civic Union political party became highly significant, to which artists such as Homero Nicolás Manzione Prestera (1907-1951) joined, who wanted to rescue the nation’s artistic practice from European influence. Through tango and milonga (Milonga del 900) that demonstrate interest in local folklore, and scripts like *Rosa de América* and *Nobleza Gaucha*, Manzi formulates a kind of resistance to the influence of foreign capital in Argentina. Not in vain, he actively participated in founding Force of Radical Orientation of the Young in Argentina (FORJA for its Spanish acronym), a political movement whose goal was to return to Hispanic Americanism by rejecting imperialism all at once. In reference to Europe’s influence on the education of Argentineans, Manzi states the following:

I dreamed that universities would be the cradle of the Argentine soul. I thought that science that came from old Europe was going to be an instrument to which universities would become nationally emotional. I also thought that this legal Argentine culture would become an example for youth in the Americas. But I was wrong; I have seen that what comes to us does not take our shape and that we are at the risk of being dependent on foreign models, which (...) will not serve to further our destiny. (Ford, Rivera & Romano, 1984, p. 142)

Rescuing popular traditions was strongly opposed to this notion inherited from the 19th century and to a large extent embodies associations such as SEBA that advocated turning Argentina into a civilized nation, immersed in a framework of international relations, by incorporating European symbolic capital that idealized a classified world “based on an outline of the international division of labor and the advancement of imperialism” (Malosetti, 2007, p. 44).

Here, the roots of popular traditions are understood as the driver that is “characteristic of the transition from a ‘traditional society’ to a ‘modern society’” (Viguera, 1993, p. 50), which progressively motivated connecting the masses to the Argentine society’s political life in this case. Popular elements have an important influence on the process of transition presented with the purpose of “civilizing” the country by seeking to incorporate European sociocultural elements, mainly to the typical lifestyles of Buenos Aires. In this way, the emergence of artist associations gave rise to processes in which the masses sought to cling to their popular forms and

Panorama

expressions to build and maintain an identity that belonged to them (Aldao and Damin, 2013, p. 159), which in turn would allow them to resist social, cultural, and foreign political control. These transition processes laid the foundation for the emergence of populist movements that marked the socioeconomic history of Argentina in the early 20th century (Vilas, 1998).

The most important element of associations such as SEBA is that they envisaged a path for the development and dissemination of art in Buenos Aires. Although this path could not dissociate itself from the European focus, it began to forge a space for identity, marked by the need to build national art, recognizing the European influence, especially in the processes of educating new artists, but building a discourse of their own, from their reality. Thus, for example, associations such as SEBA made possible the development of universal art exhibitions that took place in Buenos Aires, wherein experienced artists and those in training displayed their work in the spirit of “producing works of a nature and magnitude to represent the country as a civilized nation. At a time when universal exhibitions included stained glass windows in which cultural contrasts could be seen in a strictly hierarchical order, expressing themselves as ‘civilized’ and as European as possible was the only option” (Malosetti, 2007, p. 44).

These exhibitions were promoted by the administration of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874), who wanted to replicate the grand art fairs he had seen in Europe and the United States as a way of providing a “civilized” place for Argentina. Some of the most significant exhibitions were the National Exhibition of Córdoba in 1871, whose catalog included over 39 artists representing the main Argentine provinces (Buenos Aires, Córdoba, San Juan, Mendoza, and Entre Ríos), many of whom were Italians based in the country. This first exhibition was so successful that it was followed by the Industrial Exhibition of 1877, the Italian Exhibition in Buenos Aires (1881), and the South American Continental Exhibition (1882) (Malosetti, 2007, p. 117).

It was precisely in the middle of art exhibition shows that the main art critics began to appear, making their debut in national newspapers. Much of this emerging critique focused on the controversial debate about the influence of European art in Argentina, i.e., specifically, on the extent to which the artists’ education in the old continent, through student scholarships, contributed to the creation of national art that appropriates and reinterprets a European-centered technique, or on whether it was merely a shadow of the aesthetic tendencies of the

old continent. These discussions were widely disseminated in newspapers such as *La Nación* (January 1, 1877), in which the following was published:

Great artists honor the countries in which they are born and the Argentine Republic is deprived of such glory. It would also be extraordinary if a nation not molded by political institutions, which remains in a continuous ebb and flow eager to populate its grand territory and has not been able to hear more [sic] than cries on scientific or technological issues, would demonstrate a remarkable trend in fine arts. [...]

We are currently witnessing the painful start of national art. We see it guided by a foreign hand, and at the risk of falling to avoid getting up, the walking frame cannot be discarded. For a long time, it will copy and imitate, today a teacher, tomorrow at a school, but it can only hope to soon be able to open new paths, going back to a style or just creating a character (cited in Malosetti, 2007, p. 129).

In this case, the walking frame, which symbolizes artists who emulate European art, does not necessarily have a negative connotation, especially if artists who draw from European techniques are able to detach themselves from it to construct their own, even if it takes a substantial amount of time and the continuous practice of “imitation.” Another important aspect is that through these exhibitions, the door toward constructing professional critique was opened due to the media. In this sense, it was possible to make artistic activity an intellectual exercise that involved the critical role with a kind of “social sense,” in terms of guiding an audience that was just starting to get used to this type of setting.

Traditionally, the practice of critique in the artistic field was concerned with the “refined arts” such as painting, sculpture, and literature, to mention just a few. Next, we will refer to the way these art forms were treated in magazines through examples, especially regarding the manner in which writers informed the public on publishing news. In a section of *Caras y Caretas* dedicated to reviewing books, the editor’s interest is demonstrated in “tending toward the knowledge and diffusion of intellectual production among us.” In this section, brief reviews on the latest national publishing projects and, in some cases, critical commentary regarding the work and its author were published, as it can be seen for the book *El hombre* by Horacio B. Ohianarte, with the following commentary published in the referenced section:

Political defense is a genre that has somewhat fallen into disuse. The critical spirit develops more

Panorama

and more, and being a sincere and devoted member of a party does not seem at odds with acknowledging the weaknesses or defects of the followed leader. This book by Mr. Oyhanarte is a defense of the radical party and its leader, Mr. Hipólito Irigoyen. It is a boastful, enthusiastic manifestation of unconditional support and the result of a rather sentimental conviction but no less strong. Some historical sections give *El hombre* more strength than that if the author had not emerged from the field of defense. As a sign of the current Argentine political landscape, Mr. Oyhanarte's book also has value that no one could deny. (*Caras y Caretas*, issue 917 from April 29, 1916. Retrieved from the National Newspaper Library of Spain)

The typology of works reviewed here corresponds to national productions and in some cases to Latin American foreigners, who addressed diverse topics, and were not restricted to novels, poetry, or other more traditional literary genres. The range of thematic possibilities included diverse catalogs, agriculture, medicine, and geography, among others, sometimes accompanied by photos of the authors.

The field of sculpture also played a leading role in the pages of *Caras y Caretas*. In keeping with its social role of disseminating national artistic expressions, the magazine made significant efforts to review and provide critical commentary on works by national and international artists, in a way that captivated and attracted the public to both the art itself and the publication. Such is the case of José Fioravanti, a young Argentine sculptor, about whom the following was written: "Through much effort, he achieved the desired goal, and art came as no surprise to him. Those angelic eyes and their intense look are always envisioning beauty to capture it in clay. Now, Fioravanti has completed truly worthy works and is considered a hope for art" (*Caras y Caretas*, No. 1040, September 7, 1918. Retrieved from the National Newspaper Library of Spain).

To conclude, illustrating the treatment that the magazine's writers gave to various artistic expressions with the aim of spreading them to their reading public, we include an example regarding painting. In the issue 756 from March 29, 1913, from the "Our Enthusiasts" section, it is again apparent how the publication, accompanied by images of the works, served as a platform to support national artists who exhibited their creations at large conventions and art exhibitions held in Buenos Aires, as in this particular case in which Haydée Coria Gallegos is praised for her work in the following way:

The artist must have somehow felt the great masters, such as Sívori, and their teaching nearby; however, it is also true that she has always known how to avoid any imitation and to fully assert her own personality [...]. In the National Exhibition of Fine Arts, held last year, Haydée Coria Gallegos was one of the few stand-outs, to whom the most competent critics issued praiseworthy reviews. (*Caras y Caretas*, issue 756 from March 29, 1913. Retrieved from the National Newspaper Library of Spain)

Later, during the post-war years (approximately from 1917 to 1930), with the flourishing economy due to the increase in agricultural exports and in a much more stable political and social landscape, the range of artistic expressions that had popularized at the end of the 1910s broadened in such a way that within the publication's pages, a significant number of music and film reviews became highly valued. In his studies on Buenos Aires' elites of the time, Losada suggests that these new styles were significantly incorporated into society's customs, and they allowed the public to become knowledgeable and informed consumers about these issues (162). Thus, for example, the following figure shows how during the 1920s, the pages of the weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas* were flooded with comments and critiques of the latest film premieres, which were the most popular and accessible form of artistic expression at that time.

To inform the reading public about the artistic qualities of current films, referencing the actors' talents and primarily the work's ability to emotionally motivate the audience was its clear social function. In this case, the writer's critique of the films expressed the appropriateness of the film to the reader in terms of its harmonization and emotional coherence between what the actor expresses and what the scene's atmosphere reveals. The writer of this particular critique comments that "However, what is missing from this film to be a work of art is not much. It is very little; if you will, it is a simple plausible pretext for a woman in love to doubt the well-proven honesty of her husband" (Film Premieres Page, *Caras y Caretas*, January 24, 1920).

In this regard, the art critique was also a "walking frame" that allowed the "general public" to familiarize with new the European and even North American trends, due to their emergence within the worldview after the first world war; to estimate the economic value of art and thus facilitate its subsequent commercialization; or simply to refine the taste and consumption of refined, and also popular,

Panorama

demonstrations of culture in order to grant the status of a “civilized” society to Buenos Aires, while reaffirming intellectual ties with Europe, its greatest influence.

Throughout this section, we have recounted elements that allow for identifying the keys and actors in the process of structuring the institution of literature in Argentina. The transition to modernity, the consolidation of physical conditions that allowed for the industrial circulation of printed material, the diversification of readability conditions, and the positioning of actors allowed the creation of a system seeking autonomy by defining instances that standardize their roles and grant them legitimacy, as stated by Dubois.

Final remarks

In this work, we focused on presenting the concepts and conditions that contributed to the creation of the publishing field in Argentina, with regard to the professionalization of writing. To begin with, we refer to the fundamental theoretical concepts to understand the subject, field, literary institution, and autonomization being the most important. We continue with the technological developments and innovations that allowed for the development of the publishing industry in the country, especially in its capital city. We treated this as the combination of physical conditions that favored the process of institutionalization and the consequent professionalization.

In particular, there were several factors that played a role in the process of the professionalization of writing in the field of journalism. Some of them are advances in printing technology that led to the publication of text and images on the same page; the implementation of a State policy that ordered teaching to be mandatory and highlighted the importance of reading and writing as part of primary education’s core aspects; and the emergence of artist associations that facilitated the confluence and exchange of art between Argentina and Europe.

These factors allowed the widespread dissemination of contemporary art of that time and its consumption by a sector that had previously been excluded. In this way, we discuss a two-way process; on the one hand is the dissemination of art through reviews and written critique to captivate the public, which were accompanied by related images and graphics. On the other hand, is the existence of a public educated to read and taking advantage of this material and build solid foundations for the success of publications such as *Caras y Caretas* (at least in terms of importance based on the number of print runs), in addition to the proliferation of readers

and the inclination to consume this type of information.

In this regard, the main role of the journalistic activity of that time was to not only refine tastes for art among the population and educate but also be an instrument to disseminate art that would make it profitable to a certain text. Finally, it aimed to spread the production of Argentine art around the world and take European elements to be incorporated into the national culture (for example, through educational trips, sending journalists to cover world events, etc.).

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