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The Schoolchildren Will Come to Salute the Sun:
The Making of Uruguay's Public Education System, 1830s

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the first ten years of the Uruguayan public school system. Postcolonial *Orientales* believed public schools would assist them in building a new society, one ideologically conceived as a voluntary association of formally equal individuals. The new society contrasted with the corporate and overtly hierarchical *sistema colonial*, hence the pedagogical mission to create a new type of man, the idealized and homogenized citizen. The 1830s witnessed the increasing ascendancy of the state over all educational matters, resulting in the partial displacement of traditional pedagogical agents, practices and institutions, such as the family and the Church. The new republic was responsible for building schoolhouses, recruiting and training teachers, and standardizing elementary education under a single set of pedagogical and organizational rules. In order to achieve its standardizing goals, the government enforced the implementation of Lancaster's monitorial school, a pedagogical institution perceived as the best to rapidly produce a future generation of citizens. This work also examines the role of teachers and the mobilization of the local communities, the *pueblos* and *vecindarios*, whose ideological commitment was crucial for the success of the new educational project. Public school teachers developed their occupational identity as state agents, surrogate parents, and priests of a modern kind; they connected students, families and parochial communities to the universalistic ideals of a "higher" cosmopolitan culture. Apart from spreading literacy and instilling scholarly ideals of cultivation, meritocratic individualism, and progress-oriented agency, the modern school also emerged as a prolonged initiation ritual, a rationalized and intentional process of socialization which incorporated young children into the envisioned national community.

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Introduction

The teacher Francisca García de Perichon had originally moved with her family from Buenos Aires to the village of Mercedes, Department of Soriano, in 1832, once she was hired by the Uruguayan State to work at the local elementary school.¹ She was later promoted and transferred to Montevideo in 1835, where she directed a public institution regularly attended by more than 100 girls, peaking at 148 in 1836. Eugenia Perichon had helped her mother for all these years, working as an unpaid assistant. It was July 1837 when she formally addressed Montevideo's Education Commission on behalf of her mother, reporting a significant decline in student attendance. The downfall of the school, Eugenia alerted, had ensued from the unprecedented order that had recently authorized the enrollment of "*negras* and *mulatas*" at her school. Eugenia frankly declared her opposition to the presence of non-whites in the classroom, expounding that

"society ... preserves, as it should, the difference that exists between the *castas* that constitute it, and in the day when the poor understanding of equality confuses them, it will happen what happens today; that is, that the parents of the white girls will not want their daughters to meld with the *pardas* and the *negras*, and thus ... they will remove them from the establishment." As a result, "the school benches which are today occupied by the daughters of meritorious citizens ... will be occupied by the *castas*, while a much superior class of society will mourn the lack of education ... that is now bestowed upon another, which is much inferior."²

¹ Francisca's husband was Eugenio Perichon, brother of the notorious Ana Perichon, popularly known as "La Perichona."

² Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Archivo Administrativo (AA), Box 899.

Whereas Eugenia denounced the negative repercussions of the misguided notion of equality, a word she underlined in the original, the Minister of War and Navy, Pedro Lenguas, counteracted with a renewed proclamation that, at first glance, challenged her belief in racial segregation:

“The Government considers that the promotion of the means of elementary education for all classes of society is an obligation in accordance with the spirit of the national institutions, with the equality and rights that the laws grant to all those who have the necessary conditions to aspire to them by virtue of their condition or status; that depriving the castas of the common education available to other portions of society would be the same as preventing them from enjoying that citizenship to which they should aspire, in line with a constitutional provision; that keeping them in abjection or distant from the pathway of culture would threaten the benignity of the laws, and provide an example contrary to the principles of social organization.”³

In just a few lines, Lenguas articulated the modern concepts of citizenship, formal equality, constitutional rights and national community, which entailed a new form of “social organization,” and evidently contrasted with the continuity of the colonial social structures invoked by Perichon. If the assistant teacher resorted to an imaginary threat to social order, the inclusion of *libertas*, Lenguas grounded his decision on abstract, if not vague, progress-oriented ideals, such as facilitating universal access to the “pathway of culture.” Under the new republic, the government was obliged to provide all of its citizen-subjects with the necessary means to achieve their personal happiness and emancipation. Yet, notwithstanding its universalistic and “progressive” overtones, the

³ AGN, AA, Box 899.

proclamation had been issued with a pernicious caveat. In order to safeguard the education of the white girls, Lenguas had ordered the school to prepare a separate room for the new students, who should thereby receive their instruction in a racially segregated environment.⁴ If her superiors subscribed to that pragmatic compromise between idealistic modern forms and colonial continuities, García de Perichon still refused to accept the *libertas*; she shortly after quit her job, and returned to Buenos Aires with her family.

One could draw a few simple questions from the above exchange between Eugenia Perichon and Pedro Lenguas, although the answers may prove more difficult to provide. Why did Lenguas, at the time a high-ranking official, bother writing such an ideologically charged document? What could he possibly gain from enrolling a few girls in a public elementary institution? In sum, why should those girls go to school? The standard answer in the specialized literature has been, so far, that individuals such as Lenguas needed and used that educational institution for the inculcation of certain universalistic, progress-oriented values and behaviors. Implicit, however, was a hidden curriculum which instilled obedience and deference to authority in the lower classes. From that perspective, the modern educational system was created by the ruling elites in a bid to attain social order. Indeed, as an upper-class male of European ancestry, Lenguas wielded significant power over most other members of society, a privileged standing rooted in perverse inequality, patriarchy and slavery. However, that elite status had

⁴ The Normal School of Montevideo also accepted young *libertos* for instruction, under the condition that they studied in separate from the white students. Back in 1835, the central state had established its own school for *libertas*, referred as *Escuela para Niñas de Color*, yet it closed just a few months after inauguration.

historically preceded the ideological imperative of mass schooling. It is in fact doubtful that Lengua really needed something that had not yet been fully implemented in order to achieve something he already had. Conversely, the Minister had a receptive audience in Perichon in case he wanted to praise the virtues of hierarchy and order, and yet he wrote a short manifesto on equality and universal access to public education. One could argue that, as far as maintaining social order was concerned, Perichon was probably right. A much cheaper alternative to formal education would be the deliberate exclusion of the *libertas* from the “pathway of culture,” in practice condemning them to more subservient domestic labor in some upper-class household in Montevideo. Those were the 1830s, and Perichon needed no hidden curriculum to enforce inequality; she explicitly asked for it, and clearly linked the exclusion of *libertas*, not their indoctrination, to the preservation of social order.

Drawing from several authors who had approached the historical and ideological roots of mass schooling, and establishing an interdisciplinary conversation between disparate theoretical traditions, this dissertation is an attempt to provide tentative answers to the questions formulated in the previous paragraph. My central thesis is primarily informed by the neo-institutionalist school of thought, although the influence of Pierre Bourdieu will be evident throughout the chapters. In addition, the dense scholarship centered on the nineteenth-century phenomenon of mass education will help us contextualized the Uruguayan case with the broader Latin American experience, with special attention given to the body of work recently produced by a team of scholars led by Eugenia Roldán Vera and Marcelo Caruso, whose valuable contributions have

enriched my analysis of the reception and implementation of the Lancasterian monitorial system in early modern Uruguay.

The neo-institutional theory concerning the historical phenomenon of mass education was developed by a team of sociologists linked to Stanford University. Following in the footsteps of John Meyer's world-polity theory, their body of work has privileged a global perspective on the emergence of mass education, and even John Boli's case study of Sweden constitutes a contribution to that transnational analytical project.⁵ In the neo-institutionalist account, a long-term process that gradually encompassed large portions of the globe has designated the individual and the nation-state as the legitimate actors of modern society. To the detriment of traditional corporate entities and identities, the nation-state has emerged with the universalistic ambitions of a transformed church. The institutional framework of modern society, conceived as a collectivity composed of formally equal individuals held together under the notion of *association*, is manifested in the national community, itself perceived as the collective sum of its individual citizens. The citizen is the political embodiment of a modern ideology, of the moral and political values of the national community; he is conceived as a purposive rational actor, an intellectually and economically emancipated person, but he primarily performs as a normative model which informs the ordinary members of society of who they should be or aspire to become. Modern society is a progress-oriented collective enterprise, a vehicle of earthly salvation, and as such, its secularized institutions have largely displaced the

⁵ Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Pluralizing Meanings: The Monitorial System of Education in Latin America in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6 (December 2005): 645–654.

Catholic Church from the field of formal education. Incidentally, the primacy of the state has also partially displaced the family unit as the privileged locus of socialization, and gradually turned the school into society's ultimate initiation ritual. The school incorporates the child into the modern collectivity; it socializes boys and girls as full members of the national community in a durable pedagogical process that is meant to cultivate their moral qualities and skills, presumedly enhancing their agentic capabilities, so that they may positively contribute to the success of the nation, their respective families, and their selves as "empowered" individuals.

This dissertation is divided in four chapters. The neo-institutionalists' contribution will be noticeable in chapter one, which examines the cultural construction of modernity in Uruguay, or the dissemination of an ideology that legitimated the educational policies of the new republic. In chapter two, I will analyze the reception and practical implementation of the Lancasterian monitorial system, which was in itself an expression of that universalistic and expansionist culture. The Lancasterian agents who visited and worked in the Rio de la Plata promised a low cost, highly productive elementary school designed for the mass production of citizens. On their part, state officials were eager to adopt a pedagogical method that provided a set of administrative, standardizing regulations, which were, at least in principle, imposed on all the schools of the country. In chapter three, I will focus on the public school teacher, whose occupational identity was institutionally linked to the rise of the new model of society and respective educational system. Early modern teachers were priests of a modern kind; they provided moral guidance and served as role models for the students, but they were also state agents who

helped connect the individualized child, conceived as a future member of society, to the national community and to the “higher” culture of modernity. In chapter four, I will examine the place of the school in the local communities of the Uruguayan countryside. If the Christian temple and the *cabildo* were once public spaces for the *pueblos* and *vecindarios* to reify their communal identities, connecting parochial life and culture to the transnational Catholic Church, its universalistic religion, and to the Iberian Monarchy, then the postcolonial elementary school mediated the reception and impact of the government’s educational policies, effectively connecting the local communities and their parochial culture with that of cosmopolitan modernity.

A Concise History of Colonial and Early Modern Uruguay

Known as the *Banda Oriental* (the Eastern Bank of the Uruguay River), the territory that today roughly coincides with the *República Oriental del Uruguay* (the Oriental Republic of Uruguay) was originally “discovered” by the Spanish in the early sixteenth century. Effective colonization, however, only started in the seventeenth century, when the Jesuit and Franciscan orders established their *reducciones* along the Uruguay River. The first permanent European settlement was Colonia del Sacramento, founded by the Portuguese in 1680. Located on the edges of the two Iberian Empires, Colonia was a smuggling center, which allowed the merchants of Buenos Aires to bypass most restrictions on their trade, while providing the Portuguese with access to the Andean

silver.⁶ Colonia was also a locus of frequent military engagements; it repeatedly switched hands, being conquered by the Spanish in multiple times, only to be swiftly returned to the Portuguese through diplomacy. It was only in 1777, after the Treaty of San Ildefonso, that Madrid finally secured its hold on Colonia. Earlier in 1723, the Portuguese attempted to establish a second city further to the East along the Atlantic coast. After expelling the Portuguese in 1724, a handful of *familias pobladoras* arriving from the Canary Islands and Buenos Aires founded the city of Montevideo on that same location. As a late colonial settlement, Montevideo society was entirely shaped by the Bourbons, whose program of reforms oriented the formation of local institutions, its demographic composition and economic insertion in the Atlantic World. Montevideo was originally founded as a military outpost, hence its fortress and walls, but the city quickly outgrew its original purpose. An influential merchant class emerged from its port, which not only redirected a significant share of the regional commerce from Buenos Aires, but also displaced Caracas in the slave trade, at once supplying the Rio de la Plata and Andean markets.⁷ By the turn of the century, the population north of the Rio Negro was primarily composed of Guaranis and the so-called *Charrúas*. Montevideo, however, was a

⁶ See Zacharias Moutoukias for the smugglers of Colonia, and Fabrício Prado for the role of the Portuguese in the formation of colonial and early modern Uruguay. Zacarías Moutoukias, “Power, Corruption, and Commerce: the making of the local administrative structure in seventeenth-century Buenos Aires,” *HAHR* 64, n. 4 (Nov, 1988): 771-801. Zacharias Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial en el siglo XVII* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1988). Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire: Atlantic Networks and Revolution in Bourbon Rio de la Plata* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

⁷ For more details on the slave trade in Montevideo, see Alex Borucki, “The Slave Trade to the Rio de la Plata, 1777-1812: Trans-Imperial Networks and Atlantic Warfare,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 20, n. 1 (April 2011): 81-107.

“Spanish” town, notwithstanding its important population of African descent. In addition, a few other settlements had been founded along the coast, including Maldonado, while some of the old reducciones had grown into small villages, as it happened with Mercedes and Paysandú.

The process of Uruguayan independence stands among the most complex of Hispanic America. Apart from its own struggle for political autonomy, the Banda Oriental was directly involved with the Argentinean and Brazilian emancipation processes. The Spanish monarchy had already been undermined by the British Invasions (1806-1807), when the *muy fieles* subjects of the Rio de la Plata expelled the foreign aggressors without any assistance from Madrid. Though Spanish rule was symbolically restored, the legitimacy of the crown was further compromised by the forced abdication of Ferdinand VII in 1808 and the rise of Joseph Bonaparte, widely regarded as a usurper in the region. Inspired by the anti-Napoleonic resistance taking place in the Iberian Peninsula, Montevideo organized its first autonomous government in September 1808, the *Junta Gubernativa de Montevideo*, which claimed to rule in the name of Ferdinand VII, and which refused to recognize the authority of the viceroy Santiago Liniers, perceived as a French sympathizer. Montevideo was sieged and conquered by the loyalists in 1809, but Buenos Aires itself would soon unseat its new viceroy, Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros, after the May Revolution of 1810. In a political movement initiated by the local cabildo, the viceregal capital organized its *Junta de Gobierno*, which at first claimed to rule in the name of the absent king, but in practice pushed the entire region toward independence. Ferdinand VII recovered the crown in 1814, but the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 had

already been rejected in the Rio de la Plata, so that Argentina, then called *Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata*, formally declared independence in 1816. However, the declaration did not count with the support and participation of Santa Fé, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Paraguay and the Banda Oriental, provinces that refused to recognize the political hegemony of Buenos Aires and its centralist policies. With the exception of Paraguay, the other provinces joined the *Liga Federal*, whose leader José Gervasio Artigas would be canonized as Uruguay's national hero in the late nineteenth century.⁸ Political fragmentation and warfare between rival revolutionary factions constituted an invitation to the Luso-Brazilian invasion of 1816. After the conquest of Montevideo in 1817 and the final defeat of Artigas in 1820, the Banda Oriental was formally annexed to Brazil, and thereafter rebranded as *Provincia Cisplatina*.

Following the capitulation of Montevideo, the cabildo initiated negotiations with Carlos Frederico Lecor, the newly installed governor, in order to preserve its Hispanic model of administration, *fueros*, laws and customs. The deal prevented the local government from taking the Portuguese form, but most institutions were occupied by Luso-Brazilian sympathizers, then pejoratively known as *abrasilerados*. Although Lecor counted with the initial collaboration of the local elites, some of which fiercely opposed Artigas and the Liga Federal, their support quickly receded due to the growing resentment against the presence of foreigners in the administration, and due to the economic situation which had failed to stabilize. The Banda Oriental was still under

⁸ For more on Artiguismo and the place of Artigas in the Uruguayan historiography, see Ana Frega and Ariadna Islas, *Nuevas Miradas en torno al Artiguismo* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 2001); Lucía Sala de Touron et al., *Artigas y su Revolución Agraria* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1978).

occupation when Brazil became independent in 1822. Whereas Lecor astutely sided with the new Empire of Brazil, the cabildo of Montevideo seized the opportunity to nullify the terms of its subjection to Rio de Janeiro. Montevideo however failed to reestablish its ties with the other Argentine provinces; the city was again sieged and conquered, forcing most “patriots” to seek exile in Buenos Aires. Sponsored by the Argentine government and under the leadership of Juan Antonio Lavalleja, the rebels returned to the Banda Oriental in 1825. After defeating the Brazilian forces in the Battle of Sarandí, the rebels installed their provisory capital in the town of Florida, and, on August 25, they declared the reincorporation of the Banda Oriental to the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata. Argentina’s decision to sanction that reincorporation resulted in the Cisplatine War (1825-1828) against the Empire of Brazil. It was nonetheless clear by 1828 that none of the opposing forces were close to victory. Brazil had secured its hold on Montevideo, but lacked the necessary resources and manpower to defeat the Argentine and rebel troops, which in turn controlled most of the Banda Oriental and some areas of the northern province of Rio Grande do Sul. Following British diplomatic intervention, the hostilities ended in 1828 with the Treaty of Montevideo, in which the regional powers agreed to recognize the political independence of the Banda Oriental. In both Argentina and Brazil, the treaty was denounced as a defeat. While in the former it became an excuse for the removal and execution of Governor Manuel Dorrego in 1829, in the latter it contributed to the abdication of Pedro I in 1831.

Following the writing of the Constitution of 1830, the Banda Oriental officially changed its name to República Oriental del Uruguay.⁹ Its first president was the opportunist José Fructuoso Rivera, who somehow managed to stay on the winning side of almost every major political event in the convoluted history of the Banda Oriental. The former *abrasilerado* was indirectly elected by the General Assembly in October 24, 1830, defeating Lavalleja by a wide margin. Notwithstanding the two uprisings led by the latter in 1832 and 1834, Rivera managed to finish his term. The next elections however resulted in a new distribution of power, and in the election of Manuel Ceferino Oribe in 1835. It was Rivera's turn to orchestrate a coup in 1836, igniting the conflict that marked the formation of the *Colorado* and *Blanco* political parties and the beginning of a centuries-old rivalry.¹⁰ The Blancos were defeated in 1838, so that Rivera returned to the presidency after forcing Oribe to resign. Exiled in Buenos Aires, Oribe joined the Argentine *Federales* in their fight against the local *Unitarios*, and later led the former in the decisive Battle of Quebracho Herrado. With the defeat of the Unitarians in Argentina, Oribe returned to the Banda Oriental, then determined to confront his homeland opponents. Historians refer to the merging of the Argentine and Uruguayan civil wars as the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1852). It was February 16, 1843, when the inhabitants of Montevideo witnessed the arrival of the Blancos and their Argentine allies, as they laid

⁹ Present-day Uruguayans identify themselves as *Uruguayos* and *Orientales*, both used as interchangeable terms. However, the former was rarely ever employed in the early nineteenth century. For the 1830s, and even if this dissertation frequently uses the term "Uruguayan," the most common demonym was actually *Oriental*.

¹⁰ The two parties controlled the Uruguayan political scene until the election *Frente Amplio's* first president in 2004.

down what was later known as the Great Siege of Montevideo (1843-1851). At that point, the conflict had split the Banda Oriental in two, since two rival states claimed to rule in the name of a divided nation.

In 1829, on the eve of independence, Uruguay had about 74,000 inhabitants, although it quickly ascended to nearly 128,000 in 1835, mainly through immigration. Montevideo's population accordingly increased from approximately 23,000 in 1830 to just 38,000 in 1840.¹¹ Slavery was abolished in 1843, but being a former slave trade center, Montevideo counted with a sizable population of African ancestry. With the exception of the Guarani, whose last settlement was disbanded in 1843, the indigenous peoples of the Banda Oriental were virtually decimated in the 1830s by constant warfare. The censuses show sizable Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and French communities in Montevideo; these immigrants were mostly merchants, artisans, lawyers, physicians, farmers, but there were also some schoolteachers. Moreover, numerous landowners and small tenants lived along the Atlantic coast and in Montevideo's immediate hinterland; they supplied the local urban centers with grains and vegetables. Nevertheless, the economy of the Banda Oriental revolved around the export of cattle byproducts, namely leather and jerky beef, while the central state's budget heavily relied on import taxes.

This dissertation is restricted to just ten years of history, yet it hopes to compensate what it loses on diachronic analysis with a thick description of the public

¹¹ The capital had a large immigrant population and nearly one-fourth of its residents were slaves. By 1843, only 36 percent of Montevideo's inhabitants were native-born Uruguayans. Estimates taken from Arredondo, "Los 'apuntes estadísticos' del Dr. Andrés Lamas," *Revista del Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay* 4, n. 1 (1928): 25, 44; Raquel Pollero, *Historia demográfica de Montevideo y su campaña (1757-1860)*, PhD diss. (Universidad de la República, 2013), 239-252.

school system of the 1830s. As this study unfolds, the reader will be gradually acquainted with many Uruguayan villages, schools and teachers — not a colossal memory task, admittedly, since we are dealing with Hispanic America’s smallest country in population. The historiography has identified only a handful of elementary schools for the colonial and Brazilian periods. The Jesuits had schools in Colonia and Montevideo, but those were transferred to the Franciscans after 1767.¹² In addition, the cabildo of Montevideo once funded its own school of *primeras letras*. There was an undetermined, albeit certainly small, number of private institutions, including one for girls inaugurated in 1794, managed by three Dominican nuns. For the 1830s, however, I have identified 39 state-funded establishments, 29 schools for boys and ten for girls. The 31 schools of the interior served a predominantly rural population, while only eight public institutions were inaugurated in the capital. Notwithstanding the growing number of private institutions during the 1830s, especially in Montevideo, we may assume that the new educational system excluded most children from the “pathway of culture” due to limited coverage. In any case, the 39 elementary schools were part of a coherent *system* of education, operating under clear administrative unity, standardized pedagogical methods, and shared educational goals.

What might at first appear as a methodological weakness, Uruguay’s small size actually offers a unique opportunity to study an early nineteenth-century public school system in its entirety and on a national level. Contrasting with the rough estimates of most other studies, this dissertation does not rely on a “representative” number of

¹² Orestes Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*, (Montevideo: Imprenta ‘El Siglo Ilustrado’, 1911), 41-42.

educational institutions, for I have identified every single public school, the vast majority of the teachers, the pedagogical methods they put in practice, and, in a few cases, even their precise number of students. Most studies focus on official policy, textbooks, pedagogical manuals, and other sources which enunciate political and pedagogical intentions that were, in practice, contradicted by everyday classroom reality. The highly centralized organization of the Uruguayan bureaucracy resulted in a rich archive, one whose sources cover the four corners of the country. Moreover, the relative small size of that bureaucracy resulted in numerous letters and documents written by teachers, parents and students to reach the office of the Ministry of Government. Especially in chapters two, three, and four, teachers, parents and students will emerge not as mere targets of government policies, but as social actors actively engaged in the making of a new public school system. Finally, Uruguay was among the world's pioneers in public education, and even today the country still stands among the nations with the highest levels of literacy. In Latin America, for instance, it is second only to Cuba.¹³ This success is generally attributed to the Valerian Reform of 1877, but I hope to persuade the reader that the basic ideological framework for universal education had been fairly institutionalized by the 1830s, despite the system's limited resources, coverage and chronic instability.

¹³ "The World Factbook," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed July 8, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html>

Social Control Theory and the Cultural Construction of Modernity

An overarching objective of this dissertation is to destabilize the notion of modern educational systems as straightforward instruments of upper-class interest. I present this thesis not because schools have no impact in the cross-generational reproduction of certain power relations and inequalities (and they do), but because social control theory uncritically takes the values and models of modernity at face value. Following in the footsteps of Gramscian Marxism, the proponents of social control theory assume that the cultural sphere is a matter of hegemony. Sarah Chambers, for instance, on her celebrated *From Subjects to Citizens*, describes Arequipa's public and private spheres as contested spaces in which the plebeians and the elites fought for cultural hegemony.¹⁴ From that perspective, social actors are capable of transforming society in accordance with their particular interests, since they presumedly have the power to impose their culture on others. Thus modernity was either the product of purposive actors who shaped society to their advantage, or of conflict between different classes or interest groups which competed for hegemony, therefore engaged in the dialectical production of new cultural contents and forms. Public schooling, for instance, emerges as a contested space in which rival factions fight for cultural hegemony and the right to instill their own politicized values in children. In this theoretical formulation, culture becomes a passive and inert set of beliefs, and an object of deliberate manipulation. Alternatively, the neo-institutional theory suggests that those wearing rational-actor masks are themselves performative

¹⁴ Sarah Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1999), 9-12.

expressions of the cultural forces they claim to manipulate.¹⁵ The political action and the educational policies of the ruling elites were no less embedded in that dominant culture, therefore equally contained and restrained by its institutional framework. Neo-institutionalism rejects the premise of a purposive actor as an unscripted agent capable of rising above culture, or above “bourgeois false consciousness.” Conversely, the theory portrays the educational agents of modernity, including scientists, teachers and professors, not as simple representatives of ruling-class interests, but as a new religious elite embedded in and legitimated by their very institutional proximity to cultural modernity.¹⁶

Contrary to what is put forward by the social control theory, early nineteenth-century conservatives who wished to preserve traditional social order feared universal education for its inherent danger. Even those who were in principle supporters of modern schooling expressed their doubts over the universalization of elementary education and the promotion of dangerous political aspirations among the lower classes. As exemplified by the assistant teacher Eugenia Perichon, a common fear was the blurring of racial divisions. The conservatives’ resistance was however more common than the above selected case might indicate. In 1824, José Catalá y Codina, at the time a schoolteacher and an agent of Lancaster, was summoned to defend the monitorial system, and to confront the most conservative sectors of Uruguayan society. Some of Catalá’s ideological adversaries accused the monitorial system of turning children into little

¹⁵ John Meyer, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez, “World Society and the Nation–State,” *American Journal of Sociology* 103, n. 1 (July 1997): 167-168.

¹⁶ Meyer, et al, “World Society and the Nation–State,” 161, 171, 174.

soldiers, while others denounced the method's Protestant origins, insinuating that the school was neglecting the teaching of Catholic catechism.¹⁷ Some pedagogical novelties and techniques were also kept under scrutiny, such as the introduction of writing slates, which partially displaced the customary instruction with quill and paper. Not to be discouraged, Catalá had some strong words for his critics. To begin with, his adversaries insisted on the lengthy and outdated pedagogy of "*Cristus y b-a ba*," which linked the teaching of reading and writing to religious indoctrination, and unfairly favored "the sons of the wealthier parents," because the poor "could not afford to pay for seven or eight years of schooling." Moreover, the Lancasterian approach to standardized, universal education "clashes with their ignorance," hence the detractors' difficulty in accepting "that the plebs, the working and artisan classes may soon learn to read, write, and count."¹⁸ Ten years later, the Normal School Teacher Juan Manuel de la Sota employed similar words against those who criticized the Lancasterian pedagogical practices. Drawing on the colonial-modern dichotomy, the teacher denounced the abusive physical punishments of the old methods, which offended human dignity and turned the child into "a hypocrite or an imposter." While leading "the youngsters by liberal principles, not by strict rigor," the agents of modernity rejected the remnants of "a colonial system which strove to enslave thought."¹⁹ Catalá and De la Sota wrote ten years apart from each other,

¹⁷ Published in three parts: *El Publicista Mercantil*, n. 41, February 20, 1824; n. 42, February 21, 1824; n. 44, February 24, 1824.

¹⁸ *El Publicista Mercantil*, n. 44, February 24, 1824.

¹⁹ Juan Manuel de la Sota, *Ensayo sobre el Método de Mutua Enseñanza para las Escuelas Públicas de Primaria Instrucción en el Estado Oriental del Uruguay, y Análisis de las Causas que retardan sus Progresos, 1834*, Archivo General de la Nación, Argentina, Archivo Andrés Lamas, Legajo 48, 2651.

yet both refused to accept that their professional activity entailed blunt indoctrination and control.

When applied to educational systems, social control theory is generally grounded on the notion of “hidden curriculum,” one which nonetheless contrasts with the very manifest curriculum that instructed children on republican values and conceived all citizens as formally equal individuals with legitimate political aspirations. When not presented as a conspiracy, the hidden curriculum explanation is analogous to the Marxist concept of false consciousness. The inculcation of meritocratic values, for example, coexists with limited and controlled upward mobility. The poor man’s failure to advance in life is attributed to his own indolence and ignorance, while those at the top are presented as talented and successful hard workers. Such a statement, of course, conceals the impact of one’s family socioeconomic background on future educational achievement and blatantly ignores modern society’s sophisticated mechanisms for the cross-generational reproduction of inequality. According to Bourdieu, inherited familiarity to scholarly culture and language is the single most important factor in determining success in the educational system, since what is learned at the household level constitutes “the basis of the reception and assimilation of the classroom message.”²⁰ Modern school systems tend to be more “universal” at the lower levels of instruction, while reserving the entrance to the most prestigious higher education institutions to those whose parents have accumulated greater material wealth and educational capital. Genuine meritocracy is

²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 43.

indeed more myth than reality, but we still lose a lot on the understanding of modern schooling if we confine the problem to the notion of false consciousness.

Yet Bourdieu's approach to social control theory demands more careful consideration. What the neo-institutionalists call "world culture" is for the French sociologist a "cultural arbitrary" imposed by the dominant classes. Culture is arbitrary, insofar as it is impossible to deduce its origins and content from any transcendental principle or entity external to mankind, and because its internal legitimacy cannot be explained by any natural moral order, intrinsic logic or purpose. If society conceives its culture as part of the natural order of things, it is because its ethnocentric members have been cultured with the correspondent *habitus* which makes them receptive to that culture's claim of universality. The process of acquiring that *habitus* is conditioned by society's internal system of power relations, so that the favorable reception of cultural contents relies more on the authority of the messenger than on the intrinsic quality of the message. Thus even modernity's core educational values have no inherent merit by themselves. If children learn to read, or if they familiarize themselves with the principles of method and order, it is because an adult who has been invested by the dominant culture with the necessary pedagogic authority teaches them so. Moreover, successful pedagogic agency must necessarily conceal the power relations which condition effective cultural transmission. One's failure to recognize the "objective reality" of the power relations which govern the reception and internalization of all cultural constructs and institutions is what Bourdieu calls *misrecognition*. Even though he cautiously distanced the concept

from “malicious mystification or culpable naivety,” misrecognition still emerges as an unfortunate variant of the Marxist notion of false consciousness.²¹

In Bourdieu, culture is neither indivisible nor total. Not only he rejects the Durkheimian notion of culture “conceived of as the jointly owned property of the whole society,” but also the “philosophy of totality which sees the whole in every part.” From that perspective, modern educational systems cannot be conceived as mere products of unique national cultures, as if schools reflected the values shared by a culturally homogeneous population (themselves artificially detached from the rest of the world). Bourdieu conceives modern collectivities as collections of sub-systems, each one operating in relative autonomy, yet integrated in systemic formation. Culture is therefore fragmented and dispersed through various *fields* and *habitus*, culminating in the formation of a market of cultural exchanges in which varied cultural products circulate. Sociocultural background roughly determines one’s access to such cultural goods, which explains the uneven allocation of cultural capital in modern collectivities. On the one hand, Bourdieu undermines traditional social control theory by arguing that those most deeply “institutionalized” by modern educational systems tend to come from the privileged classes. On the other hand, educational systems tend to reproduce a particular class structure across generations through biased selection and exclusion, so that families and individuals of privileged background accumulate greater cultural capital by effectively monopolizing the acquisition of certain cultural products, such as academic certificates.

²¹ Bourdieu, *Reproduction*, xix-xx.

Bourdieu is celebrated as one of the most influential scholars of the twentieth century, yet his writings had little impact on the Latin Americanist analysis of the nineteenth-century phenomenon of mass schooling. Due to the lack of reliable data and ensuing limitation in properly identifying students and their families, the number one reason for his absence is the difficulty in assessing the educational system's contribution to the cross-generational reproduction and transmission of educational capital. Since this dissertation is limited in scope to the 1830s, it simply cannot support or refute Bourdieu's thesis. However, in my examination of the place of the school in the local communities of the Banda Oriental in chapter four, I will underscore the institutional and demographic continuity that connected the colonial *vecino* to the modern citizen, and the resulting disproportionate presence of boys of Iberian ancestry in the postcolonial school. Despite Lengua's compelling argument for the inclusion of *libertas*, Perichon's departure and refusal to accept non-whites reminds us of how idealized egalitarian citizenship was contradicted by everyday discrimination. Indeed, nation-states often engage in largely symbolic educational reform, but have a hard time bringing change into the classroom.²² If schools were ideal institutions for the inculcation of docility and submission, then Perichon should have gladly seized the opportunity to assert her authority on the *libertas*, yet for some reason she preferred to work with white girls only, those who like herself were members of a "much superior class." The Uruguayan sources often make reference to the presence of "poor" and "rich" students alike. The word *pobre* however conveys a misleading connotation; it mostly alluded to white boys whose parents were artisans,

²² Meyer, et al, "World Society and the Nation-State," 149, 154-155.

petty merchants or peasants, while those of African, indigenous, and mixed ancestry were unambiguously labelled according to race. While not necessarily stemming from the wealthiest local families, the fragmented data suggests that most Uruguayan children in school were white boys with privileged access to citizenship rights, thus not exactly the underclasses who should be disciplined and controlled.²³

Social Control Theory in the Historiography

Adherence to social control theory is widespread in the literature on the history of education in Latin America. According to Javier Laviña and Bárbara Sánchez, the colonial school had privileged a pedagogy of civic-religious morality with the purpose of exerting social control while instilling obedience to the Monarchy. Especially after the Bourdon Reforms, the school had become, at its heart, an instrument of “control, vigilancia, [y] mantenimiento del orden.”²⁴ Luciano de Faria, José Gondra and Marcus Fonseca interpreted formal education in nineteenth-century Brazil as a “safeguard [to] social order,” an instrument the “ruling elites” had envisioned “to control and direct a

²³ A police inquiry identified most students in Las Piedras, Department of Canelones, as sons of *labradores*, mostly immigrants from the Canary Islands. Targeting boys of school age, a Montevideo census from 1833 revealed the merchant and artisan background of the local families with children in school. The census, which was unfortunately limited to the city’s section of *Extramuros*, shows students as predominantly white, for the few boys labelled *pardos* were listed as artisan apprentices, or simply “*sin escuela*.” AGN, AA, Box 842/A, Folder 12; Box 899A

²⁴ Javier Laviña, “Independencia y Educación: Reflexiones en torno al Bicentenario,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 14 (2010): 128. Bárbara Yadira García Sánchez, “La Educación Colonial en la Nueva Granada: entre lo doméstico y lo público,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 7 (2005): 221.

poor population, consisting mainly of free and slave blacks.”²⁵ Karen Racine interpreted the Haitian postcolonial school “as a way to depoliticize and direct the citizenry toward their rightful place in a paternalistic, hierarchical social order.”²⁶ On his part, Leopoldo Mesquita equated the Lancasterian school to the modern factory, where teachers were expected to discipline students through the inculcation of a new capitalist ethos of order, punctuality, and productivity.²⁷ A similar argument had been made decades earlier by Jesualdo Sosa in his analysis of the Lancasterian school in Uruguay. Although not necessarily concurring with Marx’s primacy of the infrastructure and ensuing deterministic effects on culture, it was still clear for Sosa that the Lancasterian system was an expression of the Industrial Revolution and modern society’s demand for a new “tipo de individuo social.” Even in a largely rural society such as early modern Uruguay, capitalism required an educational system capable of supplying its businesses and markets with a new type of worker.²⁸ More recently, Diosma Piotti associated the rise of

²⁵ Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and José G. Gondra, “In the Name of Civilization: Compulsory Education and Cultural Politics in Brazil in the 19th Century,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, edited by Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 313. Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and Marcus Vinícius Fonseca, “Political culture, schooling and subaltern groups in the Brazilian Empire (1822–1850),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 525.

²⁶ Karen Racine, “Imported Englishness: Henry Christophe’s Educational Programme in Haiti, 1806-1820,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, edited by Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 206, 212.

²⁷ Leopoldo Mesquita, “The Lancasterian monitorial system as an education industry with a logic of capitalist valorisation,” *Paedagogica Historica* 48, n. 5 (October 2012): 674.

²⁸ Jesualdo Sosa, “La Escuela Lancasteriana: Ensayo histórico-pedagógico de la Escuela Uruguaya durante la Dominación Luso-Brasileña (1817-1825), en especial del método Lancaster; acompañado de un Apéndice Documental,” *Revista Histórica, Publicación del Museo Histórico Nacional* 20, XLVII, n. 58-60 (1954): 7-9, 17-18.

the modern school in Uruguay with worldwide sociocultural transformations put forward by the “desarrollo de la industria, de la administración y del comercio.”²⁹

There is a noticeable influence of Michel Foucault on the Latin American approach to social control theory, hence the common understanding that the school is a modern technology of power exercised over the body and mind of the subjectified student. Mariano Narodowski’s *Infancia y Poder* was a pioneering work loosely based on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punishment*.³⁰ In the words of Belin Vázquez de Ferrer, the Venezuelan school was originally designed as a “máquina de enseñar, pero también de vigilar;” it was an increasingly mechanized institution set to guarantee a standardized pedagogical result in the disciplined bodies of a targeted population.³¹ Focusing on the Varelian Reform of the late nineteenth century, Luis Eduardo Morás underscored the disciplining mechanisms of an instrument of intervention employed in the service of the Uruguayan State. Nevertheless, Morás acknowledged the school’s institutional ambiguity. Whereas it instilled respect to authority and self control, therefore expressing the “valores de las clases dominantes,” the Valerian school also inculcated ideals perceived as

²⁹ Diosma Piotti, *El Elbio, una Institución Privada con Vocación Pública: La Historia de la Escuela y Liceo Elbio Fernández y la Sociedad de Amigos de la Educación Popular (1868-1998)* (Montevideo: SAEP, 2000), 33.

³⁰ Marcelo Caruso, “Politics and Educational Historiography: Criticizing ‘Civilization’ and Shaping Educational Policies in Latin America,” in *Knowledge, Politics and the History of Education*, edited by Jesper Eckhardt Larsen (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), 167. Mariano Narodowski, *Infancia y poder. La conformación de la pedagogía moderna* (Buenos Aires: Aique Grupo Editor, 1994).

³¹ Belin Vázquez de Ferrer, “Ciudadanía e Instrucción Pública para el Estado-Nación en Venezuela, 1811-1920,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 12 (2009): 233.

subversive by contemporary conservatives, including notions of universal civil rights, individual cultivation and emancipation.³²

An alternative version of the theory was constructed around the concept of restoration, rather than mere preservation of order. In the case of Europe, the fear of disorder that followed the French Revolution and the emergence of a large proletariat freed from traditional patriarchal control represented a tangible threat of social unrest to the European elites. The rapid urbanization and proletarianization of the subalterns resulted in the weakening of patriarchal authority, as absent working-class parents flooded the streets with problematic children. In order to prevent future social upheaval, the modern school should inculcate docility, discipline, and compliance with authority; it should instill Christian morality, patriotism, and deference to the state. Consequently, the school should only teach practical skills to its students, preparing them for the (manual) labor demands of industrial society. A similar argument is often employed for Latin America, because the alarming mobilization and politicization of the lower classes during the revolutionary era had reportedly endangered the sociopolitical status of the elites. Perhaps the better known representative of this viewpoint for the Rio de la Plata is Mark Szuchman's *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)*, in which the school is juxtaposed to other repressive institutions such as the police and the judiciary, all designed to compensate for the perceived disintegration of the traditional patriarchal family. Conceived as an unwanted byproduct of the collapse of colonial society, the erosion of traditional authority was a cause of alarm for the elites of Buenos Aires. The

³² Luis Eduardo Morás, *De la Tierra Purpúrea al Laboratorio Social* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2000): 79, 103-104, 107.

modern school was therefore introduced as a remedy for the large number of unsupervised children growing up in the streets, in order to instill the values and behaviors that helped the *gente decente* to restore their customary ascendancy over the *gente de pueblo*.³³ The thesis is particularly popular among those who consult with Domingo Sarmiento, whose political propaganda directed against the governor of Buenos Aires Juan Manuel de Rosas attributed the lower classes' general disregard for order and authority to the region's civilizational underdevelopment, and to the caudillos' alleged opposition to the organization of a strong centralized nation-state.³⁴ In order to civilize the unruly *gaucho* underclass of the Argentinean and Uruguayan hinterlands, the enlightened liberal elites should strengthen the state and its coercive forces, subsequently converting an incipient public school system into an effective means of control and reestablishment of order.

As far as the object of this dissertation is concerned, the restoration thesis is problematic for chronological reasons. The ideological imperative of mass schooling simply predates that elite resentment, which might have indeed emerged in later decades, but greatly contrasts with the general optimism of the 1830s. Yet the primary problem with the thesis is that, in the 1830s, the school was not conceived as an answer to the deterioration of the patriarchal family, but instead used as an instrument of deterioration.

As I will examine in chapter one, the modern ideology deliberately undermined the

³³ Mark D. Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 3-11.

³⁴ In his overview of the Argentinean historiography and the politicization of education, Marcelo Caruso succinctly described Sarmiento's point of view on education in Caruso, "Politics and Educational Historiography," 155.

traditional pedagogy of the *pater familias*. The father was increasingly perceived as an inadequate educator, resulting in the gradual displacement of his pedagogic authority in favor of the teacher, who in turn was portrayed as an agent of progress and the Enlightenment, as an official representative of the educational policies of the new republic. The nation-state had summoned the public school teacher to rescue children from their inherited misery. All parents, regardless of social background, were simply perceived as under-qualified for the task, for they lacked the proper training, method and knowledge of the professional educator.

Marcelo Caruso also recognized the Colombian elites' ideological inclination toward the restoration of order. The traumatic experience of war and revolution, political fragmentation and the general sense of anarchy had led many to aspire for the return of political stability.³⁵ The Colombian elites had nonetheless noticed that the "traditional manners and behaviors" of the lower classes "were incompatible with the functioning of the new republican order," whose long-term survival was conditioned to the formation of a "new citizenry."³⁶ The modern school was credited with the transformative "power of revolutionizing political life and modernizing local and 'backward' populations;" it was

³⁵ In the Rio de la Plata, the fear of fragmentation is a Buenos Aires-centric point of view. Unlike Argentina and Colombia, Uruguay was not a victim, but rather a product of political fragmentation. During the nineteenth century, Uruguayans were not afraid of further fragmentation, but of losing their independence to one of its larger neighboring countries.

³⁶ Marcelo Caruso, "New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture: Community, Rituals and Meritocracy in Colombia Monitorial Schools, 1821-1842," in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, edited by Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 278. The same concept was formulated in Marcelo Caruso, "The Persistence of Educational Semantics: Patterns of Variation in Monitorial Schooling in Colombia (1821-1844)," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6 (December 2005): 721-744.

expected to reframe all inherited identities “under the new imperative of the ‘people.’”³⁷ Thus, as enunciated by Caruso, the third version of the theory forgoes the conservative notion of preserving traditional social structures, and instead presents Latin Americans as engaged in the creation of a new republican order. In their struggle to overcome their colonial heritage, the postcolonial elites promoted educational policies “aimed at the implementation of republican values to legitimize their rule.”³⁸ According to Lasse Hölck and Mónica Contreras, the postcolonial states relied on the school to advance the notion of popular sovereignty, helping them legitimate their new political structures with the replacement of the outdated divine right of kings. The same view was put forward by Andrés Baeza Ruz, who associated Chile’s nineteenth-century educational system with a modern political project, one which inculcated “republican values and strengthen[ed] the independent political order.”³⁹

The correlation between postcolonial pedagogy and the ideological concept of order has been further developed by Eugenia Roldán Vera, especially in her article *Order in the Classroom: The Spanish American Appropriation of the Monitorial System of Education*. The Lancasterian pedagogical method, which was widely adopted in Latin America in the early nineteenth century, had placed a strong emphasis on the principle of order. While focusing on its Mexican implementation, Roldán observed how order

³⁷ Marcelo Caruso, “Latin American independence: education and the invention of new polities,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 409-415.

³⁸ Lasse Hölck and Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Educating *Bárbaros*: educational policies on the Latin American frontiers between colonies and independent republics (Araucania, Southern Chile/Sonora, Mexico),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 435.

³⁹ Andrés Baeza Ruz, “Enlightenment, education, and the republican project: Chile’s *Instituto Nacional* (1810–1830),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 479-480.

oriented all classroom activities, submitting the child to the strict control of movement and behavior. Once more echoing the influence of Foucault, the author identifies order as “the beginning and the end of the monitorial method,” for it inculcated “discipline, docility, economy and control of the body.” Roldán is however cautious not to associate the Lancasterian obsession with order and control with the preservation of traditional social structures. Conversely, the mass production of disciplined citizens was perceived by the liberal elites as instrumental for the consolidation of a new political order, one which existed as an ideological project rather than an objective social reality.⁴⁰

A Game of Scales: Cultural Modernity, Local and Universal

It would be unfair to reduce the general argument of Caruso and Roldán to the social control label. The two authors are associated with a group of scholars from varied academic fields, who, starting in the 2000s, have focused on the phenomenon of mass schooling in Latin America. Though currently congregated around the History of Education department of Humboldt University of Berlin, and despite publishing their most significant works in English, the group is overwhelmingly Latin American in origin. Their main communication vehicle is the *Paedagogica Historica*, which has published valuable contributions to the history of education in Latin America. They have acknowledged the transnational character of the phenomenon of mass education in the widespread diffusion of Lancaster’s monitorial system in the early nineteenth century.

⁴⁰ Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Order in the Classroom: The Spanish American Appropriation of the Monitorial System of Education,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6 (December 2005): 660, 663, 664, 674. Eugenia Roldán Vera, “The Monitorial System of Education and Civic Culture in Early Independent Mexico,” *Paedagogica Historica* 35, n. 2 (1999): 297.

Their studies are primarily centered on Hispanic America, but the *Paedagogica Historica* has juxtaposed national-level analyses of countries as diverse as Brazil, Haiti, Spain and India. Caruso and Roldán suggest that, in the process of reception and resignification, Latin Americans had stripped the monitorial system of its original social control dispositions, thereby infusing Lancaster’s system with “progressive” republican values and goals. If the English pedagogical method was an answer to the emergence of a dangerous urban underclass, its Latin American implementation was however oriented toward nation-building and the deliberate attempt to overcome the despised colonial heritage. Rather than preserving a status quo of colonial roots, Latin Americans conceived modern schooling as a tool for the construction of a new society. Whereas the education of the poor in England underscored the cultivation of a skilled — albeit obedient — labor force, the Latin American monitorial system was, at least in principle, universally adopted for all social classes. As a matter of fact, Caruso and Roldán acknowledge that the children of the lower classes were outnumbered by those of privileged background in Latin American monitorial schools, which favored the instruction of reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, civic education, and varied abstract subjects of limited practical use in the labor market. However, the neo-institutional explanation for the emergence of mass schooling in fact rejects the notion that Europeans had conceived formal education as a means of social control.⁴¹ While the conclusions of

⁴¹ For the neo-institutionalist take on social control, see John Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society: The institutional origins of mass schooling in Sweden* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), 14-19.

Caruso and Roldán concerning Latin America go in the direction of the neo-institutional theory, it is their understanding of Europe that contradicts it.

At first glance, Caruso and Roldán seem to support the general argument of the neo-institutionalists, because the dissemination of the ideals of progress, individualism, and the republican notion of popular sovereignty had at least partially oriented the reception of the monitorial system in Latin America. The two authors however take issue with the neo-institutionalist suggestion that the diffusion of modernity's institutions have guided culturally diverse populations toward increasing social isomorphism. Conversely, they believe Latin Americans were highly selective in the adoption and implementation of those universalistic models of society and education. The reception of the monitorial system was therefore invariably subjected to an intense process of rearticulation and resignification of ideas and institutions. Indeed, Latin American educational entrepreneurs were, as a rule, highly cosmopolitan individuals with good connections to the Atlantic World, yet they ascribed to the monitorial system new meanings and purposes that were better suited to their socio-economic realities and cultural-political traditions. Hence, Caruso and Roldán prefer to focus on decision-making processes, the attribution of new meanings, and the local struggles that took place around the implementation of the method in Latin America.⁴²

Caruso and Roldán however developed their argument under the misapprehension of the neo-institutionalist notion of isomorphism, which transcends the old “homogeneity” versus “diversity” dualism conceived as two absolute opposites. Western

⁴² Caruso, and Roldán, “Pluralizing Meanings,” 646-648.

modernity is indeed loaded with cultural inconsistencies and conflicting dualisms, such as equality versus liberty.⁴³ But the tendency toward institutional isomorphism, as described by Meyer, does not entail total homogenization or imposition of downright identical forms. Alternatively, such a process is just as likely to result in the rearticulation and resignification of older forms and identities toward the production of modern diversities. The theoretical model neither postulates nor presumes the emergence of “carbon-copy” isomorphism, but merely “institutional” isomorphism.⁴⁴ Almost two hundred nation-states have been created in the last two hundred years as that model of society has become hegemonic in the world, yet the tendency toward institutional isomorphism, in the sense that most sovereign polities have become nation-states, have also generated multiple and diverse national identities.⁴⁵ A similar process might have happened at the micro-level of analysis among individuals.⁴⁶ Members of different societies or communities are able to trigger their particular cultural heritages and diverse social backgrounds in order to put down a marker of distinctive character and personality, yet their identity performances might reveal a shared language or discourse which is loaded with modern notions of national community, progress, agency, emancipation, and individuality, not to mention distinctively modern narratives of identity.⁴⁷ As far as

⁴³ Meyer, et al, “World Society and the Nation–State,” 171-172.

⁴⁴ John Meyer, and Ronald Jepperson, “The ‘Actors’ of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency Author(s),” *Sociological Theory* 18, n. 1 (March 2000): 112. Meyer, et al, “World Society and the Nation–State,” 145-146.

⁴⁵ Meyer, et al, “World Society and the Nation–State,” 157-158.

⁴⁶ Bourdieu makes that claim in his analysis of the *habitus* produced by modern school systems. Bourdieu, *Reproduction*, 35, 196.

⁴⁷ Meyer, and Jepperson, “The ‘Actors’ of Modern Society,” 111.

educational systems are concerned, one decade of Uruguayan history and the relatively short lifespan of the monitorial system are perhaps inadequate objects of study for the assessment of long-term processes such as the one described by the neo-institutional theory. In any case, there is certainly considerable variation in the way modern schooling has been conceived and implemented throughout the world. Schools are not identical copies of each other in countries as diverse as Uruguay, Germany and the United States, yet in these three distant parts of the globe human beings have created analogous educational systems which have largely displaced traditional socialization forms, and they did so in relative synchronicity and short period of time. Among countless other possible forms, and despite the expected local-level diversity and adaptation, there is little doubt that the modern school model of socialization has become dominant throughout the world.

Quite explicitly, Meyer conceived an expanding world system which coexisted with “both selection and adaptation,” yet gradually approached “something close to universality of the nation-state form.” The provincial adoption of universalistic cultural models might lead to eclectic, conflicting, and even incoherent implementations, for these modern forms are highly idealized and not rarely inconsistent with local practices and traditions. Theories relying on particular cultural traditions and resources must nonetheless explain the shortage of a much wider variety of institutional forms. Much attention is given to the heterogeneity of culture, history, and the subjectivity of particular social actors, although this perspective does not explain why diverse regions of the world quite simultaneously embraced highly standardized forms. Meyer believes observed

institutional isomorphisms are sensibly explained as cultural constructions or enactments of a much higher order. As analyzed in chapter one, nation-states and modern educational systems have emerged from an overarching universalistic culture which first replaced Christianity in the West, but then gradually expanded throughout the globe. State policies indeed evince processes of selection and adaptation from such universalistic models, but they also reveal deliberate efforts to modify local traditions in the direction of world-cultural forms. Public education policies, for instance, draw on the ideals of a transnational culture, even if state agents insist their decisions are rationalized expressions of national sovereignty.⁴⁸

Concerning the Latin American reception of the monitorial system, Caruso and Roldán conceptualize culture as either local or Iberian. On the one hand, they recognize the cosmopolitan cultural setting which facilitated the diffusion of the Lancasterian method. On the other hand, they condition its reception to cultural and interpretive systems perceived as genuinely Latin American. Apparently, nineteenth-century educational entrepreneurs constantly shifted between two perfectly delimited and distinguishable levels of culture. Whereas the lines of transmission were culturally cosmopolitan, the reception was essentially parochial. The processes of rearticulation and resignification were undoubtedly embedded in the locally available culture, but the neo-institutionalists invite us to reconceptualize the local in contemporary society as integrated into wider cosmopolitan spaces. Western culture is neither internally coherent and homogeneous nor self-contained within particular geographical bounds. Some Latin

⁴⁸ This entire paragraph is based on Meyer, et al, "World Society and the Nation-State," 146-147, 152-159.

Americans were more exposed to the cosmopolitan circuits of the Atlantic World than others who were perhaps circumscribed to more “traditional” social circles. Yet the so-called local and traditional spaces had also been embedded in cosmopolitan culture from the moment of inception. Colonial society was fairly cosmopolitan in its own right, because conquest, colonization and evangelization had set in motion powerful processes of cultural incorporation, hybridization, *mestizaje*, and of violent subjection which integrated diverse populations into the quite multicultural Spanish Empire, itself part of a much larger and universalistic imagined community: Christendom. Postcolonial Uruguayans generally overstated the notion of the hermetically closed local society, blaming the Spanish monarchy for the restricted circulation of goods and ideas. However, even in peripheral cities such as Montevideo, peoples and ideas of diverse origins circulated and mingled. Thus modernity’s “universalistic” culture did not merely replace older “parochial” forms, for it was built upon a colonial culture of comparable cosmopolitan features.

Chapter 1

The Ideological Roots of Modern Schooling

Uruguayan modernity was in a dialectical relationship with its colonial past. On the one hand, the postcolonial educational system was a product of the socio-political institutions that emerged from the revolutionary era. On the other hand, the institutional roots of modern schooling clearly antedate the very process of colonization. Early modern Uruguayans vilified what they called the *sistema colonial*, which they came to associate with tyranny and underdevelopment. Conversely, they praised an ongoing process of moral “regeneration” initiated by the May Revolution in 1810; they perceived their political emancipation as an opportunity to create a better society, one which was not conceived as a hierarchical collection of corporations and statuses, but as a free association of citizens. Yet contrasting with the narrative of revolution which underscored radical discontinuity, the sociopolitical institutions of the early republican era were the culmination of a long-term process of growth of the state, and gradual transition from the medieval notion of one whole collectivity (*universitas*) to the modern concept of association (*societas*). The Bourbon Reforms had actually accelerated that process in the Rio de la Plata, at a time when the main agent of modernization was the enlightened Spanish monarchy. The young Uruguayan republic inherited from its colonial predecessor the authority and duty to provide for the general welfare of the citizenry, hence the many progress-oriented, “civilizing” agencies, such as schools, created for that purpose. The

Uruguayan State became the new paternal protector of the country's subject-citizens, replacing the king and his colonial representatives as the main agent of progress and modern guardian of *bien común*. Thus not only did modernity ideologically define itself in opposition to the sistema colonial, but the modern institutions that would seemingly overcome the denigrated past were often rooted in immediate colonial equivalents.

In order to better understand modernity's dialectical relationship with its past, this chapter presents two contrasting historical narratives, both of which will permeate the remaining of this dissertation. The first, produced in Uruguay during the 1830s and 1840s, emphasized discontinuity and intentional departure from colonial social structures. The second, based on the neo-institutional theory, advances an alternative perspective, highlighting the engagement of the Banda Oriental in a long-term transnational process. The Spanish colonizers did not disembark in the Rio de la Plata as blank slates; they carried a centuries-old cultural heritage, one which would influence later Uruguayans in their nation-building efforts. Nevertheless, I will limit this study to the impact of the Bourbon Reforms in the late eighteenth century, when the first elementary schools were inaugurated in Montevideo, and to the first half of the nineteenth century, when the moral imperative of mass schooling effectively took hold of the country.¹ This chapter will constantly shift between those two distinct narratives, one presented by contemporary newspapers, part-time historians and textbook authors, and one of my own, which projects the institutional origins of mass education on that long-term process. However, it

¹ I will thus spare the reader from imitating Louis Dumont, who began his work on the origins of the "modern ideology" with the philosophers of Ancient Greece and the early Christians. Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

would be a mistake to assume that the latter is a mere rebuke of the former. On the contrary, my intention is to put that original narrative in perspective, examining its origins and ideological content vis-à-vis the culture of modernity.

Most historians agree that formal schooling in early modern Latin America was linked to the notion of national community and the formation of republican governments. The rejection of the “backward” colonial past prevailed in the postcolonial states and ruling elites, whose nation-building projects entailed the reshaping of “collective identities under the new imperative of the ‘people’.”² Luís Alarcón Meneses, for instance, highlighted the political determination of the Colombian State to use the educational system “to change the individual into a citizen, ... into a ‘new type’ of man: the modern one,” a point of view supported by Marcelo Caruso, who identified the leitmotiv of educational discourses in the critique of inherited Spanish traditions.³ As stated by Belin Vázquez de Ferrer, public education in Venezuela was equally conceived as a means to consolidate the new republican order, hence the government’s duty to provide for the education of the citizenry.⁴ The Mexican Constitution of 1824 gave political rights to all adult men, regardless of ethnic or social background, thus orienting the envisioned national community toward the ideal of an enlightened citizenry by putting an end, at

² Marcelo Caruso, “Latin American independence: education and the invention of new polities,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 409, 412, 415.

³ Luís Alarcón Meneses, and Jorge Conde Calderón, “Social Representations of National Territory and Citizenship in Nineteenth-century History and Geography Textbooks of the Colombian Caribbean Region,” *Paedagogica Historica* 43, n. 5 (October 2007): 710. Marcelo Caruso, “The Persistence of Educational Semantics: Patterns of Variation in Monitorial Schooling in Colombia (1821–1844),” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6, (December 2005): 725.

⁴ Vázquez de Ferrer, Belin, “Ciudadanía e Instrucción Pública para el Estado-Nación en Venezuela, 1811-1920,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 12 (2009): 221-223, 236-237.

least formally, to the colonial division of “states.” According to Eugenia Roldán Vera, such a radical transformation demanded, from the perspective of the ruling elites, the intervention of modern educational institutions in a deliberate attempt to replace the unwanted colonial identities.⁵ Even in the Empire of Brazil, where nation-building projects paradoxically coexisted with the continuity of slavery and monarchy, the liberal elites recognized formal schooling as a necessary step toward an overhauling of colonial structures and traditions.⁶ The referenced studies are a just sample of a widespread consensus, which invariably presents the phenomenon of mass education as rooted in purposive political action.

Instead of looking at modern educational systems through the lenses of the ruling elites and their political projects, this dissertation alternatively suggests that the moral imperative of modern schooling stemmed from an overarching culture, one which conditioned the educational policies of a particular generation of Latin Americans. It is undeniable that the postcolonial educational policies relied on the mobilization of various social actors, many of privileged background, yet the agents of modernity were embedded participants in a cross-generational cultural process that greatly transcended both parochial political matters and specific nation-building projects. In a neo-institutionalist perspective, the proper understanding of mass schooling as a moral imperative lies in the domain of a culturally cosmopolitan, universalistic religion. Despite the post-Enlightenment narrative of secularization, modernity preserved the spiritual

⁵ Eugenia Roldán Vera, “The Monitorial System of Education and Civic Culture in Early Independent Mexico,” *Paedagogica Historica* 35, n. 2 (1999): 298.

⁶ Cynthia Greive Veiga, “Schooling, Organisation of the Constitutional Monarchy and the Education of Citizens (Brazil, 1822–1889),” *Paedagogica Historica* 49, n. 1 (2013): 34.

immanence of the West with the increasing sacralization of worldly society. Early Christians once rejected the material world for its imperfections, but a long-term process of devolution rehabilitated life on earth, effectively transferring the sacred from the City of God to the City of Man. Christianity once summoned the individual soul to reduce the gap between imperfect world realities and the transcendental perfection of God. In his personal struggle for redemption, the Christian should recognize his moral flaws and physical limitations, yet he should strive for perfection while emulating the exemplary lives of Jesus, Mary, and the saints. After the Reformation, the Christian however grew increasingly committed to the material world, as the West witnessed the gradual unification of the Two Cities after a centuries-long process that promoted the full legitimation of life on earth. The modern state would emerge as the new bearer of values and beliefs, a “transformed Church” specialized in providing moral guidance to its subjects. In the words of Dumont, the progress-oriented goals of modernity could only have appeared “in a civilization which had for long implacably maintained the absolute distinction between the life promised to man and the one he actually lives.”⁷ By the time Uruguay had become independent, Western society was already conceived as a vehicle of worldly salvation, a collective project engaged in the making of heaven on earth. The Christian models of the past, such as the Catholic saints, had been replaced by an earthly civic, normative ideal. In the Banda Oriental, the model citizen was a male, free and literate *Oriental*; he was the moral embodiment of the republic, and a cultivated individual who should positively contribute to the progress and happiness of the nation.

⁷ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 30-31/50-52.

The erosion of colonial social structures, combined with the need to mobilize military forces for the independence wars legitimated the political emergence of subaltern social groups throughout the Rio de la Plata.⁸ The Uruguayan Constitution of 1830 recognized that political participation, even if its legal requirements in practice limited citizenship to a select group of middle- and upper-class males of European ancestry. Access to citizenship was further restricted after 1840 to those who had learned to read and write; one was not born a citizen, after all, but should rather become one through formal education. The principles of universalization and standardization of elementary schooling nonetheless guided the educational policies of the new republic, themselves drawn from the moral imperative which compelled state officials to provide adequate public school access to the general population. As a matter of fact, all individuals, regardless of social background, should ideally attend formal schooling. Intentionally designed for the replacement of the family as the institution responsible for the upbringing of children, Uruguay's modern public school system was made of specialized pedagogic institutions ran by professional educators, who had been invested by the state with a civic duty, the education of the future citizenry.

The following chapter examines the ideological and historical roots of Uruguay's nineteenth-century educational system. The theory of progress and what Louis Dumont called the "modern ideology" of individualism permeated the postcolonial system of

⁸ Marcela Ternavasio, *La Revolución del Voto* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2001); Gabriel Di Meglio, *Viva el Bajo Pueblo!* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2007.) For the Artiguist revolutionary period, see Ana Frega, "Las instrucciones de los diputados orientales a la Asamblea del Año XIII," *Anuario del Instituto de Historia Argentina* 13 (2013): 1-12, http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.6153/pr.6153.pdf

beliefs, at once legitimating and compelling the Uruguayan State to mobilize its human and material resources for the inauguration of a new public school system. State agents, in particular, believed their country was oriented toward continuous improvement. Since national success presumably relied on the enhancement of society's most fundamental unit, the citizen, even its youngest members should commit themselves to collective and personal progress, "in a word, [they should study to become] useful citizens to their country and to themselves."⁹ Modern schooling should achieve more than mere obedience and deference to authority; it should introduce children to the moral principles of *adelanto*, *mejoramiento*, and *utilidad*, (*advancement*, *improvement*, and *utility*), and to modernity's highly idealized role models for personal development and appropriate behavior.

⁹ *El Constitucional*, n. 18, February 15, 1839.

The Social Experience of Time

- *Este presente año es de la creación del mundo* 7028;
- *Del diluvio universal* 4786.
- *De la era de los Olímpicos (era griega)* 3605;
- *De la fundación de Roma (era romana)* 2581;
- *De la era de Nabonassar (era caldaica)* 2576;
- *De la Natividad de JESUS-CRISTO* 1829;
- *Del año Juliano (última era romana)* 1784;
- *De la Hegira o fuga de Mahoma (era arabi)* 1207;
- *Del Yesdird (era de los persas)* 1198;
- *De la corrección Gregoriana* 247;
- *Del pontificado de N. S. P. Leon VII* 7;
- *Del descubrimiento del Río de la Plata* 321;
- *De la fundación de esta Ciudad* 104;
- *De la consagración de esta Sta. Iglesia Matriz* 26;
- *De la regeneración política de Sudamerica* 20;
- *De su emancipación* 14;
- *De la paz celebrada entre la República Argentina y el Imperio del Brasil, por la que quedó esta provincia libre e independiente* 1.

*Almanaque de la Provincia Oriental para el Año de 1829.*¹⁰

Not unlike others of its kind, the *Almanaque de la Provincia Oriental para el Año de 1829* listed a series of events for a forthcoming year. Informing the country's Catholic population, the calendar registered the daily saints, annual religious festivals, and provided general recommendations on indulgences and church attendance. Regarding the seasonal rhythms tied to agricultural labor, it offered general tips on the correct time for sowing and harvesting varied crops. The almanac also presented a chronological list of events, the *Épocas Célebres*, beginning with two foundational myths of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Genesis creation of the world and Noah's great flood. The list

¹⁰ Nabonassar was the reformer of the Babylonian calendar. Yesdird and the "era de los persas" are references to the last Sassanid King, Yazdegird III, and the Zoroastrian calendar, whose first day was June 16, 632 AD. *Almanaque de la Provincia Oriental para el año de 1829*, 2. Biblioteca Nacional (BB), microfilm roll 2.

amounted to a true celebration of the counting of time, since it marked the starting years of alternative calendars of ancient cultures and foreign religions, such as the foundation of Rome and the Hegira. Inserting the Rio de la Plata into the greater narrative of the Western Christian world, the almanac's foremost historical events were the arrival of the first European explorers in the early sixteenth century, the foundation of Montevideo in 1724, the May Revolution in 1810, the Argentinean independence in 1816, and the 1828 peace treaty that recognized the political autonomy of the Banda Oriental. The chronology combined religious and secular themes in a simple timeline, so that readers could locate their land and themselves in a familiar historical narrative.¹¹ That narrative had started with the creation of the world, but was finally culminating with the approaching establishment of a new republic in the Rio de la Plata.

The Hispanic-Arabic origin of the word *almanaque* attests to the antiquity of the genre in the Iberian Peninsula. The earliest printed editions likely followed the arrival of the printing press in Spain, helping in the diffusion of a genre that enjoyed some popularity in the nineteenth century. Due to their low cultural status and monetary value, almanacs were printed in inferior-quality paper, and not rarely edited by minor publishing

¹¹ The merging of European, Judeo-Christian, and regional themes was also present in Montevideo's theaters, art galleries and exhibitions. In June 1839, a diorama had on display the "view of the city and canal of Ghent in Belgium," and the "interior of the Church of San Esteban del Monte in Paris, gothic church from the eleventh century." The *Cosmorama Español* alternatively focused on historical events; it exhibited the battle of "Rivoli, won by Napoleon," the folkloric "assassination of ... Facundo Quiroga in Barranca Yaco, Buenos Aires Province," and the "execution of the Reinafés, authors of the assassination of General Quiroga ..., hanged on the gallows." Once the government censored the murder of Quiroga and hanging of his assassins, the *Cosmorama* replaced them with the more patriotic and socially acceptable "battle of Palmar, won by ... Fructuoso Rivera." The *Cosmorama* also depicted the "destruction of Babylon by Cyrus de Great," the Persian king who released the Jewish people from captivity "540 years before the coming of Christ," thus satisfying the local demand for a religiously-themed exhibition. *El Constitucional*, n. 109, June 11, 1839; n. 142, July 23, 1839; n. 300, February 1, 1840.

houses for local or regional distribution. Though editors often boasted their wide circulation, the almanacs were held in low regard in the Spanish literary market. It is uncertain when the first almanacs arrived in South America, but nineteenth-century *Rioplateneses* were certainly familiar with the genre. Montevideo's first printing press disembarked with the British invaders in 1807, so there was certainly no locally printed almanacs before that. The 1829 Uruguayan almanac was printed by Buenaventura de Arzac, an Argentinean exile who brought his printing press to Montevideo in 1824.¹²

Almanacs were the expression of a collective temporal experience; they helped organize the seasonal rhythms of social life, reminding individuals about the religious and civic gatherings that reified their collective identities.¹³ Human beings are biologically endowed with the capacity to perceive continuity and discontinuity in their immediate environment. According to Simonetta Tabboni, "we experience discontinuity when we realize that a change has taken place in some part of our reality: in our body, in our thoughts, in the physical or social world around us." Our memory and capacity of synthesis help us confer meaning on the experience of change. Human beings structure their individual and collective memory around two types of experience: the seasonal rhythms of social life and the awareness of linear continuity and discontinuity. The 1829

¹² Arzac returned to Buenos Aires in 1833, but some of his booklets still circulated in Uruguay in the 1840s. For more information on Hispanic almanacs and print culture in Uruguay, see: Miryam Carreño, "Almanaques y Calendarios en la Historia de la Educación Popular: un Estudio sobre España," *Revista de Educación* 296 (1991): 198; Jean-François Botrel, "Para una bibliografía de los almanaques y calendarios (siglos XIX-XX)," *Elucidario* I/1 (March 2006): 35-46; Dardo Estrada, *Historia y Bibliografía de la Imprenta en Montevideo: 1810-1865* (Montevideo, Librería Cervantes, 1912), 19, 47-48, 112, 152.

¹³ Myriam Carreño, "Almanaques y Calendarios para Maestros," *Historia de la Educación: Revista Interuniversitaria* 16 (1997): 48-51.

Almanac registered both perceptions of time. First, its calendar simultaneously regulated individual and community life around work (seasonal agricultural labor) and pray (annual liturgical calendar).¹⁴ Second, its chronological list of events presented a linear progression of continuities and discontinuities, a succinct history of a collectivity that projected its origins back to a distant reconstructed past. In the two cases, the social construction of time reconnected the individual to community life and collective memory.

We find the *Épocas Célebres* in almost every nineteenth-century Hispanic almanac.¹⁵ Though there is some variation in these lists of events, the creation of the world, the great flood, and the birth of Christ are ubiquitously present. Indeed, the Orinoco *Catecismo Político* published in 1821, the 1829 Uruguayan Almanac, the Spanish *Almanaque para el año de 1842*, and the 1856 Argentinean *Almanaque Nacional* have identical phrasings for the three foundational myths.¹⁶ In each particular case, the religious segment of the *Épocas Célebres* reinforced the individual's attachment to the Catholic Church and its worldwide community of Christians, but the historical section of the chronology connected him to his particular national community. The wording and selection of local historical events nonetheless follows a recognizable pattern. The Spanish almanac does stand out due to its preferential treatment of the Iberian monarchy, but the three South American examples feature the European "discovery" of their territories, the foundation of a national or provincial capital, the start of an independence

¹⁴ Simonetta Tabboni, "The Idea of Social Time in Norbert Elias," *Time & Society* 10, n.1 (2001): 13, 19.

¹⁵ Carreño, "Almanaques y Calendarios en la Historia de la Educación Popular," 208.

¹⁶ "Almanaque para el Año de 1842," originally printed in 1841. Accessed July 10, 2008: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000060834&page=1>

revolution, and the establishment of a modern republican state. While the isolated historical narrative indicates the emergence of a unique national polity, the comparative examination of the *Épocas Célebres* reveals the diffusion of a transnational narrative of modernization.

The *Épocas Célebres* are split in two distinctive segments: the first is religious and universal, the second is historical and, at first glance only, local. The Church was universalistic and transnational in character; it embraced a wide variety of cultures, peoples, and nations in the older sense.¹⁷ Christendom was an obvious referential for all Catholics, but the Enlightenment would soon advance its rival notion of universal history, one that encompassed the whole of mankind as its subject. As a result, the transnational community of Christians would be slowly replaced by the worldwide community of nations. One could interpret the secular character of the historical segment of the *Épocas Célebres* as evidence of the process of disenchantment of the world, but instead of straightforward desacralization, the change involved the transference of the sacred from the Church to the national polity. At the turning point of that process of devolution, the main actors in history were the nation-state and its people, and the chronicle of each particular nation was nothing but the local account of a universal narrative of human progress on earth.

The writings of Esteban Echeverría, an Argentinean poet and political activist who lived in Montevideo as an exile from 1840 to 1851, provide additional evidence of

¹⁷ John Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society: The institutional origins of mass schooling in Sweden* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), 53.

the diffusion of that post-Enlightenment narrative.¹⁸ Prior to his arrival in Uruguay, and bypassing the censorship of his country, Echeverría published in Montevideo a political program for Argentina, the *Creencia Social*.¹⁹ Among its fifteenth moral principles, the notion of *Progreso* underlined the historical character of the world, for “the entire universe has a peculiar life that develops across time.” Humanity was conceived as a multigenerational living entity, defined as “a man that lives forever and constantly progresses.” Whereas society lacked the organic unity of the human body, Echeverría equated the *pueblos* to *cuerpos sociales*, whose existential continuity developed in the

¹⁸ Echeverría lived in Paris from 1826 to 1830; he arrived one year after the death of Saint-Simon, and departed two months before the start of the July Revolution. After his return to Argentina, he kept in touch with French literature through newspapers published by the immigrant communities of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Echeverría first established his public persona as a poet between 1832 and 1837, but later intensified his political activism in the famous meetings in the library of Marcos Sastre, where he debated literature and politics with Juan Bautista Alberdi, Vicente Fidel López, and Miguel Cané. The meetings turned clandestine after 1837, once the group started calling themselves the *Joven Argentina*, a political movement modeled after Mazzini’s *La Giovine Italia*. Alberdi escaped to Montevideo in 1838, and later arranged for the publication of the *Creencia Social* in *El Iniciador*. Echeverría soon followed, arriving in 1841. Whereas Alberdi left for Europe in 1843, Echeverría died of tuberculosis in Uruguay in 1851. Pierre-Luc Abramson, *Las utopías sociales en America Latina en el siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 124-125. Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America. The New Generation and the Reception of Tocqueville’s *De la Démocratie en Amérique: The Path of River Plate Liberalism, 1840-1852*,” 158.

¹⁹ Printed in *El Iniciador* in January 1839, its full title was *Declaración de los Principios que Constituyen la Creencia Social de la República Argentina*. The editors of *El Iniciador* were Miguel Cané, another Argentinean exile, and Andrés Lamas, an active member of the Uruguayan *Colorado* political party. The newspaper’s front page carried Mazzini’s motto *Es necesario ponerse en camino* (*Bisogna riporsi in via*), while later editions were dedicated to the ideas of Saint-Simon. *El Iniciador* is known for the first use of the word *socialista* in Uruguay, which showed up on its very first edition, on an introductory text that described the periodic as “purely literary and socialist.” According to Pierre-Luc Abramson, Echeverría studied the French utopian socialists in Montevideo, where he got in touch with the writings of Pierre Leroux, the Romantic Socialist responsible for the introduction of the term *socialism* to France. Thus after updating the *Creencia Social* in 1846, Echeverría republished it under the new title *Dogma Socialista*. His increasing radicalism would earn him frequent accusations of communism and *falansterianismo* (related to Fourier’s utopian communities, the *Phalanstère*). In his most radical essay, the *Revolución de Febrero en Francia*, Echeverría asserted his belief in “human perfectibility in history,” and concluded that “the culmination of its [humanity’s] historical path is found in the emancipation of the proletariat which is exploited by the owners of the means of production.” *El Iniciador* n. 1, Abril 15, 1838; Abramson, “*Las utopías sociales en America Latina*,” 128, 131-135; Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 165.

multigenerational experience of time.²⁰ Thus “the individual disappears, but his deeds remain. Each generation infuses new life into the body social. The individual flesh belongs to men, but his spirit belongs to humanity.” Originally published in 1846, Echeverría’s *Manual de Enseñanza Moral para las Escuelas del Estado Oriental* taught students that God had created mankind and all living things.²¹ The Manual however expanded Christendom’s universal brotherhood of men to include peoples of foreign religions. Thus the student should understand that “the Jew is your brother, [and so are] the Muslim [and] the Protestant,” because mankind is a universal “human family” under a monotheistic “celestial father.”²² The Manual’s secular account however portrayed mankind as a worldwide community of nations, or simply “the aggregate of . . . nations that inhabit the earth.” In addition, the author reinforced the historical nature of the human race in his enunciation of *civilization*, defined as “the combined work of human generations,” or “the daughter of the continuous and persistent labor of mankind.”

Notwithstanding his strong commitment to Catholicism, Echeverría’s defense of the separation of church and state sanctioned the further transference of the sacred from

²⁰ The problem in early modern Rio de la Plata was to determine who the “people” was. The word *pueblo* could either refer to the sovereign national community in the modern sense, as in *el pueblo Oriental*, or to a corporate local community, namely a city or village, as in *el pueblo de Mercedes*. In their political manifestos, liberals (and Unitarians) such as Echeverría were more likely to use the term in the modern sense. See: Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported,” 74.

²¹ The *Manual de Enseñanza* was originally published by the Imprenta de la Caridad in Montevideo in 1846. However, the excerpts in this chapter were taken from an unidentified edition from 1873. Esteban Echeverría, *Manual de Enseñanza Moral, para las Escuelas Primarias del Estado Oriental*, Montevideo, 1873.

²² This message was also conveyed in the *Creencia Social*, in which, “by the law of God and humanity, all men are brothers.”

Christianity to worldly society.²³ Simply stated, “religious society is independent from civil society.” If the former has a spiritual mission, directing “its hopes to the other world,” the latter is temporal, orienting its expectations to life on earth.²⁴ The transference of the sacred to worldly life became more explicit when Echeverría elevated the *patria* to the status of a modern “religion of the citizen,” hence the title of his political program, the *Creencia Social*.²⁵ In the *Manual de Enseñanza*, then addressing Uruguayan schoolchildren, Echeverría restored the historical character of modern society, once more a multigenerational entity, whose destinies relied on the progressive agency of its people. Thus Uruguayans should understand that the motherland had invited them to a “communal life in society,” and to stride forward to “the realization of a mission assigned by Providence.” Yet the purpose of this transformed religion clearly transcended the saving of souls for the holy kingdom of the afterlife, because Echeverría’s modern society addressed the establishment of a heavenly kingdom on earth.²⁶ From that perspective, the ideology of progress infused the collective experience of time with a new meaning and purpose. Admittedly, human beings still relied on God’s divine Providence for moral guidance, yet the modern ideology had devolved actorhood to temporal society, which had become a collective, sacred project of continuous progress.

²³ The separation of church and state was only implemented in Uruguay after the Constitution of 1918.

²⁴ *El Iniciador*, n. 4, January 1, 1839.

²⁵ The notion of “civic religion” was also popular in Colombian schools, civic holidays, ceremonies and events. Luís Alarcón Meneses, and Jorge Conde Calderón, “Social Representations of National Territory and Citizenship,” *Paedagogica Historica* 43, n. 5 (October 2007): 711.

²⁶ In the modern religion, “what is to be glorified is not God but humanity itself.” Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 41.

The theory of progress can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In France, the belief in human progress was evident in Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Auguste Comte.²⁷ A future minister of Louis XVI, Turgot delivered two lectures at the Sorbonne in 1750, what some consider the first thorough presentation of the ideology of progress. Turgot believed “the succession of men ... presents a changing spectacle from century to century... All ages are linked to each other by a series of causes and effects which binds the present state of the world with all those which have preceded it.” The accumulated knowledge of mankind constituted “a common treasury, which one generation transmits to another like a legacy that is ever being augmented by the discoveries of each century.” Equating the historical evolution of mankind to the development of the human body, d’Alembert conceived non-civilized societies as “in a kind of childhood,” while Condorcet subjected human progress “to the same general laws, observable in the individual development of our faculties.”²⁸ Thus the historical evolution of the human mind and the accumulated scientific knowledge identified the civilizational progress of mankind. In his main contribution to the theory of progress, Condorcet believed human beings could rationally intervene on a long-term process that had been so far mostly spontaneous. In that case, civilizational development could and should be accelerated with state-supported mass education, since the increase in the number of scientists would

²⁷ Randall Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions* (New York: Oxford, 1994), 18.

²⁸ Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, “The Human Mind Emerged from Barbarism,” *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1995); Antoine-Nicholas de Condorcet, *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (Chicago: G. Langer, 2009), 3. Caruso located in a January 1826 edition of the *Gaceta de Colombia* the very same allegory which portrays the nation as an infant, and that the “state of childhood” of the new republic should be improved through the spread of formal education. Caruso, “New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture,” 278-279.

allegedly speed up the rate of human progress.²⁹ There was an even greater emphasis on social engineering in Saint-Simon, who believed social progress should be entirely planned and oriented by human reason.³⁰

The dramatic events of the French Revolution also left their imprint on the theory of progress. Facing the decay of *ancien régime* social structures, post-revolutionary intellectuals longed for the establishment of a new organic unity. According to Saint-Simon, the critical work of the Revolution had been accomplished, but post-revolutionary political instability was rooted in the absence of an enduring social order. As enunciated in Comte's *Law of Three Stages*, each successive stage in the evolution of mankind would necessarily grow out of a preceding one, because "the constitution of the new system cannot take place before the destruction of the old." The (proto-)sociologist described the evolutionary states of society as either *organic* or *critic*. In the former, the body social stands in equilibrium, since social stability and intellectual harmony tend to prevail; in the latter, the body social stands in disequilibrium, because collective traditions and social cohesion have been severely undermined.³¹ The smooth and steady linear progression that once distinguished the more optimistic eighteenth-century version of the theory was accordingly abandoned by Comte, who conceived revolutions as violent events of traumatic consequences.³²

²⁹ Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2003), 21-22.

³⁰ George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 14.

³¹ Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 6-8, 28.

³² Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 15.

The notions of growth, development, and becoming had been central to German philosophy since Leibniz, who in the early eighteenth century believed the present is always pregnant with the future. In Leibniz's theory, mankind should necessarily reach greater happiness and perfection through the spread of science. The link between secularized progress and education in the German school of thought is at least as old as Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race* (1780), whose theory of moral development projected a future man released from fear of external punishment and internal guilt. Lessing's emancipated man was an autonomous moral being capable of reasoned moral judgement. Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx would carry on with the German tradition, though their approach to individual and social progress was generally less optimistic than that of Leibniz or Lessing. In Kant, progress was the outcome of innumerable antagonisms among individuals, while in Hegel change derived from an individual impulse to solve the contradiction between what the person is and what he feels he could be.³³

The diffusion of the theory of progress in the Rio de la Plata was more in debt to the French rather than to the German school. To begin with, the region was fully acquainted with the enlightened despotism of the Bourbons, whose eighteenth-century program of reforms had left a strong impression on the Banda Oriental. The Spanish monarchy once mediated the reception of foreign subversive literature, but French philosophical texts freely circulated in early modern Uruguay, thereby disseminating

³³ Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 68-69; Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 20-21.

French-infused ideals of progress and revolution.³⁴ For example, Condorcet once wrote that “the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite,” while the youth of Montevideo had in Juan Bautista Alberdi’s “course of contemporary philosophy” an opportunity to study “the doctrine of indefinite perfectibility.”³⁵ According to Pierre-Luc Abramson, the definition of *equality* in Echeverría’s *Creencia Social* was definitely taken from Saint-Simon.³⁶ The Enlightenment of the Catholic Saint-Simonians was certainly less controversial or culturally foreigner than the German variety, not to mention that the French revolutionary experience better suited Argentineans and Uruguayans, who had both emerged victorious from the independence wars. As a result, the dominant theory of progress in early modern Rio de la Plata was completely deprived of German dialectics. What predominated in the 1830s was the linear conception of time and progress, in which individual and social development resulted from the multigenerational accumulation of knowledge and the gradual emancipation of the human body and mind.

³⁴ Montevideo had become a meeting point for radicals and revolutionaries by the late 1830s, receiving successive waves of French, Italian and Argentine exiles, who exercised a strong impact on local politics. The city would gain some notoriety in the international scene, to the point that Alexandre Dumas would write an ode to the Uruguayan capital called *Montevideo ou une nouvelle Troie*, a fictionalized version of the Great Siege (1843-1851). Apart from the many Argentineans fleeing from Buenos Aires, 6,324 French nationals and 4,295 Italians had already moved to Montevideo by 1843, then a port city of 31,067 inhabitants. Among them was the merchant Jean-Baptiste Eugène Tandonnet, a director of a local French-language newspaper, and an enthusiastic disciple of utopian socialist Charles Fourier. Another exiled was Colonel Jean-Chrysostome Thiébout, a veteran sub-officer of the Napoleonic Wars. Thiébout would command of the *Légion Française*, which participated in the defense of Montevideo during the *Guerra Grande*. Many Italian immigrants were exiled *Carbonari*, former members of La Giovine Italia and veterans of the Mazzinian cause. The most notorious of them was Giuseppe Garibaldi. Also living in Montevideo was Joaquín de la Sagra, brother of Ramón de la Sagra, the famous Spanish anarchist. Abramson, *Las utopías sociales en America Latina en el siglo XIX*, 129-130, 137, 142; Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 159-160, 169-170.

³⁵ Condorcet, *Outlines*, 3-4; *El Constitucional*, n. 497, September 2, 1840; n. 511, October 13, 1840.

³⁶ Abramson, *Las Utopías Sociales en America Latina*, 127.

History and Revolution in the Banda Oriental

In the early modern era, the dominant historical narrative depicted Uruguay as an integrated part of the Western Christian world. More specifically, it interpreted the colonial past as a foundational era in which the Banda Oriental had been politically, economically, and culturally incorporated into the West through European colonization. Unsurprisingly, that narrative was written from the viewpoint of the Spanish settlers and their descendants. The colonial era was interpreted as a self-contained formative period which shaped future Uruguayan society, yet subjection to the Spanish crown had inevitably pushed the settlers toward revolution and political emancipation. The linear progression of time, with its continuities and discontinuities, was therefore essentially secular; it was a teleological sequence of historical events whose ultimate end was the development of modern society in the Banda Oriental. The key actors in the national epic were the land and its inhabitants, or the patria itself. Uruguayan textbook authors, in particular, unified the notion of national territory with the historical formation of the national community; they integrated social representations of time and space in their simultaneous approach to the teaching of History and Geography. In that sense, they attributed an ancestral existence to a particular piece of land, one which harbored the national collectivity in its reconstructed historical continuity.³⁷

Only a few months had passed since Argentina and Brazil had signed the Peace Treaty of 1828 when *El Universal* published an article on the origins of Montevideo's

³⁷ For the Colombian case, see Lu s Alarc n Meneses, and Jorge Conde Calder n, "Social Representations of National Territory and Citizenship in Nineteenth-century History and Geography Textbooks of the Colombian Caribbean Region," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, n. 5 (October 2007): 702-703, 706.

population and fortifications. The newspaper offered an informative background to the Argentinian-Brazilian war, which, rooted in the old Spanish-Portuguese rivalry, had defined Uruguay's national borders.³⁸ It would not take long before part-time historians published more elaborated accounts of the colonial era. Particularly in the late 1830s, in the context of the *Guerra Grande*, Montevideo's press and literary market actively engaged in the analysis of the colonial past and historical impact of the May Revolution. Three books dedicated to the history of the Banda Oriental are particularly relevant to this dissertation, for they were written by two individuals deeply involved in public education. The first was José Catalá y Codina, a Spanish immigrant who played a pivotal role in the establishment of Montevideo's first Lancasterian school back in 1822. He later moved north to Paysandú, but kept himself involved in public education as the president of the local *Junta Económico-Administrativa*.³⁹ During the 1830s, Catalá would write an undetermined number of short textbooks for elementary schools; he published works on Spanish Grammar, Geography and History. The second author was the Argentinean-born Juan Manuel de la Sota. Fleeing from civil war, De la Sota immigrated to Uruguay in 1830; he first worked in the public school of Las Vacas, Department of Colonia, but later occupied the prestigious main teacher position at the Normal School of Montevideo between 1834 and 1838.⁴⁰ Before becoming a textbook author in the 1840s, De la Sota

³⁸ *El Universal*, n. 16, July 6, 1829.

³⁹ After the suppression of the *cabildos*, the Constitution of 1830 created the *Juntas Económico-Administrativas* as partial replacements. Since heads of the new *Departamentos* were directly appointed by the central state, the *Juntas* were new corporate entities whose elected members represented the local *pueblos* and *vecindarios*.

⁴⁰ Tomás Sansón Corbo, "Los Historiadores Rioplatenses del siglo XIX: Notas para un retrato colectivo," *Anuario del Instituto de Historia Argentina* 3 (2003): 192.

worked for the standardization of Uruguay's public school system under Lancasterian methods, and was responsible for admission tests and subsequent training of candidate teachers.

In December 1840, *El Constitucional* printed a few paragraphs from the latest edition of Catalá's *Geografía de la República Oriental del Uruguay*.⁴¹ After describing the main geographical features of the Banda Oriental, the author presented the typical narrative of discovery, conquest, and colonization. Admittedly, Catalá named the “*Charrúas, Cháyos* and *Chanás*” among the “main tribes found in this territory,” but the history of the Banda Oriental only started with its “discovery ... by Juan Díaz Solís who after taking possession and erecting crosses on the heights of the coast returned to Spain to provide an account to his court.” The article, probably a selection of paragraphs from the original book, abruptly jumped from conquest to 1751, when Madrid assigned Montevideo's first Governor. An era of remarkable economic and demographic growth, the second half of the eighteenth century and ensuing revolutionary period constituted the core of the narrative. Catalá guided his readers through the main events of the May Revolution, invariably underscoring Montevideo's participation in the wars of independence, and concluding with the Peace Treaty of 1828 and the establishment of Uruguay as a new independent republic.

History returned to *El Constitucional* in August 1842, with a review of De la Sota's *Historia de la República Oriental del Uruguay*.⁴² The anonymous commentator

⁴¹ *El Constitucional*, n. 564, December 16, 1840.

⁴² *El Constitucional*, n. 1,057, August 24, 1842.

expressed his “renewed interest” in a book of “renewed merit,” and certified the author’s “exact knowledge about the history of this country, unknown to us since its foundation.” A surviving copy of the book however contains a slightly modified title: *Historia del Territorio Oriental del Uruguay*.⁴³ The book’s leading protagonist was the land, hence the extended description of its flora and fauna, and the many chapters on Physical Geography. De la Sota’s History section began with the Alexandrine Bulls, which had awarded most of the New World to the Castilian crown. Once more resembling the timeline of the Almanac of 1829, De la Sota’s narrative covered the arrival of the first European explorers, and the main historical events associated with Spanish conquest and colonization. The independence wars were however remarkably absent, and the book’s final chapter concluded with an eighteenth-century event, the “expulsion of the Jesuits.”

De la Sota’s ensuing work, the *Catecismo Geográfico-Político e Histórico de la República Oriental del Uruguay*, published in 1850, was crafted for elementary school consumption. The textbook was written in the popular pedagogical format of questions and answers as a fictional dialogue between a teacher and a student. It was published a decade after the period addressed by this dissertation, yet it reproduces the long lasting beliefs of a former Normal School Teacher of the 1830s. Most chapters alternate passages on History and Geography, for the narrative’s recurring protagonist is again the land, its material and human resources. The *Catecismo* is however unique on its abstract and theoretical approach to Geography. Apart from describing Uruguay’s main geographical features, students should learn to identify Earth’s location in the solar system, their

⁴³ Juan Manuel de la Sota, *Historia del Territorio Oriental del Uruguay* (Montevideo, Imprenta de la Caridad, 1841).

country on the world map, and their hometowns on the national territory. In addition, De la Sota instructed his pupils on the institutional organization of the Uruguayan Republic, the Constitution of 1830, branches of government, and administrative divisions. The chapter organization is more thematic than chronologic, yet it preserves the basic timeline of Spanish discovery, conquest, and colonization. De la Sota even employed the expression *sistema colonial*, which is still in use among Latin American historians.

Contrasting with the earlier *Historia del Territorio* and Catalá's *Geografía*, De la Sota's *Catecismo* contains extended segments on the revolutionary era and early republican period. The book covers the English Invasions, the May Revolution, Artiguism, the Luso-Brazilian occupation, the last war of independence, and concludes with a short history of a few towns and villages founded in the 1830s. The *Catecismo* also pursues the ambitious goal of developing an elementary historical consciousness in children. De la Sota recommended his students to observe the following two principles: "to ignore what preceded our birth is to live forever in childhood," and "History is the witness of the ages, light of truth, life, memory, lady of customs, messenger of antiquity." The messages reproduce the belief in civilizational progress with an analogy of the development of the human body, thus resonating with the post-Enlightenment notion of history as a multigenerational process of accumulation and transmission of knowledge. Studying the *Catecismo* was akin to a religious experience of revelation and incorporation. At that magic moment, probably during ritualized classroom routine involving tedious dictation and reading exercises, the child received the knowledge of his ancestors, the past

members of the imagined national community, and was therefore incorporated into their collective (now “scientific”) experience of time.

Twenty-one years had elapsed since the exemplary Almanac of 1829 was published in Montevideo, but the works of Catalá and De la Sota still preserved an almost identical historical timeline. Delimited at both ends by the arrival of the first Spanish explorers and national independence, that simple framework of colonial history was not only consolidated in the local collective consciousness, but also institutionalized in the educational system, therefore ready to be transmitted to future generations.

Independence was not “the end of history,” but indeed a major turning point for the inhabitants of the Banda Oriental.⁴⁴ In a direct reference to the May Revolution of 1810, early modern Uruguayans fondly recalled their revolutionary experience as an era of *regeneración política*. The use of this expression in the Banda Oriental however preceded independence, and was most certainly borrowed from neighboring Buenos Aires.⁴⁵ The June 1823 edition of *El Febo Argentino*, which despite its name was printed in Montevideo, commemorated the May 25 holiday and the “political regeneration” of the Rio de la Plata.⁴⁶ Published by Argentinean exiles in 1832, the newspaper *El Indicator* celebrated the “regeneration of the South Americans” with an ode to the

⁴⁴ Brazilian ruling elites also believed in independence, “as with Christ’s death,” as a unique historical opportunity to start a new era of earthly “salvation.” Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and Marcus Vinicius Fonseca, “Political culture, schooling and subaltern groups in the Brazilian Empire (1822–1850),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 531.

⁴⁵ According to Beatriz Dávila, the concept of “political regeneration” had appeared in the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* as early as in September 1810. Beatriz Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported: The Intellectual and Political Trajectories of the Elites in the Rio de la Plata, 1810-1825,” 64.

⁴⁶ *El Febo Argentino*, n. 1, June 13, 1823.

Veinticinco de Mayo, encouraging readers to honor “the Sun which enlightened the restorers of independence.”⁴⁷ The May Revolution holiday faded in popularity over the course of the century due to its Argentinean roots, yet it was Uruguay’s favored civic date during the 1830s. The schoolchildren of Montevideo customarily participated in the *Fiestas Mayas*, which generally took place in the Cathedral Square.⁴⁸ In early May 1830, Montevideo’s Police Department sent an official notice to the General Director of the Schools, asking public school students to participate in the local civic celebrations. The order instructed schoolchildren to wait in formation for the first rays of light in order to salute the rising Sun of May with the National Anthem. In the words of the police court clerk, it was the “anniversary of our independence”, and a day of “political regeneration.”⁴⁹

Early modern Uruguayans were fascinated with the concept of *revolution*. The ruling elites often denounced the excesses of the revolutionary era, what they considered the dangerous radicalization of the lower classes, but their passion for the subject was nonetheless sincere. Rio de la Plata newspapers had been drawing parallels between foreign revolutions and local history since the early 1810s.⁵⁰ For example, *El Constitucional* was eager to report on the “great events” of the world, such as the

⁴⁷ *El Indicador*, n. 274, May 24, 1832.

⁴⁸ William Garret Acree, *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780-1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 30.

⁴⁹ Notes from the police department of Montevideo, May 4-21, 1830. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Archivo Administrativo (AA), Book 375bis.

⁵⁰ Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported,” 63-66.

“Spanish revolution, due to its closer analogy with our social state.”⁵¹ Montevideo’s literary market was avid for anything related to recent revolutions and popular insurrections, with a noticeable interest on the French revolutionary case. Thus a local bookstore announced in the press the arrival of “selected works of rich paste and binding that have come from France,” including the *History of the Revolution* by Adolphe Thiers, the *History of the Revolution* by François Mignet, the *Memoirs of Robespierre*, and the *History of Napoleon* by Laurent de l’Ardèche.⁵²

Especially in the late 1830s and early 1840s, Montevideo’s newspapers were actively engaged in abstract political arguments about the historical significance of the May Revolution.⁵³ In the article *De la Revolución*, published in March 1841, *El Constitucional* exposed the deeper meaning behind all popular insurrections. To begin with, one should reject the “great men” narrative, because these historical events should not be confused with the mediocre aspirations of a few ambitious individuals, whose selfish intentions are nothing but “*dolores pasajeros* of the body social.”⁵⁴ Conversely, revolutions represent an entire collectivity in motion; they have an internal “logic, and take time to develop,” sometimes several generations, and the individual might easily

⁵¹ *El Constitucional*, n. 577, January 4, 1841.

⁵² The bookstore also advertised several books from other French authors, including Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, Lamartin, Casimiro Delavigne, Balzac, and Molière. *El Constitucional*, n. 619, February 26, 1841.

⁵³ The most famous debate opposed the *Colorado* Manuel Herrera y Obes, who was heavily influenced by Sarmiento’s *Civilización y Barbárie*, to the *Blanco* Bernardo Berro, who would later become President of Uruguay (1860-1864). The debate developed in the press in between 1847 and 1848s. See: Juan Viacava, *Se Armaron con ellos las Ideas para Resistir a la Fuerza: por una Reavaliação da oposição entre Caudilho e Estado no Uruguai a partir de Herrera y Obes, Berro, Antuña e Zás, la Metade do Século XIX* (Master thesis, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2005), 98-131.

⁵⁴ *El Constitucional*, n. 621, March 1, 1841.

lose grasp of such long-term processes. Perhaps alluding to Comte's *organic* and *critic* social states, the anonymous author explained how social upheaval typically took place in the context of deep crisis, when "societies have lost their balance." When society progresses faster than existing state structures, the result is an anachronistic form of government that hinders proper social development. Thus, stressing revolutions as necessary events for the continuous progress of mankind, the article boldly defines them as the "solemn upheaval of all new, natural and extraordinary forces against the worn out and pernicious forces of an outdated system." The article then descends to the empirical analysis of the Rio de la Plata, the wars of independence and ensuing partizan conflicts involving *Blancos* and *Colorados*, *Federales* and *Unitarios*. The anonymous author first admitted that, "in our infancy, during our fight against Spain," the city of Montevideo had only performed a peripheral role "in the great drama of Independence." The Rio de la Plata had been divided by rival insurgent factions, which instilled conflict between the Banda Oriental and its neighbors, but the unifying spirit of revolution had nonetheless guided all participants through the many "episodes of the great May Revolution." Finally disclosing his political motivations and true Colorado colors, the anonymous author then shifted the debate to the ongoing Guerra Grande. The war against the Governor of Buenos Aires was "in itself a revolution, ... and we the Orientales, its strongest representatives, [and we] will fight until the end to comply with [our] sacred mission."⁵⁵ Hence, the national community, conceived as a collective historical agent, was summoned to fulfill its sacred duty. The people of the Banda Oriental, the Orientales,

⁵⁵ *El Constitucional*, n. 622, March 2, 1841.

were protagonists in an epic journey of progress and revolution that was at once local and universal. The local narrative of revolution had been adjusted to the universal rhythms of history, at once unfolding as a parochial political struggle, and as part of a worldwide trend of political transformation and social development.⁵⁶

El Constitucional published an even more ambitious article in August 1842. Examining the “spirit of the nineteenth century,” it defined modernity in opposition to Europe’s feudalism and America’s colonial system. With daring anti-clericalism and a sharp critic of the monarchy, the article underscored the “horrors that took place at a time of backwardness, barbarism, blindness, in which the despotism of absolutist and superstitious kings, and the power of religious fanaticism bullied and brutalized the people, and humanity was sacrificed to the interests of feudalism and the Church.” The “fanatical kings” exercised their rule through power and oppression, “supported by the false ministers of the gospel,” who abused religion for the “torment of mankind.” Tired of “political and religious despotism,” mankind finally seized the opportunity “to shake the rags of feudalism, to put a barrier to the ambition and injustice of kings and monks.” The revolution delivered a “sudden, miraculous, [and] universal change in politics,” which spread through the “moral and religious customs” of the people. Fortunately, the spirit of the nineteenth century had spread to the Americas, where it triumphed over the “lions and the chains of Castile,” inaugurating a “century of freedom and progress, of humanity and

⁵⁶ Alberdi, in particular, “would never abandon his conviction that the ‘revolution’ which had brought the Argentine nation into being was also transforming the conditions of life everywhere in the world, and carrying European civilization to ever higher levels of refinement. For him, the Nation and Global Civilization were two terms of an interlocking dialectic.” Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 173-174, 200.

civilization, of movement and grandeur.” In conclusion, the “spirit of the current century is of liberty, progress, philosophy, and humanity.”⁵⁷

Generally affiliated with the Argentinean Unitarian Party and the Uruguayan Colorados, the authors of the above articles belonged to a generation that was not directly involved in the independence wars.⁵⁸ Their writings were not highly sophisticated academic texts, but rather political pamphlets directed at specific political targets in the context of armed conflict.⁵⁹ As a result, their romanticized narratives of revolution were substantially detached from the actual ideological motivations of the revolutionary era, which were just as grounded on Iberian political traditions as in radical liberalism.⁶⁰ Moreover, the continuity of slavery, which was not abolished in Montevideo until December 1842, and the virtual ethnocide of the indigenous communities of the Banda Oriental during the 1830s further challenge the emancipatory character of the new republic. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this dissertation, the factual accuracy of the narrative is not as relevant as its discursive efficiency. Influenced by what Jorge Meyers called the *historicist turn*, early modern Uruguayans interpreted their country as a

⁵⁷ In other editions, the newspaper even evoked unlikely European parallels with the Rio de la Plata, such as the Polish resistance against despotic Russian aggression, or Juan Manuel de Rosas’ equivalence to the conservatism of Vienna’s Holy Alliance. *El Constitucional*, n. 1053, August 19, 1842; n. 1054, August 20, 1842.

⁵⁸ The intellectuals of the *Generación del 37* had all been born shortly before or immediately after the end of colonial times. Echeverría, for instance, was born in 1805. As Alberdi and Sarmiento would later acknowledge in their autobiographical writings, “the participants in this generational movement had no memory of Spanish rule.” Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 161-162.

⁵⁹ *El Constitucional* was in fact a well-known a mouthpiece of the Colorado party.

⁶⁰ For more on Iberian political traditions and their place in revolutionary Rio de la Plata, see: José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Nación y Estado en Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 200); José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados: Orígenes de la Nación Argentina (1800-1846)*, (Buenos Aires: Emencé Editores, 2007).

historical entity, and their independence as the structural turning point responsible for the eradication of the sistema colonial, a momentous event which announced the beginning of a new era.⁶¹ The teleological and triumphalist historical narrative reflected an ideological model of society that defined itself in opposition to the colonial past. Central to the argument of progress and revolution was the cultural construction of *modern society*. In addition, the notion of “we the Orientales” underscored the emergence of the national community, one conceived as a multigenerational agent of progress, and as an earthly participant in the universalistic telos of mankind.

Modern Society, an Association of Individuals

1. *Del hombre en el estado de naturaleza.*
2. *Del origen de las sociedades.*
3. *Del pacto social.*
4. *Consecuencias del pacto.*
5. *Del origen de las leyes.*
6. *De los jefes de los pueblos en el primer grado de civilización.*
7. *Del origen de los reyes.*
8. *De la patria y del ciudadano.*
9. *Deberes del ciudadano para con la patria.*
10. *De la obediencia y del respeto a la ley.*
11. *De los derechos del ciudadano.*
12. *De la soberanía del pueblo.*
13. *Distinciones entre la libertad y la licencia.*

Topics for a proposed *Catecismo Político*, by Tomás Diago, 1829.⁶²

Writing as San José’s representative in the Constituent General Assembly, Tomás Diago announced in November 1829 his intention to publish a new *Catecismo Político*

⁶¹ Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 158.

⁶² *El Universal*, n. 133, November 23, 1829.

for elementary school students. The political catechism would be written in the traditional questions and answers format, introducing schoolchildren to their rights and duties as future citizens, and to the basics of social contract theory.⁶³ As stated in the project's preamble, published in *El Universal*, "it is not enough that the citizen wants to be free, but it is essential that he learns to be so."⁶⁴ There is no evidence of Diago's catechism beyond this project, yet we know that, according to its list of thirteen topics, children would have learned about men in the state of nature, the origin of society as a contract between free individuals, the formation of governments, and the civic submission of the citizen to the rule of law.

We may assume that Diago's project was modeled after similar textbooks published in contemporary Latin American and European countries.⁶⁵ Although printed

⁶³ Two months earlier, in September 1829, *El Universal* published an article on the "rights of man in society" with an overview of social contract theory. The article defined society as the association of free individuals who had voluntarily convened in exchange of mutual protection. Thus all men are born with "that [*natural*] right," and they are "free, and free in perfect equality." The purpose of living in society is to "conserve in each one, without exception, the right of existence." Consequently, men "made conventions with each other, and everyone tried to freely and voluntarily adjust them [the conventions]." Once they reached a consensus, they were all "forced to comply" with the new "stipulated terms," which were "given the name of laws." Since the totality of society was excessively numerous to assemble all at once, the people elected representatives to act on their behalf. In sum, free men had just submitted their will to the state. Whereas human beings had lost much of their pre-social autonomy, the new arrangement called *society* should help them to become "stronger and happier." *El Universal*, n. 82, September 24, 1829.

⁶⁴ Karen Racine located a letter by the Lancasterian teacher Thomas Gulliver, written in Haiti in May 1817, which stated the same principle later enunciated by Diago in Uruguay: "it is not ... sufficient to direct men to be good, they should be instructed how to become so; and to form good citizens, we must instruct children." Karen Racine, "Imported Englishness," 220.

⁶⁵ According to Racine, the textbooks distributed to Haitian schoolchildren were "part catechism, part nation-building project;" they should inspire the children "to dedicate themselves to the betterment of themselves and their fellow citizens through Christian morality and loyalty to their King." Karen Racine, "Imported Englishness: Henry Christophe's Educational Programme in Haiti, 1806-1820," in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 221.

catechisms had been circulating in the Hispanic world since the sixteenth century, the Bourbons pioneered the merging of spiritual and temporal contents with the aim of reinforcing the loyalty of their subjects.⁶⁶ Secularized, civic catechisms gained popularity in France after the revolution, and proliferated in Spain during the Napoleonic occupation, especially after the 1812 Constitution of the Cádiz Cortes.⁶⁷ In the 1820s, Spanish Americans further intervened in their moral content, modernizing their political messages to better reflect the new republican order.⁶⁸ Notwithstanding the apparent effort to secularize their content, there was an obvious continuity of style and purpose between religious and civic catechisms, for both had embraced the interrogative format, the advocacy of moral values and rules, and were used as auxiliary tools for the teaching of reading. Despite the expected variation in their table of contents, the new catechisms also combined an elementary school approach to the teaching of history with an overview of the basic organization of republican governments.

Everywhere in the Americas, liberals had been reading and debating Rousseau's *Émile* and *The Social Contract*, the latter occupying in the Rio de la Plata "an undisputed

⁶⁶ From the sixteenth century onwards, the European religious divide pushed counter-reformist Catholics to further specialize their teaching techniques, and to create new pedagogical methods, tools, agents, and institutions. The major technological innovation of the time was the invention of teaching as a system of ordered interactions, a development Caruso attributed to the programs of Pietistic and Catholic groups during the eighteenth century. The catechisms were therefore created in an era of development of new educational tools. Marcelo Caruso, "World systems, world society, world polity: theoretical insights for a global history of education," *History of Education* 37, n. 6 (November 2008): 833-834. Javier Laviña, "Independencia y Educación," 125, 130.

⁶⁷ Eugenia Roldán Vera, "The Monitorial System of Education and Civic Culture in Early Independent Mexico," *Paedagogica Historica* 35, n.2 (1999): 318-322; Adrian Velicu, *Civic Catechisms and Reason in the French Revolution* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 19-38.

⁶⁸ Karen Racine, "Patriots-in-training: Spanish American children at Hazelwood School in England during the 1820s," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 505.

position as the single most influential theoretical statement in the field of political reflection,” even if other authors of the Enlightenment, such as Montesquieu, later gained importance during the 1810s and 1820s.⁶⁹ As expected, Rousseau left an imprint on Hispanic catechisms which defined modern society as a political association composed of individuals who had voluntarily departed from the state of nature. For example, the *Catecismo Político para la Primera Enseñanza de las Escuelas de la República del Perú*, a booklet authorized by Simon Bolivar, explained that the “natural liberty” of the “savage” was overcome by the civilized in a “new state of society,” and for that reason man sacrificed a “portion of the primitive freedom he enjoyed in the woods ... for the benefit of those to whom he had associated with.” The newly founded collectivity was therefore a “political association.”⁷⁰ In the words of Roldán, the civic catechisms of postcolonial Mexico also included the description on different forms of government, the contractualist definition of society, and an explanation “of the rights, duties and civic virtues expected from citizens.”⁷¹ Apparently, these topics were not an ephemeral political fad, because the Colombian *Manual del Ciudadano*, published in 1873, still

⁶⁹ Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 155. Caruso, “Within, between, above, and beyond,” 16.

⁷⁰ Antonio Gonzales, *Catecismo Político para la Enseñanza de las Escuelas de la República del Perú* (Arequipa, Imprenta del Gobierno, 1825), 13. A catechism for the Province of Orinoco, which later became part of Venezuela, defined the Republic of Colombia as the “assemblage of all Colombians.” According to its author, José Grau, “natural liberty” was “the power of a man who does not live in society to do anything he wants,” while the superior “civil liberty” of the citizen was determined by the civilized rule of law. José Grau, *Catecismo Político Arreglado a la Constitución de la República de Colombia de 30 de Agosto de 1821: Para el uso de las escuelas de primeras letras de la Provincia de Orinoco* (Imprenta de la República, 1824), 5-9.

⁷¹ Roldán, “The Monitorial System of Education,” 320, 323.

instructed students on the “natural state of man, ... citizens’ duties and rights, republican government, and requirements to obtain citizenship.”⁷²

Echeverría confirmed the importance of civic education as a school subject in his 1846 *Manual de Enseñanza*. As evidence of the continuing popularity of social contract theory, the Argentinean exile presented Uruguayan students with a simple definition of *society*, one which overlapped with the concept of *patria*, the modern collectivity “born of the voluntary union of all citizens with the aim of establishing a political association.” Simply put, the notions of popular sovereignty and citizenship could not have existed under the Spanish monarchy, since the *sistema colonial* was an oppressive arrangement composed of “bodies, hierarchies, professions and guilds.”⁷³ Indeed, there could be no true *Asociación* where “the rich class superimposes itself and has more *fueros* than the others,” where “wealth and power paralyzes the action of law,” and where the “poor class

⁷² The Colombian *Manual del Ciudadano* “placed special emphasis on the individual rights considered to form the fundamental conditions that a person needed to behave well in society, and to become a sensible, intelligent, free and responsible human being.” Luí Alarcón Meneses, and Jorge Conde Calderón, “Social Representations of National Territory and Citizenship in Nineteenth-century History and Geography Textbooks of the Colombian Caribbean Region,” *Paedagogica Historica* 43, n. 5 (October 2007): 712.

⁷³ Echeverría was paraphrasing Rousseau, who once declared that “where there is no longer fatherland, there can no longer be citizens.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or on Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 40. The influence of Rousseau and *Émile* was also pronounced in Venezuela. See Vázquez de Ferrer, “Ciudadanía e Instrucción Pública,” 224. The 1812 Constitution of the Cádiz Cortes had already redefined the concepts of national sovereignty and constitutional monarchy, underscoring the *patria* as the “collectivity of all Spaniards in both hemispheres.” Andrés Baeza Ruz, “Enlightenment, education, and the republican project,” 480-481.

suffers alone all harsh social burdens, as in the militias.”⁷⁴ Echeverría condemned corporate privileges once “bestowed upon civil, military, religious, or academic corporations” as crimes against the democratic principle of equality.⁷⁵ Conversely, the envisioned modern society was internally homogeneous, and thus “all are ones,” including the “priest, the soldier, the lawyer, the merchant, the artisan, the rich and the poor.”

Throughout Latin America, the rejection of colonial social structures and customs implied in the dissolution of traditional corporate identities, pushing adult males toward the only political identity recognized as legitimate by the new republican order, that of the homogenized citizen.⁷⁶ The rise of modern individualism was, however, a long-term historical process linked to the gradual weakening of the medieval notion of one whole collectivity (*universitas*), in which living men were merely parts of a highly hierarchical social body made of varied corporations and statuses, in favor of a partnership of

⁷⁴ Echeverría’s denunciation of colonial society contrasted with his extraordinary faith in the new society, because “modern political associations tend to the establishment of class equality.” Quoting Tocqueville, Echeverría affirmed “that the gradual development of class equality is a law of Providence ... it is universal ... all events and all men conspire without knowing to achieve and guarantee it [the development of class equality].” At that point of his intellectual career, however, Echeverría’s egalitarianism did not venture beyond bourgeois formal equality. Forgoing utopian equality in favor of utopian meritocracy, Echeverría believed the only morally acceptable social hierarchies resulted from the free exercise of individual faculties. Consequently, each man’s welfare and income should be proportionate to his intelligence and labor. The *Manual de Enseñanza* reduced the principle of equality to a mere means to “the conquest of the kingdom of complete liberty,” which in turn was defined as “the right that every man has to employ ... his [physical and intellectual] faculties to the attainment of his welfare.” Condorcet was another obvious influence in Echeverría’s understanding of progress and class equality. The French author had predicted “the abolition of inequality between nations, the progress of equality within each nation, and the true perfection of mankind.” Condorcet, *Outlines*, 23-24, 353.

⁷⁵ For more on the decline of corporate identities, see: Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 35-39.

⁷⁶ Vázquez de Ferrer, “Ciudadanía e Instrucción Pública,” 224-225. Caruso, “New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture,” 288, 304.

formally equal individuals (*societas*), which “is evocative of a contract by which the individuals composing it have ‘associated’ themselves in a society.”⁷⁷ As the nation-state model spread to become the dominant socio-political arrangement in Europe and the Americas, so did the cultural construction of *societas*. In order to achieve that hegemonic status, the state first overcame the rival organizations that challenged its absolute sovereignty. The many corporate bodies that once mediated the individual’s relationship with the whole of society gradually lost most of their social significance, and were replaced by the more direct connection between the citizen and the nation. Thus the very first article of the 1830 Constitution simply defined the *Estado Oriental del Uruguay* as “the political association of all its citizens comprehended in the nine current Departments of its territory.”⁷⁸ According to the Constitution, political sovereignty was exclusively located in the national community, and apart from the citizens themselves, the only legitimate agents of the national will were its elected representatives. The Unitarian conception of state centralization, in which the national sovereignty is absolute and indivisible, prevailed among early modern Uruguayans. As a result, the republic had suppressed the colonial cabildos, while the main office holders of the modern Departments were directly appointed by the central government.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The dichotomy of *universitas-societas* is also somewhat expressed by the well-known German duality of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 62-63/66, 73-74.

⁷⁸ The Constitution of 1830 had granted citizenship rights to all free men born in the territory of the republic, since all citizens were “member[s] of the sovereignty of the nation.” See: Armand Ugón, *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 243.

⁷⁹ For the Argentinean case, see: Marcela Ternavasio, “La Supresión del Cabildo de Buenos Aires: ¿Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada?” *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana “Dr. Emilio Ravignani”* 3rd series, n. 21 (2000): 33-73.

Despite relinquishing a share of his natural rights to society, the individual persevered as the locus of moral value, hence the need to protect what was left of his autonomy, and to promote his personal welfare and development. Thus Uruguayan students learned with Echeverría that the whole of “society must neither absorb the citizen nor demand the absolute sacrifice of his individuality.” The nation-state was forbidden to “violate or compress the exercise of ... man’s natural faculties, because these are at once the origin, the foundation, and the ends of the association.” The Argentine exile went as far as speculating on the possibility of rebellion against a tyrannical state which violated the individual’s sacred rights. In that case, he argued, the social “pact is broken. The association is dissolved, and each one will be an absolute ruler of his will and actions.” Echeverría nonetheless characterized the relationship between the individual and society as one of reciprocity, for the national community must ensure “the individual independence of its members, just like the individualities are obliged to concur with their strength to the good of the patria.” Thus the ultimate goal of “social science” was to “reconcile and harmonize the citizen with the patria, the individual with the association,” to adjust and optimize the communion of private and public interests.⁸⁰

According to Dávila, the colonial-modernity dichotomy had evolved into various other dualisms, such as despotism-freedom, violence-consent and arbitrariness-law. What differentiated the civic subjection of the citizen to the nation-state was the myth of

⁸⁰ Meyers suggests that the term *socialism* was not used by those of the *Generación del 37* in the Marxist sense, but in opposition to the corporate sistema colonial. In Sarmiento, *socialism* was more akin to what Echeverría called the *ciencia social*, in the sense of a science concerned with the goal of improving the national community and the life of each individual member of the new political association. Jorge Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 186-188.

consent, and the belief that a higher form of freedom could only be achieved under the rule of law.⁸¹

In the *Creencia Social*, Echeverría alternatively presented society as a facilitator of personal emancipation, thereby defining it as “a requirement imposed on man by Providence for the free exercise and full development of his faculties.” If the concerns of the savage were once limited to survival in a hostile environment, the civilized man had an opportunity to fully develop his intellectual and physical faculties in the communion of social life, because “human activity, in its many forms, cannot be efficiently exerted if not through the association.” Pre-social individuals were indeed free, but their lives were solitary, poor, brutish, and short; life in society however allowed man “to attain security, comfort, and the development of his faculties, but at the price of his subjection.”⁸² In Echeverría, the Spanish expression “*el ejercicio de la actividad humana*” carried both individualistic and collective connotations. On the one hand, human activity was conceived as the sum of individual action. On the other hand, individual agency acquired a higher moral meaning when placed in the context of multigenerational social activity. Thus the great achievements of the human body and mind, “from the highest speculations of science to the most humble labor in the industry,” were necessarily “subordinated, engendered and born of the association.” In sum, there could be “no progress without association.” Conversely, the *potestad social* which hindered the development of man’s faculties was necessarily corrupt and illegitimate, hence the moral imperative to enlighten

⁸¹ Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported,” 63, 74.

⁸² Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 83-84.

the masses on their rights and duties through proper education.⁸³ It is worthy of notice that, in Echeverría, “civilizing” schoolchildren did not entail mere behavioral control, since the whole point of formal education was to prepare the individualized student for a moral life in a new society. Thus the school incorporated the “savage” child into the “civilized” national community in the symbolic reenactment of the mythical social contract, a prolonged and supervised rite of passage which transpired in the classroom. Yet the process of incorporation evidently transcended the mere inculcation of a particular national identity, and instead focused on the enhancement of the students’ individual qualities, in the expectation that they would result in the general advancement of the national community.⁸⁴

In the legal system, the modern ideology relocated the concept of *rights* from corporate bodies to individuals. According to Dumont, “when the notion of ‘right’ is attached, not to a natural and social order, but to the particular human being, he becomes an individual in the modern sense of the word.”⁸⁵ Thus the religiously charged natural law (*jusnaturalismo*) was gradually converted into the more secular positive law, as in the example of the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and later

⁸³ “The location of sovereignty in the individual implies that collective entities can be legitimated only by theories that link them to the welfare of individuals.” Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 40.

⁸⁴ Echeverría’s use of social contract theory in the school was hardly unique for Latin America. Luís Alarcón Meneses, for instance, identified a Colombian textbook in which “the willingness to decide one’s own fate ... ‘resides in the individual regarding the use of his strengths and faculties when they do not reach another individual; and resides collectively in society regarding every activity or exercise of faculties that have effects on associated people’.” Luís Alarcón Meneses, and Jorge Conde Calderón, “Social Representations of National Territory and Citizenship in Nineteenth-century History and Geography Textbooks of the Colombian Caribbean Region,” *Paedagogica Historica* 43, n. 5 (October 2007): 712.

⁸⁵ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 65.

modern constitutions. A translation of the French Declaration already circulated in Bogotá in 1794, and later influenced the writing of the first constitutions of Colombia and Venezuela.⁸⁶ In the Rio de la Plata, the Declaration was first published in February 1812, yet it defined political discourse and debate until at least the 1850s.⁸⁷ Thus, in the words of José Ellauri, then president of the Uruguayan Constituent General Assembly, the writing of the Constitution of 1830 was oriented by “the declaration of the rights reserved to the citizens, noting the manner and conditions of their association.”⁸⁸ The Constitution conformed to classical, nineteenth-century liberalism; it recognized the formal equality of all citizens, granted them access to due process, protected the security of the individual person, home and property, the right to petition, and the free exercise of all industry, agriculture and commerce.⁸⁹ Yet again, the legislative intent was to safeguard the citizens’ “pursuit of happiness” by protecting the free exercise of their individual faculties.⁹⁰

Unlike Echeverría, the Constitution did not contemplate the possibility of social dissolution in the face of violations of individual rights. On the contrary, it authorized the

⁸⁶ Laviña, “Independencia y Educación,” 129; Vázquez de Ferrer, “Ciudadanía e Instrucción Pública,” 226.

⁸⁷ Meyers, “Democracy in South America,” 165; Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported,” 68.

⁸⁸ From José Ellauri’s speech, then president of the *Asamblea General Constituyente*. Armand Ugón, et. al. *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 239.

⁸⁹ All those living in Uruguay, including non-citizens, had their rights to “life, honor, liberty, security, and property” protected by the state. All those born in the territory of the republic were free, even if one of their parents was a slave. The Constitution also declared that “all men are equal before the Law,” and recognized no distinction beyond those of “talent” and “virtue.” Armand Ugón, et. al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 261-263.

⁹⁰ Thus the preamble of the Constitution defined the Law as the “convention that men do together to regulate the exercise of their natural faculties.” As expressed in the article *Rights of Man in Society*, published in *El Universal* in 1829, “all men have the right to ... make their existence as happy as they can.” *El Universal*, n. 82, September 24, 1829.

national sovereignty and its elected representatives to “impose coercive provisions against the natural liberty [of its members], when demanded by communal happiness,” since that was “the sole and exclusive purpose of all political associations.”⁹¹ Thus the legal and ideological primacy of the individual actually rested on the goodwill of the republic, for the state was allowed submit the individual to the rule of law, restraining him whenever his primeval passions and selfish acts obstructed the higher goals of national happiness and prosperity.⁹²

Academia had long discredited social contract theory before the end of the nineteenth century. An absolute truth of the humanities and social sciences is the recognition of man as a sociocultural being. With its institutions, values and language, society exists prior to its particular members, who can become “human beings only through education into and modeling by a given society.”⁹³ Thus the nation is nothing but the sum of its individual citizens, while the individual, in the modern sense of the word, cannot exist outside the realm of the national community.⁹⁴ We must, of course, not underestimate the intelligence of nineteenth-century Latin Americans. Notwithstanding the popularity of social contract theory, early modern Uruguayans perfectly understood that the state of nature was an abstraction, and that the national community was a historical entity rooted in the centuries-old process of Spanish conquest and colonization.

⁹¹ Armand Ugón, et. al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 234, 236-237. According to John Boli, in modern societies “human beings can be sacrificed for the good of the polity, but the theory justifying such sacrifice must still lead finally to the benefit of individuals.” Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 41-42.

⁹² Dávila, “Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported,” 77.

⁹³ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 74.

⁹⁴ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 41-42.

The aforementioned political catechism of Orinoco, for example, admitted to its students that the state of nature was a foundational myth, one which “*apenas se concibe*.”⁹⁵ Among postcolonial Uruguayans, it nonetheless prevailed the belief in a new society conceived as a free association of modern individuals. The cultural construction of the progress-oriented association composed of formally equal individuals permeated the writing of the 1830 Constitution; it was disseminated in the press, and was even present in elementary school textbooks as evidence of the penetration and diffusion of the modern ideology.

The Rise of the Nation-State, the *Padre Amoroso de los Pueblos*

Unlike women, children, slaves, and all those who had been submitted to a condition of paternalistic dependency at the household, adult free men, holders of citizenship rights, were expected to exercise their economic, political, and intellectual autonomy. While partially preserving their authority in the private sphere, adult men nonetheless surrendered their pre-social independence to the rule of law, thus recognizing the legitimacy of a new collective sovereignty, the nation-state. The new political association therefore sanctioned two varieties of inequality: at the household level, the *pater familias* had preserved his authority over his dependents; at the public level, state officials who generally came from the upper- and middle-class sectors of society ruled over the average man, thus partially safeguarding a hierarchical system of colonial roots. Whereas the first social contract had “introduced the relationship characterized by

⁹⁵ Grau, *Catecismo*, 9.

equality ...; the second ... introduced subjection to a ruler or a ruling agency.”⁹⁶ The emancipated adult man was a *padre de familia* at the private sphere, but his public persona was the citizen, whose freedom and autonomy were defined by virtuous civic agency. As in other Western nations, the individual in Uruguay was “abruptly called to recognize in the State his higher self, and in the State’s command the expression of his own will and freedom.”⁹⁷

The rise of the modern state involved the gradual process of centralization and bureaucratization of ancien régime monarchies. At its inception, however, the state had on the family institution a model of government, order and hierarchy, for the administration of the state was the also administration of the house of the king. Quoting Sarah Hanley, Bourdieu believed that “the Family-State compact provided a formidable family model of socioeconomic authority which influenced the state model of political power in the making at the same time.”⁹⁸ The family, according to Bourdieu, is the most natural of all social categories, providing a model for all social bodies, a scheme of classification, and principles for the construction of the social world.⁹⁹ Government practices were spread all over society, since many individuals ruled over others, including the king over his subjects, the father over his family, and teachers over students. While examining the ancien régime concept of the “art of government,” Foucault noticed how it

⁹⁶ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 75.

⁹⁷ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 101.

⁹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Razões Práticas Sobre a Teoria da Ação* (Campinas: Papirus Editora, 1996), 110.

⁹⁹ The family is more than a given in reality, for it is an instrument for the construction of social reality. Bourdieu, *Razões Práticas*, 129, 133.

encompassed the government of the state, the government of the self, but also the government of family and children. There was, however, an ascendant and a descendant continuity between those three distinct levels of governance. The ascendant one asserted that, in order to rule the state, the king should first learn to govern his self and his family. The descendant continuity determined that in a properly ruled kingdom all fathers had been prepared to rule their families and property, and all individual subjects had learned to govern their selves.¹⁰⁰ In both ascendant and descendant directions, the principles of governance streamlined relationships of authority that encompassed the three basic levels of society: state, family and individual subject.

The art of government elevated the concept of economy, or the appropriate and correct rule over individuals, property, and wealth within the realm of the family, to the administration of the state. If the word economy once designated the wise management of the household (in the sense of *oikonomia*), then ruling a state meant the proper management of the human and material resources of its jurisdiction. Both Foucault and Bourdieu however noticed that the hierarchy between the administration of the family and the state was gradually turned upside down along the eighteenth century, so that the family would become less of a model for the state and more of an instrument for the management of a subject population. While privileging a particular form of family organization, codifying and supporting it, the state blurred the lines between the so-called public and private spheres, to the point that our domestic lives, including our formal

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *Microfísica do Poder* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 2008), 277-278, 280-281.

education, parental and marriage rights, often rely on public institutions and policies toward the family and the upbringing of children.¹⁰¹

The caricatural portrait early modern Uruguayans painted of the colonial era concealed some flagrant ideological and institutional continuities that linked them to the Spanish Enlightenment. While focusing on the economic and cultural renovation of the Spanish territories, the Bourbon Reforms accelerated the process of rationalization and centralization of the state bureaucracy.¹⁰² The Rio de la Plata was particularly affected by these modernization impulses, which resulted in the establishment of a new viceroyalty in the region, and in the subsequent growth of the royal bureaucracy in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo.¹⁰³ In order to promote the interests of the state, the Spanish Enlightenment had given the monarchy the necessary legitimacy to further intervene in society, helping government agencies to expand their role in areas traditionally associated with the Church and the family. The Protestant monarchies of northern Europe had earlier reduced the Church to a subordinated agency within the polity, but the decline of the Church vis-à-vis the state was not unknown to Catholics.¹⁰⁴ The *Patronato Regio* had already asserted the ascendancy of the monarchy over the Church in the Americas, but especially after the *Concordato de 1753*, the Bourbons further consolidated their

¹⁰¹ Bourdieu, *Razões Práticas*, 134-135; Foucault, *Microfísica do Poder*, 281-283, 288-290.

¹⁰² Carlos Martínez Shaw, “El Despotismo Ilustrado en España y en las Indias,” in *El Imperio Sublevado*, ed. Victor Mínguez, and Manuel Chust (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 2000), 124-125.

¹⁰³ Susan Socolow, *The Bureaucrats of Buenos Aires, 1769-1810: Amor al Real Servicio* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1987); Arturo Bentancur, “La Primera Burocracia Montevideana, 1724-1814,” in *Ediciones del Quinto Centenario*, edited by Lucía Sala de Touron (Montevideo: Univ. de la República, 1993), 15-68.

¹⁰⁴ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 84-85.

sovereignty over the internal affairs of their many kingdoms, confirming their control over Church revenues and bishop appointments. With the Concordato triumphed the notion of *Iglesia Nacional*, part of a project that aimed at the political unification of the Peninsula.¹⁰⁵ The new republics of Latin America, Uruguay included, had inherited the institution of the royal patronage, so that the local ecclesiastical structure was also partially subordinated and incorporated into the postcolonial bureaucracy.¹⁰⁶ A major turning point in the struggle against the Church was the suppression of the Jesuits in 1767, which opened the doors for greater government involvement in the field of education.¹⁰⁷ Although other religious orders temporarily replaced the Jesuits in some educational establishments (such as the Franciscans in the Banda Oriental), the colonial state — “por derecho y obligación” — inaugurated numerous “secular” schools of primeras letras during the eighteenth century, so that even peripheral settlements such as Montevideo had their own public institutions under the jurisdiction of the cabildo.¹⁰⁸ If the Jesuits once incorporated children into colonial society through evangelization, the

¹⁰⁵ Antonio Mestre Sanchis, “Nueva Dinastía e Iglesia Nacional,” in *Los Borbones: Dinastía y Memoria de Nación en la España del Siglo XVIII*, ed. Pablo Fernández Albaladejo (Madrid: Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, 2001), 556-565.

¹⁰⁶ Tomás Sansón Corbo, “La Iglesia y el Proceso de Secularización en el Uruguay Moderno (1859-1919),” *Hispania Sacra* LXIII, 127, (January-June 2011): 286. Latin American republican governments, including Chile, had the “clear intent to take over the right to direct ecclesiastic affairs which previously belonged to the king.” Baeza Ruz, “Enlightenment, education, and the republican project,” 486.

¹⁰⁷ Natalia Sobrevilla Perea, “Mid nineteenth-century ideological radicalization in Peru,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 132.

¹⁰⁸ On the late colonial Mexican case, see Torres Aguilar, Morelos. “La Enseñanza de Primeras Letras en Chiapas en los Albores de la Independencia, en un Contexto Iberoamericano.” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 14 (2010): 145.

Bourbons focused on the cultivation of loyal subjects for the monarchy.¹⁰⁹ The advance of the state however extended far beyond the field of education. Between 1776 and 1803, the Bourbons encroached into another traditional domain of the Church while issuing a series of decrees on marriage legislation.¹¹⁰ The *Pragmática sanción de matrimonios* could be interpreted as an attempt “to make the Spanish imperial state stronger and more efficient, to modernize the state and society and to strengthen the power and influence of the Crown.” The new marriage laws should “strengthen paternal authority and filial obedience, and in this manner enhance the power of the King, who, according to the Bourbon absolutist rhetoric, was the father of all fathers.”¹¹¹

Despite the many significant sociocultural transformations from monarchy to republic, from subjects to citizens, early modern states preserved and occasionally enhanced certain paternalistic practices inherited from their political predecessors. Indeed, postcolonial rhetoric was dominated by family metaphors, and even radical revolutionaries often portrayed Ferdinand VII as their tyrannical father.¹¹² By the 1830s, Uruguayans still thought of the state as their *buen padre*, a word choice reminiscent of colonial times and loaded with deference to patriarchal authority. An exemplary

¹⁰⁹ In between the 1780s and 1810s, the Spanish Enlightenment was eager to create a universal education system that would increment “individual utility and social harmony.” Meri L. Clark, “Teaching writing in the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 449-451.

¹¹⁰ Susan Socolow, “Acceptable Partners: Marriage Choice in Colonial Argentina, 1778-1810,” in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 209-246; Steinar A. Sawther, “Bourbon Absolutism and Marriage Reform in Late Colonial Spanish America,” *The Americas* 59, n. 4 (April 2003): 475-509.

¹¹¹ Sawther, “Bourbon Absolutism and Marriage Reform,” 476, 509.

¹¹² Racine, “Patriots-in-training,” 495.

document addressed the state as the “*padre amoroso de los pueblos*” — the loving father of the pueblos.¹¹³ Whereas the word *patria* (literally fatherland) is rooted in *patrius* (pertaining to a father), early modern Orientales portrayed it as their beloved mother, relegating the father’s role to the state. This arrangement furnished Uruguayans with an easily recognizable family structure, in which the patria bore the qualities of a loving mother, while the state assumed the role of a ruling father and severe educator.¹¹⁴ The ascription of family roles was clearly enunciated in November 1829, in the inauguration ceremony of Montevideo’s first postcolonial public school. In the speech by Lucas José Obes, the patria promised to protect her children with “the warmth of her motherly breast,” and was committed to lead them “toward the summit of their destinies.” The patria had invested state authorities with the duty to take care of “your infancy,” hence the public school mission to place in the hands of the students “a portion of the richest heritage any mortal can have — morality and knowledge.” Thus the father of all fathers was no longer identified with the king, but with the republic, and by extension with its postcolonial institutions, agents and elected representatives. The independent state had accordingly inherited the responsibility for the *bien común*, for the general progress and welfare of the citizenry. Far from curtailing the general trend of modernization advanced by the Bourbon Reforms, the nineteenth century witnessed the accelerated expansion of the Uruguayan State, though civil wars and foreign interventions temporarily delayed that process until the 1870s.

¹¹³ AGN, AA, Box 924.

¹¹⁴ Lucas José Obes was *Ministro de Hacienda* at the time. *El Universal*, n. 131, November 20, 1829.

In early modern Uruguay, state policy was frequently interpreted as the benevolent act of a paternal government in favor of its children. The principle of reciprocity, in which the king provided for the common good of his subjects in exchange of loyalty and service, was transposed to the postcolonial educational system, itself conceived as a republican obligation, insofar as the citizens oriented their acquired education toward the common good of the nation.¹¹⁵ The father-to-son relationship also stimulated the expectation that it was the government's duty to work for the welfare and progress of its children, thus encouraging citizens to demand action from the public administration.¹¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, Montevideo's newspapers at once legitimated and pressured the government for the expansion of public education. In December 1826, *La Gaceta de la Provincia Oriental* published "an incontrovertible truth ... the degree of education of a country is the most certain sign that denotes its good or bad government."¹¹⁷ In May 1839, *El Constitucional* highlighted "the education of the youth" among "the most important matters that demand the government's attention." The newspaper thanked President Fructuoso Rivera, "because [his government] is *paternal*, free, patriotic, and therefore concerned with the propagation of the enlightenment, with the diffusion of knowledge, [so that] the Oriental youth is instructed, formed, and aware of its rights and duties." In the eyes of the liberal press, there was a direct correlation between poor education and tyranny. An easy prey to totalitarian rulers such as Rosas

¹¹⁵ Roldan Vera, "Towards a logic of citizenship," 517, 521, 523.

¹¹⁶ The relationship of reciprocity between the king and his subjects was a complex net of rights and obligations which might have strengthened the authority of the former, but also entitled the latter to make demands. Dávila, "Iusnaturalist Tradition and Utilitarianism Imported," 69

¹¹⁷ *La Gaceta de la Provincia Oriental*, n. 6, December 19, 1826.

(Uruguay's favorite tyrant in the Colorado-Unitarian propaganda), the uneducated was "unable to recognize his legitimate natural rights." Oppressors have always imposed restrictions on "the education of the people, because ignorance and backwardness give greater stability to despotism and tyranny." Undoubtedly, "the paternal governments" which aspire for "their country's glory, and advancement of their fellow citizens did not neglect the education of the individual, the education of the people."¹¹⁸

Not to be forgotten, the head of the household was also summoned in support of the educational policies of the state. In 1837, for instance, twenty-two *vecinos* of Las Piedras appealed to the Minister of Government, to whom they referred as "*padre benéfico*," for the reinstatement of a public school teacher who had been recently fired.¹¹⁹ In 1839, Maria Mendes de Perez was unable to fund the "first rudiments of instruction" of her two grandsons, so she appealed for the Minister, trusting his "paternal eye" to award them a stipend for the *Colegio de Humanidades*, a private school in Montevideo.¹²⁰ In May 1841, *El Constitucional* recalled how public education once flourished to the satisfaction of the *padres de familia*. Unfortunately, the escalation of the civil war had reduced the number of "these useful establishments that the patria had offered to the advancement of its tender children."¹²¹ Employing emotional blackmail

¹¹⁸ *El Constitucional*, n. 99, May 29, 1839; n. 1102, October 18, 1842. The concept of filial piety emerged in all levels of the public administration. In December 1830, after failing to recruit a new teacher for the local public school, the *Junta Inspector* of an unstated location regretted the "unforeseen [setbacks that] deprived us from constituting this cadre of children of the state." AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 8.

¹¹⁹ AGN, AA, Box 899.

¹²⁰ AGN, AA, Box 912.

¹²¹ *El Constitucional*, n. 694, May 31, 1841.

against the public administration, the newspaper highlighted the parents' legitimate expectations, for they relied on the state to guarantee their children's access to formal education. Hence, "the father who does not have the resources to pay for the education of his children ... would resign himself to the pain of seeing" them "vegetate in ignorance and misery." Future generations would arguably look back at their childhood to condemn "the indolence of those men who once ruled their country, and neglected to provide the less fortunate classes" with the necessary means for their instruction.¹²²

State officials repeatedly asserted the ascendancy of the state over the family during the 1830s, for traditional childrearing methods were increasingly considered inadequate among early modern Uruguayans.¹²³ While the state assumed greater responsibility over the education of children, the parents, especially those from the lower classes, were portrayed as ignorant, negligent, incapable educators. As stated by the Junta of San José in March 1837, the parents, "lacking in knowledge and morality, cannot instill in their children sentiments that they themselves do not possess."¹²⁴ State-managed instruction should rescue the ignorant from their misery, and the "parents' scandalous omission in the cultivation of children" should persuade the government to take responsibility for the "social enlightenment" of the people, the country's "true national

¹²² *El Constitucional*, n. 1102, October 18, 1842.

¹²³ The *Cédula Real* of 1768 was an early attempt to overcome traditional family education. The parents were seen as an obstacle to formal education, so that the *Cédula* was also issued to curb their interference in the work of the teachers. García Sánchez, "La Educación Colonial en la Nueva Granada," 232-235.

¹²⁴ AGN, AA, Box 895.

capital.”¹²⁵ In August 1833, De la Sota, at the time still a schoolteacher, complained about “the faculties that the parents arrogate to themselves over their sons.” The Normal School was suffering with poor attendance, because “the parents’ indigence overcomes their duty to educate.” “Civilization has not yet been extended to the lower classes,” De la Sota alerted, and the children’s education should not be left “to the discretion of ignorant, selfish parents.” It was therefore “the government’s duty” to promote civilizational progress, “employing, if necessary, coercive measures.”¹²⁶ In April 1840, *El Constitucional* lamented the “neglect of some fathers,” hence the state’s moral duty to “obligate the parents to place their sons in school,” so that students “may become useful citizens for the patria and for themselves.”¹²⁷ Though compulsory schooling would not become law until 1876, there was already widespread support for the employment of coercive measures against the parents.

Evidently, state-officials did not intend to undermine the family institution, yet traditional childrearing practices should be replaced by formal schooling. In the nineteenth century, the household was reconstructed as a private domain and refuge, thus the making of citizens (themselves public personas) should necessarily occur at the public stage. Children’s socialization should match the progress-oriented ambitions of the nation-state, accordingly rising above the petty concerns of the family. The new society was an agent of socioeconomic development, but its collective agentic capabilities relied

¹²⁵ Letters from the Minister of Government, Santiago Vazquez, January 1832. AGN, AA, Box 823, Folder 9; Box 824, Folder 10.

¹²⁶ AGN, AA, Box 845A, Folder 12.

¹²⁷ *El Constitucional*, n. 365, April 23, 1840.

on the proper development of each individual citizen.¹²⁸ Admittedly, the nineteenth-century school also inculcated traditional family values in children, creating obedient sons and daughters, preparing future fathers and mothers for the household. But educating children for the family only mattered because state officials believed the transmission of family values would have a positive impact on the interests and general welfare of the national collectivity — and even if women had no citizenship rights, their formal education was still linked to the making of citizens. In June 1833, the General Inspector asserted that girls should be educated to become “good wives, better mothers,” so that they could “someday give to the patria the gift of honorable and enlightened citizens.”¹²⁹ Moreover, the patriarch’s act of designating the state as the educator of his son or daughter marked a remarkable cultural and institutional shift. In the words of Szuchman, the modern school had “succeeded in imposing on parents the disagreeable notion that the care of their children was no longer a monopoly of the family.”¹³⁰ Far from merely guaranteeing the reproduction of patriarchal society across generations, the shift heralded the gradual weakening of the family institution vis-à-vis the state. Perhaps the greatest paradox of modern schooling, the father-like state enhanced its paternalistic authority while undermining the traditional pedagogy of the *pater familias*, to the point

¹²⁸ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 76-77, 113.

¹²⁹ AGN, AA, Box 844, Folder 6.

¹³⁰ The idea that “learning took place away from home, in a new environment, under the aegis of a virtual stranger, had considerable psychological and cultural implications.” The conservative sectors of society however believed modern schooling would “undermine patriarchal authority.” They understood “the subordination of the child ... to the household as essential for the maintenance of the societal order.” Mark Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 135, 156.

that formal elementary education would become compulsory in Uruguay before the end of the nineteenth century.

The public goals of the new educational system were made obvious in the strong correlation between literacy and citizenship rights. Before including someone's name in the electoral lists, the French Constitution of 1795 required all aspiring citizens to present a certificate of literacy and known occupation, although a grace period which would expire in 1804 temporarily exempted them from the requirement.¹³¹ The Cádiz Constitution of 1812 had also enfranchised all adult males, but citizenship would be exclusive to the literate after 1830.¹³² Caruso surveyed 45 Latin American constitutions for the 1811-1848 period, and found that 29 of them included analogous provisions which limited citizenship to literate adult males, with an average grace period of twelve years before enforcement; one of them was the short-lived Argentine Constitution of 1826, which, at least in principle, should apply to the Banda Oriental.¹³³ While excluding women and slaves, the Constitution of 1830 also projected the suspension of citizenship rights of all men who could not read and write after 1840.¹³⁴ Thus, at its inception, the republic had given itself ten years to spread literacy among its free male population. That was no dead-letter intention; state agents were ideologically committed to an elementary

¹³¹ Marcelo Caruso, "Literacy and Suffrage: the Politicisation of Schooling in Postcolonial Hispanic America (1810–1850)," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 465.

¹³² Caruso, "Cheap, Suitable, Promising," 38-39.

¹³³ Caruso, "Literacy and suffrage," 463, 466-468, 470-472.

¹³⁴ Armand Ugón, *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos, 1825-1834*, 243-44.

school system capable of producing a future generation of literate citizens.¹³⁵ In December 1832, the General Inspector advised the Minister of Government on the need to “increase [the number of] elementary schools in all cities and pueblos of the republic,” and explained that the Minister himself was “constitutionally responsible for the education and progress of civilization.” In 1837, the Junta of San José complained that “there will be no citizens in this pueblo” due to the continuous negligence of its resident teacher. In October 1837, the Education Commission of Montevideo denounced the “indifference” of “many parents regarding the education of their children,” a problem which reinforced the need for more public schools, since, “after a constitutional provision, ... it is required to know how to read and write in order to exercise citizenship.”¹³⁶ Perhaps the most comprehensive statement was the one provided by the Minister of War and Navy, Pedro Lenguas, who unequivocally linked citizenship rights to formal schooling. As previously referenced in the introduction to this dissertation, Lenguas had declared that the promotion of “the means of elementary education for all classes of society” was a state “obligation in accordance with the spirit of the national institutions,” and “depriving the *castas* of the common education available to other portions of society would be the same as preventing them from enjoying that citizenship

¹³⁵ That constitutional duty was nonetheless shared with the Juntas. In January 1834, the Junta of Paysandú reported that it was well-aware of “the duties imposed by the article 126 of the Constitution” regarding its educational responsibilities. AGN, AA, Box 896; Box 851, Folder 6; Box 839A, Folder 12.

¹³⁶ AGN, AA, Box 902. In April 1840, *El Constitucional* recognized that the constitutional deadline had already deprived too many Uruguayans of their citizenship rights. “Not all parents are wealthy [enough] to fund the education of their children,” and “most inhabitants of our extensive *campaña*” come from the “proletarian classes which require government protection for their instruction.” *El Constitucional*, n. 365, April 23, 1840; n. 574, December 30, 1840.

to which they should aspire.”¹³⁷ It should come as no surprise that students themselves learned about citizenship in school. Echeverría’s *Manual de Enseñanza* explained that, in order to become a citizen, one must “be twenty years old,” and “know how to read and write.”¹³⁸ Whereas their “parents were [once] vassals of a Spanish king,” therefore submitted to a “shameful and humiliating” condition, future generations should aspire to attain the “precious right to directly and actively influence the matters of your country.” “You are not citizens yet,” Echeverría expounded, “but you will come to be, and you should prepare in advance to perform that rank with dignity; because being a good citizen is the highest and noblest prerogative that a man can aspire.” Indeed, Uruguayans did not have citizenship rights by default, but the public school system was clearly conceived as a path toward it.

The press routinely reaffirmed the correlation between the formation of citizens and collective national progress. In December 1829, *El Universal* publicized a statistical report about the pueblo of Minas, Department of Maldonado. The local public school had prepared many “virtuous citizens,” who would help that village in its “fast marching progress toward the enlightenment.”¹³⁹ Beyond public opinion discourse, all those directly involved with the field of education identified schools with the reproduction of republican values and institutions. Thus the *Alcalde Ordinario Suplente* of Rocha, another village in the Department of Maldonado, believed public schools were essential

¹³⁷ AGN, AA, Box. 899.

¹³⁸ Though gender restrictions were not explicitly stated, the textbook took for granted that the reader was a boy.

¹³⁹ *El Universal*, n. 157, December 22, 1829.

to the making of an “enlightened patria” comprised of “good citizens.”¹⁴⁰ The teacher Francisco Curel wrote in November 1831 that “the citizens’ morality and enlightenment are the foundation of prosperity, glory, and security of [all] nations.”¹⁴¹ Writing in Paysandú, January 1833, Basilio Antonio Pinillas explained that “the education of the youth” would certainly “lead the pueblos to that level of enlightenment, [which is the] principle of life and seed of happiness to other nations.”¹⁴² Juan José Peyrallo, member of the Education Commission of Montevideo, wrote in April 1834 that “good morals, virtue and education at the tender age undoubtedly make the fortune of families and states; it is the cornerstone ... of a well-groomed society.”¹⁴³

Creating Citizens, the Actors of Modern Society

Before modern schooling, education was a largely undirected process. Upbringing was unanalyzed and unproblematic, since household education generally assumed children would follow the steps of their parents.¹⁴⁴ By contrast, modern schooling promotes a highly intentional approach to socialization. State-managed education removed children from the family, handling their formation to a specialized institution, where they spent a few hours a day in a large room, sitting in rows before a professional educator they learned to call *preceptor* or *maestro*. After the Enlightenment, man was no longer seen as the fixed and final object of God’s creation; each individual was then a

¹⁴⁰ AGN, AA, Box 814, Folder 4 .

¹⁴¹ AGN, AA, Box 819, Folder 4.

¹⁴² AGN, AA, Box 838, Folder 7.

¹⁴³ AGN, AA, Box 855A, Folder 10.

¹⁴⁴ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 67-68.

creature of education and environment, of physical and intellectual evolution. Man “had less of a nature than a history, or rather his history was his nature.” The body and the soul were objects of natural and social processes of adaptation, learning, and advancement. The individual consciousness resulted from dynamic processes of refinement and maturing, while upbringing involved change and becoming.¹⁴⁵ In the modern ideology, children were seen as weak, innocent, and tender; they were no longer conceived as adults in miniature, but as human beings at an early stage of development.¹⁴⁶ The human life-cycle followed various stages of development, and childhood in particular was considered a critical phase in which human beings were especially malleable and susceptible to deliberate formation. In Europe, the attitudes toward children began to change in the seventeenth century, when childhood became a social category in its own right.¹⁴⁷ As expected, that ideology was fully developed in nineteenth-century Uruguay.¹⁴⁸ *El Constitucional*, for instance, once more supported public schooling in May 1839, because children “receive, at their tender age, their first impressions.”¹⁴⁹

What the German and French Enlightenments had in common was the belief in human perfectibility, and “the possibility of altering the human environment in such a

¹⁴⁵ George Rousseau, *Enlightenment Crossings: Pre- and Post-modern Discourses, Anthropological* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 226.

¹⁴⁶ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

¹⁴⁷ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 45.

¹⁴⁸ “The expansion of state authority over childhood is not simply a matter of the diffusion of rules from centers to peripheries, or of copying of the constitutions of metropolitan powers. This expansion is, rather, a matter of world ideology that peripheral countries adopt most completely. Central countries are a little slower to adopt it.” John Boli, and John Meyer, “The Ideology of Childhood and the State: Rules Distinguishing Children in National Constitutions, 1870-1970,” in *American Sociological Review* 43, n.6 (December 1978): 797-802, 806.

¹⁴⁹ *El Constitucional*, n. 99, May 29, 1839.

way as to allow a fuller and more wholesome development of human capacities.”¹⁵⁰

There was always a possibility of self-improvement through environmental change and education, which would allow men to make full use of their physical and intellectual faculties. Human beings were seen as creatures of circumstances and upbringing, hence the optimization of educational environments and the supervision of the child’s upbringing toward the creation of a future better man.¹⁵¹ The belief in formal schooling became so powerful that it even managed to remove children from their families and traditional communities in a deliberate effort to link them directly to the universalistic culture of modernity. As a result, the sacralization of individuals had one clear consequence, the explosion of education, since the members of modern society were both entitled and obligated to familiarize themselves with modernity’s rationalized knowledge system. Science supports claims of expanded human agency, because the power of knowledge, as postulated by the modern ideology, informs and legitimates purposive human action.¹⁵² Thus classroom routine tended to operate as a process of individuation in which the moral values of modernity, including the very values of formal education and modern actorhood, were reproduced in students as part of a project to create purposive rational actors for the national community (more of this in chapter two).

Even statist societies marked by authoritarian hierarchical structures can have in the individual their central unit of action. As long as collective progress relies on individual advancement, competence and commitment, specialized pedagogical

¹⁵⁰ Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 33.

¹⁵¹ Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 71-72.

¹⁵² Meyer, “World Society,” 9-11.

institutions in which socialization has become a process of individuation are likely to replace traditional educational forms. The emergence of Pedagogy and ensuing theories of socialization promoted the modern view that children could be purposively modeled by adults as long as their upbringing and environmental experiences were controlled in a rational manner. If “citizenship is defined in active, individualist, rationally progressive terms,” a school system that aims at the making of future citizens will certainly instill such moral values in its students. The national collectivity incorporates the individual through citizenship, but proper incorporation demands from the individual a few years of formal education by state institutions or by private credentialed schools that conform to governmental standards. Thus the new educational system emerged as the modern rite of passage into adulthood, eventually replacing the family as the primary institution for the socialization of children.¹⁵³ As summarized by Boli, “the institutional imperative of mass schooling derived from the modern conception of society as a project for creating progress through the combined efforts of capable, motivated individuals acting as effective political and economic/technical citizens. ... Mass schooling should therefore be both universally available and compulsory, its compulsory aspect promoting both the welfare of the national polity and the well-being and success of the individual.”¹⁵⁴

Notwithstanding its secularized disposition, the Western modern individual derived from the centuries-old Christian duality of body and soul, itself the most pervasive of all the dualisms in history, yet fundamental to “everyone’s intimate sense of

¹⁵³ John Boli, Francisco Ramirez, and John Meyer, “Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education,” *Comparative Education Review*, 29, n. 2 (May 1985): 149, 157, 159, 161.

¹⁵⁴ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 44-46.

what being human is and ought to be.”¹⁵⁵ Thus the very first chapter of Echeverría’s *Manual de Enseñanza*, the *Duties to Oneself*, instructed students to “address the proper conservation of your body and the perfection of your soul.” An exemplary handwriting exercise by Domingo Lino de Gadea, a student from the village Soriano, provides further evidence of the diffusion of that notion in Uruguayan public schools (see Figure 1.1). In August 1833, the boy copied from an unknown source the following incomplete sentences: “Having spoken about the body for so long, I give you now an idea about the soul. This one is far superior to that other one [the body] on excellence and dignity, ... [due to] its spiritual nature [and] faculties. What faculties are those? The potencies of the soul consist of...” On his part, Echeverría expected his readers to understand that each human life was a unique gift from God, and that the meaning of life was to be happy. Fortunately, God gave man the means to find his happiness; “those means are your faculties,” Echeverría explained, and thus “the unity and exercise of those faculties” is what constituted “the individual life.”¹⁵⁶ On the one hand, God had empowered every single human being with certain physical and intellectual faculties, themselves conceived as earthly expressions of His godly agency. On the other hand, Echeverría’s God was an

¹⁵⁵ George S. Rousseau, *Enlightenment Crossings*, 210-211, 219.

¹⁵⁶ As it turns out, that was far from an original thought, for the *Manual de Enseñanza* mirrored similar textbooks published abroad, such as the *Tratado de las Obligaciones del Hombre* by Juan de Escoiquiz, published in Barcelona in 1821. In his own *Duties to Oneself*, Escoiquiz reaffirmed the twofold nature of human life, with its spiritual and corporeal existence. As expected, students from other Latin American countries were also educated on the Christian duality. Hence, the planned *escuela patriótica* of Bogotá instructed students that “*Dios es orden, y el hombre en sociedad debe imitarle en lo moral y en lo físico*,” while the Chilean *Instituto Nacional* offered an education focused on “the physical and moral character of the citizen.” Juan de Escoiquiz, *Tratado de las Obligaciones del Hombre* (Barcelona: Imprenta de los Hermanos Torras, 1821), 8, 15-16, 53. García Sánchez, “La Educación Colonial en la Nueva Granada,” 239. Andrés Baeza Ruz, “Enlightenment, education, and the republican project: Chile’s *Instituto Nacional* (1810–1830),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 484.

abstract universal force rather than an agent actively intervening on earth. Admittedly, He had given man life, free will, and the necessary faculties for the pursuit of happiness, but worldly actorhood had been transferred to the individual, who should therefore cultivate and employ his faculties for the benefit of his self, family, and national community.

Whereas the Uruguayan citizen still partially preserved his original Christian character, he should nonetheless invoke authority that was located in the self, and therefore behave like a rational, competent, progress-oriented individual.¹⁵⁷

The Christian duality of body and soul, expressed in the physical and moral faculties of each individual, resulted in two varieties of labor: “one material and the other intellectual.” The former concerned the transformation of raw materials applied to the uses of life, while the latter related to the cultivation of the sciences and the arts. Both varieties were equally legitimate and necessary to the welfare of the individual and society. Labor was an expression of God-given faculties, and a requirement for individual autonomy and emancipation. Thus Echeverría’s final message to Uruguayan students was to “never forget that man was born to work, ... and only through incessant work can he morally and intellectually perfect himself, becoming a useful citizen.” In that case, labor was not perceived as a locus of exploitation, but as a medium of individual and collective emancipation. As it turns out, the “emancipation of the masses” and the “realization of absolute class equality” were not possible unless “all social institutions convey to that end, and to the intellectual, physical and moral improvement of the most numerous and poorest class.” Evidently, the problem of labor was of great importance for a progress-

¹⁵⁷ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 40, 84-85, 112.

oriented society inserted in world capitalism. In market economies, the pursuit of progress is paramount, “for success in the marketplace is furthered by specialization, technical efficiency, uniqueness, and innovation.”¹⁵⁸ The qualities enunciated by Boli partially match Echeverría’s modern individual, himself a moral being in permanent “action, innovation, and constant exercise of . . . man’s faculties, because movement is the essence of his life.” When cultivated to the fullest possible extent, the individual is “conscientious, charitable, competent, industrious, rational, tolerant, loving, compassionate, enterprising, [and] forgiving.”¹⁵⁹ With qualities better suited to the nineteenth-century South American context, Catalá’s *Geografía* identified the Orientales as “honorable by nature, sociable, vivacious and insightful, with great disposition to the sciences and the arts, affable, industrious, sober, valiant, and skilled horsemen.” Ignorance and passivity are well-known human properties, but these are not the qualities expected from proper modern agents.¹⁶⁰ The *Manual de Enseñanza* focused too much on students as legitimated social actors in the making to be merely conceived as a pedagogical instrument of social control. Children learned with Echeverría that human beings were not defined by birth, but by their actions on earth, hence the moral message which compelled them to strive for the continuous cultivation and enlightened exercise of their physical and intellectual faculties.

Echeverría’s sociology abided to methodological individualism, for he conceived modern society as the aggregation of cultivated rational actors. Macro-social

¹⁵⁸ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 112.

¹⁵⁹ Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 41.

¹⁶⁰ Jepperson et. al. “Analytical Individualism,” 107.

development, or the success of Uruguay as a nation, could only be achieved and explained by the sum of purposive actions by individuals at the micro level of analysis. In this ideological model, “individual persons acting in a real world are placed at the center of things and are to be valued and empowered by themselves.” While colonial society was stereotypically characterized by subjection, inaction and immobility, the new political association was a proactive participant in the Western universalistic telos. Immersed in an ideological model rooted in individual rational action, modern society was what Jepperson and Meyer called a “modifiable system, with a strong individual as its bottom-line element.”¹⁶¹ Thus the *actor* of modern society was no mundane person, but someone with more articulated and rationalized purposes. When compared with the natural freedom of the savage, the civilized citizens of modern society were morally legitimated by their (alleged) stronger internal control system, a personal feature that was often attributed to their education. As a rational actor, the well-educated and politically conscious citizen was able to recognize his legitimate rights and interests; he was entitled to make demands, and was also expected to responsibly represent himself before others.¹⁶² In other words, the emancipated individual was entitled to “speak for himself,” and not through the voice of some patronizing figure of authority. The *agency* of the modern individual was no random intervention in the environment; it was purposive action, or as Echeverría would perhaps put it, it was the responsible and cultivated

¹⁶¹ Jepperson et. al, “Analytical Individualism,” 273, 276, 282-283.

¹⁶² John Meyer, “World Society, Institutional Theories, and the Actor,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 3.

exercise of man's physical and intellectual faculties.¹⁶³ Rather than passively shaped by history and environment, the emancipated citizen should be driven by choice, purposes and ideas, and thus the enlightened republic should furnish its future citizens with the material and intellectual resources they needed to achieve their individual and collective emancipation. Citizens should be prepared to act upon the world as rational agents; they should overcome their Spanish colonial heritage by converting the national community and themselves into progress-oriented actors.¹⁶⁴

Using the concept of the individual, I am not speaking of the empirical sample of mankind as found in all collectivities and cultures, but of the moral being that carries the values of a modern ideology. It is only where the individual is a paramount value that we may identify the existence of modern individualism.¹⁶⁵ After receiving that ex-godly agency, the modern individual must strive for godlikeness. The agency of the emancipated modern man is derived from much older religious ideas, from conceptions of natural and social orders as operating under universal principles within reach of human

¹⁶³ Legitimate actorhood was indeed restricted to a handful of individuals, mostly upper- and middle-class males of European ancestry, but the pool of socially legitimated actors would gradually expand to incorporate broader sectors of society, eventually embracing the whole of the nation in the twentieth century. Far from undermining modernity's ideological project, the condemnation of past privileges and exclusions and the political struggle to ascribe legitimate actorhood to the whole of society tended to reinforce the legitimacy and the diffusion of modernity's cultural constructs. The notable exception to full actorhood are children, who are only considered agents *in potential*.

¹⁶⁴ In the *realist* understanding of agency, actorhood is an innate, unscripted, and universal feature of all human beings. In Jepperson and Meyer's phenomenological model, however, modern actors are constructed entities, playing roles in the institutional environment that operates as "a cultural or meaning system, ... constructing agency, identity, and activity." Unfortunately, individual actors are still seen as real entities, and "the implications of the idea that individuality is a legal and religious and cultural myth structure much more than a natural social reality still remain poorly developed." Meyer, "World Society," 3-5. John Meyer, "Society without Culture: A Nineteenth-Century Legacy," in *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Francisco Ramirez (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 199. Jepperson et. al. "Analytical Individualism," 101.

¹⁶⁵ Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, 25.

understanding (science), and from “notions of the human individual (rather than corporate bodies) as bearing natural rights and competences.” It is difficult to date with precision the exact moment when the sovereignty of God had been devolved to worldly society, but it is clear that the shift had already happened by the time Uruguay had become independent, since earthly actorhood had been mostly transferred to the citizenry, to the Orientales, a people conceived as a historical and collective entity, and as a political association of formally equal and emancipated individuals. Whereas authority and agency were once trusted to transcendental powers or their representatives on earth (such as the Church and the Monarchy), a long-term process of devolution redistributed legitimate actorhood to temporal states, organizations, and individuals. The transference of the sacred from Christianity to worldly society involved the remarkable sacralization of the individual, at once empowering citizens and nation states at the expense of rival corporate bodies, traditional “organic” communities, and premodern conceptions of the self, and that not rarely in a violent and authoritarian process.¹⁶⁶

Perhaps the closest equivalent to the German concept of *Bildung* in Spanish is *formación*, but this term rarely ever appears in the examined sources.¹⁶⁷ Early modern Uruguayans occasionally employed the term *cultivar* among other agricultural analogies, but their most frequent words regarding the desired effects of education on the individual were *adelantar*, *mejorar* and *perfeccionar* (to advance, to improve, and to perfect), verbs which denote proactive improvement. Conversely, a common antonym was *atrasar* (to

¹⁶⁶ Meyer, “World Society,” 7-8, 15.

¹⁶⁷ The proper translation is, of course, *educación*, but *formación* better conveys the meaning of maturing, development, shaping and modeling, which are essential to the German original.

delay), although the most recurrent negative term was *abandonar* (to abandon), which entails inaction or neglect. Truth be told, schools had been instructing Catholics on the care of the body and the soul since the early days of the Jesuits, at a time when education was meant to prepare the earthly individual to salvation in the afterlife.¹⁶⁸ In early modern Uruguay, however, the pedagogical intention was to enhance the citizen's physical and intellectual faculties toward earthly actorhood. As a matter of fact, all social actors involved with public education were conceived as legitimate agents and targets of *mejoramientos*. Students should *perfect* themselves through education; teachers should *improve* their teaching methods; the state should work for the general *advancement* of public education; their combined collective action assisted the progress-oriented nation on its march toward worldly salvation.¹⁶⁹ Due to the nature of the available sources, the words *mejorar*, *adelantar*, and *perfeccionar* most often emerge in official reports prepared by the Juntas. In February 1834, the Junta of Soriano was happy to inform that its main school was approaching “a remarkable degree of *perfection*,” whereas the establishment of Mercedes was still “susceptible to many *improvements*.”¹⁷⁰ In July 1836, the Junta of Paysandú attributed “this *perfection*, these *improvements*” in the teaching of

¹⁶⁸ Alejandra Contreras Gutiérrez, “La enseñanza jesuita en Chile colonial: sus colegios, universidades y una aproximación a sus métodos y contenidos,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 16, n. 22 (January-June 2014): 45.

¹⁶⁹ “La escuela elemental nace, pues, con un sentido misional: viene a redimir a los hombres de su doble pecado histórico: la ignorancia, miseria moral y la sumisión, miseria política.” Elisabetta Pagliarulo, “Juana Paula Manso (1819-1875). Presencia Femenina Indiscutible en la Educación y en la Cultura Argentina del Siglo XIX, con Proyección Americana,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 13, n. 17 (July-December 2011): 25.

¹⁷⁰ AGN, AA, Box 853, Folder 6.

reading and writing “to the capacity and dedication of the teacher.”¹⁷¹ In October 1832, the Junta of Canelones had just inspected the school of San Juan Bautista, which was in “a notable state of *abandonment*.” The inspection had failed to recognize “in the boys any *improvement* due to the ineptitude of the teacher.” Years later, in February 1837, the same Junta alerted that the teacher’s extensive absence from the local school for girls had caused “much delay in the students,” resulting in “an evident regression in the knowledge they have once acquired.”¹⁷² The local governments frequently blamed teachers for the schools’ lack of progress, but also subtly complained about the negligence of central-state authorities. Thus, in April 1836, the Education Commission of San Carlos painfully witnessed “a gathering of one-hundred girls who could have made great *progresses* under the direction of a worthy teacher,” but were unfortunately “*delayed* in their *advancement*,” due to the “shortage of school materials which are indispensable to the execution of [classroom] activities with method and good order.”¹⁷³

The examined sources rarely give voice to parents with children in school, but an isolated case comes from the village of San Juan Bautista, Department of Canelones. In August 1837, several parents offered testimonies on behalf of Custodio Echagüe, a public school teacher who had been recently replaced against the will of the *vecindario*. The parents employed an identical vocabulary of advancement and improvement, evidence that the ideals of individual cultivation were not circumscribed to the state bureaucracy. Thus Agustín Mechozo, “vecino of the village of San Juan Bautista,” certified Echagüe’s

¹⁷¹ AGN, AA, Box 886, Folder 7.

¹⁷² AGN, AA, Box 833A, Folder 8; Box 894.

¹⁷³ AGN, AA, Box 883, Folder 12.

“flawless honored conduct, and concerning his school performance, I found him always committed to his duties . . . , to which I own the *advancement* of my son, who today significantly *delays* under the direction of the current teacher.” Mechozo was not alone, because Juan Carrera had “sufficient evidence of the *advancement* of my son, who is still at a tender age,” and whose educational progress he “could not attribute to any other cause rather than the effort and capability of his teacher.”¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

As an ideological model, modern society is by and large identified with the nation-state. The basic units of society are, most prominently, the individuals who live within the territorial borders of that political sovereignty. Modern society is accordingly conceived as an association or partnership of such relatively autonomous individuals, who in turn organize themselves in interest groups, firms, families, and varied associational and communal arrangements, all embedded in a set of multiple interdependent institutions, such as an economy and a political system that links them to the state.¹⁷⁵ Modern society is a cultural project embedded in the nineteenth-century consensus known as the theory of progress, which entails the belief that history has a meaning and a purpose, and that “we are going from a less good social world toward a better one.”¹⁷⁶ Collective and individual progress must be scientifically explained, and put under control of rational human action, which in Latin America generally means

¹⁷⁴ AGN, AA, Box 899A.

¹⁷⁵ Meyer, “Society without Culture,” 193-195.

¹⁷⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, “Should we Unthink the Nineteenth Century?,” in *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Francisco Ramirez, 187.

submitting social development to the direction of dedicated state agencies. The rapid expansion of governmental power and intervention in social life is an outcome of the doctrines of progress and the ideological emphasis on national success in a world system of competing nations.¹⁷⁷ Nineteenth-century-style liberalism conceives collective progress as the result of individual human action, under the assumption that there is an ascendent continuity between the enhancement of the smaller components of society and the improvement of the whole. Hence, collective progress begins with the advancement of society's most fundamental unit, the individual, the locus of social value and competence, and a legitimate target of national policies of development.¹⁷⁸

Whereas the conception of society presented in the previous paragraph is a cultural construction of modernity, present-day historians all too often employ nineteenth-century cultural constructs as natural categories. Ideologically charged terms like *society* and *individual* are stripped of their historicity, and artificially detached from the cultural settings and contexts that generated them. Missing, in this case, is an analysis of modern "society itself as a cultural system, with its institutions and functions as cultural products and with its individual and associational elements as culturally constructed."¹⁷⁹ Thus, if this chapter presents nineteenth-century Uruguay as a stereotypical modern society, it is not because that country perfectly conformed to the models of modernity, but because a significant and influential portion of its inhabitants

¹⁷⁷ Boli, and Meyer, "The Ideology of Childhood and the State," 799.

¹⁷⁸ Wallerstein, "Should we Unthink the Nineteenth Century?," 187-189; Boli et al., "Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education," 150, 153.

¹⁷⁹ Meyer, "Society without Culture," 195.

conceived themselves as active participants in a progress-oriented national endeavor. State officials defined the postcolonial collectivity as a free association of citizens; they consciously engaged in various nation-building projects, and therefore pushed local institutions toward the adoption of universalistic forms. It is no surprise that the newly created republic inaugurated a new educational system, in the belief that the cultivation of each individual citizen would result in the gradual improvement of the national community as a whole.

The ideologues of modern society, after enthusiastically promoting the values of individual cultivation, emancipation, agency and formal equality, would then routinely walk the streets of Montevideo among slaves, numerous illiterate compatriots, and hordes of recently disembarked immigrants who were often just barely fluent in the Spanish language. After all the optimism of the 1830s, there was still a considerable gap between the heaven on earth promised by independence and what society at the Banda Oriental actually was. Before the end of the decade, the country would be dragged into civil war, a prolonged feud that would soon merge with the neighboring Argentinean conflict among Federales and Unitarios, culminating in the Great Siege of Montevideo (1843-1851). Though public schools did not entirely disappear, Uruguay's incipient public education system was severely compromised. It is however telling that Echeverría published his *Manual de Enseñanza* in 1846 as an exile in the sieged city. At the time of its first edition, the textbook had preserved the progress-oriented optimism of the early postcolonial period. Like other liberals of his time, Echeverría passionately believed in a future better

world, and in the promise of social and individual emancipation through formal education.

If schools contributed to the consolidation of a “new order,” than that order entailed the formation of a progress-oriented society. Thus I have not described the institutional framework and origins of modern society as a political project aimed at the formation of a new republican order, but as sociocultural phenomenon linked to the emergence of modernity. The new collectivity conceived itself as a historical entity, one engaged in a mission of earthly salvation, in the struggle to reduce the gap between imperfect world realities (perceived as colonial continuities) and the idealized models of modernity. It is easy for us in the twentieth-first century to dismiss early modern Orientales after pointing out the evident contradictions between what their ideology projected and what their public schools actually achieved. However, we may better understand these discrepancies and apparent failures vis-à-vis the increasing legitimacy of formal schooling once we recognize the modern ideology as a system of beliefs. As a devolved form of Christianity, modernity advances its own models and ideals. For the sake of comparison, one could argue that the Church will never achieve its most fundamental goal, which is saving the soul of every single human being on earth. Moreover, the Christian will surely fail to emulate the perfect lives of Jesus, Mary and the saints, because sin is a common occurrence among human beings. Yet, despite all its perceived failures, Christianity somehow managed to perpetuate itself for over two thousand years. Meyer’s theory of decoupling suggests that modern actor identities are

also “statements about what should happen, but will probably not happen.”¹⁸⁰

Echeverría’s utopian future of formal equality, emancipated citizenry, and heaven on earth did not have to happen in order to justify modern schooling. Rather than undermining the cultural construction of modern society and respective educational system, the perception of failure actually reinforces the demand for increasing social action. The struggle to reduce the distance between idealized models and imperfect realities is, as it turns out, an essential component of the Western religion, both in its Christian and secularized forms.

The often mutually contradictory ideals of universalism, egalitarianism, and individualism are also essential to the moral imperative of modern schooling, even if they only weakly relate to the real world.¹⁸¹ We know children’s home environment, social background, and inherited educational capital play decisive roles in future educational achievement. At least since Bourdieu and Passeron originally published the *Reproduction in Education* in 1970, we recognize mass schooling has limited effects in reducing social inequality. Quite the opposite, modern educational systems are just as likely to reproduce privilege than to promote genuine egalitarian meritocracy. The ideals of modernity are nonetheless a blueprint for the construction of a new world; they are religious beliefs in a utopian future that does not have to happen. Whether the child indeed interiorizes the inculcated values of modernity or not, formal schooling still operates as an extended initiation rite that creates a new moral being in a man, or as Luciano Mendes de Faria had

¹⁸⁰ Meyer, “World Society,” 14.

¹⁸¹ Boli, “New Citizens for a New Society,” 47-48.

put it, “schooling invokes, in a more direct manner, the act or effect of making people become ‘schooled’.”¹⁸² Only those who attend school can become “schooled” and thereby ascend to the status of a full member of modern society, “just as any boy in a tribal society who does not undergo the manhood ritual cannot leave childhood.”¹⁸³ As the principles of universal and compulsory formal education take over, children are obliged to attend schools, to the point that nothing else is required of them.

The holy mission of earthly salvation finds in the modern individual its most fundamental unit of social action. In the modern system of beliefs, humans have acquired the responsibility to intervene, modify and, presumably, improve society and themselves. Modern individuals have the moral duty to reduce the gap between their idealized models and the imperfect world realities that surround them; they have the duty to improve their selves (their “faculties”) and their nation, and by doing so they participate in the universalistic historical narrative of the modern Western world.¹⁸⁴ The nation-state is in turn responsible for the coordination and enhancement of the agentic capabilities of its associated members, advancing policies of socioeconomic development that embrace its territory and population.¹⁸⁵ Individuals, collectivities, and organizations have

¹⁸² Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and Marcus Vinícius Fonseca, “Political culture, schooling and subaltern groups in the Brazilian Empire (1822–1850),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 528.

¹⁸³ Boli, “New Citizens for a New Society,” 49-50.

¹⁸⁴ “The modern individual carries a little piece of ex-godly agency, and has a little role in society’s mission to act in history. The properly agentic actor is always partly an agent of the broader historical telos of the modern system, and its postures reveal this telos.” Jepperson, “Analytical Individualism,” 112.

¹⁸⁵ Jepperson, “Analytical Individualism,” 105.

consequently become instrumentalized vehicles of worldly salvation, as modern notions of progress, justice and morality devise human representations of heaven on earth.¹⁸⁶

We may better understand the spread of nineteenth-century social order if we think of it as a modern system of beliefs. The Western ideological model greatly transcends “money and power;” it is essentially a cultural project built upon individual-level social realism, as it promotes the expansive cultural construction of modern individuals as basic units of society.¹⁸⁷ The actors of modern society, themselves products of modern educational systems, are agents for larger realities, imagined communities, and historical processes; they are monads of a larger cultural project that celebrates ideals of mobilized agency and sweeping collective action.¹⁸⁸ As stated by Jepperson and Meyer, “modern social participants wear masks, too, now carrying the devolved authority of a high god. The modern mask is actorhood itself, and in wearing it modern participants acquire their agentic authority for themselves, each other, and the moral (and natural) universe. They become agents for themselves, true, but under the condition that they are also agents for and under constructed rationalized and universalistic standards.”¹⁸⁹

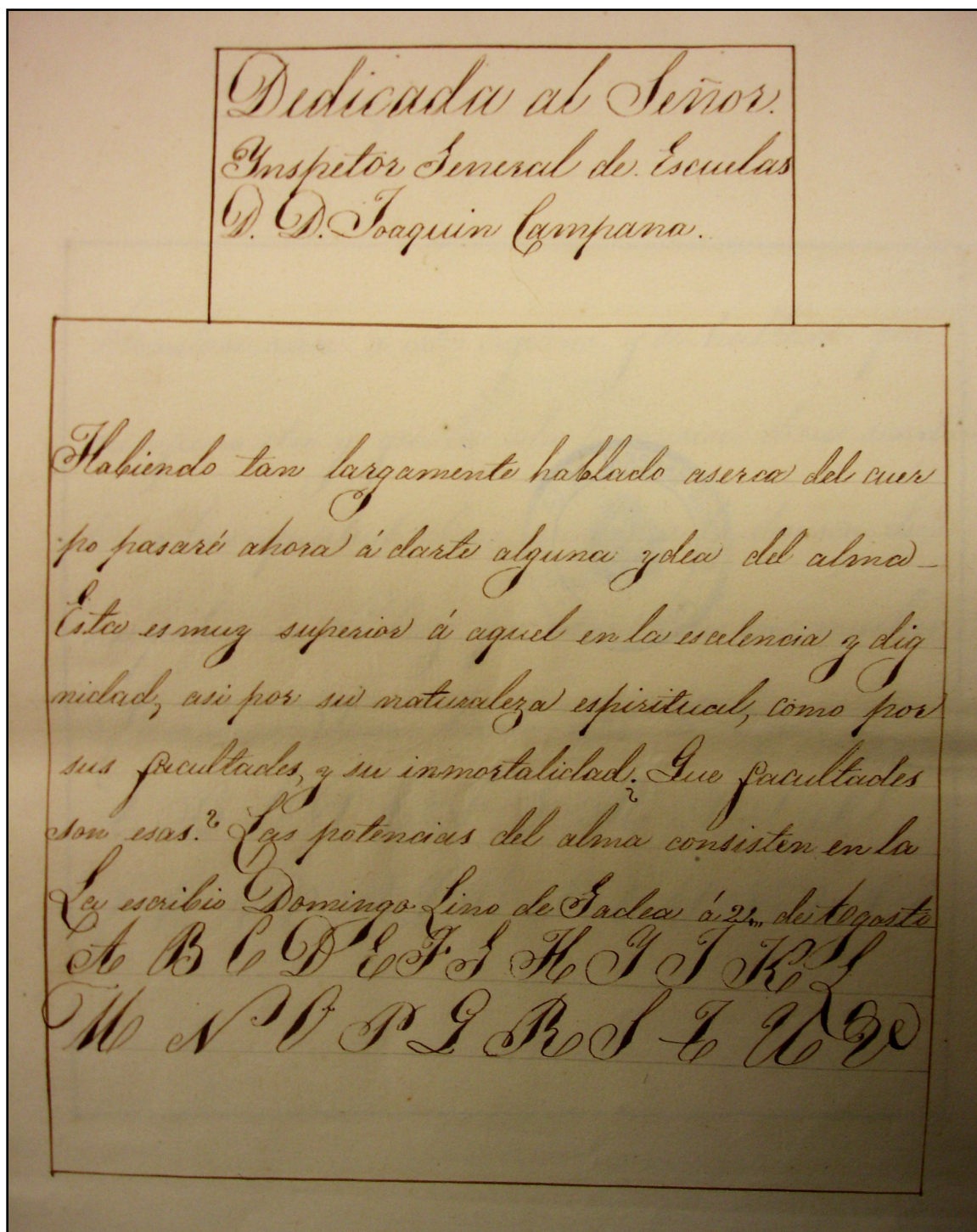
¹⁸⁶ Jepperson, “Analytical Individualism,” 101-103.

¹⁸⁷ Meyer, “Society without Culture,” 200; Jepperson, “Analytical Individualism,” 101.

¹⁸⁸ “‘Actors’ are agents for larger realities and larger imagined truths: they are in substantial part monads of a larger cultural project. Accordingly, they celebrate ideals of mobilized agency, and enter into the sweeping collective action that is distinctive to modern society.” Jepperson, “Analytical Individualism,” 110.

¹⁸⁹ John Meyer, and Ronald Jepperson, “The ‘Actors’ of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency,” *Sociological Theory* 18, n. 1 (2000): 116-117.

Figure 1.1 - Handwriting exercise by Domingo Lino de Gadea, Soriano, August 1833.



Source: AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

Chapter 2

Teaching, Learning and Evaluating: the Lancasterian System

Placing advanced students in charge of beginners was an old pedagogical practice. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster would nonetheless claim authorship of the monitorial system, which they respectively implemented in Madras (India) and London, starting in the late eighteenth century. Over the course of their careers, the two British rivals would produce an increasingly articulated and elaborated system of pedagogical and organizational rules. Lancaster's systematization of the method was intentionally designed for reproduction and export, so that in a relatively short period of time schools modeled after his manuals would emerge in countries as distant and diverse as Russia, Australia and Haiti.¹ Disembarking in the Rio de la Plata in the late 1810s, the Lancasterian promise of a low-cost school capable of teaching hundreds of students at once appealed to high-ranking political authorities, educational entrepreneurs, and teachers alike. The method was distinctively associated with the values of modern society, because it facilitated the fast teaching of reading and writing, the citizen's most essential scholarly skills. In Uruguay, the ruling elites were particularly receptive to Lancaster's standardizing methods, techniques, pedagogical materials and schoolrooms,

¹ Andrew Bell developed his method towards 1790 in Madras, while Joseph Lancaster had been experimenting with the monitorial system since 1798 in London. Their first manuals were respectively published in 1797 and 1803. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Pluralizing Meanings: The Monitorial System of Education in Latin America in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6, (December 2005): 650.

which they came to associate with universal education, formal equality, meritocracy, and progress.

The obsession with method had taken hold of early nineteenth-century Uruguayans. Private education advertisements in the press promoted the advantages of methodical teaching, and celebrated the instructors' attention to pedagogical efficiency and order. The piano teacher Ramon Guardiola understood method as "acting always with logic, from the known to the unknown."² Published in *El Indicador*, a fictional dialogue between a medical professor and his students defined method as "the art of acting according to the rules."³ According to *El Universal*, those who neglected methodical reading would be "delivered to ignorance, because the fast turning of pages and irregular drifting of subjects would prevent them from correctly forming their ideas."⁴ In his *Manual de Enseñanza*, Esteban Echeverría stressed the importance of systematized learning, because "a vicious method wastes the boy's time, creates unnecessary costs to his parents, delays him in his education, tires him, and transmits false or incomplete ideas."⁵ In the introduction to his *Reglamento Escolar*, the public school teacher Tomás Julian Ortiz highlighted the many advantages of the Lancasterian system over older pedagogical traditions. In his account, the monitorial methods were a step forward in

² *El Constitucional*, n. 105, June 6, 1839.

³ *El Indicador*, n. 283, June 8, 1832.

⁴ *El Universal*, n. 19, July 9, 1829.

⁵ Esteban Echeverría, *Manual de Enseñanza Moral para las Escuelas Primarias del Estado Oriental*, (Montevideo, 1873), 328.

terms of rationalization and efficiency.⁶ From the viewpoint of the state, the Lancasterian “scientific” approach was simply considered the best; it was a systematic and economical mechanism of instruction, which optimized pedagogical practices and increased educational productivity.⁷

Notwithstanding its many temporary setbacks, the monitorial system managed to survive the convoluted 1820s and 1830s. It was equally embraced by Luso-Brazilian collaborators and pro-emancipation rebels, and likewise promoted by *Blancos* and *Colorados*, the two political factions that subsequently alternated in power. The first Lancasterian school of the Banda Oriental was founded in Montevideo in 1821. At that time, the implementation of the method relied on the combined efforts of the provincial Luso-Brazilian government, the cabildo of Montevideo, the clergy, and, representing the emerging “civil society,” the *Sociedad Lancasteriana*. However, the method quickly lost its original philanthropic character, and was incorporated into official educational policy. The Provisional Government, organized in the town of Florida, confirmed the official status of the monitorial system in 1826. In the years following independence, state agents would espouse inventive bureaucratic instruments, such as controlling the supply and consumption of pedagogical materials, to enforce the nationwide adoption of the method. Absolute uniformity was indeed a distant goal, but the standardizing efforts of the state would nonetheless contribute to the dissemination of Lancasterian techniques and organizational rules.

⁶ *Reglamento Interno de Tomás Julian Ortiz, Método de Mutua Enseñanza*. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Archivo Administrativo (AA), Box 842A, Folder 12.

⁷ Mark Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 153.

This chapter examines the Uruguayan attempt to implement such an ambitious, if not utopian, public school system under Lancaster's pedagogical models. It begins with a condensed narrative of the diffusion of the monitorial system through Latin America, its arrival in the Banda Oriental, and initial implementation during Luso-Brazilian occupation. The focus in this chapter however lies on the 1830s, as the new republic pushed its incipient public school system toward greater pedagogical and organizational uniformity. I will thus examine the most important instruments of standardization available to central state agents, such as direct inspections, the supply of pedagogical materials, and the circulation of Lancasterian manuals. From the description of idealized models and well-intended policies, we move to concrete monitorial practice, assessing how the method was adapted to local classroom realities. Uruguayan teachers were highly selective in the use of the method, since its proper implementation was conditioned by factors beyond their control, namely student enrollment, attendance and dropout rates, schoolhouse infrastructure, and availability of Lancasterian materials. As a result, many teachers resorted to improvisation; they combined the English monitorial system with older Spanish traditions, devising hybrid pedagogical practices which defied the government's standardizing directives.

I will analyze the internal management of the monitorial school, focusing on its pedagogical practices and hierarchical structure. Children in the Lancasterian school were not passive recipients of a top-down education, since the method — and that was the whole point of the system — placed advanced students in charge of the novice. The assignment of students to various monitorial tasks at once reflected the school's ranking

system and the devised distribution of educational statuses. Children learned to read and write, but they also learned to manage themselves in an institution conceived as a small republic of boys. Classroom routine revolved around four basic subjects: catechism, mathematics, reading, and writing. The teaching of writing was certainly held in higher regard, for the students spent most of their time engaged in penmanship exercises. Yet Uruguayan children were not learning to write like their parents, since the Lancasterian school strived to replace the old Spanish script with the fashionable English round-hand (*letra inglesa*). What might at first appear as a frivolous aesthetic variation, actually reveals a much deeper institutional transformation with long-term consequences.⁸ The outmoded colonial script was associated with the methods and instruments of the old writing masters (the *peritos caligrafos*), whose teaching techniques had also been employed in colonial educational institutions. As “specialists” in the art of calligraphy, the writing masters excelled in various cursive styles, yet they were gradually displaced in the early nineteenth century by the “generalist” elementary school teacher. The new republic believed the English round-hand was an appropriate cursive style for all Uruguayan children, regardless of social background, and henceforth assimilated it into its standardizing directives.

State officials naturally inquired whether the school system was indeed producing the desired results. Apart from *in loco* inspections, the government resorted to other

⁸ The *letra inglesa* and some Lancasterian pedagogical practices outlasted the monitorial school, for Uruguayan students were still learning to write under similar methods by the early twentieth century, and still scribing with English letters. William Garret Acree, *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780-1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 106-108.

instruments of evaluation, such as public examinations. These ceremonies were ritualized performances of educational merit and achievement, but also pompous and festive events in which the *Orientales* reified their imagined national community. Public examinations were solemn rites of passage which formally introduced the child to the larger society, allowing the attending adults to recognize their nation's cross-generational continuity in the performing students. An alternative form of inspection was the examination of samples of students' handwriting. Known as *planas*, the samples were useful tools in the standardization and evaluation of elementary education. Teachers from all over the country forwarded collections of *planas* to the office of the General Director (Inspector) of the Schools, who used them to evaluate the learning progress of the students. Were schools really creating future citizens? Due to the strong legal and moral correlation between literacy and citizenship, the assessment of the students' handwriting quality was an inventive procedure to measure the educational system's pedagogical success.

If the national community was conceived as the sum of its citizens, then the Lancasterian classroom was certainly the sum of its students. The educational environment of the monitorial school intentionally submitted the child to a supervised process of individuation. The *individual* child was the institution's most fundamental unit and primary target of pedagogical intervention. The child was subjectified into a fixed identity, that of the *student*, and henceforth treated as an individual member of society in the making. The child started to become a student at the moment of enrollment, as the teacher collected the boy's or girl's personal information, including age, home address, and family background. Official record-keeping documents, such as the *Estado General*,

had not yet reached the level of detail of a present-day register or transcript, but Uruguayan teachers still meticulously recorded the students' educational progress, achievements, attendance, and disciplinary history. Admittedly, the students belonged to a distinctly identifiable social category, and they also worked in groups according to their Lancasterian levels of instruction (called *classes*). Nevertheless, the *individual* student was the primary object of data collection and evaluation, the receiver of rewards, and target of disciplinary action. Educational progress through the Lancasterian levels of instruction was entirely based on individual performance and merit, so that the students' personal achievements were always attributed to their presumed talent and dedication. Moreover, the student was encouraged to compete with his peers for educational distinction, and to climb the academic ladder in the monitorial rank system.

The Lancasterian System: from England to Uruguay

Latin American historiography has traditionally defined the history of the New World in terms of its bond with Europe. When assessing the processes by which liberal ideology spread over Latin America, previous generations of scholars pictured Europe as the world's primary center of cultural production and diffusion. Even when challenging Europe's evolutionary model taken to be universal, historians drifted into a debate about the inconsistencies which emerged between the borrowed "ideas out of place" and the region's "traditional" social structures — the Latin American academic expression of an old Christian dichotomy, the contrast between projected ideals and imperfect world realities. According to Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán Vera, the universalistic ideals

of liberal modernity were treated as foreign symbolic commodities produced by an intellectual market that had been conceived as totally external to Latin Americans. The inhabitants of the Rio de la Plata, for instance, would become more permeable to external influence after the Bourbon Reforms, later establishing direct contact with the northern European liberalism during the revolutionary era. The intellectual goods brought from England and France were politically charged, and endowed with hope and the promise of a better future.⁹ By the time Latin Americans got acquainted with the monitorial system, their sustained exposure to European liberalism had already conditioned the favorable reception of Lancaster's progress-oriented educational tools. From this perspective, the Latin American educational failures simply evinced the practical limitations of such imported novelties when applied to "traditional" local structures.

Caruso and Roldán however oppose the concept of Latin American modernity as a purely transplanted phenomenon. Conceived as a system of beliefs, modernity emerged from within an international circuit of cultural exchanges which had been under development since the early days of European expansion in the Atlantic. The historical genesis of mass schooling was also a transnational phenomenon which cannot be easily pinpointed to one particular country or continent. At least from an ideological and institutional perspective, the comparative history of European and Latin American educational systems shows that the latter were not necessarily lagging behind, a

⁹ Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Introduction: Avoiding the National, Assessing the Modern," in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 8-9.

conclusion supported by the neo-institutionalist research.¹⁰ Uruguay's major educational reform of 1876, for example, antedated its French equivalent, the Jules Ferry Laws, by five years. Even some Brazilian provinces legislated on compulsory schooling earlier than certain "core" centers of modernity, such as Great Britain. Lancasterian missionaries reported their surprise at the Latin American ideological commitment to a standardized and universal system of education, a conviction not necessarily shared by the English upper classes. Caruso and Roldán do not contest the core-periphery dynamics of nineteenth-century neocolonialism, conceding that a symbolic, economic, and even military hierarchy between the two continents had existed. Nevertheless, Latin Americans frequently overstated European civilizational achievement in order to legitimate local educational reforms, even when their idealized models had not been fully implemented in their countries of origin.¹¹ Montevideo's newspapers, for example, even described utopian foreign lands whose remarkable progress relied on the miraculous multiplication of Lancasterian schools. In February 1824, *El Publicista Mercantil* enumerated the state of Vermont's "27 cotton and woolen mills; 13 paper mills; 286 fulling machines; 250 carding machines; 380 gristmills; 380 physicians; 224 lawyers; 234 churches;" and the quite dubious "1575 schools under the system of Lancaster." The same newspaper later printed a short description of New York's public education system. The city's remarkable prosperity relied on its "numerous public schools," which had been "founded by the

¹⁰ Boli, John, Francisco Ramirez, and John Meyer, "Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education," *Comparative Education Review*, 29, n. 2 (May 1985): 147.

¹¹ Caruso, and Roldán, "Introduction," 17-18, 20-21, 26.

efforts of citizens.” The “educational system of Lancaster” was allegedly behind New York’s success, for it had been adopted “by all schools in this city.”¹²

But as much as Latin Americans internally legitimated the implementation of new pedagogical methods after idealized models projected on hyperreal foreign lands, their ideological predisposition toward mass schooling highlights the region’s engagement in a transnational phenomenon. Though we often think of the diffusion of pedagogical innovations in terms of production, transfer and reception, Roldán conceives the monitorial school as constituted in the very process of transnational transmission. The Lancasterian system had emerged along with the cultural construction of modern society, whose most fundamental components (the nation-state, the theory of progress, modern individualism and mass schooling) should not be taken as European final products, but instead “as a set of values, perceptions and ideals that were defined, proved and legitimated in the very relation of Europe with the rest of the world.”¹³ The Lancasterian system was more than a fashionable English import; it was a cosmopolitan educational project disseminated by cosmopolitan agents who developed and implemented that pedagogical method in the highly cosmopolitan cultural setting of the Atlantic World. Lancaster’s monitorial system was embedded in such a culture; it was loaded with the universalistic and expansionist character which invested its agents with two overlapping missions: converting the whole planet to Christianity, and civilizing foreign populations (modernity’s secularized Christian mission).

¹² *El Publicista Mercantil*, n. 24, January 30, 1824; n. 40, February 19, 1824.

¹³ Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Export as Import: James Thomson’s Civilizing Mission in South America, 1818-1825,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 234.

James Thomson, Lancaster's main agent for South America, was at once a member of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) and the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS). The two organizations worked in conjunction for the diffusion of the word of God and the promotion of Lancaster's monitorial system. The agents of the BFSS and BFBS were well-travelled individuals, who moved from town to town founding schools, forming auxiliary Lancasterian societies, selling bibles and pedagogical materials. Their primary goal was to establish in each visited locality a semi-autonomous and self-perpetuating educational system. Born in Scotland, Thomson was in Buenos Aires between 1818 and 1821, and briefly visited Montevideo in 1820; he later lived and worked in Santiago de Chile (1821-1822), Lima (1822-1824), Guayaquil (1824), Quito (1824), Bogotá (1825), and was twice in Mexico (1827-1830; 1842-1844). Thomson's strategy consisted in securing the favor of religious and political authorities, who would assist him in establishing a model monitorial school in each city. In the absence of a strong centralized government, Thomson also relied on the formation of auxiliary Lancasterian societies in order to guarantee the necessary political legitimacy and funding. The British agent distributed standardized instructions as to how these societies should be constituted, establishing a model for future expansion. With the assistance of governments, members of the clergy, and Lancasterian societies, Thomson hoped to create an enduring organizational structure capable of self-reproduction.¹⁴

Latin Americans were not passively copying European pedagogical models. As a matter of fact, Thomson was surprised by the South American enthusiastic commitment

¹⁴ Roldán, "Export as Import."

to the project of universal education. In the process of appropriation and implementation, Latin Americans subordinated the modern school to the ideas of nation-building and the formation of citizenship, thereby converting the monitorial system into a tool for the expansion of universal education.¹⁵ Whereas state-led education did not yet exist in Britain, Thomson noticed the growing engagement of Latin American governments, an institutional mobilization which transcended the European charity organizations he knew so well. The British monitorial system was originally designed as a cheap method for the instruction of the urban poor, but South Americans believed it could be used for the education of all children, regardless of social background.¹⁶ Moreover, a few countries such as Uruguay would legally impose the Lancasterian system upon all schools, even private and confessional ones. It was after encountering such widespread support for the ideal of standardized mass schooling that Thomson started to employ the notion of “universal education” in his correspondence with Europe. Roldán goes as far as suggesting that the “universality” of the monitorial system was developed in South America, and only then transmitted back to Britain by Thomson. The British agent was even contaminated by the Latin American spirit of revolution, something he could not have brought from Britain. In his letters, he often spoke of a revolt against the Spanish yoke, yet his pedagogical revolution was a moral one, a God-driven moral revolution.¹⁷

¹⁵ Roldán, “Export as Import,” 259-260.

¹⁶ Also in Brazil, the ruling elites intended to adopt the monitorial system for the education of the free population, including those of African ancestry. Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and José Gondra, “In the Name of Civilization: Compulsory Education and Cultural Politics in Brazil in the 19th Century,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 316.

¹⁷ Roldán, “Export as Import,” 250-251, 256.

While acknowledging the core-periphery dynamics of colonialism, a hierarchical relationship in which one side of the equation was presumedly civilizing the other, Roldán displaces the Eurocentric perspective of production, diffusion, and reception, by relocating the development of monitorial pedagogical practices to the transnational setting of cultural exchanges.¹⁸ Admittedly, the Lancasterian system had been originally designed in England, yet it developed its most modern, cosmopolitan and universalistic features in the process of transmission and internationalization. It was in Latin America, not in Britain, where Thomson began to associate mass education with the formation of citizens, and where he first conceived the monitorial system as a standardized pedagogical method for all social classes and genders.¹⁹

The peak of internationalization of the monitorial system occurred in the first half of the 1820s, just as it went into decline in Britain.²⁰ The method first gained momentum in South America after Thomson's arrival in Buenos Aires in 1818, with a second impulse after Joseph Lancaster's move to Caracas in 1824. It is however uncertain whether monitorial methods had been previously installed on the continent. Caruso refers only obliquely to a monitorial school in Uruguay towards 1815, but Jesualdo Sosa believed

¹⁸ Going in the direction of Roldán's conclusions, Jana Tschurenev argues that Bell's version of the system was developed in the context of British colonialism in India. Bell had transformed his teaching experience in Madras into a standardized model of education claiming universal adaptability in London, which in turn should be re-transmitted to the British colonial territories for re-implementation. Jana Tschurenev, "Diffusing useful knowledge: the monitorial system of education in Madras, London and Bengal, 1789–1840," *Paedagogica Historica* 44, n. 3, (June 2008): 259-260.

¹⁹ Roldán, "Export as Import," 271-272, 274-276.

²⁰ Roldán, "Export as Import," 264.

one might have existed in the country as early as 1811.²¹ Although the local press had previously noted its existence, the Lancasterian system of education would only arrive properly in the Rio de la Plata with Thomson, who founded the first Lancasterian school of Buenos Aires in 1819. By 1820, he had already become the city's new Director of the Schools, and had converted eight elementary schools to the method.²² Thomson was directly involved in the propagation of the system in Uruguay, Chile, Peru and Gran Colombia, yet he was part of a wider network of educational entrepreneurs who helped disseminate Lancasterian schools throughout the continent.²³

²¹ Caruso and Roldán, "Pluralizing Meanings," 645–654. In 1811, the priest Buenaventura Borrás expressed to the cabildo of Montevideo his intention of inaugurating a school in which the most advanced students would be in charge of the novice. There is however no indication of that teacher's knowledge of Lancaster in particular. Another monitorial school might have existed in Concepción del Uruguay around 1817, though Jesualdo Sosa argues that the school was installed on the Uruguayan side of the river. Jesualdo Sosa, "La Escuela Lancasteriana: Ensayo histórico-pedagógico de la Escuela Uruguaya durante la Dominación Luso-Brasileña (1817-1825), en especial del método Lancaster; acompañado de un Apéndice Documental," *Revista Histórica, Publicación del Museo Histórico Nacional* 20, n. 58-60 (1954): 28, 50-54.

²² Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "El impacto de las nuevas sociabilidades: Sociedad civil, recursividad comunicativa y cambio educativo en la Hispanoamérica postcolonial," *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação* 11, n. 2 (May-August 2011): 23-31.

²³ The first Lancasterian school of Mexico City was founded in 1819, while an earlier institution had existed in the Brazilian province of Minas Gerais since at least 1816. See Caruso and Roldán, "El impacto de las nuevas sociabilidades," 23-31. In Brazil, an Imperial decree from October 1827 proposed the creation of elementary schools under Lancasterian methods, but the country's first Normal School was only inaugurated in Rio de Janeiro in 1835. De Faria Filho, and Gondra, "In the Name of Civilization," 316-317. María Helena Camara Bastos, "Educação Pública e Independências na América Espanhola e Brasil: Experiências Lancasterianas no Século XIX," *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 14, n 18 (January-June, 2012): 87-89. According to Racine, around 1,000 students were enrolled in eleven monitorial schools in Haiti by January 1820. The Lancasterian experience did not last long, however, since King Christophe's successor, General Boyer, closed most establishments. Karen Racine, "Imported Englishness: Henry Christophe's Educational Programme in Haiti, 1806-1820," in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 224-225, 228. Simon Bolivar, who had met Lancaster in London, had already proposed creation of three Lancasterian Normal Schools in Gran Colombia when the government ordered all public establishments to adopt the monitorial system in 1821. Marcelo Caruso, "New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture: Community, Rituals and Meritocracy in Colombia Monitorial Schools, 1821-1842," in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 280-282.

Thomson visited Montevideo in 1820 for just a few weeks at a time when the Banda Oriental was under Luso-Brazilian control. The British agent had been exchanging letters with the influential priest Dámaso Larrañaga, who reportedly invited him to Montevideo. Fourteen years later, Thomson's visit was already considered as a major turning point in the Uruguayan history of education. In his 1834 *Ensayo*, the Normal School Teacher Juan Manuel de la Sota attributed the introduction of the Lancasterian system to the British "philanthropist" and to Larrañaga, Uruguay's "liberal and enlightened priest, and a great friend of education."²⁴ Once the monitorial system had secured the support of the local clergy and the cabildo, the Baron of Laguna personally approved the creation of Montevideo's first Lancasterian school. The establishment was then installed in the *Fuerte de Gobierno*, located in what is today the old quarter of the city, and was ready to open on October 12, 1821.²⁵ Orestes Araujo asserts that the private teacher Pedro Vidal had also embraced the monitorial system as early as 1823.²⁶

After Thomson's recommendation, the Banda Oriental hired its first Lancasterian instructor, the Spanish-born José Catalá y Codina. In common with other Lancasterian agents, Catalá had previously worked in different countries on both sides of the Atlantic.

²⁴ Juan Manuel de la Sota, "Ensayo sobre la Adopción del Método de Mutua Enseñanza para las Escuelas Públicas de Primera Instrucción en el Estado Oriental del Uruguay," Montevideo, 1834. The original manuscript is in Archivo General de la Nación (Argentina), Archivo Andrés Lamas, Legajo 48, 2651.

²⁵ Apart from Catalá, the complete staff of the school included the auxiliary teachers Francisco Calabuig (deceased in 1824) and Father Lázaro Gadea, who would eventually become General Director of the Schools, and later again a teacher in Las Piedras. In addition, there worked the *portero* Juan de Moya, later replaced by Antonio Facio. See Sosa, "La Escuela Lancasteriana," 146-150. Orestes Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya* (Montevideo: Imprenta 'El Siglo Ilustrado', 1911), 113-116, 121-122.

²⁶ Araujo, "Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya," 124.

Having emigrated to the United States in 1812, he later moved to Argentina, where he became Thomson's "first disciple in Buenos Aires."²⁷ As a European, the educational entrepreneur truly believed he had been called to civilize the Americas, and once compared his Lancasterian mission with other humanitarian enterprises, such as the diffusion of vaccination and the spread of the Christian faith.²⁸ Apart from teaching children to read and write, his task in Montevideo was to install the organizational structure necessary for the long-term reproduction of the new educational system, namely a model school and an affiliated Lancasterian society, which he founded on November 3, 1821.²⁹ Although the number of associated members quickly ascended to 127 after inauguration, it declined to 62 in the following year, falling to just four subscribers before

²⁷ De la Sota, "Ensayo," 1834. In the United States, Catalá met the future Governor of Buenos Aires Manuel Dorrego, with whom he left for Argentina. See Sosa, "La Escuela Lancasteriana," 126-127.

²⁸ *El Publicista Mercantil*, n. 44, February 24, 1824.

²⁹ Printed in 1822, the *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster* is a short document which regulated the Society's internal administration, establishing the role of its associated members and steering commission. The document provides little information on actual Lancasterian practices, alternatively focusing on the hierarchical and organizational structure which encompassed the commission, teachers and students. *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster*; (Montevideo: Imprenta de Perez, 1822), 1-15. Analogous Lancasterian societies existed in other countries, part of an associative movement developed in the early nineteenth century along with the emergence of "civil society." The Societies were "associations" in the modern sense of the word; they were political gatherings of individuals who associated themselves toward progress-oriented goals. With the notable exception of the Mexican *Compañía Lancasteriana*, established in 1822 and only closed in 1890, most Societies were ephemeral attempts to mobilize the ruling elites toward mass education. The Buenos Aires Lancasterian Society, founded in 1823, was soon dissolved, although the contemporary *Sociedad de Beneficencia* would have a lasting impact on Argentinean schooling. Caruso and Roldán, "El impacto de las nuevas sociabilidades," 17-20, 26, 36-40. Those associated with these Societies were cosmopolitan individuals who represented the political, religious, and economic power in society. In Minas Gerais, specially during the liberal years of the regency period (1831-1835), there was a marked rise of the associative movement. Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho, and Marçalaine Soares Inácio, "Civilise the people, build the nation: scientific and literary association and education in Minas Gerais (Brazil) at the beginning of the Brazilian empire," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, n. 1 (2013): 84-85.

closure in late 1824. The decline of the Lancasterian Society was certainly related to the general collapse of the school, which was closed after nearly four years of operation.³⁰

Notwithstanding his valuable contributions to the cause of public education, Catalá did not receive immediate recognition from the local provincial authorities. On the contrary, he was arrested in April 1825, for the Brazilian government was suspicious of his involvement with the rebels of the so-called *Cruzada Libertadora*.³¹ Those were not baseless allegations, because the Provisional Government of Florida later reinstated the Lancasterian agent, who could once again work on behalf of the method.³² Two decades later, the Spanish immigrant fondly recalled his early years at the Banda Oriental, “forming schools, instructing teachers under said system, and managing the educational system.” Catalá felt like an accomplished man, for he had once “introduced to this country the educational system of ... Lancaster.”³³ Writing in 1834, De la Sota was more skeptical of Catalá’s achievements, though he blamed the limited progress of the system during the 1820s on the country’s political instability and ensuing war of independence.³⁴

³⁰ The commission’s last meeting possibly happened on November 24, 1824. De la Sota however stated that Catalá was succeeded by José Calabuig, then Ventura Orta, and finally José Bergara. In case he is correct, the Lancasterian school of Montevideo would be still operational in 1829, although regular attendance was apparently limited to just 18 students. De la Sota, “Ensayo;” Araujo, “*Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*,” 117, 123-124; Sosa, “La Escuela Lancasteriana,” 125-126, 173-174, 186.

³¹ Araujo, “*Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*,” 123; Sosa, “La Escuela Lancasteriana,” 171.

³² Araujo, “*Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*,” 128.

³³ AGN, AA, Box 904.

³⁴ De la Sota, *Ensayo*.

The Lancasterian System: Implementation

The Provisional Government of Florida had already determined in February 1826 that all public elementary schools should conform to Lancasterian methods. Future legislation would repeatedly confirm the symbolic primacy of the monitorial system, going as far as compelling private institutions to adopt it. The state's official agents of standardization were the General Director (Inspector) of the Schools and the Normal School Teacher, though the local Juntas and Education Commissions should also contribute on the matter. State officials evaluated the implementation of Lancasterian methods through direct inspections, public examinations, and the evaluation of students' handwriting samples, but there were also more subtle and indirect means of enforcing regulation, such as controlling the consumption and supply of pedagogical materials. On the one hand, several schools indeed implemented the monitorial system, and there is plenty of evidence of its presence in the classroom. On the other hand, the ideal of an educational system unified under a single set of organizational and pedagogical rules clearly fell short of the target. The teachers' selective implementation resulted in hybrid pedagogical practices which combined monitorial techniques with older Spanish traditions. In addition, practical application was also conditioned, if not compromised, by poor infrastructure, chronic shortage of pedagogical supplies, disappointing progress in student enrollment, significant dropout rates, and limited training for teachers.

The Provisional Government of Florida issued its first decree on public education on February 9, 1826. The law reinstated Catalá as *Institutor y Director*, and ordered the inauguration of "elementary schools in all *pueblos* of the Province, [establishing them]

under the new and reputable system of mutual instruction.”³⁵ Two additional decrees simultaneously issued on May 16, 1827 created the Normal School, plus thirteen other elementary institutions “under the Lancasterian system.”³⁶ Nevertheless, the Florida decrees had limited practical effect, and De la Sota later identified the schools of Canelones, Maldonado, Durazno and Mercedes as the only operational ones by early 1829. Once Ignacio de Zufriategui had replaced Catalá as General Director in April 1829, the government expanded the system with the inauguration of the Normal School in Montevideo, plus new elementary schools in Cordón, Minas, Rocha, San Carlos, San Juan Bautista, San José, Rosario, Colonia, Soriano, Paysandú, Porongos, Melo, and Florida.³⁷ The Uruguayan National Archive (AGN) provides evidence for 39 different public schools that functioned during the 1830s (see figure 2.1), but the number includes some short-lived institutions, such as the Montevideo school for *libertas* and the Aguada school for girls, which were operational for no more than few months (the former in 1835, the latter in 1837). There were at least 24 to 29 public schools simultaneously working between 1833 and 1837, when the educational system reached some level of maturity and stability.³⁸ In April 1834, the General Inspector reported that the Uruguayan

³⁵ Prior to the Peace Treaty of 1828, the rebellion aimed at the incorporation of the Banda Oriental to the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata (Argentina). Thus the sources employed the term *Province* for the Banda Oriental, since full independence was not yet an overt goal of the rebellion. E. Armand Ugón et al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos, 1825-1930, Vol. 1 1825-1834* (Montevideo, 1930), 25-26.

³⁶ Armand Ugón et al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 78.

³⁷ De la Sota, “Ensayo.”

³⁸ The national budgets of the 1837-1839 period allocated funds for 33 elementary schools, yet I could not confirm in the sources if all these schools were indeed simultaneously operational. See Armand Ugón, et al. *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos, 1825-1930, Vol. 2 1835-1843* (Montevideo, 1930), 45-47, 89-112, 139, 212-234.

public school system had risen to 29 institutions, and “the educational method that they have followed, although not in all uniformly systematized, has been the mutual instruction.”³⁹ However, the civil war later compromised the continuity of many educational establishments, so that only 18 schools were still operational by early 1839. There was also an undetermined, albeit increasing, number of private institutions, specially in Montevideo and its immediate hinterland.⁴⁰

The Normal School of Montevideo was inaugurated on October 15, 1829, yet contrary to optimistic expectations, it was plagued with setbacks from the beginning. At first, it suffered in the repeated replacement of teachers, resulting in the swift succession of disparate pedagogical practices which diverted the school from the original intent of method standardization.⁴¹ The Junta of Montevideo diagnosed the problem in July 1833, and exhorted the Ministry of Government to limit all external influence on the school’s internal management as a precondition for stability and continuity. By external influence, the Junta meant Bernabé Torres, who was General Director at the time and was subsequently fired, thereby releasing De la Sota to finally implement the monitorial system. The Normal School would achieve some stability under De la Sota, who would keep his post until January 1839. Whereas De la Sota succeeded in restoring the monitorial system, he would utterly fail to fulfill the school’s primary purpose, that is, the

³⁹ AGN, AA, Box 855/A, Folder 10.

⁴⁰ According to De la Sota, there were perhaps two private schools in Montevideo in 1830, and at least seven in 1833. In addition, there were many private tutors, not to mention that some schools for girls accepted boys under seven years old. AGN, AA, Box 845A, Folder 12.

⁴¹ In just three years, the Normal School teachers and auxiliary instructors were: Juan Manuel Besnes e Irigoyen, Flumencio José de Muñoz, Candido de San Martín, Luciano Lira, and Juan Manuel de la Sota. Since 1829, the General Director or Inspector of the Schools post had been occupied by Catalá, Zufriategui, Lázaro Gadea, Bernabé Torres, and Joaquin Campana.

training of future teachers in Lancasterian methods. Thus, for most of the 1830s, the Normal School operated as a model elementary institution rather than a proper training facility.⁴² As a final problem, the school also suffered in the steady decline in student attendance. In just a few months after inauguration, enrollment had quickly ascended from a mere 18 to 357 students, an impressive figure for early modern Uruguay. However, poor management and fierce competition from private institutions culminated in its decline. In August 1834, the Normal School registry identified 119 enrolled students, though only 51 were regularly attending classes.

The Juntas and Education Commissions routinely forwarded varied reports and documents which confirm the partial or hybrid implementation of Lancasterian pedagogical practices and organizational rules in many schools of the Uruguayan countryside. The sources also provide more indirect evidence through the recurrent requests for certain pedagogical materials, such as writing slates and telegraphs, which were intimately associated with the monitorial school.⁴³ The official Estado General, for instance, often displayed the students' educational progress based on their respective "classes," since academic advancement in the Lancasterian system consisted in the passage through eight levels of instruction. Hence, the Estado General of Maldonado, prepared in December 1832, provides detailed information on 121 students, including their progress in six different subjects: reading, writing slates, writing on paper, arithmetic, grammar, and religious catechism. The teacher Juan Lopes Formoso had

⁴² Araujo shared this opinion. Araujo, "*Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*," 207.

⁴³ Not to be confused with the device invented by Samuel Morse, see footnote 95 for more information on Lancaster's telegraph.

ordered his pupils on a scale that somewhat corresponded to the Lancasterian progression of classes, ranging from level 1 (beginner) to 10 (advanced).⁴⁴ The Estado General of Mercedes, from February 1834, listed its 79 students in four different subjects, ordering the students' progress on a scale of 1 to 8. In the subject of Arithmetic, however, their progress level was simply described as "*sumar*," and "*quebrados*" (see figure 2.2).

The sources also confirm the continuity of traditional pedagogical practices in several schools, specially smaller ones, which clearly deviated from the state-sponsored system. Several factors influenced the schools' implementation or deviation from the method, including teachers' job security, which affected pedagogical continuity, and the students' enrollment, attendance, and dropout rates. The problem of irregular attendance was a challenge for the system's viability, since the method relied on the somewhat durable training of monitors, whose daily presence in the classroom was essential for the instruction of low-level pupils. In December 1837, Cerrito's small public school listed only nineteen schoolboys in its Estado General. The teacher José Garcia del Valle described the attendance of eleven students as "half" or "a third." In that case, daily attendance fluctuated from nineteen to eight; such figures certainly made the monitorial system inefficient, if not unnecessary. Unsurprisingly, the students' progress levels were not presented in the customary Lancasterian fashion. The boy Joaquin Viera, for instance,

⁴⁴ AGN, AA, Box 836/A, Folder 12; Box 853/A, Folder 12.

was learning “to multiply fractions,” while his reading skill level was described as “*corrido*.”⁴⁵

The formation of monitors was a sine qua non for the adequate functioning of the system.⁴⁶ Teachers split the students into small classes according to their levels of instruction; each group was put under the authority of a monitor, an advanced student who had been previously trained for the task. The rules of advancement in the school’s internal hierarchy and the relations of authority between the students reflected the inculcated values of formal equality, meritocracy, and individual achievement, so that the institution worked as a micro simulation of the idealized larger society. The monitorial role was therefore not a permanent position, for the slow, undisciplined and inefficient were surpassed by the fast-progressing, presumedly more talented, hard-working colleagues. In the continuous competition for educational distinction and status, the students were routinely demoted or promoted, punished or rewarded. Since individual progress varied from subject to subject, a monitor in writing was perhaps a regular pupil in mathematics. As a result, hierarchy and authority were fluid and diffused, and children constantly moved back and forth in the classroom as they advanced and transited from class to class. Rather than engaging in direct pedagogic action, the ideal teacher was a

⁴⁵ There were only 22 students in the school of Dolores in January 1834, thus its *Estado General* simply reported their educational progress in generic terms such as “poorly reading and writing,” “writes well in the slate,” or “knows the [multiplication] table, and helps during Mass.” AGN, AA, Box 905; Box 847A, Folder 12.

⁴⁶ The fundamental “principle of the method was the teaching of students by other students, under the supervision of a single master.” Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Order in the Classroom: The Spanish American Appropriation of the Monitorial System of Education,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, n. 6 (December 2005): 657-658.

supervisor whose authority and command flowed through the Lancasterian network of monitors, or *instructores* and *inspectores*, as they were called in Uruguay.

The training of monitors was so important, that it could even take place prior to the official opening of a school. While preparing the public institution of the Cordón for inauguration, Tomás Julian Ortiz declared that “the formation of monitors is the first step toward the opening of a school . . . , [thus] for days I have been committed to the instruction of monitors.”⁴⁷ Conversely, Mariano Elgueta, who had been hired in 1833 to teach in Dolores, Department of Soriano, later recalled his initial disappointment upon arrival. Among his twelve students, not a single one was capable of performing the role of “class instructor,” because those boys were “beings full of ignorance, who could not even syllabize.”⁴⁸ For the most part, the task of training monitors was integrated into the teacher’s daily routine, starting early in the morning before the arrival of the other students. In his 1833 project for a Reglamento Escolar, Ortiz described his early morning tasks and obligations. As a teacher, he should arrive half an hour early in order to assist his two inspectores in various assignments, such as cutting quills and refilling inkwells. Orienting monitors was the most important part of his job, because in there resided “the whole secret of this system of mutual instruction.”⁴⁹

The idealized Lancasterian classroom however contrasted with everyday reality.

The system relied on the availability of advanced students who were ready to perform

⁴⁷ AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 8.

⁴⁸ The *Salteño* Elgueta had been working in Dolores since 1833, yet this letter is from May 1834. AGN, AA, Box 885, Folder 8.

⁴⁹ AGN, AA, Box 842A, Folder 12.

monitorial roles, and on their capacity to teach and impose discipline on others. Early in the decade, the General Director Zufriategui had already warned that, although “acting like a teacher,” the monitor “does not cease to be a child,” and is likely to behave like one at the first opportunity.⁵⁰ Irregular attendance and high dropout rates further threatened teachers, who were always in need of reliable monitors. In May 1836, the teacher Dionisio Lopez reported that his most advanced students, those who were ready to assist him in the monitorial tasks, “are transferred by their parents to other activities,” possibly to work at home. Perhaps unintentionally, the parents undermined the most fundamental principle of the system, forcing the teacher to fill in as a monitor due to the shortage of qualified students.⁵¹

The shortage of monitors and the problem of discipline led some teachers to search for an extra helping hand elsewhere. The government repeatedly rejected requests for state-funded assistants, which only existed in the Normal School, yet the recurrent pleas reveal the practical shortcomings of the system. The practice was more common in public schools for girls, since a few teachers had placed their daughters in permanent monitorial roles or assistant positions, possibly with the intention of training them in the profession. Josefa Mendoza de Perez, for example, had originally worked in Buenos Aires “for more than five years with a daughter of hers, who in the later two [years] served as *monitora*.” The teacher moved to Paysandú in 1832, and while applying for the local public school position, she offered “one of her daughters to help her as *monitora*, *sin*

⁵⁰ AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 8.

⁵¹ AGN, AA, Box 884, Folder 6.

opción a sueldo.”⁵² First in Mercedes, later in Montevideo, the teacher Francisca Garcia de Perichon had also worked with her daughter Eugenia. In her failed attempt to persuade the Minister of Government to appoint Eugenia as a paid assistant, Garcia de Perichon explained “how complicated ... is the education of a girl,” and admitted that the increasing number of students “makes it impossible to attend them all as they require.”⁵³ Thus, notwithstanding the Lancasterian promise of simultaneously teaching hundreds of students at lower costs, the shortcomings of the system were made apparent in the larger schools. In April 1836, the teacher of San Carlos asked for a salary bonus “in order to pay for an assistant, because it is impossible for one person alone to attend such a growing number of students.”⁵⁴ Even Besnes e Irigoyen, who shared his responsibilities with an auxiliary teacher at the Normal School, complained about “the impossibility of attending 230 students with the aid of only one assistant.” State officials would nonetheless keep the faith in the system throughout the 1830s. Whereas the Junta of Montevideo had once admitted that “each boy requires the indispensable and special attention of the teacher for a given time,” it nonetheless reiterated its belief in the monitorial system, the “method universally recognized as the best.”⁵⁵

⁵² AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12.

⁵³ This was a renewed request, for the first attempt happened in February 1835. AGN, AA, Box 864, Folder 6; Box 872, Folder 10.

⁵⁴ AGN, Box 883, Folder 12.

⁵⁵ AGN, AA, Box 820, Folder 3; Box 821, Folder 8; Box 849/A, Folder 12.

The Lancasterian System: Standardization

The main agents of inspection were the Juntas and Education Commissions, whose members routinely visited the educational establishments in their jurisdictions. The Juntas were corporate entities constituted as auxiliary councils of locally elected *vecinos*, which therefore lacked the authority of a proper governmental agency. The Constitution of 1830 had given the Juntas the rather vague assignment to “watch over elementary education,” which in practice translated into routine inspections and reports to the central state in Montevideo.⁵⁶ Some public school teachers resented such intrusive inspections, and not rarely activated their civil servant status in order to challenge the limited authority of these councils. In March 1837, for instance, the teacher of San José vehemently protested against the local Junta, which had criticized him for not implementing the monitorial system. In a letter to Montevideo, the teacher reassured the General Inspector that “the method adopted in the school is not arbitrary,” and that he was fully aware of the existence of “a Normal School that serves as a standard to all others of the state.”⁵⁷ In addition, the Normal School Teacher and the General Director occasionally traveled throughout the country in order to inspect schools and instruct teachers in the method. In early 1831, the General Director Zufriategui received orders to prepare for his first “general inspection,” for the Ministry of Government required his

⁵⁶ The Education Commissions (EC) were sub-councils subordinated to the Juntas, and often constituted with the same elected members. There were also auxiliary ECs in the most populated Departments. These auxiliary councils existed in cities or villages of significant size which were not capitals of a Department. The Department of Montevideo, for example, had two ECs: one for the city proper, and an auxiliary one for the section of Extramuros. See article 126 in the *Constitución del la República Oriental del Uruguay* (1830). Armand Ugón, *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 261.

⁵⁷ AGN, AA, Box 895.

thorough assessment of the state of the schools, students, teachers, and pedagogical methods. Notwithstanding the small size of the Uruguayan territory, traveling in the countryside was no simple task, thus Zufriategui asked for four horses and “two soldiers to accompany him on such a long journey.” Although the Minister denied him the soldiers, the General Director departed for inspection on February 10.⁵⁸ In the following year, the new General Director Lázaro Gadea announced his intention to “personally inspect said establishments;” he would “leave for the countryside ... to fix these establishments, standardizing them.”⁵⁹ Two months later, Gadea returned with a detailed report. The two schools of Durazno, for example, were “lacking in everything,” namely “benches, writing slates, and everything else that is absolutely necessary.” In order to standardize elementary education, Gadea also “tried to instruct both teachers in the principles of the system of mutual instruction.”⁶⁰ Central state inspections would become rare during the second half of the 1830s, possibly due to the increasing political instability, but even during the civil war, it was still somewhat safe for central state agents to inspect schools in Montevideo and Canelones.⁶¹

The state-controlled supply of pedagogical materials, which was centralized by the Ministry of Government in Montevideo, was also integrated into the general policy of standardizing classroom practices and school management. Though the Juntas, Education Commissions and teachers occasionally bought their own materials in times of shortage,

⁵⁸ AGN, AA, Box 810, Folder 6.

⁵⁹ Document from June 1832. AGN, AA, Box 830A, Folders 10, 13.

⁶⁰ AGN, AA, Box 832, Folder 11.

⁶¹ In 1839, the General Inspector visited the school of the Cerrito. AGN, AA, Box 912.

their recurrent pleas for paper, ink, quills, alphabets, writing slates, and printed *lecciones*, show how public schools heavily relied on governmental supply. The sources provide little information on the origin of those materials. It is possible that some were locally manufactured, yet they were most likely imported from Europe and Buenos Aires. The government purchased such items in bulk, and usually stored them in Montevideo's Police Department or in the *Archivo General*. For most of the 1830s, the *Habilitado General* was responsible for that state-run task, but De la Sota purchased the rights over the distribution of pedagogical materials in 1834.⁶² Until his contract expired in 1835, the Normal School Teacher accumulated the function of *asentista*, which allowed him to profit from the distribution of pedagogical materials while overseeing the schools' adherence to Lancasterian methods through the consumption of those same materials.

Early modern Uruguayans perfectly understood the strong correlation between the availability of adequate pedagogical equipment, the effective implementation of Lancasterian methods, and the standardization of the whole educational system. De la Sota could tell just by examining the Normal School's inventory that his predecessor had not adopted the monitorial system, because his obsolete materials disclosed the unwanted continuity of an "old method."⁶³ Conversely, the Junta of Paysandú expounded in July 1836 that the educational achievements of a local teacher not only reflected his "exact knowledge of the mutual instruction system," but also the availability of a "complete set

⁶² AGN, AA, Box 877.

⁶³ De la Sota, "Ensayo."

of reading, writing, and arithmetic lessons.”⁶⁴ The method’s reliance on specific materials was not accidental. Lancaster’s teaching of writing was grounded on the intensive use of the writing slate, an instrument rarely employed in elementary education until then. The introduction of new teaching techniques resulted in the sale of writing slates which, unsurprisingly, Lancaster was eager to supply. Evidently, that strong reliance on specific pedagogical materials created new business opportunities for educational entrepreneurs. Although Lancaster and his agents portrayed themselves as well-intentioned philanthropists, Leopoldo Mesquita identifies the BFSS as an obvious for-profit organization. From the start, the diffusion of monitorial techniques in Latin America was intertwined with the selling of pedagogical materials. As agents of the BFBS and BFSS, Thomson and Catalá were also businessmen exploring new markets for the sale of Lancasterian equipment.⁶⁵

The Uruguayan sources employ the term *útiles* to describe a wide variety of items, such as quills, paper, benches, slates, brooms, and water barrels. The Juntas and Education Commissions were often told to purchase schools’ furniture and other durable goods in local markets, but the central state was responsible for the supply of most consumables. The General Director had already informed the Ministry of Government in December 1830 about the basic items the state should provide: “ink, paper, quills, writing

⁶⁴ At that time, the president of the Junta was none other than José Catalá y Codina, who was obviously familiar with the material requirements of the Lancasterian system and the standardization efforts of the state. Thus in order to comply with the governmental regulations, the Junta requested additional “dictation lessons for writing,” plus “two large boards with cursive alphabets for the boys to imitate.” AGN, AA, Box 886, Fox 7.

⁶⁵ Leopoldo Mesquita, “The Lancasterian monitorial system as an education industry with a logic of capitalist valorisation,” *Paedagogica Historica* 48, n. 5 (October 2012): 666-667.

slates, pencils, catechisms, grammar books.”⁶⁶ Consumption was calculated according to the number of students in school, and their estimated needs in the monitorial system. Thus when the General Inspector forwarded a request from the school of Las Vacas, Department of Colonia, in December 1831, he explained that the needed útiles accounted for “fifty students under the method of Lancaster.”⁶⁷

Between 1834 and 1835, De la Sota was the “*rematador de la provisión de útiles*,” therefore responsible for the nationwide distribution of pedagogical materials. The Normal School Teacher would naturally seize the opportunity to enforce the implementation of Lancasterian methods while regulating the provision of consumables. In order to streamline his mission, De la Sota requested the Juntas to forward him a monthly report on the schools’ number of students and needed materials (see figure 2.3).⁶⁸ A *Circular* issued in Mar 1835 later imposed more stringent rules on teachers for the request of additional items, and confirmed the order to regularly report on the schools’ number of students and inventory.⁶⁹ With that information at hand, De la Sota could tell that the establishment of Florida was “not established under the general plan of mutual instruction,” since one could notice “the significant expenses demanded by the old

⁶⁶ AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 8. According to Jorge Bralich, the cabildo of Montevideo also supplied its colonial school with paper, ink, and quills. Jorge Bralich, *Una Historia de la Educación en el Uruguay, del Padre Astete a las Computadoras* (Montevideo: Fundación de Cultura Universitaria, 1996), 10-12.

⁶⁷ In December 1831, the teacher of Las Vacas (alternatively known as Carmelo) was Juan Manuel de la Sota. AGN, AA, Box 821, Folders 5, 8; Box 834, Folder 12; Box 877.

⁶⁸ AGN, AA, Box 861/A, Folder 12.

⁶⁹ The explicit goal of the *Circular* was to “*metodizar de un modo más regular y económico la provisión de los útiles*.” AGN, AA, Box 865/A, Folder 8.

method which is still utilized in said school.”⁷⁰ Some elementary institutions however conformed to governmental regulations, including the school of Porongos, which in January 1834 was in desperate need of the “main items for mutual instruction.” After estimating Porongos’ needs, De la Sota furnished the school with “1 ream of paper; 80 *lapiceras*; 80 pencils; 2 bottles of ink; 24 writing slates; 6 inkwells; 100 quills; 12 *punteros*; 6 catechisms.”⁷¹

The supply of pedagogical materials however evinced a relationship of mutual obligations between central and local state agents. Consequently, the Ministry of Government could also be blamed for the poor implementation of Lancasterian methods, especially when it failed in its duty to supply schools with the much-needed materials. In March 1837, the Junta of Colonia recognized that the pedagogical method in one of its schools was lacking in uniformity. Yet the teacher was not alone at fault, for the shortage of “benches, writing slates, [and] models” contributed to the “lack of method that is observed, making it impractical ... to place the children in their respective [Lancasterian] classes.”⁷² Later in May 1837, the Junta of Paysandú reiterated its need for “writing slates, pencils, *lapiceros*, paper, quills and ink.” In addition, there were only ten benches with the corresponding desks for a total 127 enrolled students, forcing most girls to sit on the floor, “thus hindering the instruction and order of the system.”⁷³

⁷⁰ In January 1835, the General Inspector realized that too many teachers from the countryside had deviated from the Lancasterian method after examining their requests for school materials, which did not conform to the contract of the *asentista* (De la Sota). AGN, AA, Box 862A, Folder 11; Box 863/A, Folder 12.

⁷¹ AGN, AA, Box 863/A, Folder 12.

⁷² AGN, AA, Box 896.

⁷³ AGN, AA, Box 897.

The correct implementation of the Lancasterian system conditioned the school's material life as a whole, for it also demanded an appropriate infrastructure for the rationalized use of classroom space. Whenever possible, the classroom setup should be entirely adapted to monitorial methods, accommodating the necessary furniture and pedagogical materials, and allowing the students to move in order and safety. In the Lancasterian system, educational progress was individualized. Each individual student belonged to a different "class," which amounted to small groups of children in the same level of instruction. The child however progressed in each subject at a different pace, so that the student was required to move around the classroom as he or she switched classes. During writing lessons, children sat in rows on long benches and desks, yet they were required to move to their corresponding "circles" or "stations" once reading classes began. Movement in the classroom was highly rehearsed and synchronized, so that the transition from class to class was done with order and discipline. As a result, the size of the classroom determined the maximum number of students, and again conditioned the proper implementation of the method. The sources provide multiple examples of teachers and local state officials justifying their requests for larger classrooms after Lancasterian spatial demands. The village of Melo, Department of Cerro Largo, appealed for additional funds to rebuild its school in 1835, so that the "teacher might put the Lancasterian educational system into practice ... , which cannot be done in the small place it occupies today."⁷⁴ In March 1837, the Junta of Colonia complained that one of its schools was unsuited for its 38 students, hence the need for the construction of "a place

⁷⁴ AGN, AA, Box 873A, Folder 8.

with greater capacity and size in which one could establish the method of mutual instruction.”⁷⁵ Space limitations were not exclusive to public institutions, thus Montevideo’s Education Commission informed that “the observed method” in De Curel’s private school for girls “is adapted to the mutual order [Lancasterian], and to the narrowness of the place it occupies.”⁷⁶ The quality of the infrastructure indeed varied across the country. Most schoolrooms were small, making the implementation of the system rather difficult. The schoolhouse of Salto was “too small and narrow,” and received “no more light than what comes through two doors and a small window which is open to a dark alley.”⁷⁷ In Dolores, the schoolhouse had been built by the local vecinos, yet their voluntary contributions were only enough for “the construction of a house of straw,” which could perhaps accommodate 50 students.⁷⁸ By contrast, the schoolhouse of Cerdón had seven rooms; the largest one was 15 yards long (about 12.5 meters), with enough space for 125 students.⁷⁹

The Lancasterian Classroom: Theory and Practice

Over the years, Bell and Lancaster started writing increasingly abstract manuals that were further disconnected from their original contexts of pedagogical practice. When compared to earlier editions, later manuals came with fewer descriptions of Bell’s

⁷⁵ AGN, AA, Box 896.

⁷⁶ Letter from January 1834. AGN, AA, Box 843, Folder 12.

⁷⁷ AGN, AA, Box 886, Folder 7.

⁷⁸ Document from February 1834. AGN, AA, Box 853, Folder 6.

⁷⁹ AGN, AA, Box 836A, Folder 8.

concrete experience in India, and no references at all to Lancaster's work in London. In their push toward theorization, their manuals became standardizing models which could be easily transposed and applied to distant parts of the world. Lancaster described teacher-student interactions, classroom settings and lesson contents in a fixed reproducible manner, aiming at the spread of his system to a large number of countries. Thus anyone could "teach any group of children ... anywhere in the world with the monitorial method, and the effects will always be the same." The manuals contained "everything a teacher needed to know, from group psychology and teaching methods to school furniture and writing materials."⁸⁰ Later manuals also came with more illustrations, classroom maps for the placement of children, and detailed descriptions of materials, buildings, furniture, and varied technological apparatuses that bestowed upon the system an aura of rationalized efficiency.⁸¹ Everything in the classroom was thought to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, which descended from the teachers, through the monitors, and reached all students. As the manuals became more detached from the authors' personal experience, they shifted toward a general theory of education which portrayed the monitorial system as a universalistic instrument of individual emancipation and social improvement. Apart from working with copies of Lancasterian texts, Latin Americans also started selecting and adding their own ideas to the originals, effectively rewriting and producing local versions of such manuals. In Colombia, for example, a manual was published in 1826, covering "many aspects of school organization,

⁸⁰ About Lancasterian manuals, see Jana Tschurennev, "Diffusing useful knowledge," 260.

⁸¹ Patricia Crain, "Children of Media, Children as Media: Optical Telegraphs, Indian Pupils, and Joseph Lancaster's System of Cultural Replication," in *New Media (1740-1915)*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey Pingree (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003), 63-65.

architecture, schooltime regulations and detailed explanation of teaching techniques.”⁸²

In Uruguay, state officials and teachers repeatedly called for the distribution of standardizing manuals throughout the 1830s. Whereas some teachers were comfortable with the idea of being left alone, the recurring requests for *reglamentos* indicate the demand for the systematization of pedagogical practices. The General Inspector had already asked in January 1832 for “a practical manual and regulation for the internal management of the schools,” while later in November the General Director renewed the call for “a method which simplifies the forms, and instructs children without fatiguing their imagination.”⁸³ As a result, the state initially supported De la Sota’s project for a *manual de enseñanza*, one which the teacher presented to the Ministry of Government in May 1832. Regrettably, the AGN does not hold a copy of that document, though we may indirectly learn about its content through other sources. De la Sota forwarded to his superiors a list of referenced literature, which mainly consisted of publications by Lancaster and Bell, plus two Spanish works on the teaching of writing and the art of calligraphy.⁸⁴ In a separate letter from August 1833, De la Sota provided a list of contents, whose items covered “the object of the public schools; their management; the obligations of teachers, inspectors, [and] instructors ...; the schools’ working schedules; [students’] offenses and penalties; awards; school jury; vacations; examinations;

⁸² Caruso, “New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture,” 281, 284.

⁸³ AGN, AA, Box 818, Folder 7.

⁸⁴ De la Sota’s referenced authors were, apart from Bell and Lancaster, Guillermo Skinner, Torcuato Torio de la Riva, and Guillermo Athanasio Xaramillo.

interventions by the Juntas.”⁸⁵ In order to standardize the internal management of the schools, De la Sota recommended that all teachers should have five different registry books, which recorded the students’ personal information, educational progress, attendance, and the school’s expenses, inventory, and archive.⁸⁶ With the explicit goal to “methodize and standardize education,” the General Inspector approved in September 1833 what was then called the *Interior Regulations for Elementary Schools and Practical Manual*.⁸⁷ A later letter from the Ministry of Government alludes to a decree from November 1833, which ordered the implementation of the fabled statute. It is however uncertain whether De la Sota ever had the chance to impose his organizational rules and pedagogical practices on the entire country.⁸⁸ By 1834, the Normal School Teacher was still struggling to publish a *plan de enseñanza* (teaching plan) and *reglamento interno* (rules of procedure), as he appealed for the state to sponsor the manuals’ printing costs.⁸⁹ Despite governmental approval, there is, in fact, no evidence of the widespread

⁸⁵ AGN, AA, Box 845A, Folder 12.

⁸⁶ Record keeping was an essential part of the job, thus the teacher should write down all necessary information about his students. Apart from documenting their personal information, including home address and proof of vaccination, the teacher should also take note of their academic progress and past performances in monitorial roles. A third document took note of all visitors who came to the school, while the fourth registry was an accountancy book that took note of all fund entries and expenses.

⁸⁷ AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

⁸⁸ AGN, AA, Box 848, Folder 9.

⁸⁹ De la Sota believed that Catalá had never presented a Reglamento which could be distributed throughout the country. De la Sota. “Ensayo.” AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 11.

distribution or printing of such manuals and regulations.⁹⁰ We may nonetheless confirm that the reglamento was put into practice, “*por vía de ensayo*,” in the Departments of Montevideo and Canelones.⁹¹ In the absence of a nationwide set of organizational rules, provisory and locally adopted manuals abounded. In February 1838, the teacher Lucas Fernandez, who worked in Paysandú, complained about “the total lack of a school statute, [one that was] good and thorough, and sufficiently adequate to . . . determine with precision the obligations of parents, children, and teachers.” Fernandez had therefore prepared a provisory set of regulations for himself, yet he lacked the necessary authority and legitimacy to enforce his rules on parents and children.⁹²

The AGN is in possession of an alternative reglamento written by the teacher Tomás Julian Ortiz.⁹³ Though possibly turned down in favor of De la Sota’s project, we may assume that Ortiz managed his schools and taught his students while following the rules and practices he described in this document. Presented in May 1833, it is a 28 pages-long adaptation of the Lancasterian system of education, which mostly overlaps

⁹⁰ The archive sources from the second half of the 1830s confirm our suspicion that the Reglamento was neither printed nor distributed. When the Education Commission of Montevideo inquired about the “*plano del método lancasteriano*,” the Junta simply replied that, at least in its archive, “the stated plan does not exist.” The Commission’s request was then forwarded to the central state, yet the Archivo General replied that “in this office . . . the requested plan for a Lancasterian method does not exist.” Apparently, De la Sota’s Reglamento had already disappeared from governmental archives in the 1830s, which explains why the document is still missing today. That is not to say that the state had given up on producing a standardizing set of organizational rules and practices. In May 1838, the Junta of Montevideo reported the existence of a “project for a general reglamento for the schools,” which had been presented by Joaquin Requena. In January 1839, another decree entrusted Alejandro Chucarro with the “formation of a general plan of *enseñanza*.” AGN, AA, Box 861/A, Folder 12; Boxes 904, 907, 912.

⁹¹ AGN, AA, Box 838, Folder 10.

⁹² AGN, AA, Box 906.

⁹³ The title *Reglamento Interno de Tomás Julian Ortiz* was probably given by some archive bureaucrat. The author’s title was *Método de Mútua Enseñanza*. The document was most certainly handwritten by Ortiz, who also signed it in the end. AGN, AA, Box 842A, Folder 12.

with De la Sota's aforementioned list of contents. The *Reglamento Interno* focuses on the school's internal hierarchy, and on the roles and obligations of its main pedagogical agents (teachers, inspectors, instructors, and students). It also provides thorough descriptions of classroom activities that concerned the teaching of reading and writing, yet it pays little attention to mathematics, and completely ignores religious catechism. Lastly, the document offers a few notes on students' discipline, academic progress, and awards.

According to Ortiz, the children studied at the school for five hours a day, from Monday to Saturday. Classroom activities lasted for three hours in the morning, from 7:00 to 10:00, and for two additional hours in the afternoon, from 16:00 to 18:00. In the coldest and darkest months of the Southern Hemisphere, in between April 1 and October 31, classes started at 8:30 in the morning and at 15:00 in the afternoon. There is no information on the students' whereabouts at noon, whether they stayed at the school for lunch or temporarily returned to their homes.

Ortiz's immediate subordinates were his *writing* and *reading inspectors*, while each *instructor* was responsible for a particular Lancasterian "class." Inspectors and instructors were extensions of the teacher's authority; they were communication relays between the teacher and the regular students, therefore forbidden to issue any orders without his approval.⁹⁴ Classroom activities were kept under strict order and control, so that the children's movement was highly disciplined and synchronized. The inspectors arrived half an hour early in order to arrange the classroom setting, and to dispose the

⁹⁴ Patricia Crain, "Children of Media, Children as Media," 66, 70, 72.

arriving students in groups according to their levels of instruction. Inspectors then examined every single student, checking if they were “well groomed and properly dressed.” In possession of an attendance sheet, fifteen minutes before class, the two inspectors called the other students by their full names. Six minutes before the beginning of class, the inspector would command his subordinates to enter the classroom in order, according to their levels of instruction. Once all students were standing by their respective desks, they would receive a long sequence commands, starting with *enter benches, clean slates, and receive pens*. The children would then sit in silence as monitors distributed “brushes, pens, quills, and notebooks.” The inspector would then issue his ensuing commands with the words: *writing classes: take pens; last class: dictation*. Once the students had filled in three rows of writing on the slates, the inspector would first ring a bell, and then order: *instructors, correct*. At the end of correction, which should not last for more than a few minutes, the instructors were told to signal their superiors with a *telegraph*.⁹⁵ The inspector should then ask each individual instructor whether any student was ready to ascend to a superior class. In case of an affirmative answer, the inspector should first examine the student’s work, and then request the boy to read it out loud before the class; he should also take note of the student’s performance, and later pass that information to the teacher. After another ring of the bell, it was the teacher’s turn to

⁹⁵ Central to the Lancasterian system of communication was the *telegraph*, a wooden-framed square of four inches by three. There were at least six varieties, each one used to issue different commands to the class, such as S.S. for *show slates*. The use of the telegraph was illustrated in manuals, explaining teachers how to communicate with the students, and how the students’ bodies should respond to each command. Lancaster’s telegraph was inspired by “the system of optical or semaphore telegraphs that spread across Europe and parts of the United States in the 1790s and early 1800s,” mostly for military use in transmitting optical signals or messages across large distances.” Patricia Crain, “Children of Media, Children as Media,” 66, 70, 72.

inspect all writing exercises. At the end of the session, the inspector should write down the current stage of progress of every class. The reglamento does not provide specific commands for the different levels of instruction which required different materials, such as sandboxes for the very beginners, or quill and paper for the most advanced students.

Up to that point, the students were sitting in rows, working at a desk. Reading classes however took place in semicircles, in a separate portion of the room.

Consequently, the reading inspector's first command was: *reading instructors, leave benches: to your classes, march*, followed by *the entire school, leave benches: hands held behind your back, march*. The children then moved to their respective stations and reading boards. Reading practice was split into two sections. After the first command — *reading classes, give lesson* — students simply read whatever was written on the board; yet, after the ring of the bell, they should start reading “by heart” (*lean de memoria*). The obligations of the reading inspector mirrored those of his writing counterpart, that is, they should evaluate the students' performance, progress, and discipline. At the end of the day, the writing inspector commanded all students to clean their slates, and then organized the collection of all pedagogical materials. After the ring of the bell and the order *leave benches, to the right, march*, the students stood in line next to their desks. At that moment, the teacher addressed the entire classroom for a few minutes, providing the students with his final instructions before sending them back to their homes.

Ortiz's school was a small republic of boys, a model simulation of the idealized national community. Regardless of monitorial rank and family background, students were told to always address each other using the respectful and egalitarian pronoun *Usted*.

Moreover, the children enjoyed some limited self-governance, which was considered part of their education; they actively participated in the decision-making processes which led to academic advancement, to the distribution of awards, punishments, and the selection of students for monitorial posts. Regarding classroom discipline, Ortiz explained that a jury composed of seven students was responsible for imposing penalties on the offenders. In addition, Ortiz promoted the rotation of monitorial positions, encouraging the students to compete for educational distinction while correcting one another; thus the student who rectified the mistake of a colleague “will take his post.” Individual achievement was clearly identifiable in the classroom placement of students. The lower ranked children sat in the front rows, and in the left end of their benches. As a result, upward mobility implied in moving to the back rows, sitting on the right half of a bench, and eventually assuming a monitorial position. Ortiz regarded ascension in the school’s internal hierarchy as the most prestigious type of reward; it represented the institutional recognition of educational progress and individual achievement. Promotion implied in being released from the authority of someone else, as well as an opportunity to exercise legitimate power over a colleague; it denoted the acquisition of a socially recognized knowledge or skill, and the power to discipline and correct.⁹⁶

As in Uruguay, the Lancasterian school in Mexico was erected as an image of the republican system. According to Roldán, Mexican pedagogical manuals paid little

⁹⁶ Just like in the case of the *Castigos*, a board formed by the teacher and three students was responsible for formally issuing all awards. The board was called *Cuerpo Conservador del Mérito*. Additional distinctions were the writing of the children’s name in the *Registro de Premios*, and the issue of a *Carta de Felicitación* to their parents, which should be read out loud in front of the class. The inspectors who correctly performed their duties were also awarded with a *Carta de Felicitación*, yet theirs was also forwarded to the *Juez del Barrio* and to the General Director of the Schools.

attention to the mechanisms of vigilance and discipline, but underscored those of reward as a stimulus for meritocratic mobility. In the Lancasterian classroom, children were in continuous movement, earning prizes, and advancing in the monitorial ranking system. The principle of *emulation* oriented most pedagogical practices, as the Mexican school instilled in the students the moral impulse toward continuous improvement. The ideal of individual autonomy and emancipation was transmitted to the child through the spirit of competition, so that the student felt responsible for his personal achievements. Mexican pedagogical manuals deliberately promoted individualism while undermining the so-called “corporate spirit” of traditional society, understood as a heavy burden inherited from colonial times. But the student should also understand that his individual actions affected the larger community as a whole. As a result, the students were expected to internalize “the notion of service, and how their individual effort as monitors would result in the general good of the class under their control;” they should identify their personal improvement with the general progress of their school.⁹⁷

The Teaching of Writing

The History of Reading is a well established subfield of the New Cultural History, though comparatively little has been published about the history of writing.⁹⁸ The scholarship on the history of literacy has created two distinctive and competing worlds,

⁹⁷ Eugenia Roldán Vera, “The Monitorial System of Education and Civic Culture in Early Independent Mexico,” *Paedagogica Historica* 35, n.2 (1999): 300, 308-309, 311-314.

⁹⁸ Thornton was the first to identify the absence of handwriting in the New Cultural historiography. Tamara Thornton, *Handwriting in America, a Cultural History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), XI-XII, 5-6.

one of orality for the lower classes, and one of print culture for the elites.⁹⁹ There is little room for handwriting in this dichotomy. Writing is a physical and intellectual skill that is different from reading, and even relatively autonomous from oral and print cultures.

Centuries had passed since the invention of the printing press, but people all over the world were still writing by hand, including many in nineteenth-century Uruguay.

Reading's precedence over writing has been extended to the study of modern educational systems, which explains the high incidence of books and articles dedicated to the analysis of school reading materials.¹⁰⁰ With the notable exceptions of Tamara Thornton's

Handwriting in America, and Meri Clark's "Teaching writing in the Republic of

Colombia, 1800–1850," scholars have not done justice to the subject, and to the special attention the school has given to the teaching of writing.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Examples of studies on oral and written cultures in late colonial and nineteenth-century Uruguay are: J. Guillermo Milán, "Letra 'oscura' contra habla 'transparente': los valores de la palabra oral y la palabra escrita en el Montevideo colonial," in *Uruguay: imaginarios culturales*, ed. Hugo Achugar and Mabel Moraña (Montevideo: Editora Trilce, 2000), 67-94; William Garret Acree, *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780-1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Reading in Questions and Answers: The Catechism as an Educational Genre in Early Independent Spanish America," *Book History* 4 (2001): 17-48; Matthias vom Hau, "Unpacking the School: Textbooks, Teachers, and the Construction of Nationhood in Mexico, Argentina, and Peru," *Latin American Research Review* 44, n. 3 (2009): 127-153.; Gabriela Ossenbach, and Miguel Somosa, eds., *Los Manuales Escolares como Fuente para la Historia de la Educación en América Latina* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2000); Mirta Fernández, "El trabajo: su presencia en los textos oficiales para la enseñanza de la lectura en las escuelas públicas uruguayas (1927-1941)," in *Manuales escolares en España, Portugal y América Latina (siglos XIX y XX)*, ed. Jean-Louis Guereña (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2005), 289-304; Jens Hentschke, "Artiguista, White, Cosmopolitan and Educated: Constructions of Nationhood in Uruguayan Textbooks and Related Narratives, 1868–1915," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 44, n. 4 (2012): 733-764.; and Acree, *Everyday Reading*, 122-192.

¹⁰¹ Tamara Thornton, *Handwriting in America*. Meri L. Clark, "Teaching writing in the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 449–461.

The members of a collectivity often share a mother tongue, but the vocabulary choices and sentence constructions used in schools and universities are qualitatively different from the everyday speaking language. Drawn from the upper- and upper-middle class sectors of society and their aesthetic standards, scholarly language is generally identified with linguistic “correctness.” These standards are normalized by institutions such as the state and the schools. Teachers communicate in scholarly language with their pupils, who in turn must learn to reply in the same orderly fashion. In modern society, writing has authority over the oral word. Modern school systems therefore privilege the teaching of language skills to the point that mastery of scholarly language implies “speaking as you would write.” Student evaluation is centered on these skills, so that teachers have the standardized language in mind when measuring their pupils’ performance on oral and written examinations. The Uruguayan public school of the 1830s was no different. Early modern education encouraged the development of basic language competencies, stressing reading and writing above all other basic disciplines. Standardizing handwriting was more than enforcing an arbitrary compilation of grammar rules; the “art of calligraphy” applied to Uruguayan public schools was also an expression of certain cultural and aesthetic values.

Joseph Lancaster founded a school in London in 1798, offering reading and writing lessons to the children of the poor, a rather unusual proposition, since the two skills were hardly ever taught together. De la Sota was still praising that pedagogical innovation in 1834, because “the attractive prospect that the child could read and write simultaneously (which until then was not implemented in schools)” had likewise

appealed to Uruguayan teachers and governmental authorities.¹⁰² Yet the monitorial system elevated the teaching of writing to a whole new level. In the words of Leopoldo Mesquita, “a permanent action of writing took up almost the entire activity of the student,” for it “was the main medium of instruction, that is, the student instructed himself through the repetitive practice of writing.” Lancaster conceived writing practice as analogous to the industrial production line. In order to optimize classroom productivity, the teacher was to measure the students’ writing output, quantifying their mental and physical activity.¹⁰³

In Uruguay, the implementation of Lancaster’s teaching techniques however conflicted with the art of calligraphy of the traditional writing masters (*peritos caligrafos*), whose pedagogical methods and materials were once dominant in educational institutions. Whereas some of the old techniques were preserved in the postcolonial classroom, the state’s standardizing directives gradually displaced the writing masters in favor of modern schoolteachers, whose occupational identity was institutionally linked to the phenomenon of mass education. Nevertheless, in their struggle to standardize schools under a single set of organizational and pedagogical rules, state officials eventually settled down with a hybrid system which combined the Lancasterian writing slates and dictation exercises with the traditional calligraphy of the writing masters, the use of quill and paper, and the imitation of models (*muestras*).

¹⁰² Juan Manuel de la Sota, *Ensayo sobre la Adopción del Método de Mutua Enseñanza para las Escuelas Públicas de Primera Instrucción en el Estado Oriental del Uruguay* (Montevideo, 1834). Archivo General de la Nación (Argentina), Archivo Andrés Lamas, Legajo 48, 2651.

¹⁰³ Leopoldo Mesquita, “The Lancasterian monitorial system as an education industry with a logic of capitalist valorisation,” *Paedagogica Historica* 48, n. 5 (October 2012): 668-671.

Moreover, while several different handwriting styles were used in the past, the government unified public education under a single cursive style, the English round-hand (*letra inglesa*). What might at first appear as a frivolous aesthetic variation, actually reveals a much deeper institutional transformation.¹⁰⁴ Standardizing public education with the imposition of a nationwide unified handwriting style reflected the idealized individual that the state intended to reproduce: the homogenized citizen.

The Writing Masters, the Art of Calligraphy, and the English Round-Hand

The self-proclaimed “celebrated calligrapher” Julio Meyer announced his services to the general public in a series of five advertisements published in *El Universal* in 1829 and early 1830. Meyer had just arrived from Buenos Aires, but was determined to promote the “art of calligraphy” among Uruguayans. For those with no previous practice, his complete course would take sixty lessons. Students who were already familiar with the rudiments of calligraphy could opt for a shorter program of twenty-five classes. Meyer would introduce a modern handwriting style “to those accustomed to cursive and the quill, regardless of their imperfect and unreadable quality,” and promised to replace their poor handwriting with the “perfect English character.” His “method of universal calligraphy” was “so easy, fun and infallible that every single disciple, no matter how crude,” would master the new fashionable cursive at the end of the course. He invited the public to visit his shop in Montevideo, and find hand-cut quills for sale, each one adapted to the customer’s hand size. Those among the public who were still suspicious of Meyer’s

¹⁰⁴ The *letra inglesa* and some Lancasterian pedagogical practices outlasted the monitorial school, for Uruguayan students were still learning to write under similar methods by the early twentieth century, and still scribing with English letters. Acree, *Everyday Reading*, 106-108.

talent could evaluate his method while visiting the printing press of *El Universal*. There the skeptical could examine some “samples produced by his disciples,” and “quills that the students themselves had cut.” His students would practice writing towards perfection, with the “brightest” form and character never before seen in these parts of the world, and would conclude the course with an outstanding handwriting, English style, “beautiful and correct.”¹⁰⁵

Julio Meyer was a writing master, not a schoolteacher. Thornton identified North American writing masters as craftsmen of humble origins. Like other artisans, they were commonly found in urban environments, teaching multiple hand styles to a socially diverse public. Most of them learned penman skills through apprenticeship. While some had shops, others were traveling peddlers who visited towns and villages, offering brief but concentrated courses of instruction. Thornton however noticed a shift from the calligraphy courses to the common schools during the 1830s. In the latter case, the schoolteacher was hardly ever a writing master, since proficiency in multiple hands became unnecessary. By the end of the nineteenth century, writing masters were completely displaced by schoolteachers in the United States, a process accompanied by the “de-skilling of penmanship pedagogy.”¹⁰⁶ Marcelo Caruso identified the same phenomenon in Spain. The gradual displacement of the *peritos calígrafos* had begun in the eighteenth century with the Bourbon Reforms, and later accelerated with the emergence of mass schooling. The generalist schoolteacher eventually overcame the

¹⁰⁵ *El Universal*, n. 32, July 24, 1829; n. 71, September 11, 1829; n. 159, December 24, 1829; n. 161, January 2, 1830; n. 206, February 26, 1830.

¹⁰⁶ Thornton, *Handwriting in America*, 44-46.

specialist calligrapher, since the modern school transformed the instructors' writing techniques, pedagogical methods, vocational training, and occupational identity. The pedagogical practices of the writing masters were artisanal one-to-one interactions which offered no solutions to the challenge of mass education, even if their professional expertise still partially survived in the early nineteenth-century school of *primeras letras*.¹⁰⁷

The English round-hand had spread over Continental Europe starting in the late eighteenth century, an expansion connected with Britain's commercial success. It was known as *lettre anglaise*, *lettera inglese*, *englische Schreibschrift*, and, of course, *letra inglesa*. Spanish calligraphers published works specially dedicated to the style, including Manuel Ruiz's *Colección de muestras de la verdadera letra inglesa* (1823), and, as early as 1835, Iberian schools had already adopted the new cursive.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding the fading presence of the writing masters, the art of calligraphy applied to the English round-hand was fully incorporated into Uruguay's private and public school systems. Ten years after Meyer's advertisements, private teachers still publicized their services, stressing the value of handwriting, and occasionally designating their choice for the *letra inglesa*. Juan Cabah, who published an advertisement in *El Constitucional*, August 1840, told his prospective students that they would learn "writing according to the English

¹⁰⁷ For more on the Spanish peritos calígrafos and the notion of *primeras letras*, which emerged in eighteenth-century Spain and later spread through Hispanic America, see: Marcelo Caruso, "La Emancipación Semántica: 'Primeras Letras' en Hispanoamérica (ca. 1770-1840)," *Bordón* 62, n. 2 (2010): 34-35, 38-39, 41-47.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Dury, "Handwriting and the linguistic study of letters," in *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence, Methodology and Data*, ed. Mariano Dossena, and Ingrid T. van Ostade (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2008), 126.

characters, [but] modified after the latest methods.” Two years later, Maria de Peña, Director of the *Academia Oriental*, promised a handwriting style “with the elegance of the English form, and the clarity of the Spanish [letters].” In 1843, Antonio Lamas announced his intention to open a new school in Montevideo. He gave parents two options, “the Spanish writing according to Iturraeta, or the English [round-hand].”¹⁰⁹ But the public school system had introduced the new cursive style a few years earlier. Montevideo was still under Brazilian occupation in 1826 when the *Gaceta de la Provincia Oriental* reported that the public school of Canelones had 123 students; 81 were practicing on writing slates, 42 on paper, and the “handwriting style is the English one.”¹¹⁰ It is possible that the Lancasterian agent José Catalá y Codina had originally launched the new cursive in the early 1820s while establishing Montevideo’s first monitorial school. Consulting with the cabildo in 1822, Catalá persuaded the local authorities to print a new edition of his *lecciones*, which contained his suggested “new type of font.”¹¹¹ Uruguayan schools were thus on par with their Iberian counterparts in the introduction of the new cursive style.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *El Constitucional*, n. 474, August 29, 1840; n. 548, November 26, 1840; n. 1057, August 24, 1842; n. 1200, February 14, 1843.

¹¹⁰ *La Gaceta de la Provincia Oriental*, n. 6, December 19, 1826.

¹¹¹ Jesualdo Sosa, “La Escuela Lancasteriana: Ensayo histórico-pedagógico de la Escuela Uruguay durante la Dominación Luso-Brasileña (1817-1825), en especial del método Lancaster; acompañado de un Apéndice Documental,” *Revista Histórica, Publicación del Museo Histórico Nacional* 20, n. 58-60 (1954): 145.

¹¹² According to Clark, the Colombian State had alternatively rejected the foreign script. Local state officials wished to “purify the Spanish handwriting that has been adulterated by the English.” Meri L. Clark, “Teaching writing in the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850,” 455-460; Caruso, “New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Eugenia Roldán Vera, and Marcelo Caruso (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 294.

Handwriting was an art and a sign of distinction for certain occupations, including schoolteachers. Thus Juan Lopez Formoso's job application arrived with four letters of recommendation, one of them certifying the teacher's "good letter form."¹¹³ In April 1832, the Junta of Durazno recommended Miguel de Cedrón for a vacant spot at the local public school. Cedrón possessed the necessary qualities, including "a good and correct" cursive.¹¹⁴ In 1834, Domingo Francisco Ricary requested the teacher position at the Melo public school. De la Sota, the Normal School Teacher at the time, noted that Ricary had "a regular letter form," that is, good handwriting.¹¹⁵ In October 1835, Mariano de Elgueta, teacher of Dolores, requested permission to leave the school for a few weeks. In his place he would leave Domingo Osorio as temporary replacement. The local Education Commission, however, had nothing to fear, for Osorio was trained in the adopted pedagogic method, and his "handwriting is just like mine."¹¹⁶ Refined handwriting skills, including aesthetic presentation and technical control of the quill, paper, and ink, were also expected from private school teachers. In 1840, the *Colegio Oriental* announced

¹¹³ The recommendation letter was written in February 1828. AGN, AA, Box 822, Folder 4.

¹¹⁴ AGN, AA, Box 824, Folder 9.

¹¹⁵ The Normal School Teacher noticed that the French postulant could have some difficulty with Spanish grammar and dictation due to his "national accent." He could circumvent this handicap with the help of a few dictation exercises given to him by the Normal School. Ricary got the job and moved to Melo, where the local population was however less inclined than De la Sota to tolerate his French accent. AGN, AA, Box 850, Folder 5.

¹¹⁶ AGN, AA, Box 885, Folder 8.

through the press its need for a new math instructor, plus one assistant “who knows how to cut quills, and has good writing in the English form.”¹¹⁷

Handwriting was more than a tool; it was a skill and an art associated with status and cultivation. Individuals with aesthetically sound handwriting and skillful handling of the quill were seen as more capable than others for certain middle-class professions. A particular style of handwriting and its aesthetic characteristics revealed the ideal traits of particular social groups, including elementary school teachers. Good handwriting skills revealed the teacher’s industry and self-discipline; it denoted a “link between written character [and] the human character.”¹¹⁸ More important, it suggested that the teacher could be trusted in the character formation of his pupils. A comparison of teachers’ handwritten letters and documents produced by ordinary state bureaucrats reveals how thoroughly crafted the former were.¹¹⁹ Moreover, teachers often wrote in the English style, while Uruguayan bureaucrats replied in the old colonial cursive. Teachers were fully aware of their educational capital. In some cases, teachers helped illiterate local government officials in their communication with the central state. In April 1837, the

¹¹⁷ Other professions also demanded skillful handwriting. In a different ad from 1839, an anonymous person was looking for a bookkeeper, who should be “good at arithmetic, [and] fast with the quill.” Good handwriting was in fact prized prior to Uruguayan independence. In his memoirs from 1851, José Encarnación de Zás described his job in the Montevideo *Consulado*, where he was a notary back in the early 1810s. I was “not sure of my handwriting [letra],” he wrote, explaining why he chose to move to a different post in the *Resguardo*. Later he volunteered to move to the Custom House of Colonia. When the better position of *Oficial* was made available to him, he reluctantly accepted it, still aware that “my handwriting [letra] was not good.” Zás’ choice for the word *letra* (letter, font) instead of *escritura* (writing) identifies the aesthetic attributes of handwriting. *El Constitucional*, n. 86, May 13, 1839; n. 310, February 13, 1840. José Encarnación de Zás, “Memoria autobiográfica de José Encarnación de Zás,” *Revista Histórica, publicación del Museo Histórico Nacional* 17 (1951): 121-173.

¹¹⁸ Thornton, *Handwriting in America*, 3.

¹¹⁹ Ventura Aguilar’s letter is a good example; it is in AGN, AA, Box 918.

teacher Miguel Mazzini even mocked the poor writing skills of his superiors in Colonia; he begged “the Junta to write their letters with more clarity, and not in stenography as they currently are.”¹²⁰

Teaching and Learning to Write: Method and Script Standardization

In early November 1831, Montevideo’s Education Commission reported its opinion about the Normal School’s new font models (*modelo de muestras de letra*). The Commission had just witnessed the Normal School Teacher testing the new models in classroom practice, and was persuaded of their utility, “because it is a safe means to standardize handwriting throughout the country. If all models are prepared by the same hands, and if all models look the same, it is certain that all students will write in the same cursive style when copying the models.” The teacher Juan Manuel Besnes e Irigoyen, who was responsible for the new muestras’ design, explained how 18 children could work at once with a single model, copying the same “connections, shapes, strokes [and] size.” His models were three yards wide and one tall, hanging from the ceiling at the height of the teacher’s head. They were placed at an appropriate visual distance from the children, forcing them to raise their heads after they copied each stroke. The old collections were printing press models, but due to the frequent shortage of ink at the time of manufacture, some shapes and connections had noticeable defects. Thus a student who strictly adhered to the old models, copying exactly what he saw, would often produce handwriting samples that were significantly different from the ones made by his colleagues, thereby compromising the desired uniformity. Besnes e Irigoyen believed his handcrafted

¹²⁰ AGN, AA, Box 896.

muestras were much easier to fabricate; they would last longer, and would assist the state in its standardizing efforts. Thus “every single boy, in every single village and school” would have “the same font type.” Apart from his sixteen years of pedagogical experience, Besnes e Irigoyen consulted with “Servidori, Forio, and other modern authors” before choosing the best combination of “strokes, shapes [and] size.” In addition, his muestras were student-proof. While hanging from the ceiling, they were beyond the reach of the students’ corrosive hands.¹²¹

The Spanish calligrapher Torcuato Torio de la Riva described the muestras method. After learning how to hold the quill and print each letter of the alphabet, the pupil was to practice his calligraphy in a progression of models. Not only should his handwriting perfectly match the models, but the student should finish his copies within a short time frame. After finishing the entire collection of muestras, the student should copy from “a book filled with useful maxims, until he is capable of writing at a regular speed exactly what the teacher dictates.”¹²² That was the last stage of instruction, after which the student would finally graduate from the school. The muestras contained standardized sets of letters, syllables, and short sentences as models for the pupils to copy. The students’ copies on paper were called *planas*. The closer their *planas* resembled the muestras, the higher the quality of their script. Teachers were to supervise the

¹²¹ Similar muestras existed in Anglo-Saxon manuals; “they consisted largely of model alphabets and copy sentences created according to such fashionable aesthetic principles as symmetry, regularity, and variety.” Thornton, *Handwriting in America*, 46.

¹²² Torcuato Torio de la Riva, *Arte de Escribir por Reglas y con Muestras* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda de Don Joaquin Ibarra, 1788), 147-150.

students, correcting their posture and handling of the quill. It was an exercise in repetition, with the goal of gradually perfecting the students' handwriting.

One can only imagine how disappointed Besnes e Irigoyen was when Joaquin Campana, the General Inspector of the Schools, rejected his muestras. Campana argued that a simple and sturdy board inscribed with the upper and lower case alphabet could last thirty years or more if hanging from a wall, at a safe distance from the students. This board was more than enough to attain the desired handwriting uniformity. Moreover, public school teachers should stick to the state-sponsored Lancasterian methods, which in fact focused on dictation instead of imitation. In his 1821 work *The Lancasterian System of Education*, Lancaster explained how students should practice handwriting. While Torio de la Riva's description of the muestras reveals an old teaching method still associated with the writing masters of the past, the Lancasterian system was developed with the modern school in mind. Hence abandoning the imitation of muestras, teachers should help the students learn how to write and spell at the same time. Monitors dictated syllables, words or sentences to their colleagues, and should always inspect the work of the other students, particularly when dictating a word for the first time. After the monitor's pronunciation of "any word for them to write," the students were "obliged to listen with attention, to catch the sound of every letter as it proceeds from the dictator's lips." Lancaster believed that the repetition of words would leave an imprint on the pupils' minds, helping them improve their vocabulary. One year of dictation routine would amount to thousands of new words learned. Thus "without the least additional

trouble on the part of the teacher, ... [this method] more than doubles the advance of each individual toward a proficiency.”¹²³

At the early levels of instruction, the Lancasterian school focused on sand writing, yet for the most part, the writing slate, a modern and relatively cheap technology, was at the center of the monitorial pedagogy.¹²⁴ The *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster*, printed in Montevideo in 1822, made it clear that students wrote on “slates instead of paper.”¹²⁵ After independence, advanced students were nonetheless encouraged to write on paper. Several documents indicate that the three most advanced class levels were reserved for the practice of handwriting with ink and quill. Maldonado’s State of the School report of 1832 clearly splits students in two different groups: slates (*pizarras*) and writing (*escritura*). In his Reglamento Interno, Ortiz explained that “the children will begin to write letters and numbers in the sand, after that on slates by dictation, and finally on paper.”¹²⁶ In November 1831, the General Director confirmed in a few lines the entire learning process: “the boys start to write with their fingers ... in the sand; then on the slate ... until they arrive at the three superior classes, which is when they take the quill.” Campana believed that the Uruguayan adaptation of the method

¹²³ Joseph Lancaster, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with improvements* (Baltimore, 1821), 14-16.

¹²⁴ Sand writing was originally an innovation of Bell, who reputedly learned it in India. The writing slate was a hard wearing, portable board, in which the student could write using another softer piece of slate (usually in the form of a pencil). Since the markings were erasable, the board could be used over and over again. Yet Lancaster did more than introduce the slate, he placed it at the center of his method. Thus “the slate was the principal means by which performance was displayed and his system was a meritocracy.” Nigel Hall, “The role of the slate in Lancasterian schools as evidenced by their manuals and handbooks,” *Paradigm 2*, n. 7 (2003): 46-54. Crain, “Children of Media, Children as Media,” 72.

¹²⁵ *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster*, 8.

¹²⁶ AGN, AA, Box 842A, Folder 12.

would produce students who wrote with “the same handwriting,” and identical “linked letters, space between words, proportionate size, a consistent slant, [correct] accents and spelling.”¹²⁷

In his *Ensayo* of 1834, De la Sota recalled the muestras experience under the tenure of Besnes e Irigoyen. The previous teacher was indeed renowned for his “calligraphic knowledge,” but his system was based on “muestras, and not on general dictation as commanded by the [Lancasterian] method.”¹²⁸ De la Sota also described his efforts to standardize other schools; as a Normal School Teacher, he should observe if “the Lancasterian method was strictly followed.” Unfortunately, teachers were not exactly enthusiastic when pressured to abandon the muestras. In his visit to the Cordon, De la Sota noticed that this school relied on a combination of the two methods, and “the appearance of modernity.” Though students practicing on slates indeed worked with dictation, those writing on paper only imitated muestras. De la Sota advised the local teacher to update his methods, for instead of becoming “a mere imitator,” children should understand the rules of proportion and distance between the words and letters, “the bodies and the shapes,” and how each stroke “connects with the other.”¹²⁹ While aiding the teacher of the Aguada, De la Sota handed him a few Normal School copies of a lower-

¹²⁷ AGN, AA, Box 820, Folder 4.

¹²⁸ De la Sota, “Ensayo.”

¹²⁹ According to Joe Nickell, the calligrapher John Jenkins, from Boston, had “replaced the old writing masters’ method (having students copy from models) with a systemized approach that required learning basic strokes, then combining them to form letters.” Thornton also noticed how nineteenth-century handwriting manuals differed from their predecessors by including “lengthy catechisms on the theory of penmanship,” while “whole chapters on hand and body position dwarf the visual models for imitation.” Joe Nickell, *Pen, Ink, & Evidence: A Study of Writing and Writing Materials for the Penman, Collector, and Document Detective* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 135. Tamara, *Handwriting in America*, 46-50.

case alphabet. Though De la Sota had instructed this teacher on Lancaster's teaching techniques, he had "shortly after deviated from the method, and reinstated the muestras." Even after De la Sota alerted him of this mistake, the teacher persisted despite the fact that he had received a set of dictation exercises. A melancholic De la Sota accordingly finished his report with a quote from Torio de la Riva, declaring that "most teachers ... only use this miserable [imitation] recourse For these teachers, there are no rules, no study, no calligraphic science. Everything is work, imitation and exercise. The pupil who fails to copy from the models suffers an unfair punishment, while the teacher is unable to detect the cause of his mistakes, thus failing to propose the means to correct his errors."¹³⁰

The conflicts over the use of appropriate pedagogic materials and teaching methods were symptomatic of the sociocultural redefinition of schools, teachers, and writing in early modern Uruguay. The writing masters were fading away. Besnes e Irigoyen, who had been teaching for over a decade prior to national independence, still carried with him the old methods and materials of the past. Like Julio Meyer, Besnes e Irigoyen was a renowned calligrapher, but he had difficulties in adapting to the modern education environment. The writing masters had just been absorbed by an incipient public school system that aimed at universalization, homogenization, and rationalization. Lancaster's methods entailed pedagogical novelties, forcing old teachers to adjust their practices to the mass production of literate citizens. Then again, handwriting manuals and state policies merely indicated how education ought to be conducted. In everyday school

¹³⁰ The quote is in De la Sota's "Ensayo," but the original is in Torio de la Riva, *Arte de Escribir por Reglas y con Muestras*, 153-154.

practice, practical application of Lancasterian techniques was also conditioned, if not compromised, by poor infrastructure, chronic shortage of pedagogical materials, and limited training for teachers, who adapted different methods according to necessity and personal preference.

Student Evaluation: State Tools for the Assessment of Educational Performance

On December 31, 1831, Juan Lopez Formoso, public school teacher of Maldonado, attached a collection of planas to his correspondence with the Junta, hoping that its president would appreciate these samples of students' handwriting. The title on its cover page was "Public School of Maldonado, 1832," followed by a short description of its content: "Planas from its students, who are eternally grateful to our government, and who present this little sample of their work." The Junta would soon forward his letter and attached documents to the central state in Montevideo, for they attested to the students' advancements in the previous school year, and to the teacher's commitment, zeal and hard work.¹³¹ The AGN holds several letters like the one from Lopez Formoso. These exchanges between the central state, Juntas, and teachers were an occasion for the Ministry of Government to inspect the progress of its public schools. While providing evidence of their pedagogical achievements, teachers seized the opportunity to formally complain about poor infrastructure, shortage of supplies, irregular student attendance, and late wages. Maldonado's poorest students were particularly affected, since the government had delivered no supplies in the previous months, despite persistent requests. Moreover, the schoolhouse walls were crumbling and needed renovation. Strong winds

¹³¹ AGN, AA, Box 824, Folders 9, 13.

and heavy rains compromised school activities, for the children were unable to work with their slates due to the infiltration of dust and water. The planas confirmed the students' learning progress, but Lopez Formoso listed the difficulties that prevented him from further advancing the children's education.

Planas were collections of single page texts containing one or two moral maxims dictated by the teacher, or copied from available models. Their earliest documented evidence in postcolonial schools dates from December 13, 1830. The General Director argued that, despite the merits of the monitorial system, the two teachers of the Normal School "are not enough to correct the planas; after investing a considerable amount of time on this task, half of the planas are still left uncorrected until the next day." First, students practiced handwriting, listening to the teacher's dictation or copying from the muestras. Teachers then collected, corrected and returned these exercises with feedback to their pupils. In at least one surviving collection of planas, there are two sheets of paper on which the same student wrote the very same sentence twice, suggesting an exercise of repetition that aimed at perfection. Thus a surviving plana, by the student Luis Echeverria, instructed aspiring authors to "correct your writings many times if you want them to be read many times."¹³² Underscoring writing as a skill meant that the evaluation of schools, students and teachers was not based on the explicit content of the maxims, but on the handwriting itself. Inspectors examined the entire page, including proper demarcation of margins, space between the lines, and font sizes. The analysis of the planas suggests that the value of these documents was contingent on their aesthetic

¹³² AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 8; Box 824, Folder 9.

presentation, for the samples were to demonstrate the skilled handling of paper, ink and quill.

The earliest evidence of planas used to evaluate teachers and students dates from October 22, 1831, when Ortiz sent a collection to the General Inspector Campana. Anticipating a possible negative evaluation of the samples, Ortiz alerted that the school of the Cordón had been open for only nine months, and admitted that there was still room for improvement. Two days later, Campana forwarded the planas to the Minister of Government, who would surely notice the “progress achieved during the short life of that establishment.” Ortiz and Campana did not miss the opportunity to complain about the shortage of writing supplies. The progress observed in the samples was in danger, for the lack of materials would force the teacher to discontinue his handwriting classes. Nevertheless, the Minister simply replied that he had received the samples with “great interest and appreciation.”¹³³ Several collections of planas would follow, gradually cementing a state practice in the evaluation of schools. In November 1832, the Junta of San José sent its samples accompanied by an official list of students attending one of its school. Its teacher had been previously accused of neglecting his duties, leaving his 56 students in a “state of abandonment,” so that his response came in the form of handwriting samples.¹³⁴ A few months later, in March 1833, the General Inspector received a second collection from Maldonado, and once more applauded Lopez Formoso’s conduct as a positive example for all teachers.¹³⁵ On September 6, 1833, the

¹³³ AGN, AA, Box 817, Folder 5; Box 818, Folder 4.

¹³⁴ AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 7, 11.

¹³⁵ AGN, AA, Box 840A, Folder 11.

Inspector forwarded a collection from Soriano, informing the Minister that the handwriting style he would find “is not of the kind we have adopted in the past; [the new style] is now employed in the interior on par with the greatest and most civilized cities” of the world.¹³⁶

The 1834 index of the General Inspector office archive reveals that, between the months of February and August, the central state received handwriting samples from Maldonado, Rocha, Durazno, Mercedes, Soriano, Minas, Florida, Porongos, Salto, Paysandú, Colonia, Las Vacas, Las Vívoras, Canelones, Cordón, the Normal School, two unspecified institutions (one for boys, one for girls), and more “planas from four schools” of unstated locations.¹³⁷ Thus the General Inspector received 22 collections in a time frame of seven months, confirming the consolidation of this method of evaluation as common state practice.¹³⁸ Later, in early 1835, the Inspector reported that “the state of the schools is *regular*, according to the collections of planas that arrived to this Inspection in the previous year.”¹³⁹ Canelones, for instance, sent its samples in April 1834, shortly after its public examination ceremony. The General Inspector praised their “superior class,” and outstanding “uniformity of character and good forms.” In the spirit of the public

¹³⁶ AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

¹³⁷ AGN, AA, Box 853A, Folder 12.

¹³⁸ Meri Clark found that the evaluation of planas had also become an institutionalized practice in Colombia during the 1840s. Colombian children dedicated their work to state authorities, who in turn replied with the same generic assessments about their handwriting quality. The content of the planas was also basically the same, with maxims that emphasized familial obligations and civic duties. The Colombian State was equally obsessed with script standardization, for the students’ handwriting should confirm that the schools conformed to the national standards of literacy. It is highly unlikely that Colombians had the earlier Uruguayan experience in mind as a model, yet the notable similarities suggest that the evaluation practice may have been widespread in South America. Clark, “Teaching writing in the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850,” 449–461.

¹³⁹ AGN, AA, Box 855A, Folder 10.

examinations, all samples were on display for the Uruguayan population to admire. The teacher's selection was however limited to his best students, those who excelled during examination. The Minister had no objections, and replied showing his "appreciation for the progress of elementary education, which was entrusted to the care and direction of the teacher." Still in April, the Normal School Teacher forwarded his own collection. The General Inspector commended their "methodical order," which at once certified the students' handwriting quality, and the teacher's successful implementation of the Lancasterian system. The Minister applauded the teacher's "zeal in the performance of his duties, and in the promotion of the improvements that perfected the educational system." Adopting a republican tone, his reply ends with "thanks to the citizen."¹⁴⁰ The planas also confirmed the public school system's contribution to the formation of the Uruguayan citizenry. In April 1836, for example, the Junta of Durazno forwarded "a small sign of the progress and enlightenment of this Department's youth." The samples denoted the fruits of the "teacher's unbroken diligence," and his commitment to the cultivation of "a few youngsters capable of serving the patria and its government."¹⁴¹

The General Inspector expected the evaluation of handwriting samples to become a well-regulated and institutionalized practice. In July 1834, a collection from Mercedes had inappropriately bypassed the local Education Commission, coming straight from the teacher to the Inspector's office. The Inspector then commanded all teachers to first send their samples to their respective Education Commissions, which in turn should forward

¹⁴⁰ AGN, AA, Box 855, Folder 6; Box 855A, Folder 10.

¹⁴¹ The outstanding quality of the samples sent from San Carlos foretold the "future of these precious" students, "who would make up the most valuable part of our society." AGN, AA, Box 883, Folders 8, 12.

the planas “on the indicated occasion” to Montevideo. He expected a regular flow of handwriting samples into his office, but ordered schoolteachers to observe state organizational hierarchy, and to wait for Montevideo’s instructions regarding the schedule for examination.¹⁴²

As an incentive to the students, the best planas often received awards. When Soriano sent a collection in July 1834, the state designated Ortiz, and the teachers José Antonio Barbosa, and Eugenio Fernandez as members of an Awards Commission. After some deliberation they chose little Antonio Alvarez as the best among his peers.¹⁴³ Once the collections from San Juan Bautista and Rosario arrived in Montevideo, a separate Awards Commission chose three handwriting samples for their distinctive quality. The General Inspector recommended two medals, one for “Doroteo Bear from San Juan Bautista, and another to one of the two from Colonia.”¹⁴⁴ The teacher García de Perichon, at the time teaching in Mercedes, sent a collection to Montevideo in July 1834. However, the Junta of Soriano would soon announce its surprise that the señorita Eugenia Perichon had received an award, for she was not really a student, but the teacher’s daughter and assistant. Mistakes like this tainted the planas’ true purpose, which was accurately evaluating students’ handwriting skills and teachers’ pedagogic performance.¹⁴⁵

Not all samples of students’ handwriting were well received by the General Inspector. In January 1835, he was quite disappointed with the school of the Aguada, for

¹⁴² AGN, AA, Box 860A, Folder 12.

¹⁴³ AGN, AA, Box 858A, Folder 11.

¹⁴⁴ Rosario is located in the Department of Colonia. AGN, AA, Box 860A, Folder 12.

¹⁴⁵ AGN, AA, Box 860A, Folder 12.

its samples contained too many “irregularities in the formation of the letters.” The Inspector concluded that “there was nothing worthy of your [Minister of Government] approval,” and immediately connected the poor quality of the planas with a teaching method deficiency. Thus the teacher had “deviated from order,” not corresponding to “what he was taught regarding writing on paper and slate.”¹⁴⁶ Yet the first documented victim of the planas was a teacher from Dolores. In March 1835, after studying the quality of the handwriting samples, the Inspector concluded that the teacher “is not among the most capable individuals to fulfill this position.” The Inspector endorsed the teacher’s request for school materials and payment of late wages, but he finished the letter proposing the failed instructor’s replacement.¹⁴⁷

Three Surviving Collections of Planas

In spite of its well-documented practice, only three collections survived the test of time in the AGN. The first came from Maldonado in late December 1831; the second from San José, November 1832; the third arrived in August 1833, sent from Soriano.¹⁴⁸ The Maldonado collection has 37 pages. San José has 32 sheets, while Soriano sent at least 12. It is possible that some additional pages were lost, for we are unable to determine if the surviving samples constitute complete sets. In the case of the surviving collection from Maldonado, a report from that school shows that, of its 121 total students in 1831, only 52 were practicing handwriting on paper. Thus the 37 existing planas

¹⁴⁶ AGN, AA, Box 863A, Folder 12.

¹⁴⁷ AGN, AA, Box 865A, Folder 12.

¹⁴⁸ AGN, AA, Box 824, Folder 9; Box 846A, Folder 12; Box 835, Folder 8.

represented a little more than 70 percent of the total students on that level of instruction.¹⁴⁹

Each individual *plana*, constitutes the work of a single student, who signed his name at the bottom of the page. Students first traced straight pencil lines over plain paper, printing rows of four lines, each one indicating the proper size of upper and lower case letters. The body of the text was meant to occupy a space previously framed by well-delimited pencil- or ink-traced margins. The Maldonado samples adopted a “landscape” orientation, in which the page is wider than it is long, while San José and Soriano chose the standard “portrait.” The novice pupils filled only three or four rows of writing, sometimes not even finishing a complete sentence. Thus Miguel Bruzado’s exercise stated: “We ascribe success to our talent, and our misfortunes to,” leaving the reader to wonder who was to blame for our failures. As the reader turns the pages, the number of lines increases, while the size of the letters is reduced. For this reason, the most advanced students wrote longer sentences, or more than one. At least two different students from two different schools wrote the very same sentence. Federico Pilar Regales from Maldonado and Eustaquio Arballo from San José wrote that “sinning and not repenting is worse than sinning,” evidence that different public schools shared similar pedagogical materials. Finally, the three surviving collections embraced the English round-hand, which replaced the old-fashioned colonial script.

The state evaluation of the *planas* was not centered on the copied maxims. Neither the Inspector nor the Minister ever spent a single drop of ink on the analysis of their

¹⁴⁹ AGN, AA, Box 836A, Folder 12.

moral substance, because the evaluation of teachers and students was entirely based on the aesthetic and technical qualities of the samples. Good quality handwriting certified the student's educational progress, and confirmed the teacher's successful implementation of monitorial methods. However, schools should achieve more than merely teaching children to write, since public education pursued the broader ambition of producing well-rounded citizens whose moral values may indeed be assessed in the content of the *planas*. Thus the sentences carried the expected advice on religion, patriotism, and family, but also stressed the importance of friendship, self-control, and even self-awareness, thoughtfulness and introspection. In sum, the maxims oriented the student to a moral life in society, and to an elementary understanding of the self.¹⁵⁰ The *planas* of San José, for instance, were overwhelmingly religious in their content, while their second most frequent motif was filial piety. Thus the student Eduardo Pelaez wrote: "My esteemed father and señor, ... in my limited knowledge I understand how law and nature command every child to acknowledge the anxieties of his father."¹⁵¹ The Soriano collection contained three pages which stressed the importance of education, including the sample of Tiburcio Vique, who wrote that "in their earliest age children should be taught good manners, because then they will easily take root. What is learned in childhood lasts a lifetime." Another typical theme was patriotism. Tanasildo Saldaña was preparing himself for patriotic martyrdom when he wrote that "every man must love his

¹⁵⁰ Liberal *porteños* "considered that prudence, rationality, and conscientious political action" relied on the students' ability to internalize the values of "delay of gratification, attention to remote consequences, and conceptualization of the self as a functioning member of the social and political community." Szuchman. *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires*, 173.

¹⁵¹ AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 8.

country, and look for its welfare. Thus, [every man] must, when he sees it invaded by its enemies, defend his country with all his strength, even if at the cost of his life.”¹⁵²

The planas from Maldonado had a more diversified set of moral lessons, including the ability to recognize true friends and the importance of acknowledging the good actions of others. This collection emphasizes courtesy and kindness, as well as self-control and introspection. In this regard, frequent themes were the value of patience and silence, an attitude adults believed children should internalize as soon as possible. Thus Juan Pablo Monegal affirmed that “silence is the safest haven for the one who is not sure of himself. Silence is the safeguard of the youth; holding one’s tongue is often better than graceful speaking.” Braulio Plá and Manuel Lopez worked with the same sentence: “A wise man often doubts himself, and changes his mind when he recognizes a mistake; but the ignorant is stubborn; never doubts anything; says he knows it all, and that proves he knows nothing.” Agustín Navarro knew how to make the world a better place, for “man only needs to overcome himself to recover virtue. If all mortals achieved this victory over themselves, the entire universe would take a new form.” Maldonado’s take on government contained more than blind allegiance to the fatherland. Two of its maxims reproduced a popular motif of the early nineteenth-century republican discourse, encouraging aspiring citizens to oppose tyranny. Gavino Perez, for example, advised us on the conflict between despotism and human reason: “Despotism, according to the general opinion of the wise, is a form of thinking that is not supported by reason; [it is] the authority to enact laws that does not admit dissent; it is an absolute power that no one

¹⁵² AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

can resist.” Telesforo Rodriguez was more succinct, writing that “the tyrant and the oppressed people fear each other” (see figure 2.5).

Public Examination Ceremonies

The imagined national community reinforced its collective ties and identities through various collective performances in which the people celebrated their common history, achievements, and the promise of a better future. Children also participated in these ritualized gatherings, because the progress-oriented society, that imagined cross-generational entity, took the opportunity to introduce its youngest members to the larger community. Thus, in 1816, during the Artiguist period, the schoolchildren also attended the *Fiestas Mayas* in Montevideo.¹⁵³ At dawn, an artillery salvo welcomed the Sun of May, as the public gathering saluted the rising sun by singing patriotic hymns. The children wore the Phrygian cap and waived the tricolor flag of the patria.¹⁵⁴ The May Festivities were Uruguay’s most popular civic celebrations throughout the 1830s, and they played an important pedagogical function, as the children learned about their national symbols, institutions, and the historical achievements of their ancestors. Yet the students did not mingle with the general public, for they stood in formation on a featured

¹⁵³ “These fiestas, which were also called *fiestas cívicas*, were modeled on those that had first taken place in Buenos Aires from 23 to 26 May 1813.” The *fiestas* in Montevideo “were meant to celebrate the *beginning* of the nation’s new history, which was in the process of being defined, in part by print and in part by ceremonies.” Acree, *Everyday Reading*, 29.

¹⁵⁴ On that day, and apart from the cabildo school, there were attending students from the private establishments of Pagola, Arrieta and Lombardini. The flag of the Patria was the Artiguist ensign of the *Liga Federal*. Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*, 101-103. Acree also acknowledged schoolchildren at the event. Acree, *Everyday Reading*, 35.

area of the public square, so that the audience could clearly identify them as a peculiar social group which belonged to a particular educational institution.

Public examinations constituted the quintessential scholastic ceremony of the early modern era. As in other collective gatherings, these ceremonies were also occasions for the reification of the national community. The pompous laudatory speeches and the ubiquitous presence of state authorities underscored the general sense of collective achievement, as the public witnessed the positive results of governmental investment in education. Public examinations were organized as essentially performative rites of passage in which the children presented themselves as progress-oriented, cultivated individuals in the modern sense — in sum, potential citizens.

Uruguayan public examinations were hardly unique for Latin America.¹⁵⁵ The earliest known event that involved a Mexican elementary school took place in Veracruz in 1788, but public examinations later became compulsory for all elementary institutions in 1800, as the colonial state reoriented them toward the ritual display of allegiance to the Monarchy. According to Roldán, the late-colonial ceremony was modeled on the degree examinations of lawyers, which consisted of ritualized demonstrations of knowledge and

¹⁵⁵ There is little research on the subject regarding the schools of the Banda Oriental. Sosa suggests that such ceremonies might have existed prior to the revolutionary period. In at least one occasion, the teachers of Montevideo and immediate surroundings were asked to bring four students of their choice to the Sala Capitular of the Cabildo “para tomar el debido conocimiento del adelantamiento adquirido por los discípulos, y de consiguiente la mayor o menor eficacia de sus maestros.” Sosa, *La Escuela Lancasteriana*, 77-78, 86-87. Segarra also mentioned the occurrence of public examinations under the responsibility of the Cabildo in the late colonial period. Enrique Mena Segarra, and Agapo Luis Palomeque. *Historia de la Educación Uruguaya. Tomo 1: La Educación Oriental 1730-1830* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 2009), 80.

competence.¹⁵⁶ During these events, the “students presented samples of their writing exercises, recited parts of their textbooks and responded to a number of questions ... on the different school subjects: reading, writing, arithmetic and religion.” The children’s performance was certainly rehearsed in advance, and sometimes only the best students were selected for examination. On a symbolic level, the students demonstrated their commitment to the common good (*bien común*), and their usefulness (*utilidad*) to the Monarchy. In exchange, the father-like state extended its protective hand, providing children “with the means for their enlightenment,” helping them to become “useful beings to society.” The students’ performance occurred before an audience composed of representatives of the state, priests, parents, and the general public. As an entity independent from the state, the modern notion of *public* emerged as an actor which granted legitimacy to the school and to the government’s increasing intervention in educational matters. At the end of the event, there was a solemn distribution of prizes, “and whatever merit there was, it was always played down with the rhetoric of retribution to the higher providers and protectors of education.” As in Mexico, public examinations in postcolonial Colombia were ritualized gatherings in which the students, teachers, and members of the public reconnected themselves to their imagined community. When the children performed, enacting the idealized republic in the examination space, they created a scale model for the larger society. Those attending public examinations, adults and

¹⁵⁶ Unless otherwise footnoted, this paragraph is based on Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Towards a logic of citizenship: public examinations in elementary schools in Mexico, 1788–1848: state and education before and after independence,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, n. 4 (August 2010): 511–524. Public school examinations were modeled after similar higher education ceremonies, which also occurred in Uruguay. The University examinations were however more elaborate, and usually lasted for many days, despite dealing with a reduced number of students. There is an example of such examination from 1833 in AGN, AA, Box 849/A, Folder 12 .

children alike, were therefore dubbed “Colombians.” The scholastic ceremonies “celebrated a child’s learning and the republic’s potential,” and reinforced the values of civic duty, individual achievement and collective progress.¹⁵⁷

The Lancasterian Society of Montevideo organized its first public examination ceremony in 1822, ten months after the inauguration of its monitorial school, while two additional events unfolded in May and September 1823.¹⁵⁸ On the three occasions, the students demonstrated their academic skills, reading prose and verse, writing on board and paper. The distribution of prizes was the responsibility of a special commission, which awarded books and medals for the best students. On inquiring who among the students was the poorest, the commission rewarded the two indicated boys with a complete set of clothes.¹⁵⁹ Due to the school’s limited infrastructure, the events took place in the cathedral, and was attended by religious authorities, state officials, parents, and the general public. The Lancasterian examinations were structured as official ceremonies, so that their symbolic significance was enhanced by speeches, poetry, and patriotic singing. In order to enhance their symbolic significance, public examinations could also coincide with other civic festivities. The school of the Cordón, for example, had originally scheduled its examinations to July 18, “the anniversary of our Constitution.”¹⁶⁰ These ceremonies turned increasingly popular during the 1830s,

¹⁵⁷ Clark, “Teaching writing in the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850,” 455.

¹⁵⁸ Sosa, “La Escuela Lancasteriana,” 152-153; Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*, 125-126.

¹⁵⁹ Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*, 124-125.

¹⁶⁰ AGN, AA, Box 811A, Folder 6; Box 844, Folder 6; Box 844A, Folder 12.

becoming quasi-compulsory events which resonated with the public and the press, so that even private educational institutions held them in order to promote their business.¹⁶¹

In April 1834, the Junta of Canelones forwarded a lengthy description of its latest public examination, an event organized as a simulation of regular classroom activities. As in a theater, the fourth wall separated the audience from the mock pedagogical setting, and the public was given the opportunity to witness the monitorial system in action.¹⁶² In the words of the General Inspector, the students were distributed in groups according to their levels of instruction, sitting in rows on regular school benches next to their corresponding monitors. The teacher Francisco Dormoy, seconded by De la Sota, first coordinated the students' examination on writing slates, followed by the evaluation of the most advanced pupils who were already writing on paper. The students were then examined on the principles of Spanish orthography, mathematics, and religious catechism. As underscored by the General Inspector, the ceremony was more than a mere demonstration of scholastic virtuosity and knowledge; the mock classroom activities had presented a learning *process*, for the audience had witnessed the "methodic, streamlined, regular order that has been implemented; ... the strict order with which one must read,

¹⁶¹ Public examinations were more common in Montevideo and its immediate hinterland than in the interior, although they occasionally took place in villages as distant as Melo, Department of Cerro Largo. A few examples of recorded public examinations: May 1832, *Colegio Oriental de Niñas*, AGN, AA, Box 827A, Folder 11; August 1833, (planned) Florida; January 1833, and January 1834, Normal School; April 1834, Canelones; March 1835, Soriano, AGN, AA, Box 865A, Folder 12; December 1835, (planned) Cerro Largo, AGN, AA, Box 879; December 1835, *Escuela Mercantil*, Araujo, "*Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya*," 198; February 1837, Mercedes, AGN, AA, Box 894; December 1838 and April 1840, *Colegio de Humanidades*, AGN, AA, Boxes 903, 925.

¹⁶² De la Sota also conceived the examinations as a public performance of Lancasterian methods. Thus the Normal School examinations had demonstrated "that the *plan de enseñanza* ... was not just theory, but that it was practiced in the Normal." De la Sota, "Ensayo."

correct or be corrected, [and how the students were] advancing or delaying, ... and [the general] desire to know.” Finally, the public examination ceremony was, by itself, methodically executed; the students’ performance was methodically planned, probably rehearsed, and therefore produced controlled results.¹⁶³

In March 1839, the General Inspector received the *Examination Program* from the *Colegio Oriental de Humanidades*, an elite private institution in Montevideo. The Program indicates how public examination ceremonies had become increasingly elaborated during the decade, for its detailed description evinces a long and meticulously rehearsed presentation. The event would certainly test the audience’s patience; enduring twelve hours in total, it would last for three consecutive days, running from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Once again, the ceremony unfolded as a simulation of everyday classroom activities. Thus “the method for the examinations is the one that has served for teaching,” allowing the public to observe the Lancasterian system in practice. Remaining true to the method, twenty-eight students would be separated in three semicircles, each one directed by its respective monitors. The first group would practice reading skills with newspapers and books, and then enunciate the rules for “good and correct pronunciation of the Spanish Language.” The students’ performance was nonetheless obviously staged, since every single boy was given a moment to shine with something different to recite. According to the official report by the examination board, the ceremony had successfully demonstrated “the excellence of the method,” whose pedagogical advantages were revealed to the public. From the viewpoint of the board, the Lancasterian system focused

¹⁶³ AGN, AA, Box 855, Folder 6.

on true learning instead of simple memorization; the method relied “on the students’ reason,” developing “understanding over the exercise of memory.” Denoting the performative quality of the event, the board congratulated the students on their Geography presentation, seen “as an enticing and pleasant entertainment.”¹⁶⁴

Whereas earlier public ceremonies in Colombia had privileged the examination of religious and civic instruction, Caruso noticed the increasing emphasis on writing exercises starting in the late 1820s. Thus later examination reports underscored the elegant writing of the students, whose handwriting samples were forwarded to the government as proof of educational progress.¹⁶⁵ In Uruguay, the teaching of writing also occupied a prominent place in public examinations. As stated by Catalá, those attending the examinations of the Lancasterian School of Montevideo in 1824 had witnessed the students’ outstanding handwriting quality.¹⁶⁶ The Examination Program of the Colegio Oriental de Humanidades also offers a detailed account of a segment called *Caligrafía*, in which six students were chosen to exhibit planas with English characters. The audience heard the children explain the “rules of calligraphy,” followed by a presentation on the use of “letters in old and modern script.” The students then explained the proper use of capital letters, punctuation and orthographic signs. An additional nine students, who were probably in an early stage of learning, simply presented “several exercises with English characters.” The calligraphy section concluded with seven students performing on writing

¹⁶⁴ The Examination Program is in AGN, AA, Boxes 914, 915.

¹⁶⁵ Caruso, “New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture,” 292-293.

¹⁶⁶ Article written by José Catalá y Codina. *El Publicista Mercantil*, n. 42, February 21, 1824.

slates the same exercises of the previous group, while the remaining eight children inscribed “upper and lower case alphabets and numbers in the sand.”¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

In December 1837, the teacher José Garcia del Valle listed nineteen students in the Estado General of the Cerrito public school, Montevideo Department. Every single boy was identified as an Oriental, although only six of them had Uruguayan-born parents.¹⁶⁸ Beyond mere bureaucratic labeling, the intentional conversion of a foreigner into an Uruguayan citizen actually involved a much longer, systematized process. In order to produce a durable result, the children had already been studying in that school for 27.5 months on average — two of them for 37 months and counting. The students had been introduced to an abstract curriculum which developed their basic intellectual and manual skills; they had been submitted to an intense classroom routine which focused on seemingly dry academic topics, such as grammar rules and multiplication by fractions. The students were also introduced to the concept of national community, and were certainly instructed to perfect themselves to become useful members of society. Thus the Estado General provides detailed information on each particular student, so that the General Inspector and the Minister of Government had in their hands an individualized assessment of each boy’s educational progress in the basic subjects of elementary

¹⁶⁷ AGN, AA, Boxes 914 and 915.

¹⁶⁸ One parent came from Tucumán (Argentina), five were identified as Portuguese, two were immigrants from the Canary Islands, the remaining five came from other Iberian provinces, such as Andalusia. AGN, AA, Box 905.

schooling. The document clearly identified each student as a future citizen in the making, a young Uruguayan male learning to read and write.

Many in nineteenth-century Uruguay understood education as an opportunity for individual and collective improvement. The new public school system should allow “capable men to cultivate themselves,” and then apply what they learned to the “welfare of society.”¹⁶⁹ The collective success of the patria, “the common mother of all individuals or countrymen,” rested on the continuous enhancement of the citizens’ physical and moral qualities.¹⁷⁰ According to Caruso and Roldán, the Lancasterian methods were “attractive precisely because they were seen as a tool for self-consciously constructing something new, something that allowed for a break with the colonial past.”¹⁷¹ The Uruguayan implementation of Lancaster’s teaching techniques and organizational rules was politically charged with modernity; it was endowed with the values of progress, rationalization, efficiency, productivity, meritocracy, and formal equality. From the viewpoint of these Uruguayan social engineers, the public school should submit as many children as possible to a standardized cycle of teaching, learning, and evaluating.¹⁷² If the monitorial school “civilized” the individual, incorporating him into the national

¹⁶⁹ A few weeks later its editors added that “the enlightened citizen is not only capable of applying his enlightenment to his own benefit and to the good of his family, but also to his country.” *El Universal*, n. 30, July 22, 1829; n. 55, August 22, 1829.

¹⁷⁰ Echeverría, *Manual de Enseñanza*, 376.

¹⁷¹ Caruso, and Roldán, “Introduction,” 23.

¹⁷² School “curriculum was to provide the community with young men and women upon whom the nation could rely for spiritual and material progress. Formal training would continue to furnish the means that would advance individuals, and their families would continue to be the beneficiaries of their children’s success. Yet the new republican ideology held that benefits from such advancement must be shared beyond the narrow confines of the private individual and familial worlds.” Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires*, 139.

community, it did so by strengthening his individual subjectivity, teaching him the appropriate habits, morals and faculties deemed useful for personal emancipation.¹⁷³

The focus on the individual was particularly evident in the teaching of writing. Learning to write was symbolically regarded as the culmination of elementary education. A student was ready to graduate the moment he completed the more advanced levels of handwriting practice. Other scholars have emphasized reading over writing, thus reducing formal education to the mass production of print culture consumers. A study solely dedicated to reading might underscore the making of a collectively shared set of values, or shared identities, but handwriting was an individual if not solitary activity. In the modern era, print entailed a negation of the self, but handwriting advanced an explicit presentation of the individual.¹⁷⁴ Thus each student, after finishing his *plana*, wrote his name at the bottom of the page; he could then admire his work for a few minutes before handing it to the teacher. The child was holding something he had just crafted, and his name was there, proof of his authorship. Even when performed in the classroom and in close proximity with other students, handwriting was an individualizing physical and mental exercise. As the students crafted their *planas*, the classroom was an assembly of dozens of children working in unison on a highly individualized activity. At that moment the classroom was a microcosm of what the state expected to build in the larger society: a collectivity of citizens. While they were working simultaneously on the same exercises, imitating models, the evaluation of their performance was dependent on their individual

¹⁷³ Tschurennev, "Diffusing useful knowledge," 258.

¹⁷⁴ Thornton, *Handwriting in America*, 4.

qualities. Thus the awards for the best planas were meant to show that some individuals performed better than others, for they presumably better internalized the standardized aesthetics, language skills, and values that the educational system believed they should internalize. The planas and the awards were respectively an incipient bureaucratic system of standardized evaluation and bourgeois meritocracy applied to the teaching of handwriting in elementary public schools. Writing was a straightforward approach to the evaluation of individual performance. Moreover, the sum of individual (student) competencies was a sign of adequate collective (school, educational system, state, society) performance.

The intra-classroom competition for educational distinction, the monitorial ranking system, and the individualized advancement through the Lancasterian levels of instruction, all oriented the student's subjectivity toward the identity of the modern individual. The Lancasterian system underscored achievement and advancement, organizing classroom relations around the ideals of diligence and productivity.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, the student was told to work hard, because his academic success and future standing in society depended on his academic dedication and attainment. Inspired by Saint Simon, to whom he attributed the motto "to each according to his ability, to each capacity according to his deeds," Echeverría instructed his young readers to reject the notion of birthright, because the only legitimate hierarchies in society were those

¹⁷⁵ Caruso, "New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture," 300, 303.

structured around the republican notions of “virtue and capacity.”¹⁷⁶ In September 1833, the Director of the *Colegio Oriental*, a private institution in Montevideo, forwarded an elaborate analysis of nine students whose studies were funded by the state. The document offers a less bureaucratic form of evaluation, which nonetheless focuses on the two individual traits we typically associate with meritocratic systems: talent and dedication. The former was expressed by the Spanish notion of *facilidad en aprender* (ease of learning), and the latter by *aplicación* (sustained effort). Thus the student Celedonia Perez was a real disappointment, for she had demonstrated “little effort and little ease.” Conversely, the Director identified the sisters Adelina and Carmen Varela as “very dedicated, specially the younger one,” and Carolina Gomez as “very hardworking, but with little facility.”¹⁷⁷ Uruguayan educators were certainly not blind to the children’s social background. At the moment of evaluation, however, all information on the pupils’ race, gender or class was concealed, because legitimate appraisal of educational performance should necessarily focus on the students’ “individual” traits and achievements.

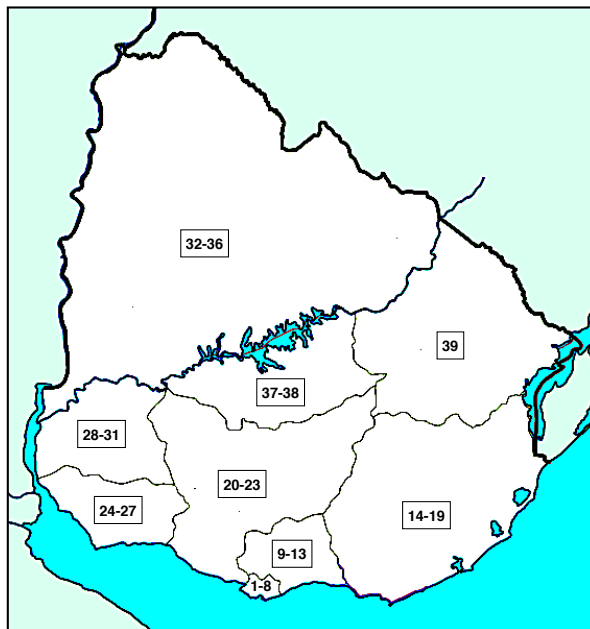
We in the twenty-first century know that modern educational systems are more likely to reproduce privilege than to offer a fair chance of upward mobility for the lower

¹⁷⁶ The sentence attributed to Saint Simon was a popular motto among nineteenth-century socialists. One of its follow-up statements was famously reproduced by Karl Marx in the Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875: “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” Echeverría’s *Manual de Enseñanza* as a whole was a guide to the care of the self, of one’s body and mind. Echeverría nonetheless justified social inequality on the presumed existence of a God-given hierarchical order which existed in all things. “Not all citizens are equal in intelligence and virtue, . . . [or] in labor capacity,” he argued, and those of superior capacity and intelligence may indeed “legitimately ascend to power.” Echeverría, *Manual de Enseñanza*, 392, 394-395.

¹⁷⁷ AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

classes. However, early nineteenth-century Uruguayans were not familiar with the dense body of research that has recently demonstrated how family background and inherited educational capital condition future academic success. In their minds, they were creating something new, something that would help them overcome the corporate, and overtly hierarchical, colonial society they so vehemently rejected. State officials accordingly perceived the monitorial school as the ideal institution to accomplish that ambitious goal, for it promised a low-cost, highly efficient institution engaged in the mass production of literate citizens. The Lancasterian system was an expression of the culture of modernity, which manifested itself in the form of a pedagogical method and an organizational set of rules. It is, nevertheless, true that the universal man of the Enlightenment was just another name for the Western European bourgeoisie man, just like most Uruguayan citizens were, unsurprisingly, males of European ancestry. Thus the monitorial system's claim to egalitarian and meritocratic universality was, admittedly, more an ideal than a reality, for the school favored certain demographic groups over others, in practice discriminating those who were more culturally distant from the universalistic models of modernity (more of this in chapter four).

Figure 2.1 - Map, list of Departments and public elementary schools, 1830-1840.

Department of Montevideo:

- 1- Montevideo Normal School;
- 2- Montevideo (girls);
- 3- Montevideo (girls “*de color*”);
- 4- Cordón;
- 5- Aguada;
- 6- Aguada (girls);
- 7- Cerrito;
- 8- Aldea;

Department of Canelones:

- 9- Canelones;
- 10- Canelones (girls);
- 11- San Juan Bautista;
- 12- Las Piedras;
- 13- Tala;

Department of Maldonado:

- 14- Maldonado;
- 15- Maldonado (girls);
- 16- San Carlos;
- 17- San Carlos (girls);
- 18- Minas;
- 19- Rocha;

Department of San José:

- 20- San José;
- 21- Florida;
- 22- Porongos;
- 23- San Borja del Yí (Guaraní settlement);

Department of Colonia:

- 24- Colonia del Sacramento;
- 25- Rosario;
- 26- Las Vacas;
- 27- Las Vívoras;

Department of Soriano:

- 28- Soriano;
- 29- Mercedes;
- 30- Mercedes (girls);
- 31- San Salvador (Dolores);

Department of Paysandú:

- 32- Paysandú;
- 33- Paysandú (girls);
- 34- Salto;
- 35- Salto (girls);
- 36- Tacuarembó;¹

Department of Durazno:

- 37- Durazno;
- 38- Durazno (girls);

Department of Cerro Largo:

- 39- Melo.

Note: ¹ The Department of Tacuarembó was created in 1837

Figure 2.2 - Estado General of the school for boys of Mercedes (copy), February 1834.

Escuela de Mercedes

Estado que manifiesta los alumnos de esta Escuela, y clases á que pertenecen.

Nombres						Nombres						Nombres					
Edad	Letras	Escritura	Arithm.	Geometria	Quimica	Edad	Letras	Escritura	Arithm.	Geometria	Quimica	Edad	Letras	Escritura	Arithm.	Geometria	Quimica
13	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0

Mercedes Feb. 11 de 1834.
(Firmado) Don Mateo de Guzmán
Es copia = *[Signature]*

Source: AGN, AA, Box 853A, Folder 12.

Figure 2.3 - *Estado de los útiles of the school for boys of Durazno, May 1834.*

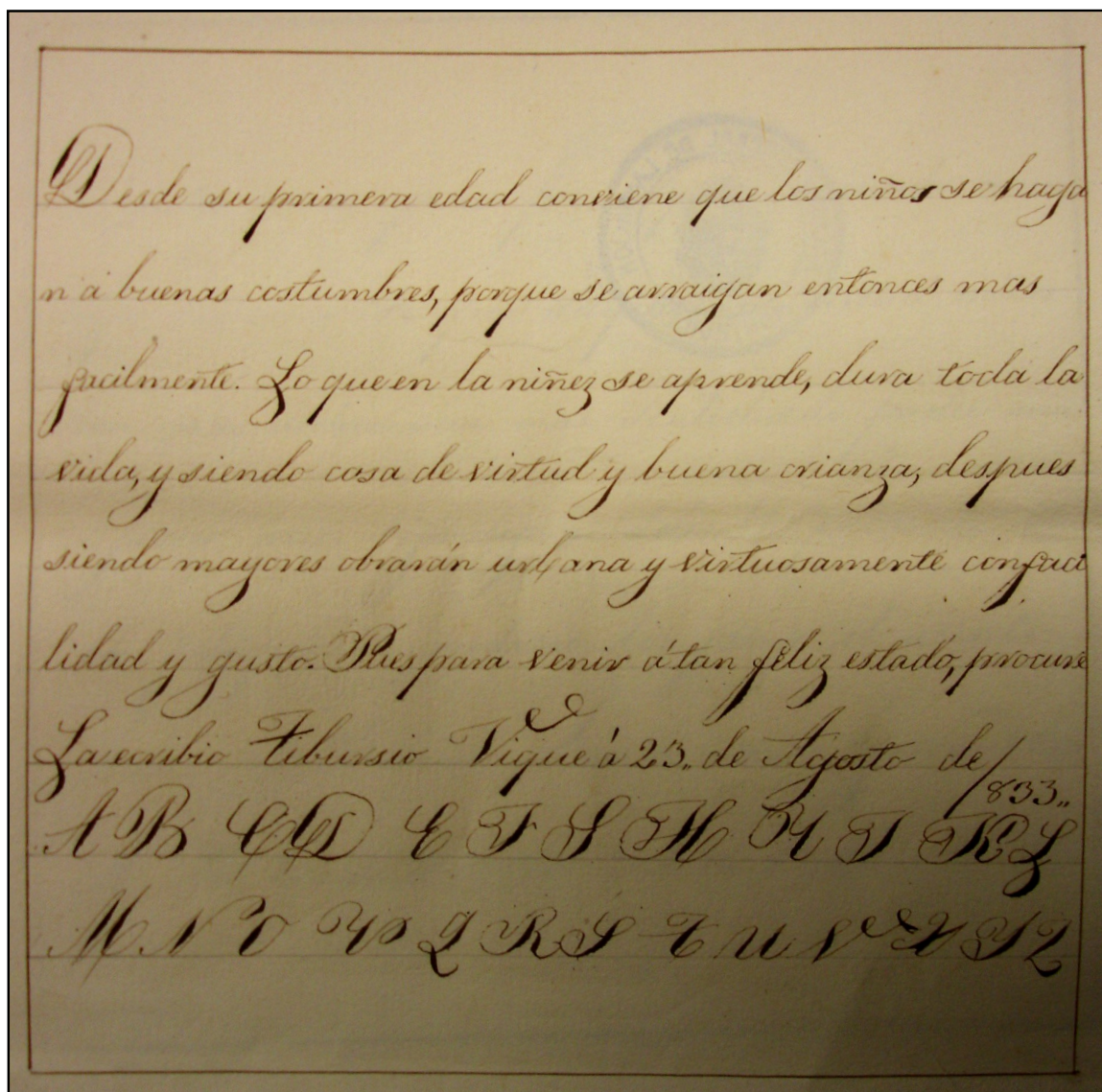
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Estado de los Útiles existentes en la Escuela de Niños del Durazno el día de la fecha

<i>Damos</i>	<i>Tablas delectura</i>	<i>Divanas</i>	<i>Capel</i>	<i>Enteros</i>	<i>Plumas</i>	<i>Lápices</i>	<i>Lagunas</i>	<i>Calcion</i>	<i>Dramat.</i>	<i>Tablas delectura</i>	<i>Licencia</i>	<i>Campanilla</i>	<i>Observaciones</i>
7	14	64	4	46	500	30	90	47	16	43	2	ca.	<p>Los útiles han sido remitidos con concepto a administrador de ellos a la escuela de niños.</p> <p>Las lecciones hay dos colecciones incompletas, faltan los alfileres grandes y chicos, y así todas las lecciones hasta la 5ª clase.</p> <p>Tres de las cuatro mesas le papel que habien este defecto, es malísimo, y le mayor defecto para la escuela por su proximidad.</p> <p>Además aun día botellas de tinta, esto a falta de que se ha gastado en estos dos años lo que se ha comprado de su género.</p> <p>También de remite de 40 centavos cuatro centavos y cuatro pesos para aquí, si los 100 reales, ninguno ha llegado a manos del que suscribe.</p> <p>Además aun los Dominos y agua.</p> <p>No hay escoba.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Durazno 28 de Mayo de 1834.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Miguel Ledon</i></p>

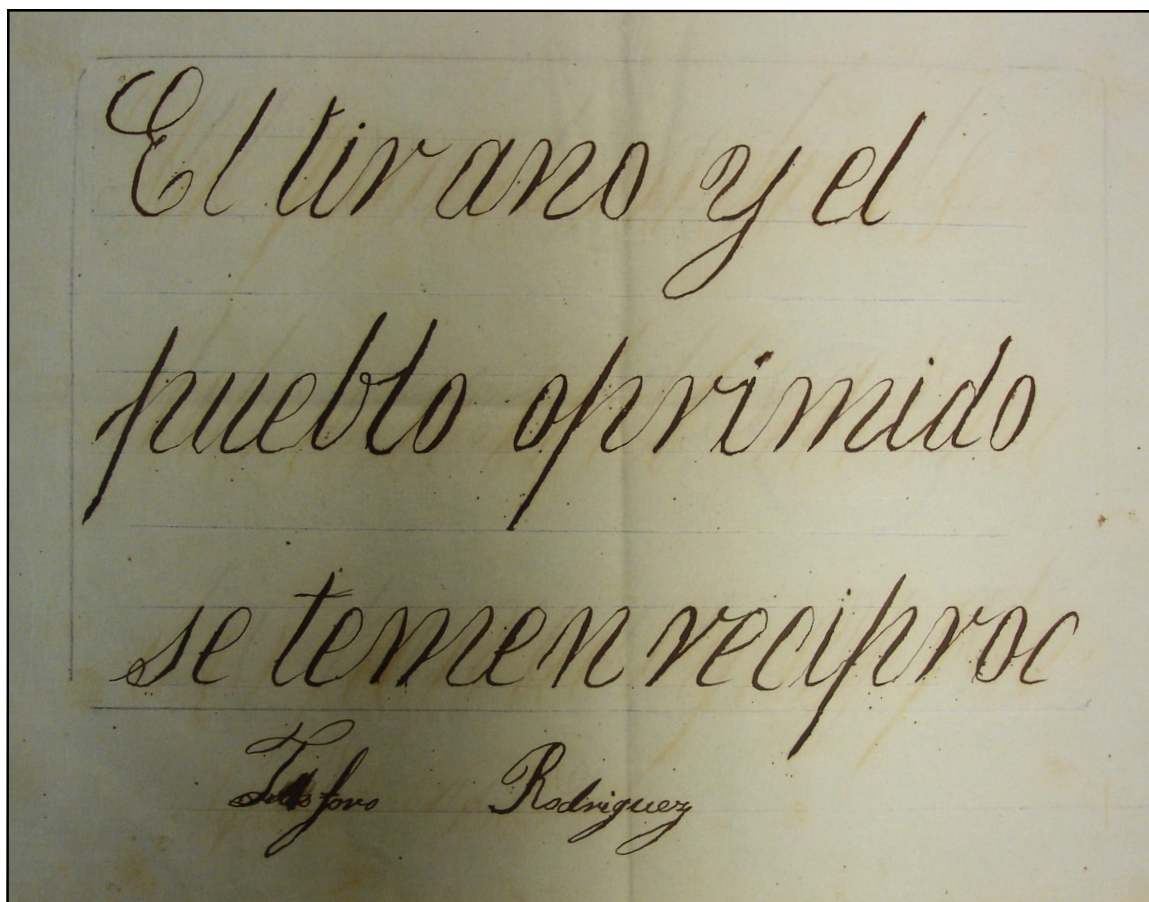
Source: AGN, AA, Box 856, Folder 6.

Figure 2.4 - Handwriting exercise by Tiburcio Vique, Soriano, August 1833.



Source: AGN, AA, Box 846A, Folder 12.

Figure 2.5 - Handwriting exercise by Telesforo Rodriguez, Maldonado, December 1831.



Source: AGN, AA, Box 824, Folder 9.

Chapter 3

Un Trabajo tan Penoso: the Public School Teacher Profession

Ventura Aguilar had been employed as a public school teacher in San José since early 1839, yet the state had failed to compensate his initial five months of work. The welfare of his family relied on his labor, and teaching was his only source of income. Aguilar seriously considered quitting his job, and accordingly expressed his frustration to the local Junta. Teaching was a demanding line of work, he argued. School administration, class preparation, and classroom activities consumed “nearly all of the time, not permitting [him] to work in any other occupation.” The few hours he had for himself were “imperatively” spent in the “repose that must follow such an arduous work” — *un trabajo tan penoso*, as he wrote in Spanish. Whereas he first intended to protest his late wages, the teacher spent most of his letter digressing about the grievous task of dealing with the students. Containing the children’s “natural vivacity” and enforcing the necessary silence for his lessons, that was in itself quite a challenge. However, “forcing them [the children] to retain them [the lessons] in the memory, and to practice them; to familiarize them with the rough and intractable rudiments of reading, calligraphy and calculus,” that was “a task greater than the twelve labors of Hercules.” Aguilar compared his work with that of a farmer in the “clearing of the lands that have never been cultivated.” Conversely, those working at the privileged higher education levels received a “prepared terrain.” College professors worked with youngsters who had been properly

conditioned to behave in the classroom, but elementary school teaching was still an exercise of patience and resilient dedication to the cultivation of “totally ignorant children.”¹ Thus Aguilar had been hired to cultivate basic scholarly skills and behaviors in children, exercising pedagogic authority under a mandate from the state. From the teacher’s perspective, that was the essence of his profession, and that was how he earned a living and supported his family.

If, in order to understand the Church and the State, the scholar must approach their respective priests, jurists, and bureaucrats, then the study of an educational system must necessarily extend to the teaching profession, examining its procedures of recruitment, vocational training, and function relative to society.² Public school teachers were at once agents and targets of governmental policies. In early modern Uruguay, they played a pivotal role in creating that new educational system, yet their endeavor naturally accompanied the incipient institutionalization of their own profession. As civil servants, they struggled to associate their private interests with the general progress of public education; they identified the good fortune of the school with their own careers, and therefore demanded decent wages and special government protection. Living in a largely rural society that still coexisted with high illiteracy rates, these *hombres de letras* exercised an occupation of relative prestige. More specifically, they were *preceptores de primeras letras*, who had been hired as *empleados del estado*. These professional educators were officially consecrated agents of modernity, for their primary duty

¹ Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Archivo Administrativo (AA), Box 918.

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Razões Práticas Sobre a Teoria da Ação* (Campinas: Papirus Editora, 1996), 120; Pierre Bourdieu, and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 56.

consisted in connecting the individualized student to the modern transformed church (the *estado*) and that “higher” universalistic culture of modernity (the *letras*).

In continuity with the evangelization efforts of their Jesuit and Franciscan predecessors, postcolonial teachers were priests of a modern kind, then engaged in the secularized mission of earthly salvation. That is not to say that the Church was completely absent from the new public school system, since priests played a pivotal role in its administration during the 1830s. Dámaso Larrañaga had already helped in the establishment of the original Lancasterian schools in the 1820s, while at least two General Directors, Ignacio Zufriategui and Lázaro Gadea, were clerics. The functional homology of Church and school was manifested in the continuity of pedagogical roles which existed between the priest and the teacher. Bourdieu believed the Jesuits were responsible for an early stage of laicization of education by “converting the theology of grace into a worldly, ‘society’ ideology of good grace.” At least from the Catholic point of view, the mundane cult of “literary prowess and scholastic triumph” was developed in the Jesuitic “self-enclosed microcosm ... of scholastic hierarchies.” In the modern era, significant thresholds of institutionalization and secularization of the profession were paid teaching, civil-service status and training, standardized education, and formal examinations. Operating as a branch of the state in most Western countries, the modern educational system effectively regulates the recruitment, training, career, and exercise of the profession of all credentialed teachers.³

³ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 55-56, 64, 129, 148-149.

Though public school teachers did their best to shape their professional activity, state officials substantially limited their autonomy. After all, their trade relied on government funding, regulation, consecration and formal delegation of pedagogic authority. Paraphrasing Bourdieu, the public school teachers' faculty to exercise pedagogic authority was legitimate, insofar as they had been invested by the state with the power to instill the social values and skills deemed worthy of reproduction, as prescribed by the universalistic models of modernity. Although teachers frequently added a personal touch to their classroom activities, their primary duties was established by a higher authority, resulting, in the Uruguayan case, in the imposition of Lancasterian methods and ensuing practices of external inspection and evaluation which were designed to enforce the compulsory orthodoxy.⁴ Notwithstanding their limited autonomy, Uruguayan public school teachers still clung to the profession, for its official standing granted them some symbolic ascendancy over the general population. As a matter of fact, early modern teachers avidly asserted their civil servant status, which they triggered to protect themselves from the aggression of rival figures of authority at the communal level.

Public school teachers had been hired to advance the educational policies of the Uruguayan Republic, but they did so while stepping into the realm of the institution traditionally responsible for the upbringing of children, the family. Bourdieu and Passeron had a mature educational system in mind when writing the *Reproduction on Education*, as their empirical data exclusively relied on the French case of the 1950s and

⁴ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, xx, 5-11, 57-58.

1960s. That educational system had long secured its ascendancy over premodern childrearing practices, which probably explains why the authors' notion of pedagogic authority was centered on teachers whose professional standing rested on rationalized training and selection processes that operated in relative autonomy from the rest of society. The French State had achieved almost full control over the training and selection of its educational agents; it had already acquired the virtual monopoly of the credentialing of teachers, of the legitimate delegation of pedagogic authority. By contrast, although parents had been labeled as inadequate educators in early modern Uruguay, the partial transference of the *patria potestas* to the teacher was not yet compulsory, hence their significant weight and influence over teachers. The Uruguayan educational system was on its early stages of development, and the Normal School of the 1830s mostly operated as a model elementary institution rather than a proper training facility. The training and selection of teachers was therefore on a very incipient stage of rationalization, and, by modern standards, still managed in a quite amateurish fashion. As a result, the Ministry of Government did not have full control over the selection of its educational agents, and occasionally even permitted the local communities and the parents to choose their own teachers. Unsurprisingly, it was crucial for these central state agents to earn the favor of the *padres de familia*, who in turn should be persuaded to voluntarily delegate a share of their parental rights, so that their sons and daughters could spend a few hours a day under the supervision of a professional educator.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the terms of that delegation of pedagogic authority, which in the Uruguayan case came both from the state and the

parents. Whereas the former underscored the teachers' professional training, experience, and compliance with governmental goals of method standardization, the latter still focused on more traditional childrearing matters, hence the frequent conflicts concerning the teachers' disciplinary action and the use of physical violence in the classroom. Moreover, the path toward earning that delegation from the state significantly differed from the parents' subjective assessment of teachers. If the state expected its candidate teachers' to formally certify their pedagogical knowledge and skills, the parents relied on the more intuitive notion of *confianza* (trust), which was developed in informal face-to-face interactions, such as visiting the school, talking with the teacher, or simply observing the educational progress and behavior of a child at home. The analysis of that delegation of pedagogic authority will help us better understand the teachers' social role in early modern Uruguay. They were professional educators whose occupational identity developed in the intersections of the so-called public and private spheres; they were civil servants, but also modern priests and surrogate parents who connected the individualized child to the imagined national community, to the state, and to idealized models of modernity.

The Delegation of Pedagogic Authority

On January 2, 1840, the newspaper *El Constitucional* published an angry letter from Jinez Alvarez, a victim of a street brawl in Montevideo. Alvarez had been "struck by a man ... in the public street, by the docks ... and at the sight of many people." The unnamed aggressor "had publicly offended me," he protested, "grabbing my hair and

throwing me to the ground.” Why would anyone attack him at broad daylight? “Because reprimanding a nephew of mine, a carter who depends on me, I hit him for a foul.”⁵

Whereas the physical punishment of his nephew was, in Alvarez’s opinion, entirely legitimate, his assaulter had trampled “the rights I have over someone who depends on me,” and that “no one can dispute.”⁶ In a society such as nineteenth-century Uruguay, the head of the household held authority over his dependents, including wife, sons and daughters, but also servants, slaves, and other family members under his roof. The head of the household was allowed to exploit the labor of his dependents, and was expected to exercise disciplinary action within certain socially acceptable limits that nonetheless extended to the use of physical violence. In that hierarchical configuration, “the head of the household (the adult male) has authority delegated ultimately from divine sovereignty,” as his patriarchal commands invoked the presence of God — the celestial father — in the family.⁷ Alvarez capitalized on his nephew’s work as a carter, and believed he had the right to correct the boy in public with a *rebenque*, a class of whip. Yet his aggressor had violated social order, embarrassing Alvarez in the streets of Montevideo for all to see. But the authority of the *pater familias* was far from absolute, and not only because he could be held accountable by society, as seen after the public reaction of the anonymous assaulter, but also because his authority rested on the principle of asymmetrical reciprocity. If the father was responsible for the administration of the

⁵ *Rebencazo* was the word in the original, which means Aguilar’s nephew was beaten with a *rebenque*, a class of whip.

⁶ *El Constitucional*, n. 300, February 1, 1840.

⁷ John Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society: The institutional origins of mass schooling in Sweden* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), 111.

household, where he acted as supreme judge, it was his duty to provide for his dependents, furnishing them food, clothes and shelter. An additional obligation was preparing youngsters to adulthood and to society, educating them, orienting them toward a profession, and, perhaps, even arranging a future marriage.

It was possible for the head of the household to delegate a share of his rights and duties to third-party individuals and institutions. For centuries, families had sent their sons and daughters to monasteries, convents, or other organizations controlled by the Church, including elementary schools and universities. Alternatively, sons and daughters moved to live with their grandparents, uncles, godparents, or other members of the extended family, who in turn became responsible for their upbringing. A practice that was still alive in early modern Uruguay was the delegation of parental authority to master artisans. The Uruguayan National Archive (AGN) holds several contracts between the heads of household and the craftsmen of Montevideo; these documents formally enunciate the terms of a delegation of parental authority for educational purposes. In February 1839, Margarita Freyre had transferred an indigenous boy of approximately eleven years of age, “named Leocadio Freyre, to whom I am godmother and have as a son,” to Antonio Manuel Pintos, who should introduce the child to the “bottler craft in the space of three years.” In exchange for the apprentice’s labor, Pintos had committed to “give him home and food, remaining with me [Margarita Freyre] the obligation to dress him.” Furthermore, Pintos was responsible for the boy’s “education and good treatment

as if he were [his] son.”⁸ Those words identify the transference of the indigenous boy — probably an orphan victim of the ethnocide perpetrated during the 1830s against the native communities of the Banda Oriental — from one household to the next, where he should nonetheless live as if he were a son in a new family. The very same terms were employed by Felipe Silveira, whose contract had commanded him to “teach the bottler craft to the *morenito* Severino Vazquez, ... being of my responsibility to give him food, home, and to treat him ... as if he were [my] son.”⁹

As a rule, the contracts clearly identified the pedagogical goals of that partial transference of parental authority. In March 1839, Francisca Gatell handled the young Juan Planella to the master tailor Antonio Lopes. The boy was a “godson of said Doña Francisca, [who was] in charge of his education.” In accordance with the contract, Gatell delegated a share of her parental rights to Lopes, who, in turn, should “teach the craft he exercises in its entirety, [and] give him food and clean clothes.” On the one hand, Gatell was forbidden to withdraw the boy “from the instruction assigned to him by this contract” for the space of three years. On the other hand, she was allowed to unilaterally cancel that legal agreement in the event of “poor treatment by Lopes.” On his part, the master artisan was prohibited to employ the youngster in any professional activity unrelated to his apprentice status; he should not employ the boy “in things different from the proposed object [of this contract], or educate him in a way that tends to corrupt him.”¹⁰ Implied in

⁸ An interesting coincidence, this contract was cosigned by Juan Manuel de la Sota, who, apart from teaching at the Normal School, was *Oficial Primero* in the local Police Department for a few months in 1839. AGN, AA, Box 913.

⁹ AGN, AA, Box 924.

¹⁰ AGN, AA, Box 914/915.

the notion of “poor treatment” was the excessive use of physical punishment, which characterized an abuse of the delegated authority. Thus, from the viewpoint of the godmother, the contract contained the necessary provisions that safeguarded the boy’s moral upbringing, for it stipulated the appropriate terms of his transference to the care of a new family.

Upper and upper middle class families had access to better educational alternatives, preferably sparing their (white biological) sons and daughters from manual labor. In their efforts to persuade parents of privileged background to deliver their children to the administration of a complete stranger, private instructors highlighted their *honor* and the notion of *trust* while offering classes in reading, writing, dance, music, fencing, and foreign languages in the Uruguayan press.¹¹ The examined newspaper ads show that the teacher’s honor was actually enhanced by the development of a relationship of trust with the parents. Thus an unnamed French language instructor was charging five *pesos* for his lessons, yet he was willing to negotiate his prices with the “individuals who want to honor him with their trust.” The very same words were used earlier in the decade by an “*artista dibujante*,” who affirmed that those who could “honor him with their trust would be satisfied with his work.”¹² In January 1841, the Directors of the *Establecimiento de Educación para Señoritas en la Aguada* announced that the

¹¹ In March 1836, while applying for an Alcalde position in Montevideo, Eugenio Aberastury explained what he understood as *honor*: He was “convinced, for as long as he knew himself, of what dictates [the concept of] good citizen, good friend, and good father.” Aberastury believed his “behavior was, if not distinguished, at least honorable and impeccable,” and that one could observe in the performance of his “duties as a public man whenever the nation has employed him, but also as a private man.” As a result, he was satisfied to find his “name in a good place” among his peers. AGN, Box 882/A, Folder 10.

¹² *El Constitucional*, n. 1016, July 5, 1842; *El Universal*, n. 259, May 5, 1830.

“education of the most beautiful half of humankind has deserved a particular attention from governments and families.” The school had been open for nearly two years, yet, in its short operational history, it had captivated “the many parents who had honored [its] directors, entrusting them with the education of their daughters.”¹³

In order to entice parents, some newspaper ads provided detailed descriptions of the instructors’ teaching methods, pedagogical skills, individualized care, and school installations. Publishing in the *Observador Oriental* in January 1829, the director of the School of First Letters for Girls promised that the “families that wish to entrust her with that precious and important task, which is the education of girls in their early years, will be satisfied with her zeal, performance, and method.”¹⁴ The School of Commerce of Buenos Aires announced in the Uruguayan *El Universal* that its director had received “unequivocal demonstrations of approval not only from the parents of their students, but also from the Superior Government.” While teaching students “to read, write, count, Christian doctrine, [and] basic notions of grammar and urbanity,” the instructors had demonstrated a “particular care with the youngsters who are entrusted to them.” Finally, the director reassured parents of the “good treatment, dedication, and cleanness” that prevailed in that educational establishment.¹⁵ In April 1843, the general public would be happy to know that the *Colegio para Señoritas*, managed in Montevideo by Señorita Fabriquettes, had been recently installed in “a spacious, comfortable, and salubrious

¹³ The owners of this establishment, Camilo Rancé and Eulalia Marti de Rancé, published a second advertisement a few months later, once again stressing the “*confianza*” that the school had inspired in the public. *El Constitucional*, n. 596, January 27, 1841; n. 677, May 8, 1841.

¹⁴ *Observador Oriental*, n. 9, January 15, 1829.

¹⁵ *El Universal*, n. 267, May 11, 1830.

location,” so that the director was ready for the “señores padres de familia who would like to entrust her with the education of their daughters.”¹⁶

The master artisans and the private instructors of Montevideo had something in common, for they had all received a delegation of parental authority for educational purposes. Evidently, the nature of the offered education varied according to the social background of those involved in the transaction. In order to learn a new profession, some non-white boys had been transferred to a new household. For three or more years, they would live and work as artisan apprentices under the continuous supervision of a surrogate father, the master craftsman. Children of privileged background were however handled to the administration of a private instructor, but only for a limited amount of time and in specialized educational environments, where they would learn a different set of intellectual and physical skills (those more clearly linked to the aesthetic tastes and requirements of the upper classes). Whereas the private instructors established an informal relationship of trust and honor with the parents, the master artisans went as far as signing a binding contract, which formally enunciated the terms of that transference of parental authority for pedagogical purposes.

If the above newspaper ads and private contracts evinced an exchange of educational services between families or individuals, public school teachers evoked a more explicit connection with the state and the imagined national community. As *civil servants* (*empleados civiles*), public school teachers were invested by the state with the authority to perform a *civic* duty, the education of the future *citizenry*. Like the priest

¹⁶ *El Constitucional*, n. 1269, April 19, 1843.

before the Church, these specialized civil servants represented a moral body greater than themselves: the young Uruguayan Republic and its incipient educational system.¹⁷ Indeed, public school teachers were legally submitted to the *patria*, yet their distinctive status did not exempt them from acknowledging the traditional authority of the *patriarch*. As a result, they required a dual-delegation of pedagogic authority: one from the state, and another from the parents.¹⁸ Thus, even after being officially consecrated by the central state, teachers should perform their duties in accordance with the expectations of the *padres de familia*. When the Junta of San José lectured one of its teachers on the general goals of public education in March 1837, it distinctly enunciated the dual-delegation principle: “the teachers, [who have been] commissioned by the [state] authorities and delegated by the parents or tutors of the youth, must educate their students in the principles of religion, public morality, and the rudiments of the first letters.” The teachers had been hired by the state and authorized by the family to instill in the students the values and skills that allegedly better prepared them for a moral life in society, assisting them in becoming “good citizens, good sons and better fathers.”¹⁹ Thus the family and the national community were clearly located at both ends of the equation: at the origin of the teacher’s authority, and at his pedagogic goals.

It would be quite a stretch to assume that the family and the state were competing institutions with overlapping functions and conflicting interests. Quite the opposite, the

¹⁷ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 63-64.

¹⁸ Private schools still needed permission from the state to operate, a *sui generis* form of governmental delegation in the form of a special license.

¹⁹ AGN, AA, Box 895.

two institutions worked as complementary patriarchal sources of authority, at once regulating and legitimating teachers' educational mission. Notwithstanding the occasional disputes that opposed them, including the common disagreements over the appointment of a teacher (more of this in chapter four), the public school in fact helped connect the family unit to the educational policies of the state. As points of intersection between the public and private spheres, teachers acted as policy transmission nodes in the ascendant and descendant continuity of governance (as enunciated by Michel Foucault, see chapter one). They worked for the cultivation of the individualized child, the future member of the national community, yet the making of the modern citizen also implied in preparing an obedient son to become a future head of the household.

The parents generally recognized the legitimacy of the state-sponsored educational system. However, they still cultivated their own personal relationships with the teachers, whose trustworthiness, honor and morality were under constant scrutiny. As their private sector counterparts, public school teachers were also bonded to the ideals of honor and trust, though in their case these values at once mediated their interactions with the parents and their submission to the state. In August 1835, the teacher Francisca García de Perichon understood how her duties had been “imposed by her office, and by the trust that has been given to her;” she should at once comply with the “hopes of the government and the public.”²⁰ When Emilio Duclos, teacher of the Aguada, was forced to defend his honor against a smearing campaign, he explained that “it has been six years since he started serving the state as a teacher,” and during that time “he has neither deserved any

²⁰ AGN, AA, Box 872, Folder 10.

reprimand from his superiors, nor given any reason of complaint from the parents His dedication and assiduity were noticeable in the public examinations he had presented, [and] the *vecinos* of the Aguada may say if he corresponded or not to the trust that they had given to him.”²¹ Duclos claimed to have always lived as an honored citizen, a good husband and father, and presented himself as a good role model for his students. Later in the decade, the *vecinos* of Melo openly supported an unnamed candidate teacher, because that individual “leads them to believe that he is capable, and deserves their trust.”²² An anonymous “citizen, worshiper of freedom and the enlightenment,” expressed in the press the “pleasure of the *padres de familia* in seeing these precious [educational] establishments,” which would someday produce to the “republic wise citizens capable of correctly directing the destinies of the patria.” Published in *El Universal*, the article however admonished the teachers who, “finding themselves far away from the government[’s watch], abuse the trust they received, forgetting the great commitment that they had made to the people.”²³

Earning the parents’ trust was easier said than done, hence the active participation of other state agencies and various figures of authority in a concerted effort to persuade families to send their sons and daughters to school. As suggested by the *Fiscal General* Francisco Solano Antuña in November 1837, it was common practice for the government to “stimulate . . . the police, judges and parish priests” to compel “the indolent parents”

²¹ AGN, AA, Box 904.

²² AGN, AA, Box 925.

²³ *El Universal*, n. 186, January 30, 1830; n. 194, February 10, 1830; n. 197, February 13, 1830.

for that purpose.²⁴ Thus, after the inauguration of the School for Colored Girls of Montevideo, the General Inspector recommended “the police to order the parents or masters of the *libertas* to send them to school, making them understand the advantages that have been provided by the benevolence of the government.”²⁵ In that same year, during an investigation process against the teacher Gabriel Lezaeta, the vecinos of Las Piedras enunciated the persuasive arguments they had once heard from their parish priest Lázaro Gadea. According to José Rodríguez Curbelo, the priest “had admonished those attending [Mass] to entrust their sons” to the new teacher, while, on his part, Martín Betancourt remembered what “Father Gadea had said, that the teacher ... was a man of principle, and would make progress” with the students. The *Teniente Alcalde* Gregorio Betancourt testified that “the priest ... had recommended him [the teacher] from the pulpit, inspiring us to trust him, and telling us that he [Gadea] would answer for [the teacher’s] conduct.” Although Gadea later became a vocal enemy of Lezaeta, he admitted that he had once “encourage[d] the parents to bring their children to school.” While addressing “the evangelical word to his parishioners,” the cleric had declared that, with the arrival of the new teacher, the government had “given you [the parishioners] an unequivocal proof that it looks upon you with paternal eyes; that it aspires to your happiness, and wishes you well.” Gadea had also certified Lezaeta’s “honesty, capability, love and dedication ... , which will make him worthy of the trust that is given to him.” At the end of his homily, the priest concluded asking the parents of Las Piedras to “bring

²⁴ AGN, AA, Box 902; Box 835, Folder 11.

²⁵ AGN, AA, Box 861.

your sons to the public school, so that they may be educated on man's great obligations ... concerning God, their selves and society."²⁶

The Teachers' Limited Pedagogic Autonomy

The dual-delegation principle at once sanctioned and constricted the power of the teacher over students. Holding a mandate from both the state and the parents, the teacher's limited pedagogic agency carried "the impossibility ... of freely defining the mode of imposition, the content imposed and the public on which it imposes it."²⁷ The Uruguayan State had imposed on its teachers the Lancasterian method, a standardized school curriculum and evaluation system, supplied them with its chosen school materials, and entrusted them with a schoolhouse at a predetermined village or town, therefore delimiting their target population. Since formal elementary education was not yet compulsory, parents were allowed to choose whether their children attended school or not, further defining the teachers' target demographic. But unlike the General Inspector and the Normal School Teacher, parents rarely bothered if these specialized civil servants were up-to-date with the latest pedagogical methods or fashionable calligraphic styles; they were more frequently worried about the "moral" upbringing and careful treatment of their children. Uruguayan parents were particularly wary about disciplinary excesses, and

²⁶ Gadea also lectured his parishioners on "the progresses of the enlightenment, and the deplorable consequences of ignorance," thereby encouraging the parents to observe their "sacred obligation of instructing their children."

²⁷ "The principle of the limited autonomy of pedagogic agencies." Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 27.

a few of them even forwarded complaints against abusive teachers.²⁸ In other words, the same individuals who had delegated a share of their parental rights to the public school teacher had also worked to impose certain limits on his pedagogic agency.

The hierarchical structure of the traditional patriarchal family provided teachers and students with an instantly recognizable model. In Bourdieu's words, the father represented "the power of society as a force in the domestic group, and so is able to make sue of juridical sanctions in imposing his pedagogic action."²⁹ Moreover, with the delegation came "the tendency to re-establish with any person invested with pedagogical authority the archetypical relationship with the father," which is so strong that whoever "teaches, however young, tends to be treated as a father."³⁰ The diffusion of that principle was widespread in the Hispanic world. For instance, the textbook *Tratado de las Obligaciones del Hombre* oriented students to respect their parents, who are "in charge of our education," but also teachers, who equally deserved "filial obedience and sincere respect."³¹ According to the Normal School Teacher Juan Manuel de la Sota, public school teachers were the "first fathers of the fatherland" (the *primeros padres de la patria*).³²

Despite temporarily ruling in the name of the family and the republican state (the postcolonial father of all fathers), the teacher's disciplinary power was far from absolute.

²⁸ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 63-64.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 6.

³⁰ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 19.

³¹ Juan de Escoiquiz, *Tratado de las Obligaciones del Hombre* (Barcelona: Imprenta de los Hermanos Torras, 1821), 71, 73-74.

³² AGN, Box 845A, Folder 12.

To begin with, the students themselves were very creative in their everyday attempts to escape the vigilance of the teacher. In November 1832, for example, the director of the *Colegio Oriental*, a private school for girls in Montevideo, reported that the Normal School students had been throwing rocks at the girls in a shared courtyard, where they met “at the time of fetching water.” As a solution to the problem, the two teachers eventually reached an agreement concerning the appropriate schedule for performing that task.³³ But the main limit the teacher’s authority was the dual-delegation principle, which entailed an authorization that set the terms upon which the teacher was allowed to exert physical and symbolic violence on children. Disciplinary action abuses were perceived as a violation of that delegation, compromising the relationship of honor and trust that encompassed all social actors and institutions involved.

There are a few examples in the AGN of the disputes that emerged among teachers, parents and the state regarding the excessive use of physical violence in the classroom. A common outcome of these conflicts was the withdrawal of children from the school, a parental decision that further restricted the teacher’s pedagogic autonomy.³⁴ In February 1833, the Police Lieutenant of San Carlos protested that his ten years-old nephew had been victimized by a “cruel punishment ... perpetrated on his personhood.”

³³ AGN, AA, Box 834, Folder 12.

³⁴ In another example of violence in the classroom, the Extramuros Education Commission reported that the “son of Don Vicente Gonzalez” had been beaten by the teacher of the Aguada, Emilio Duclos, causing that “good vecino to withdraw ... his boys from the school.” Duclos should be fired, the Commission argued, being aware of “the influence that the teachers have on their disciples,” and that their “customs, manners and character ... are imprinted in the tender hearts” of the students. Renewing its efforts to discharge Duclos in December 1837, the Commission once more communicated the “unrestrained punishment that that teacher had inflicted on one of its students, the son of ... Don Gonzalo Rodrigues de Brito, member of this Commission.” AGN, AA, Box 903; Box 904; Box 905.

The teacher Juan Placido Faxardo had assaulted the child with “a terrible strike on his jaw . . . , breaking a tooth, resulting in great inflammation.” That was apparently not an isolated incident, because the parents of San Carlos collectively denounced “the lack of restraint with which he leads his students,” and were unhappy “to see their tender sons with [beating] marks on their bodies.” The noticeable abuses were “diametrically opposed to the beneficial intentions of the Superior Government in establishing public schools,” forcing parents to transfer their children to a nearby private establishment, for they could no longer tolerate “such punishments, which are incompatible with [the boys’] tender ages.”³⁵ Writing in March 1835, the father Agustin Guareh provided a thorough account of his son’s misfortunes with the teacher of Melo, Department of Cerro Largo. One day, after the return of “his son Agustin from the public school which he daily attends,” Guareh heard him complain “about a few blows that his teacher had just given him.” The boy described the scene, telling “that the boy Santiago, a *pardo* that goes to the same school, was laughing, that some [other] boys were doing the same, and he [Agustin] was next to said boy [Santiago].” At that moment, “the teacher stood up, and, wielding a thick knotty club, stroke three times . . . , leaving him with some swollen marks.” The father attached a medical certificate to his letter, denouncing the “barbarian means with which said teacher has punished the boy . . . , and in a manner that endangers the boy’s health.” Guareh decided to remove his son from the school, effectively canceling the delegation of parental authority. That could have been the end of the problem, but the

³⁵ Juan Placido Faxardo later sent a written apology to the boy’s mother. The teacher nonetheless complained that the Education Commission had too often mistreated him, as if he were not living “in a Republic, but in the most autocratic Monarchy.” AGN, AA, Box 839A, Folder 12; Box 837, Folder 8.

letter went on with a smearing campaign against the teacher, who was not only accused of having an affair with the mother of said boy Santiago, but also of addressing all “his prayers to Bacchus.”³⁶

Denoting the increasing objection to physical violence in the school, an article published in *El Constitucional* in 1843 advised teachers to avoid cruel penalties when engaging in the “difficult and important science of education.”³⁷ Rather than instilling fear, a “degrading and vicious” feeling, teachers should alternatively reach out to the students, winning their hearts and minds. In order to increase pedagogical productivity, the teacher should create a friendly classroom environment, helping the students to understand that he simply wanted them to become “good and instructed.” The article described the child as a delicate, tender, and malleable being, receptive to both positive and negative stimuli. Even the “withering look,” the anonymous author alerted, “may cause irreparable damage,” hence the necessary caution “regarding the way of reprimanding.” Whereas carefully treated pupils would definitely develop the most “tender and delicate ... feelings,” the “brusque and rough” punishments could only harden their “moral sense.” Thus, rather than the students’ defective character, violence in the classroom in fact revealed the teacher’s own methodological shortcomings. The only tolerable penalties were those proportionate to the “physical constitution of the offender,”

³⁶ Though unnamed in the documents, the teacher was Francisco Domingo Ricary. AGN, AA, Box 865, Folder 5.

³⁷ The article was published in two parts in a section dedicated to “excerpts from foreign newspapers,” therefore copied from an unknown foreign source. The excerpts were possibly taken from a review of an English book referenced as *Manual de las Escuelas Primarias*. The text also contains several quotes from the *Letters from Hofwyl*, a book that was originally published in England in 1842. *El Constitucional*, n. 1287, May 10, 1843; n. 1289, May 12, 1843.

taking into consideration “the physical frailty or imperfect health” of the student. Nevertheless, and against “the general practice of physical punishment,” the article condemned “all arbitrary and violent punishments, which are seemingly produced by the whim of the teacher, and that are frequently dictated by his passions.” Physical punishments should be regarded as a last resort, never used to degrade the students’ physical and moral constitution, but to get them back on track toward individual cultivation. From that viewpoint, moderate disciplinary action was meant to help the child become a better person; it was not justified as an instrument of “repression,” but as a means of redirecting the child toward the highly idealized pedagogical goals of the institution.

If this dissertation has so far equated the modern teacher with the priest and the father, the proponents of social control theory identify him with the policeman and the prison officer. The school emerges, for them, as a “repressive” institution, a model penitentiary for kids which aims at controlling the body and mind of the child, preventing the future adult from behaving in undesired ways. If the purpose of the school was to rescue children from their inherited misery and ignorance while simultaneously preserving traditional social order, then the modern judicial system only imprisoned criminals in order to reeducate them, presumedly preparing them for future reinsertion as useful members of society. Admittedly, the analogy is not totally unfounded. As a matter of fact, the Normal School of Montevideo even had its own prison cell, and at least one of its teachers was particularly keen to sanction his unruly students with detention. When De la Sota reported the jailbreak of four students on November 10, 1832, he quickly

resorted to the Minister of Government, asking the state to endorse his plan to impose further penalties on the young fugitives. According to the teacher, his ability “to form good citizens” would be severely compromised if his judicial powers were not sufficiently supported by the state and the parents.³⁸

In the early modern era, the jurisdictional boundaries that clearly distinguished the school from the police were still openly contested. In 1837, the Ministry of Government analyzed a project that would secure greater power to the police in dealing with children led astray. No longer tolerating the “abandonment of the young students found in the streets, delivered to gambling and plunder,” the Police Department of Montevideo requested permission to seize the little delinquents, holding “fathers, tutors, or those in charge of the family” accountable “for the indicated offenses.” Yet the Ministry of Government promptly rejected all propositions, ordering the police to simply advise teachers to better control their school attendance, and parents to collect their sons from the streets.³⁹ The general belief among Uruguayans was that the child belonged in the school, not under the jurisdiction of the police. Teachers even disapproved the mere proximity of their students with such “repressive” institutions, which projected a negative influence over their moral upbringing. In June 1835, the Junta of Montevideo recommended the local school for girls for relocation, and detailed the many

³⁸ According to De la Sota, “a youngster called Ramón Trillo, accompanied by an unknown black” person, had cracked open “the main door of the Normal School,” releasing the four prisoners. AGN, AA, Box 834, Folder 12; Box 835, Folder 11.

³⁹ Later in August 1839, “some padres de familia” complained “about a few youngsters who pervert themselves in certain cafés,” so that the “*Intendente General*, accompanied by a [police] escort, recurred all the cafés,” expelling those who wasted their time “in lessons of vice.” AGN, AA, Box 899A; *El Constitucional*, n. 161, August 14, 1839.

“inconveniences” of its current building shared with the police.⁴⁰ The same problem occurred in Maldonado, where in February 1837 the so-called “house of the state” at once harbored the “police, public school, and court offices.”⁴¹ According to the Junta, the “house of the state ... is incompatible with that [educational] establishment,” because some of its rooms were also used as prison cells.⁴² Apparently, that was not an isolated problem, because the local *Jefe Político*, a parish priest and the Education Commission jointly complained in early 1838 about the transference of some police facilities to the schoolhouse of Rocha, resulting in severe “damages ... to the youth, due to the incompatibility that exists between an establishment of public instruction and a prison for offenders and barracks for soldiers.”⁴³

Evidently, this dissertation cannot simply dismiss the disciplinary role of the teacher. However, in order to properly understand the teacher’s judicial powers, one must clearly identify the source of his authority and attributed pedagogical role. The dual-delegation of pedagogic authority, simultaneously rooted in the family and the state, and the historical and functional continuity that links the teacher to the priest, shed light over the modern educator, revealing a profession that transcended the role of mere “repressor.” Moreover, one must recognize the effects of the long-term process of autonomization of the educational field, which entailed in the (relative) autonomy and increasing specialization of the school and respective educational agents. Uruguayan teachers

⁴⁰ AGN, AA, Box 869, Folder 3.

⁴¹ AGN, AA, Box 894.

⁴² AGN, AA, Box 901.

⁴³ AGN, AA, Box 907.

perfectly understood that their delegated powers only existed for the performance of a specialized pedagogical role, therefore circumscribed in time and space to the classroom environment. Once the students had left the school, teachers' authority was once more reverted to the parents or other state agencies. Thus, in April 1837, the teacher of San José, Francisco Baños, was offended by Luis Chausiño, a member of the local Junta who had ordered him to control his students beyond their time in school. Chausiño had complained that the boys "were fighting in the streets, that they did not go to Mass, and about other matters that are insignificant to the teacher," for he "does not believe [such issues] concern his duties."⁴⁴ His authority, Baños argued, was valid "for as long as these [students] are in the school; that outside of it, [what the boys did in their free time mattered] to the police, parents, priest, or to the señores of the Junta, if they want to invest themselves with the faculties of the parents or tutors to whom concern what they demand from the teacher."⁴⁵

Scholars have presented formal schooling as a means for social control, not rarely underscoring the ruling classes' obsession with the disciplining of children. On the one hand, "moderate" spanking and detention were still socially acceptable, and Uruguayan students certainly experienced more frequent and unchallenged punishments than the selected cases indicate, not to mention that the Lancasterian method in itself implied in strict control of movement and behavior. On the other hand, an increasing number of Uruguayans believed that the harsher penalties were detrimental to the child's physical

⁴⁴ AGN, AA, Box 896.

⁴⁵ AGN, AA, Box 895.

and moral education, and the testimonies from the parents and the exemplary newspaper article published in *El Constitucional* show that the teachers' power to impose discipline was subjected to external control.⁴⁶ That said, it would be anachronistic to suggest that students were conceived as empowered individuals with rights over their own bodies, for the only legal rights infringed by abusive teachers were those of the *patria potestas*. Moreover, society justified the teachers' disciplinary action on their civic-pedagogical duty to enhance the students' individual qualities and skills. As in other unequal relationships based on the principle of patriarchal reciprocity, society recognized the authority of the teacher in the classroom, insofar as he provided an educational service in return, something that presumedly benefited students and that same society. More specifically, the teacher's authority rested on his otherhood, on enhancing the actorhood of the students, on helping them "advance" in life through education, and on connecting them to the idealized models of modernity.⁴⁷ De la Sota, for instance, believed it was "too dangerous to give man freedom if he is enslaved by ignorance," which explained why "the good education is entrusted to teachers," whose pedagogical work rescued boys from their inherited misery, turning them into "good fathers, and better citizens."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The state had been legislating on the matter for some time. When the Junta of Montevideo accused the teacher Besnes e Irigoyen of abusive behavior toward his students, it argued that "the punishment of flogging ... has been forbidden ... since the year 1814." AGN, AA, Box 821, Folder 8.

⁴⁷ John Meyer, "World Society, Institutional Theories, and the Actor," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 7.

⁴⁸ AGN, Box 845A, Folder 12.

Hiring, Training, and Delegating Authority

When compared with the informal relationships of trust and honor which entangled parents and teachers, investing individuals with the delegated authority of the state involved a more rationalized sequence of bureaucratic procedures of selection, hiring, training, and giving possession of a school.⁴⁹ The Decree of May 16, 1827, had ordered all candidates “who want to apply for the position of schoolteacher” to attend the Normal School for vocational training, and expressively prohibited anyone else from exercising the profession. The sources however suggest that these legal requirements were frequently overlooked. Contrary to the letter of the law, frequent exceptions were made for those who had been previously examined or personally approved by the General Director (Inspector) of the Schools.⁵⁰ Some teachers nonetheless spent a few days in the Normal School learning the Lancasterian method. These short vocational courses and teachers’ examinations were common practice during the first half of the decade, whereas in later years the state hired many individuals without fulfilling the legal requirements. The selection of new teachers followed more rigorous procedures when filling vacant positions in Montevideo and its immediate hinterland, especially in towns of significant size, such as Canelones. Sometimes, two or three individuals stepped up as candidates,

⁴⁹ The statutory honor based on peer recognition would gradually lose ground to modern signs of distinction. For example, the state-granted honor is valuable in all markets controlled by the state, such as the one of formal education. The modern type of honor is codified, delegated, and guaranteed by the state, which holds the monopoly to ascribe competence, power and authority. In the case of early modern Uruguay, the Minister of Government mobilized the power of the state whenever he nominated a new teacher, thereby consecrating an individual with pedagogic authority, one which should be recognized as legitimate in the eyes of the general population. Bourdieu, *Razões Práticas*, 111-113.

⁵⁰ Private teachers were, apparently, not subjected to the law. Although they needed a license to work, there is simply no evidence of formal training or examination of private teachers.

allowing state officials to carefully select a preferred name. In smaller towns and villages of the interior, where the shortage of teachers left many establishments unattended for months, the government was more likely to hire whoever the Juntas and Education Commissions recommended, or the first volunteer presenting himself before the Ministry of Government. In that case, teachers were not necessarily examined, and did not attend the Normal School for training.

A well-documented example of these official procedures of recruitment comes from the Department of Maldonado. In July 1831, and counting with the support of the local Junta to petition the central state on their behalf, the vecinos of San Carlos announced their choice for Carlos Curel as their provisional teacher. In order to support their case, the local *Juez de Paz* testified on behalf of Curel, attesting his good “moral behavior,” and confirming that the teacher had been living in the neighboring village of Rocha for over one year and a half, where he worked in “a school of both sexes.” Following the Minister’s instructions, the General Inspector directed the aspiring civil servant to the Normal School, an institution he later “daily attend[ed] ... with the purpose of ... transmitting the elementary education to the youth through the method of mutual instruction.”⁵¹ Once the applicant had passed his examinations, the General Inspector granted his personal endorsement, recommending “the issue of the correspondent title, ... according to the request of the vecindario of San Carlos.”⁵² Thus Curel had first received broad support from local authorities and vecindario. At the central state level, the

⁵¹ AGN, AA, Box 827A, Folder 11.

⁵² AGN, AA, Box 814, Folder 4.

favorable report on his training at the Normal School persuaded the General Inspector to forward his approval. In sum, the Ministry of Government had collected enough information to justify the recruitment of Curel with the necessary reports on his moral qualities, teaching skills, professional experience, and the favorable opinion of the local host community. An additional good example concerns the recruitment of Domingo Francisco Ricary for a vacant position in Melo in May 1834. As a French immigrant, Ricary had been living in Montevideo for a few years, where he worked as a private instructor. In order to certify his “judicious morality,” the General Inspector requested testimonies of “reliable individuals,” so that the teacher returned a few days later with a letter of recommendation signed by six supporters. In spite of his previous experience with the “mutual instruction methods established in this state,” and as a necessary step in the bureaucratic process, the candidate was redirected to De la Sota, who later reported that Ricary had “daily attended the Normal School, instructing himself in the [monitorial] teaching method.” The report also described Ricary’s knowledge on the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetics. According to De la Sota, his “form of letter is regular,” while his performance “in the branch of school arithmetic” was satisfactory, although “it might be somewhat difficult for him [to teach Spanish] grammar due to his foreign accent.” The General Inspector concluded the procedure recommending the recruitment of Ricary, since the above gathered information certified his “honored conduct and regular aptitude.”⁵³

⁵³ AGN, AA, Box 850, Folder 5.

The recruitment procedures were exactly the same for female candidates. In December 1831, the Junta of Durazno presented the job application of Isabel Williams, who possessed the necessary “aptitudes and good disposition” to work in the local school for girls. In accordance with the established norm, the General Inspector made the standard request for more “information produced by reliable testimonies, certified by the judges of her residency ... [in order to] demonstrate her good morality.” Williams was then redirected to the Normal School, where she would be “examined in the method of mutual education regarding the teaching of writing,” yet not ignoring “the other [most likely gendered] qualities that must decorate her as a teacher.” Though the sources do not inform us of the result of her formal examinations or training, Williams moved to Durazno in January 1832. Upon arrival, for unknown reasons and contrary to its original opinion on the teacher, the Junta swiftly accused her “ineptitude,” so that Williams was promptly fired notwithstanding her careful selection.⁵⁴

Although almost immediately abandoned, an alternative method for selecting public school teachers was the system “*por oposición*.” Somewhat resembling the modern *concurso público*, that method had been employed in the Banda Oriental since colonial times. At the start of the process, state officials would spread posters throughout

⁵⁴ When Emilio Duclos, then teacher in San Juan Bautista requested a position in Las Vacas, he claimed to have been previously examined at the Normal School. The General Inspector however failed to locate any documented proof that supported that statement, and so he ordered the teacher to come to Montevideo, where he was later examined in November 1832. In October 1834, the Inspector also ordered an unnamed teacher from Las Piedras to spend a few days at the Normal School. The teacher however complained that he had previously studied with the priest Lázaro Gadea, learning “the principles of the system of mutual instruction.” It is uncertain whether the teacher was ordered to travel to the Montevideo, but the Inspector instructed the Junta to examine his knowledge of the method in Las Piedras before deciding whether he should attend the Normal School or not. AGN, AA, Box 817, Folder 7; Box 835, Folder 11; Box 835, Folder 11; Box 833A, Folder 8; Box 834, Folder 9; Box 844A, Folder 12.

the city or publicize in the press their intention to recruit a new teacher. Before designating its preferred name among the available candidates, an examination board evaluated the contestants' pedagogical skills, knowledge, and moral qualities. In December 1831, the General Inspector suggested De la Sota, at the time working in Las Vacas, for the newly open position at the Normal School. De la Sota was a man "of respectability, aptitudes and morality . . . , capable of occupying that post of great importance." Yet the Education Commission of Montevideo alternatively recommended the teacher of Paysandú, Cándido de San Martín. At first, the impasse persuaded the Junta to organize a selection process *por oposición*.⁵⁵ Contrary to the Junta's opinion, the General Inspector insisted on the "manifested urgency for the fast provision of a teacher." Admittedly, "it would be better to offer these jobs *por oposición* to those with the best qualities, [yet] that is not currently convenient," not only due to the "low number of candidates, but also because the education would be abandoned for an indefinite time." In order to speed up the process, the General Inspector compromised on his personal preference for De la Sota, and henceforth supported San Martín's candidacy after the "reports that he had received regarding the good conduct, patriotism and suitability in the method of mutual instruction."⁵⁶

The system *por oposición* had been abandoned, yet that did not prevent multiple candidates from competing for the few public school positions that were made available from time to time. As a rule, and before making a final decision, the General Inspector

⁵⁵ AGN AA, Box 809, Folder 8.

⁵⁶ Cándido de San Martín did not last long, for he was fired a few months later for political reasons. De la Sota was hired just a few months later. AGN, AA, Box 825, Folder 4; Box 826, Folder 11.

seized the opportunity to compare the teachers' careers, skills, and moral qualities. In 1834, following the departure of Madame de Curel, three candidates volunteered for the vacant position in the public school for girls of Montevideo. The first applicant was Josefa Moreno de Reyes, who had previously petitioned for a teaching post in San José. The second was Henriqueta Duret, a former assistant of De Curel. The third one was García de Perichon, then in charge of the public school of Mercedes. The General Inspector forwarded the three candidates to the Minister, attaching individualized reports on their positive and negative qualities. To begin with, the Inspector had gathered enough information on Moreno de Reyes, concluding that she "is not a person on who one can trust that position." Duret, however, was "very capable, and ... very worthy of consideration;" she had been working as interim teacher following the departure of De Curel, but being a French immigrant, Duret had against her the fact that she was not fluent in the "national language with the convenient regularity to transmit it to her students." Finally, García de Perichon had "on her favor the satisfactory performance in the school of Mercedes." The Minister eventually approved the transference of the latter to Montevideo, where she arrived in December 1834.⁵⁷ In February 1836, the Education Commission of Montevideo had two contestants for the school of the Aldea. The first was Antonio Silveira, an immigrant from the Canary Islands who had contributed to the "advancement of the boys placed under his [private] direction." Nevertheless, the Commission could not overcome Silveira's "inconvenience of ignoring the method of Mister Lancaster," which had been implemented "in all modern schools." The second

⁵⁷ AGN, AA, Box 861/A, Folder 12.

candidate, Juan Labandera, possessed “sufficient capability and disposition,” and had been properly trained in the “standardized method of ... Lancaster.” To his advantage, Labandera “has been educated in said method, and since he has it, he may perform it to the benefit of the youth.” The Minister of Government, at the time Francisco Llambí, approved Labandera’s nomination, adding a final xenophobic justification for the exclusion of Silveira: he was not a “native of the republic.”⁵⁸

There was no such thing as a *curriculum vitae* in early modern Uruguay. Job applications nonetheless provided comprehensive narratives of teachers’ careers, and often came attached to equally long letters of recommendation. The letters not only certified the customary moral and professional qualities expected from public school teachers, but also their previous services to the patria, such as active participation in the wars of independence. Moreover, the authors of these letters were just as important as their textual content, because they helped enhance the teachers’ credibility and honor. In April 1832, the Junta of Canelones recommended Francisco Dormoy, a person of known “probity and aptitudes,” for a vacant position in San Juan Bautista. Attached came a letter of recommendation signed by a few notable members of the Rio de la Plata ruling elites, mostly Argentinean emigrates, including Francisco Pico, Fermín Pereira, Juan C. Varela, Martín Rodríguez, Manuel Bonifacio Gallardo, and Juan Andrés Gelly. The undersigned had confirmed “to have met Mister Don Francisco Dormoy, Army Lieutenant Colonel, in Buenos Aires, and we declare that said Mister Dormoy has the necessary aptitudes and knowledge to the performance of the post of teacher according to the method of

⁵⁸ AGN, AA, Box 881.

Lancaster to the satisfaction of the [state] authorities and the padres de familia.”⁵⁹ An additional teacher with illustrious and powerful supporters was Juan Lopez Formoso. One of his letters of recommendation had been signed by none other than Juan Antonio Lavalleja, at the time “*Brigadier Gobernador y Capitán General de esta Provincia.*”⁶⁰ Formoso had not only provided “unequivocal evidence of his sufficiency and dedication as teacher of primeras letras,” Lavalleja declared, “but also of his commitment to the cause of liberty.” Two other letters forwarded by Ignacio Zufriategui and the Council of Justice Administration chronicled Formoso’s recent past as an elementary school teacher and a patriot in the wars of independence.⁶¹ The Luso-Brazilian invasion had regrettably interrupted the teacher’s decade-long commitment to “the public education of this vecindario,” forcing Formoso to first serve in the artillery corps and then in the postal service for the duration of the conflict. Once peace was restored in Maldonado, Formoso was again “fetched by some señores vecinos” to continue in his previous line of work. In order to modernize his teaching practices, he did an internship at the Normal School in 1826, at the time provisorily installed in Canelones, where he got acquainted with the recently disembarked method of Lancaster. According to Zufriategui, the teacher had “regularly attended the school under my responsibility for over a month,” experimenting with the new method “during the daily work with the children.” Thus, according to his several letters of recommendation, Formoso had the necessary qualifications, including a

⁵⁹ AGN, AA, Box 828, Folder 7.

⁶⁰ Lavalleja’s letter was probably written in 1826.

⁶¹ Dated from February 1828, this letter was probably written by Formoso himself, who simply asked the Council members to sign it.

“good form of letter” and the required knowledge “in the system of mutual instruction ... that make him capable of fulfilling the [educational] goals of the Superior Government.”⁶²

I have already identified the examples of Curel, Formoso and Ricary, but there were other teachers who attended the Normal School for short internships in order to receive the required training in the Lancasterian system. In April 1834, Joaquin Escudero, then an auxiliary instructor at the private school of José Barbosa, applied for a public post in San José. Notwithstanding Barbosa’s letter of recommendation and his certified professional experience, the General Inspector oriented Escudero to the Normal School. De la Sota confirmed the applicant’s moral qualities and aptitudes, yet insisted that the young teacher should update his pedagogical practices at the Normal School for at least eight days, so that his method could become “uniformed.” It was only after the internship was over that the General Inspector recommended the candidate for the vacation position in San José.⁶³ Thus the formal training of public school teachers was limited to a few days-long internship at the Normal School in Montevideo. That, of course, if the training took place at all, because, over the years, the legal requirements were gradually dropped or simplified in practice. In April 1838, the Junta of Soriano recommended José Maria Ibarguren for the public school of its departmental capital. The sources provide no evidence of his previous experience or knowledge of the Lancasterian method. Ibarguren

⁶² Signed in April 1828, his forth letter of recommendation came from Luis Eduardo Perez, who signed as the “*Gobernador Delegado de la Provincia Oriental*.” Pérez was interim President of the Republic prior to Rivera’s first election, and later the first President of the Senate. AGN, AA, Box 822, Folder 4.

⁶³ AGN, AA, Box 855A, Folder 10.

presumably had “the qualities required for the performance” of the profession, and that was enough for the Minister of Government to sanction his recruitment.⁶⁴

Early in the decade, when state officials still enthusiastically enforced the Lancasterian system, the General Inspector persuaded the Minister to summon all public school teachers at once for a group course on the method in Montevideo. Thus departing from the customary practice of training teachers individually, all should meet in the capital in order to instruct themselves in the system. When the Normal School Teacher Besnes e Irigoyen received the order to prepare his establishment for the incoming teachers, he certainly surprised the General Inspector revealing his absolute ignorance on the method.⁶⁵ In other words, the instructor responsible for the standardization of the Uruguayan public educational system declared himself unable to work with the method he was supposed to standardize. As expected, Besnes e Irigoyen was shortly after discharged. On his part, the General Inspector melancholically resigned to the dreadful fate of the project, fearing that the teachers would return “to their old method,” and to the pedagogical practices that still reflected “the colonial system which has so far continued in the new Republic of Uruguay.”⁶⁶ In any case, the project had also been undermined by the teachers themselves who resisted the call for training in Montevideo. As a matter of fact, whenever possible and in many other occasions, teachers resisted their formal

⁶⁴ AGN, AA, Box 906A.

⁶⁵ AGN, AA, Box 828, Folder 7.

⁶⁶ Unaware of Besnes e Irigoyen’s limitations, a few teachers nonetheless arrived in Montevideo. The government immediately gave them permission of “return to the few which had presented themselves,” since “it was not fair to have them for long” for no reason. AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 9. AGN, AA, Box 828, Folder 7.

examination and internship requirements. The public school teacher of Durazno, for instance, had failed to abide to the “superior order ... to travel during vacation to be examined ... due to the sickness he has — liver disease.”⁶⁷ Teachers also triggered their personal connections in order to waive those requirements. De la Sota himself, who would ironically move to the Normal School shortly after, was dismissed from his formal examinations while still a teacher in Las Vacas. Addressing Joaquin Campana, the General Inspector at the time, De la Sota offered his “due gratitude for having deferred the demands” of the Junta, “relieving me from the duty of presenting myself ... to be examined.”⁶⁸

Later writing as the country’s Normal School Teacher, De la Sota explained the difficult task of persuading his colleagues on the importance of vocational training, and also hinted on the causes for the gradual decline of the training requirements along the decade. De la Sota’s diagnosis of the problem identified a handful of teachers with the necessary “knowledge of the mutual system,” but its implementation was still far from uniform in all educational establishments. Whereas “in all [the countries of] Europe where the mutual system is established, ... the teacher must attend the Normal [School] to instruct himself,” in Uruguay “that cannot be.” The main reason why teachers resisted further training was, to put it bluntly, their “self-esteem,” since “it is shameful for them to subject themselves” to such a requirement. The teachers “in our pueblos of the interior,

⁶⁷ The teacher was Samuel Williams, whose poor health prevented him from “going with a horse or any other means.” AGN, AA, Box 824, Folder 13.

⁶⁸ According to De la Sota, “it has been fourteen years since I visited you in Chascomús [Province of Buenos Aires] with General Don Juan Ramon Balcarce,” an event which took place during the revolutionary period. AGN, AA, Box 820, Folder 3.

due to the shortage of *hombres de letras*, acquire reputation,” resulting in the unavoidable embarrassment in the eyes of “the very pueblo were they have some prestige,” that, instead of teaching, they must be taught on something. In conclusion, the “the pride of some and the ignorance of others” compromised the government’s goal of “standardizing the mutual system.”

After examining the process of teacher recruitment and vocational training, we may conclude that virtuous morality alone did not justify hiring someone for a public school teacher position. Though morality and honor were definitely demanded attributes for all aspiring civil servants, the official recruitment procedures did not disregard the required pedagogical skills, experience, and training in the Lancasterian system. The qualified teacher should offer a type of education that neither Uruguayan parents nor the other state agencies were prepared to deliver. It is therefore no surprise that the requirements for the state delegation of pedagogic authority focused on increasingly specialized skills rather than generic civic-religious morality. After all, only those with the necessary knowledge, skill and method could effectively guide the student through the desired path of self-cultivation and improvement. It is true that the shortage of teachers in the Uruguayan countryside lead many under-qualified individuals to numerous schools. However, one cannot deny the genuine concern over the general quality of the state-offered education, because early modern Uruguayans clearly believed

they should only entrust the education of their children to the work of a competent specialized professional.⁶⁹

Teachers as Civil Servants: Prerogatives and Bureaucratic Rites of Consecration

Public school teachers were civil servants holding constitutionally guaranteed prerogatives and rights. In the words of the *Habilitado General*, “the teachers of the schools of the state, those employed in the police and tribunals, are all the same before the law.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, teachers often struggled to reassure themselves and others of their status, especially when in conflict with rival figures of authority. While presenting themselves as agents of the state, teachers at once helped define their profession and the public school institution, strengthening their pedagogic authority while legitimating the involvement of the state in the field of elementary education. In that particular historical context, it would be illogical for these professional educators to resist the expansion of public education. Quite the opposite, many individuals avidly sought to join the public system, for all those holding a mandate from the state had secured a source of income and a middle-class position of relative prestige and autonomy. As suggested by Bourdieu, “the illusion of the absolute autonomy ... is strongest when the teaching corps is fully assimilated into the Civil Service, so that, with his salary paid by the State or the

⁶⁹ When Domingo Osorio, teacher of Mercedes, offered his letter of resignation in February 1837, he explained that the public teacher position was “an occupation that requires commitment, dedication, and punctuality.” AGN, AA, Box 894.

⁷⁰ Written in October 1837. AGN, AA, Box 902.

university institution, the teacher is no longer remunerated by the client, like other vendors of symbolic goods.”⁷¹

From the viewpoint of the central state, an assault on a civil servant was interpreted as an assault on the government itself. In November 1832, the Junta of Durazno had suspended the teacher Josefa Moreno, denouncing her “scandalous conduct and bad morality.” The General Inspector however defended his employee, arguing that “it is not among the prerogatives of the Juntas ... to suspend teachers from their jobs,” and therefore accused that corporation of “usurping the faculties” of the Ministry of Government. On his part, the Minister declared that the “power of discharging a public employee carrying official papers issued by this authority concerns no one but this authority.”⁷² In July 1840, the General Inspector accused the Education Commission of Minas, Department of Maldonado, of illegally firing its sole public school teacher. In the words of the Inspector, “the teachers who depend on the Superior Government are public employees, with the guarantees of the Law that are conceded to the others” of their class.⁷³ It is worthy of notice that the word *depend* — *dependen* in the original — is the same that was used by the head of the household regarding his family subordinates, so that the public school teacher emerges as a dependent of the father-like state. According to the Fiscal General Solano Antuña, the parents had unloaded on the teachers “all the duties of their parenthood” concerning “the social and religious education of their

⁷¹ Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education*, 66.

⁷² The Inspector nonetheless recognized the moral flaws of Doña Josefa Moreno, and thus fired her from Durazno. AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 7.

⁷³ AGN, AA, Box 926.

children.” As a result, the central state should protect the official status of all “schoolteachers endowed by the nation,” because only they could provide an education “adequate to the *Americanos*,” one which resulted in “the happiness and progress of the patria.”⁷⁴

Once the teacher was formally hired, he received an official diploma or title (*título*), which certified his official status as an employee of the state. Teachers were likely to show their papers, triggering their special prerogatives and legal protections whenever confronted with the threat of losing their jobs. For example, Juan Vazquez had been working in Canelones “with the competent title” until his schoolhouse was destroyed by fire. Once the government was finally ready to reopen that institution in October 1831, Vazquez immediately requested the Ministry to revalidate his “aforementioned title in order to continue with the mentioned school.” When the Junta expressed its intention to replace him with a different teacher, Vazquez immediately accused the move as “prejudicial to his honor, and especially since the Constitution prevents any employee from destitution without competent justification.”⁷⁵ In October 1833, the Education Commission of Porongos complained that the teacher José Maria Guerrero had been missing for over thirty days. The General Inspector was cautious on his approach, “because being a public employee with a title,” the teacher cannot “be legally discharged without sufficient justification.”⁷⁶ In April 1837, while refusing to

⁷⁴ AGN, AA, Box 899A.

⁷⁵ AGN, AA, Box 818, Folder 4.

⁷⁶ The teacher justified his absence explaining that his wife was sick in Montevideo, and alerted the Junta that “it is not on its attributions to suspend a public employee from his job.” AGN, AA, Box 847A, Folder 12.

recognize the Junta's authority to enforce a *reglamento interno*, the teacher of Colonia, Miguel Mazzini, bluntly asked: "Does the Junta ignore that the teacher has a diploma from the government?" Projecting the intra-classroom power relations on his tumultuous relationship with the Junta of Colonia, Mazzini wondered if there was any article on the Constitution authorizing that corporation to subject "the teacher to its whim as if he were a schoolboy."⁷⁷

Whenever possible, the Ministry of Government selected teacher candidates who were already vecinos in the pueblos where vacant positions were made available, a choice that allegedly granted them more stability. The vecinos of Melo, for example, expressed their support for an unnamed candidate, "because being [himself] a vecino of that locality, there is no risk that, in a short time, he renounces, as it has repeatedly happened" in the past.⁷⁸ In most cases, however, teachers moved with their families and private possessions to a new home, henceforth living as outsiders in a host vecindario.⁷⁹ Regardless of their origins, the new teacher should necessarily present himself to the Junta upon arrival. What followed the teacher's formal introduction to the Junta was a bureaucratic rite in which the school was formally transferred to the management of the new incumbent. The outgoing teacher should preferably participate in the ritual, yet it was often the case that the transference only involved someone from the Junta or Education Commission. The new teacher received the schoolhouse keys, inventory,

⁷⁷ AGN, AA, Box 896.

⁷⁸ AGN, AA, Box 925.

⁷⁹ The move was often paid by the state. Depending on the family, travel distance, available transportation, and weather, the move could take several weeks.

including all pedagogical materials and furniture that belonged to the institution, plus the *Estado General* of the school.⁸⁰ At the end of that ritual, while simultaneously taking possession of the school in its material and symbolic form, the teacher had become responsible for the management of all infrastructure, pedagogical equipment, not to mention the students themselves. When Tomás Julián Ortiz took possession of the Normal School in January 1839, he received “all the goods of that establishment according to its inventory,” a document which indicated “the number of enrolled students and the pedagogical materials that the Junta has in its deposit.” Cosigned by both incoming and outgoing teachers, namely Ortiz and De la Sota, an available copy of the inventory thoroughly describes all school materials available at the Normal School.⁸¹ Confirming that bureaucratic rite, the *Alcalde Ordinario* of San Carlos informed in April 1840 that Joaquin Eguren had “received the post of teacher of the school for boys of that village, and all pedagogical materials and equipment that exist and belong to said establishment, which had been delivered by the former teacher Don Juan Placido Faxardo.”⁸²

In a condition analogous to that of the artisan whose shop was also his home, or the priest who lived by the temple, schoolteachers generally lived in the premises of the school. When renting or erecting a new schoolhouse, it was always a concern that the teacher would have enough living space for his family. In that sense, taking possession of

⁸⁰ Conversely, demanding the schoolhouse keys from a teacher was the equivalent of dispossessing him of the school.

⁸¹ AGN, AA, Box 912.

⁸² AGM, AA, Box 925.

a school had both professional and private implications for these civil servants. When the interim teacher Henriqueta Duret transferred her educational establishment to García de Perichon, the latter promptly moved in “with her family [in order to live] in the same premises.”⁸³ Whereas regarded as a customary right, the practice was not explicitly supported by the law, hence the constant need for negotiation and accommodation. At the time protesting against the eviction of De la Sota from his living quarters at the Normal School, the Education Commission of Montevideo highlighted that “inveterate custom,” alerting that “it has always been the case that the teachers live in the same houses” where they work. One could confirm that practice “in the private schools of Mister Barbosa, Vidal, and Lira,” and “in the public schools of the Aguada, Cerdón, in the one of Madame Perichon and others.” It could also happen, the Commission alerted, that if “the current teacher ... finds himself unable to open the school at the correct time,” then the students would “find the door closed.” Consequently, the boys would “naturally start to play in the street,” exposing themselves “to some wagon or horse that may hurt or kill them. And in that case, would it be convenient to expose the youth” to such danger?⁸⁴

Career, Labor Conditions, and Wages

Teachers strove to define the exercise of their profession from within the public education system. Apart from securing their civil servant status, their struggle also focused on general labor and living conditions. Teachers raised their voices at every opportunity to defend their profession, even if their ability to do so was substantially

⁸³ AGN, AA, Box 861/A, Folder 12.

⁸⁴ AGN, AA, Box 872, Folder 4.

limited by the very institutions that had once consecrated them in office. Uruguayan state officials regarded their subordinates as extensions of their own authority, and therefore acknowledged that the prestige and security of their public school agents also impacted their ability to implement the educational policies of the state. However, scarce human and material resources combined with the difficult political situation that would eventually lead to civil war drastically constrained the government's capacity to support its employees. As a result, irregular compensation of wages, poor school infrastructure, and the chronic shortage of pedagogic materials further compromised the teachers' regular professional activity. Failing to withstand such gruesome labor conditions, some individuals moved to the private sector or abandoned the profession entirely. Nevertheless, there were a few individuals who fully embraced that middle-class occupation, undertaking it as a true life-long career.

I have identified seventy-seven teacher names, men and women who had once worked in at least one of the thirty-nine Uruguayan public schools during the 1829-40 period.⁸⁵ Although most of them only briefly embraced the profession, a comparatively small number of resilient individuals managed to achieve considerable occupational stability. Norberto Fernandez, for example, was already the teacher of Soriano in 1829, a position he would keep until April 1839. Respectively working in Maldonado, San Carlos, Durazno and Porongos, the teachers Juan Lopez Formoso, Juan Plácido Faxardo, Miguel de Cedrón and José Maria Guerreros persevered in their jobs for approximately

⁸⁵ The number includes interim teachers, but no private ones. Fourteen teachers were women. It is difficult to determine the origin of all teachers, yet it is clear that there was a high incidence of non-Uruguayans among them, mainly Argentinean and Iberian immigrants. Some of the most frequently referenced teachers, including De la Sota and García de Perichon, were Argentineans.

99 months in average.⁸⁶ The most stable among the women was Ramona Mentasti de Villagran, who worked in Canelones for at least 73 months, but probably for longer since I cannot confirm her exact dates of recruitment and dismissal. Others, such as De la Sota, Gabriel Lezaeta and García de Perichon remained active in the public service through comparable stretches of time, albeit drifting from school to school. Emilio Duclos, for instance, was first a teacher in San Juan Bautista and then in Las Vacas in between 1831 and 1833, before being transferred to the Aguada in January 1834, where he stayed until February 1838.⁸⁷ In order to partially retain their occupational identity and continue with their careers, a few teachers, such as Besnes e Irigoyen and Luciano Lira, moved into the private sector. Notwithstanding the pervasive gender segregation of their trade, a few wives and husbands managed to work in close proximity; for them, the profession was a family business rather than just an individual occupation. Before returning to France in 1834, Carlos Curel and Madame de Curel worked side by side in Rocha, Maldonado and Montevideo.⁸⁸ In the Department of Maldonado, the teachers Juan Lopes Formoso (Maldonado), Francisca Faxardo de Formoso (Maldonado), and Juan Plácido Faxardo (San Carlos) were certainly related through family ties. As exemplified by García de

⁸⁶ Juan Lopez Formoso was originally hired in July 1828. It is uncertain when exactly he took possession of the school Maldonado, although he was already working in there in January 1829, and until at least December 1838. Juan Plácido Faxardo assumed the San Carlos post around January 1832, only quitting in March 1840. Another stable teacher was Miguel de Cedrón, who remained in Durazno from August 1832 until at least April 1839. See: AGN, AA, Book 86, *Empleados Civiles (1825-1829)*.

⁸⁷ Gabriel Lezaeta first taught in Florida from at least March 1831 until December 1834. Lezaeta returned to the public system in May 1836, working in Las Piedras, from where he fired in early 1838.

⁸⁸ For some reason, her first name is always omitted in the sources; she is always referred as “Madame de Curel.”

Perichon and her daughter Eugenia, who first worked together in Mercedes and then in Montevideo, it was common practice for the mothers to employ their daughters as assistants or *monitoras*, thus introducing them to the profession. Samuel Williams, however, had failed to secure a post in Durazno for Isabel Williams, who was perhaps his sister or wife, while Josefa Agualevada, the wife of Emilio Duclos, could only last for a few months in the school of the Aguada before falling from grace with the local Education Commission in early 1838.

There were many self-identified elementary school teachers who developed a distinctive pride in the profession, as opposed to those who only temporarily worked in the field at some stage of their lives. When Ortiz applied for the assistant position at the Normal School, he highlighted the “many years he has dedicated to the arduous work of elementary education.” Prior to his return to the Banda Oriental, the teacher had worked for nearly twenty years in Buenos Aires, “ascending through the ladder of knowledge and antiquity to direct the first public schools” of the postcolonial era. Later in the decade, this time applying for the main position at the Normal School, Ortiz returned with an updated account of his professional trajectory. Presenting himself as a “native citizen and teacher of the public school of Canelones,” and in recognition of his “antiquity and capability,” he requested that prestigious post as a “reward for his teaching career.” At that point of his life, Ortiz had already spent “thirty years ... in the instruction of ... the American youth, and, consequently, I am the senior Oriental teacher.” Ortiz was particularly proud of his past contributions to the establishment of the Uruguayan educational system, assisting the government in the creation of “many public schools

under the method of mutual instruction,” which in turn had favored “the fast progress of the students.”⁸⁹ Back in 1833, the veteran teacher Mariano Parraga aspired for a pension from the state, a reward for his many years dedicated to the cause of public education. On his account, he had been teaching the first letters for more than thirty years. Parraga had devoted his life to the education of the youth in Colonia, “serving in the public schools, and performing with honor and punctuality.” Parraga had helped countless children to “perfected themselves in the principles of morality and religion, which are eternally imprinted in their souls to fulfill their respectful obligations with the state, becoming good sons, faithful spouses, honorable parents, and perfect citizens.” In the words of the General Inspector, who seconded Parraga’s request, if the state “justly rewards its defenders, with equal obligation it must do to those who had spent their lives in civilizing and enlightening” the nation. Nonetheless, the petition was most certainly rejected, and there is no evidence of public school teachers receiving pensions during the 1830s.⁹⁰

Perhaps the most impending threat to their job security and subsistence was the government’s struggle to regularly compensate their wages. The teaching profession had become increasingly dependent on governmental funding, as it thrived from within the educational policies and organizational framework of the state. As illustrated by Ventura Aguilar at the beginning of this chapter, teaching at the elementary school level was a demanding and restrictive occupation, hence its inherent vulnerability to irregular salary compensation. As early as 1831, the General Director had already realized that the

⁸⁹ Ortiz’s letters are in: AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 11; Box 904.

⁹⁰ AGN, AA, Box 840, Folder 7.

teachers' "complaints ... are frequent, because their subsistence is linked to their wages."⁹¹ As a matter of fact, letters requesting the payment of late wages are among the most common documents in the archive, with an unusually high concentration of complaints in 1833. In the span of just thirty days, in between June 11 and July 10, the Ministry of Government received six formal complaints, plus six additional pleas in September, and three more in November.⁹² As evidence of its financial trouble, the central state hastily elaborated an emergency plan to reform the calculation of wages. Prior to implementation, however, the government had sensibly opted to consult with the teachers, Juntas, and Education Commissions of its nine Departments. An actual Union or *Gremio*, like the ones in Mexico City and Madrid, did not yet exist in Uruguay.⁹³ Notwithstanding their evident shortcomings in terms of labor organization, and despite the distances between the many schools of the country that prevented the nationwide gathering of teachers, the sources confirm that a few individuals had met to debate the reform. The teachers of Soriano Department even dared to sign a joint letter, providing a unified response which evinced their incipient awareness of occupational identity and solidarity. With one isolated exception, teachers strongly rejected the project, successfully

⁹¹ AGN, AA, Box 810/A, Folder 10.

⁹² AGN, AA, Box 844A, Folder 12; Box 846A, Folder 12; Box 848, Folder 12.

⁹³ "En toda la América española, por ejemplo, sólo se encuentra un solo caso de gremio de maestros, aquel de la ciudad de México." Marcelo Caruso, "La Emancipación Semántica: 'Primeras Letras' en Hispanoamérica (ca. 1770-1840)," *Bordón* 62, n. 2 (2010): 44.

forcing the Ministry of Government to abandon what they perceived was a threat to their profession and, by extension, to the public character of their schools.⁹⁴

The most thorough description and analysis of the reform was drafted by De la Sota. To begin with, the teachers' monthly base wage would be reduced from 60 to 25 pesos, while the Normal School Teacher and assistant would respectively receive 50 and 40. In order to rectify that significant loss of income, teachers would be authorized to charge parents with four to twelve *reales* for each individual student, "as in a private school of their property." The state would still cover the costs of the officially certified poor, but the poverty status of each particular family would be at the discretion of the Juntas. De la Sota frankly offered his opinion, first acknowledging that some teachers would be tempted to accept the general concept of the project in the belief that, unlike the state, the parents would not delay their payments. That said, the new source of income would certainly not compensate the overall loss of those drastic pay cuts. De la Sota additionally questioned the Juntas' authority to split families in two different groups relative to their presumed wealth. On the one hand, the arbitrary rules concerning the "classification of the poor children" could result in the "small number of those who pay" in proportion to the total quantity of enrolled students. On the other hand, teachers would be tempted to lobby the Juntas to place all children among the rich in order to maximize their income. At the end of his report, De la Sota explained that the reform would not only undermine his profession, but also the very continuity and purpose of the Uruguayan

⁹⁴ A single teacher supported the reform, the one from Durazno, whose consent was however conditioned to the payment of at least "half of the thirteen months that are still due to his wages." AGN, AA, Box 851, Folder 6.

public education system. The practical implementation of the project entailed the conversion of all public institutions into semi-private ones, therefore placing the burden of elementary education back on the family. Whereas the Constitution had “determined for the year 1840 that those who do not know how to read and write would have their citizenship rights suspended,” De la Sota recognized in the reform an attempt to relieve the state of its legal educational responsibilities. From the viewpoint of the teacher, the defense of his salary was somehow intimately connected with the very survival of the new educational system and its progress-oriented goal of creating citizens for the nation. Thus De la Sota bluntly concluded that the proposed reform would simply “destroy the [public] educational establishments” of the country.⁹⁵

In order to discuss the reform, the Junta of Soriano summoned its four teachers to the departmental capital of Mercedes. At the end of that meeting, the teachers prepared a joint statement whose historical relevance does not lie on its textual response to the reform, but rather on the evidence it provides of their incipient awareness of occupational identity and solidarity. The undersigned teachers were Francisca García de Perichon, Mariano Martiniano de Elgueta, José Mateo de Gurruchaga, and Norberto Fernandez, whose signature and calligraphy suggest that he had personally written the letter. In their own words, the four civil servants recognized, “without a doubt, that the sixty pesos that are today assigned are just enough for their basic necessities,” but they were not yet convinced that the proposed reform would in any way improve their financial situation. If the teachers had shown some restraint, the Junta strongly opposed the project, arguing that

⁹⁵ AGN, AA, Box 849/A, Folder 12.

the “general state of poverty in the pueblos of this Department will make it very difficult for the parents to pay for the education of their children.” In addition, the proposed measures could generate further negative repercussions for the general welfare and progress of the local population, certainly damaging “the propagation of the enlightenment,” therefore compromising the teachers’ capacity to introduce the students to that “higher” universalistic culture of modernity.⁹⁶

De la Sota and the teachers of Soriano were not alone in their rejection of the project. The teacher of the Cordón, Dionisio Lopez, declared that he “cannot accept to serve under the indicated conditions, ... due to the inadequacy of his assigned wage, ... [making] it impossible for him to meet his obligations.” At the time teaching in Melo, Cándido de San Martín “decidedly [replied] that he does not accept to serve ... under those propositions ... due to the small assigned wage, and the uncertainty regarding the reduced number of people who could pay for the education of their sons.” De la Sota’s assistant, Ortiz, informed that the Normal School was “populated by boys who belong to the poorer families,” for those of privileged background had been recently transferred to local private institutions.⁹⁷

The teachers had successfully resisted that first attempt of reform, but disputes concerning the calculation of wages would reemerge shortly after. In July 1834, the teacher of Maldonado expressed his discontent with his meager income and burdensome labor. Juan Lopez Formoso had been working in the field of elementary education for

⁹⁶ AGN, AA, Box 850, Folder 5.

⁹⁷ AGN, AA, Box 849/A, Folder 12.

nearly 16 years, and therefore expected a higher income after so much time dedicated to the education of the youth. At the time of his letter, Lopez Formoso was in charge of 67 boys, however earning the exact same salary as some of his colleagues who had been working with 20 students or less. The teacher's grievances triggered a second attempt of reform, one that would set wages according to the number of enrolled students in each school. The General Inspector had two goals in mind: first, to reduce the state's budget deficit; second, to force teachers to work harder with the parents, potentially improving the educational system's total enrollment figures. Prior to the reform, the teachers' base wage was set to 720 pesos a year. The Inspector however intended to reduce the wages of those in charge of 25 to 45 students to just 500 pesos, while those working with 46 to 75 would receive 600. Teachers working with 76 to 100 students would be the only ones maintaining their current income levels. Ironically, the reform would significantly reduce Formoso's salary. In addition, teachers who had failed to enroll at least 25 students would lose their jobs, a requirement that endangered the continuity of several establishments in the smaller villages of the interior.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the sources do not provide the teachers' feedback on that second attempt of reform. The new salary scale was apparently implemented in August 1834, although ensuing national budgets, such as the one from

⁹⁸ AGN, AA, Box 858A, Folder 11.

1837, indicate that the wages were later restored to their previous level of 720 pesos a year.⁹⁹

It was March 1836 when García de Perichon, then working in Montevideo, forwarded a complaint analogous to Lopez Formoso's understanding that wages should be calculated proportionally to labor input. In an extraordinary letter to the local Education Commission, and underscoring the "disproportion that is noticed between her assigned monthly income and the one received by the teacher of the one for boys," García de Perichon demanded equal pay to who she believed was her male counterpart in the Uruguayan capital, the Normal School Teacher. The disparity was indeed quite "noticeable, and even more visible when, comparing the nature of our tasks, one easily perceives that those of the undersigned are not only more laborious, but also more delicate." In her personal experience, the gendered education she offered greatly surpassed the pedagogical duties of the Normal School Teacher, whose salary was higher than hers nevertheless. Employing a careful language that did not challenge the notion of gendered education, but instead used it to justify her a raise, García de Perichon invited the Education Commission to compare the "number of students between the two establishments, and the subjects taught in them, and the special care demanded by each sex, and their specificities."¹⁰⁰ The archive sources regrettably omit the government's

⁹⁹ The Ministry of Government would nonetheless order the termination of a few schools whose student attendance was under the new required minimum (more of this in chapter 4). AGN, AA, Box 915. There is a full transcription of the Decree in Orestes Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya* (Montevideo: Imprenta 'El Siglo Ilustrado', 1911), 628. The national budget of 1837 is in Armand Ugón, et al. *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos, 1825-1930, Vol. 2 1835-1843* (Montevideo, 1930), 96.

¹⁰⁰ AGM, AA, Box 882/A, Folder 13.

response to her request, though we may assume that her pleas were ignored. Against her claim was the fact that her salary was already equal to her other male colleagues, while the Normal School Teacher's privileged income status concerned his unique training, examination, and standardization responsibilities.¹⁰¹

We may now better understand how public school teachers conceived their own profession vis-à-vis the state and the modern educational system. While presenting her case before the Education Commission, García de Perichon was forced to associate her private interests with those of the state and the larger society, an argumentative exercise analogous to what Bourdieu had called *profit of universalization*. After all, why should the Ministry of Government give her a raise? García de Perichon articulated her professional responsibilities with the broader pedagogical goals of the school, presenting herself as an agent of the educational policies of the state. From her perspective, she was performing an important and laborious duty, preparing young girls to become future members of society. In their resistance against the central state's plans of salary reform, teachers and local government officials alluded to the profession's ministerial role and intrinsic connection to universalistic values, such as "the propagation of the enlightenment" and the making of citizens for the national community. If teachers deserved proper social recognition in the form of decent wages, it was because they

¹⁰¹ In 1837, the professor of *Latinidad*, Ambrosio Velasco, expected equal pay to his colleagues of the so-called "higher sciences," namely Theology, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Civil Law. Velasco had been teaching for four hours a day, yet his other colleagues had higher wages while only teaching for half of that time. Notwithstanding the Inspector's support, the Ministry of Government refused to grant him a raise. The Minister however explained that, regardless of Velasco's "commitment, diligence and progress," the professors' wages reflected their years spent on their own education and vocational training, and that alone justified the disparity of their income. AGN, AA, Box 898.

conceived themselves as agents of that sacred mission. Many among them had spent years, if not decades, managing schools, cultivating the youth, performing that civic-ministerial duty toward what they believed was the common good and progress of the Banda Oriental. The teachers' struggle to define their professional identity was also intrinsically connected to the negotiation of the terms of their subordination to the nation-state, which was at once their employer and source of authority. It was in their every complaint, petition, and response to the decisions the Ministry of Government that these civil servants engaged in a continuous negotiation process, fighting for better wages and working conditions while simultaneously defining their own profession.

Conclusion

The increasingly bitter partizan rivalries that would eventually lead to the *Guerra Grande* further aggravated the problem of irregular salary compensation. That looming conflict would generate greater political instability, financial constraints, and logistic impediments that prevented teachers, especially those in the countryside, from regularly receiving their payments. As it happened earlier in the decade, the archive sources for the year of 1838 present an unusually high frequency of late salary complaints, showing how the civil war had affected the government's means to support its employees.¹⁰² In April 1838, for instance, the two teachers of Paysandú, Lucas Fernandez and Josefa Mendoza de Perez, jointly forwarded their letters of resignation, blaming their "misery" on "the

¹⁰² AGN, AA, Box 911.

great delay they suffer in receiving their wages.”¹⁰³ Yet Fernandez ventured beyond his salary, for his primary concern and cause of resignation was actually the “total lack of a school statute, a good and thorough one,” capable of determining the “duties of parents, sons, and teachers.”

As examined in the previous chapter, the absence of a standardized reglamento for the Uruguayan public school system was a common grievance among teachers. The existence of that legal instrument could potentially enhance the teachers’ professional autonomy and job security, safeguarding their pedagogic authority by further institutionalizing it under an official set of rules. Covering school administration and classroom activities, the reglamento could have shielded Fernandez from what he called the many “unfounded criticisms and arbitrary dispositions” that had tormented his career. The teacher had once personally redacted a provisional statute, but despite his “unbounded educational efforts,” his pupils too often disobeyed his regulations, “enticed, perhaps, by paternal example.” Fernandez believed it was the state’s duty to regulate that unique social arrangement comprised of teachers, students, and parents, in order to reinforce his own pedagogic authority and professional autonomy.¹⁰⁴ As suggested by Bourdieu, the institutionalization of the schoolteacher profession walked hand in hand with the process of autonomization of the educational field, which over the next

¹⁰³ War hindered the Ministry of Government from monthly delivering “the teachers’ wages in the same places where they render their services,” forcing the teachers of Paysandú to travel to Montevideo in order to receive their payments. The state officials’ primary mission to “bring peace to the republic, destroying the anarchical band that has disordered it,” had made it impossible to regularly pay their salaries in the cities where they worked. AGN, AA, Box 906; Box 906A.

¹⁰⁴ AGN, AA, Box 906.

generations would become increasingly capable of formulating its own internal regulations, rules of inclusion and exclusion, mechanisms of recruitment, training and self-reproduction. It is worthy of notice that the Uruguayan educational system was just a few years-old, but teachers were already openly expressing their intention to distance themselves from the influence of the father and the family, and from the shadow of other organizations such as the Church and the police. Moreover, they expressed that very intention while confirming their civil servant status and subordination to the state. Thus Fernandez's request for a school statute exemplifies the public school teachers' early modern push toward the gradual replacement of the dreaded dual-delegation system with a single-delegation one, in which the nation-state (or a semi-autonomous public education system that operates as an agency of the state), not the family, would become the primary source of legitimate pedagogic authority.

Uruguayans witnessed the formation of a new professional category in the nineteenth century, as the public school teacher replaced parents and most free-lance instructors in the field of education. The instructors of the colonial past had educated children for the prosperity of the family, but the public school teacher was hired by the state to prepare future citizens for the nation.¹⁰⁵ The 1830s were just a brief chapter in that long-term process of relative weakening of the family institution vis-à-vis the state. Yet the nineteenth-century disputes that involved teachers and parents, or the patriarch's

¹⁰⁵ Prior to modern schooling, "education had been considered a surplus commodity of a sort," while "the returns on the investment of education had been largely self-centered: the individual, along with his family." However, modern republican virtues were "public virtues established by extrafamilial interests, and the achievements of the nation's youth became the foundations of the nation's, not simply the family's, progress." Mark Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 138-140.

occasional resistance to waive a portion of his parental rights to the state, obfuscate the more frequent cooperation between the two sources of authority. The borders between the public and private spheres have always been permeable and fluid, and it was in their intersections that public school teachers originally developed their occupational identity and provided their educational services. From that privileged standpoint, these professional educators operated as nodes of transmission between the two levels of governance, effectively connecting the family and the child to the educational policies of the state, and from there they disseminated the universalistic values and models of modernity. In their years of pedagogical practice, dealing with students and families, with local and central state officials, Uruguayan public school teachers developed an acute sense of occupational awareness, as they became more and more identified with modernity's progress-oriented cultural project.

Chapter 4

Vecinos and Vecindarios: Schools and Local Communities

The new republic had removed public education from municipal jurisdiction, placing it under the direct authority of a highly centralized state. In the executive branch, the Ministry of Government was invested with the responsibility to create, maintain and regulate the new public school system. For the most part of the 1830s, the government's dedicated staff was however restricted to only a handful of individuals, namely the General Director (Inspector) of the Schools and the teachers, making it impossible for them to micromanage the everyday governance of the system and each particular school. The primacy of the central state over elementary education was therefore more symbolic than functional, because the enactment of governmental policies, including the inauguration of new public institutions, relied on the mobilization and commitment of various local agents. The law repeatedly reaffirmed the central state's funding obligations toward teacher wages, schoolhouse rents, and the delivery of pedagogical supplies, but the responsibility to maintain public schools was shared with local Juntas, Education Commissions, and *vecindarios*. Though the final word on all educational matters should necessarily come from the Ministry of Government, these local corporate entities, which in principle represented the local communities, were encouraged to participate in the everyday affairs of the schools.

Other scholars have acknowledged the mobilization of local-level actors toward mass schooling, and the importance of the school for the rural and urban communities of early modern Latin America. According to Hillel Soifer, Chilean mid-level bureaucrats were indispensable agents in the enactment of central state policies, for they adapted the elite's idealized projects to the demands of local communities.¹⁰⁶ While focusing on the communal life of the *barrios* of Buenos Aires, Mark Szuchman noticed that the authorities still insisted in the 1850s “on locating public schools in the very center of a parish,” for the parents should have direct accessibility to their children's schoolteacher.¹⁰⁷ José Bustamante's study of rural Buenos Aires verified the *vecinos'* active participation in the planning and funding of schools, as well as in the selection of teachers.¹⁰⁸ As evidence of the belief in the state as a provider of elementary education, Bárbara García Sánchez located seventeen petitions from *vecinos notables*, who in between 1787 and 1813 requested the authorities of Nueva Granada to inaugurate schools in their *pueblos*.¹⁰⁹ Thus it would be a mistake to assume that the public school was a mere top-down imposition from the central state, since its institutional viability not only

¹⁰⁶ Hillel David Soifer, “The Sources of Infrastructural Power Evidence from Nineteenth-Century Chilean Education,” *Latin American Research Review* 44, n. 2, (2009): 158-180.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Szuchman, *Order, Family, and Community in Buenos Aires (1810-1860)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 164.

¹⁰⁸ José Bustamante, *Las Escuelas de Primeras Letras en la Campaña de Buenos Aires, 1800-1860* (La Plata: Asociación Amigos del Archivo Histórico, 2007), 93-122.

¹⁰⁹ Bárbara Y. García Sánchez, “La Educación Colonial en la Nueva Granada: entre lo doméstico y lo público,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 7 (2005): 227-228. In the late nineteenth century, Brazilians in the province of Minas Gerais also petitioned for the inauguration of public schools. Cynthia Greive Veiga, “Schooling, organisation of the constitutional monarchy and the education of citizens (Brazil, 1822–1889),” *Paedagogica Historica* 49, n. 1 (2013): 39.

relied on the favorable reception, but also on the proactive commitment of the host communities.

As far as Uruguay is concerned, the two classics on the Lancasterian period, written by Orestes Araujo and Jesualdo Sosa, underscored the contributions of educational entrepreneurs such as José Catalá y Codina, and the pivotal involvement of various governmental and religious figures, including Dámaso Larrañaga, yet most Uruguayan authors tend to the focus on central state policy and legislation.¹¹⁰ As a result, there is scant research on the participation of the Juntas and vecindarios, and even teachers and students are still largely absent from the specialized literature. The vecinos were legitimate participants in that national educational project, and their political commitment to the school also underscores the expansion of the identity of the modern actor. In the words of Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán Vera, Latin American postcolonial culture advanced “notions of popular initiative and the use of mass mobilization, collective organization and empowerment techniques” in the pursuit of various political purposes, including the making of modern educational systems.¹¹¹ Yet, for all its claims of universality, the political mobilization of the Uruguayan vecindarios privileged the participation of adult males of European ancestry, those socially recognized as vecinos. These individuals were the most influential actors in the

¹¹⁰ Orestes Araujo, *Historia de la Escuela Uruguaya* (Montevideo: Imprenta ‘El Siglo Ilustrado’, 1911); Enrique Mena Segarra, and Agapo Luis Palomeque, *Historia de la Educación Uruguaya. Tomo 1: La Educación Oriental 1730-1830* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 2009); Enrique Mena Segarra, and Agapo Luis Palomeque. *Historia de la Educación Uruguaya. Tomo 2: La Educación Oriental 1830-1886*. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 2011.

¹¹¹ Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Introduction: Avoiding the National, Assessing the Modern,” in *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State Formation*, ed. Marcelo Caruso, and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 12-14.

communities, and their sons constituted the primary targets of pedagogical intervention, hence their privileged access to citizenship rights.

The Uruguayan central state directly appointed the heads of the *Departamentos*, the *Jefes Políticos*, but these individuals were not directly involved in public education. That task was reserved for the *Juntas Económico-Administrativas* and respective Education Commissions, whose locally elected members should periodically inspect public schools, reporting their impressions back to Montevideo.¹¹² The Constitution of 1830 had ordered the Juntas to “watch over” public education, a rather vague assignment which nonetheless resulted in the periodic assessment of the teachers’ pedagogical practices and moral conduct. In addition, these local corporate agencies assisted teachers on various mundane chores, such as forwarding requests for pedagogical materials, purchasing classroom furniture, organizing public examination ceremonies, and exhorting parents to send their children to school. The role of the Juntas, Education Commissions, and *vecindarios* was even more crucial at the moment of creating a new public school. While the inauguration of a new educational institution was contingent on the Minister’s approval (himself restrained by budgetary and legal obligations), it generally was up to these local corporate agencies to locate a suitable schoolhouse.

Whereas the Juntas represented the Departments, *pueblos* and *vecindarios*, the public school teacher was the embodiment of the educational policies of the central state.

¹¹² The members of the Juntas were locally elected officials, but the composition of the Education Commissions (a subagency of the former) varied from *pueblo* to *pueblo*, generally including a *Juez de Paz*, an *Alcalde*, a local priest, or individuals who were already members of the Junta. In 1834, the members of the Mercedes Education Commission were the same individuals from the Junta of Soriano, while the Auxiliary Education Commission of Dolores were simply described as “respectable *vecinos*.” AGN, AA, Box 857, Folder 6.

Some teachers resented the meddling of the Juntas, and triggered their civil servant status in order to limit what, from their perspective, was an unwanted intrusion. As expected, the public school emerged as a focal point of conflict and dispute between the many social actors involved. Yet the institution also attracted the attention of varied “independent” individuals. Alcaldes, priests, and other minor figures identified in the school an opportunity for political gain, and, not rarely, the institution emerged as a contested space between rival factions. The Uruguayan National Archive (AGN) provides detailed information on a particular school whose teacher was caught in a web of intrigue, threats, and police investigations. Thus I will give special attention to the well-documented case of Gabriel Lezaeta, a teacher from Las Piedras, who not only strived to defend his honor and job, but also took part, voluntarily or not, in the community-level politics and power struggles of his host vecindario.

This chapter first examines the decision-making process of creating new public schools in early modern Uruguay. Notwithstanding the voluntaristic nature of the original decrees from the Provisional Government of Florida, issued in 1826 and 1827, the procedures necessarily involved the cooperation of the Juntas and the good-will of the vecindarios. I will also analyze the principal modes of communal mobilization. The vecinos expressed their will through petitions (*peticiones* or *representaciones*) and voluntary pecuniary contributions (*subscripciones*), by sending their sons and daughters to school as a sign of political support, or by withdrawing them in protest against an unpopular teacher. The petitions’ most prevalent themes were the creation of a new educational institution, the construction of a new schoolhouse, and the replacement or

reinstatement of a teacher. More limited in scope, the subscripciones were fundraising mobilizations for the construction of a new schoolhouse, or for the purchase of classroom furniture and pedagogical materials. The political action of the vecindarios was however coordinated, and occasionally manipulated, by the members of the Juntas, the teachers themselves, and other figures of authority who claimed to speak on behalf of the vecinos.

Withdrawing children from the school was the most effective form of expressing discontent toward an unpopular governmental decision. It is nonetheless important to emphasize that there is no evidence of widespread resistance to public schooling in the local communities. Nineteenth-century Uruguayans did not take dissent lightly, and political dispute could easily spill into physical violence. The parents who did not send their children to school were often accused of negligence and ignorance, yet they were never labeled as *anarquistas* or *salvajes*. Such harsh terms were indeed used against partisan rivals and rebellious underclasses, denoting dissenters as legitimate targets of coercive repression. One could argue that the state bureaucracy had failed to properly identify the most subtle forms of dissent, such as keeping children away from the school. Nevertheless, from the perspective of a state official, there was no reason to hide or underestimate any resistance from the local communities. This chapter provides multiple examples of articulated mobilizations on behalf of public schooling, yet there is simply no evidence of any comparable movement of opposition. The exemplary cases analyzed in this chapter suggest that the parents' decision to withdraw their children from the school was not a form of resistance against schooling, but part of their strategy to assert control over the institution by influencing the state in the appointment of a teacher.

Far from evincing the local communities' opposition to the role of the state in elementary education, the conflicts surrounding the school show how the pueblos were integrated into that progress-oriented national project. One should not conceive the disputes between the central state and the local communities as confrontations between the cosmopolitan modernity of the ruling elites and the "parochial" culture of the local communities. On the contrary, the school helped connect the vecindarios to the nation-state and to the universalistic culture of modernity. The vecindarios were just as committed to the cause of public education, and their petitions even employed an identical vocabulary of collective progress and individual advancement, as parents unambiguously associated the cultivation of their children to the common good of their local and national communities.

Vecinos and Vecindarios

Social order in late colonial Rio de la Plata was structured around multiple corporate bodies, statuses and *fueros*. Among such statuses was the vecino, an adult male of Iberian ancestry either living in the city with full civil capacity, or in the countryside as a landowner.¹¹³ The vecino was the basic political unit of the settled communities, and the civic expression of the monarchy in colonial spaces that have been sufficiently hispanicized. According to Tamar Herzog, the Iberian vecino was necessarily tied to a local community in a contract of rights and duties; he could vote and be elected to office,

¹¹³ Quoting from a dictionary of 1725, Oreste Cansanello defined the vecino as "*el que habita con otros en el mismo barrio.*" Oreste Carlos Cansanello, "Ciudadano/Vecino," in *Lenguaje y revolución: conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata, 1780-1850*, ed. Noemí Goldman (Prometeo Libros Editorial, 2008), 19-21.

but he should also certify his permanent residency, pay taxes, and serve in the local militia. Herzog however confronts the rigid legal definition of *vecindad*, and instead underscores the concept of *enactment* as a flexible and fluid performance of a political identity. There were many ways of enacting *vecindad*, such as using common pastures or complying with military duties. As a free man of privileged background, the aspiring *vecino* should integrate along with his family into the communal life of a *pueblo*, garnering the recognition of his peers as a fellow member of a *vecindario*. As a category of belonging, *vecindad* simultaneously defined the available paths of communal integration and exclusion, thereby distinguishing foreigners and outsiders from the integrated members of the community. In the Iberian Peninsula, the *vecino* identity was exclusive to the head of the household, but, in Spanish America, it was also used to exclude peoples of indigenous and African descent. In eighteenth-century Rio de la Plata, for instance, the *vecino* was spared from the harsher sentences imposed on a slave or native, and had privileged access to a few legitimate venues of political action, including the right to petition. In Spanish America, there was a strong correlation between “Spanishness” and *vecindad*, because the concept integrated all that was local, provincial and Spanish. Herzog accordingly challenges the traditional dichotomy between the parochial and the larger imagined community, identifying the complementary continuity which connected the two political levels. There was simply no need to “imagine” the larger community, since one enacted Spanishness through integration and membership in

a local community, and that itself entailed very visible and practical sociopolitical implications.¹¹⁴

In the early nineteenth century, the legal requirements for citizenship still partially matched those of the colonial *vecino*. The citizen was an adult free man with certified permanent residency and duly registered for military service. Hence, an Argentinean constitutional project from 1812 defined citizens as “hombres libres que, nacidos y residentes en el territorio de la República, se hallen inscriptos en el Registro Cívico.”¹¹⁵ In her study of Santa Fé’s provincial elections of 1828, Sonia Tedeschi noticed that the use of the word *ciudadano* indeed revealed the continuity of the old *vecino* identity. Thus all candidates in the election had fulfilled the requirements of permanent residency, known occupation, sufficient wealth and income, and previous public service.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the term *vecino* had lost its most rigid connotation during the revolutionary era, gradually including individuals of more humble background, such as artisans and peasants.¹¹⁷ But notwithstanding its more inclusive character, we may assume that early nineteenth-century *vecinos* still constituted a small fraction of the total population. It is difficult to assess the number of individuals recognized as *vecinos* in Uruguay, since that

¹¹⁴ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2-3, 7-8, 10, 11 18, 25, 44, 46-47, 60.

¹¹⁵ The May 1810 Revolution, for instance, “denominó ciudadanos a todos los hombres libres que alistó en los ejércitos.” *Ley de Elecciones* of 1821 embraced urban and rural *vecinos*, or “todos los habitantes incluidos en el padrón de milicias con domicilio establecido en el distrito.” Cansanello, “Ciudadano/Vecino,” 23-24, 26-27, 29.

¹¹⁶ Sonia Tedeschi, “Caudillo e Instituciones en el Río de la Plata. El caso de Santa Fe entre 1819 y 1838” (paper presented at the Primeiras Jornadas de História Regional Comparada, Fundação de Economia e Estatística y PUCRS, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, August 23-25, 2000).

¹¹⁷ José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados: Orígenes de la Nación Argentina (1800-1846)* (Buenos Aires: Emencé Editores, 2007), 147.

political identity relied more on peer recognition than governmental ascription, yet the proportion was probably similar to what other historians have estimated for the Argentinean provinces. According to Gabriela Tío Vallejo, the percentage of *vecinos* in Tucumán was close to five percent in between 1812 and 1818, a number which amounted to nearly half of all the heads of household. In the electoral and militia rolls, the *vecinos* were easy to recognize due to the customary *don* which preceded their names. Beyond the requirements of the *Leyes de Indias*, the modern use of *don* in the Rio de la Plata was entirely based on peer recognition. Although all men worthy of the honorific *don* were labelled as *vecinos*, Tío Vallejo noticed that many *plebeyos* whose names were not preceded by that title also emerged as voters later in the decade, and there was an increasing number of artisans and petty merchants among them.¹¹⁸

The Banda Oriental also experienced the expansion of the *vecindario* from its narrow colonial definition, and witnessed the inceptive displacement of the colonial *vecino* toward the modern *ciudadano*.¹¹⁹ The National Militia Law of April 1830, for example, simply enlisted all Uruguayan males in between 20 and 45 years-old.¹²⁰ On the

¹¹⁸ The *alcaldes de barrio y de partido* played a pivotal role in attesting the social standing of the *vecino*, since they prepared the censuses and lists of voters for the polling stations. Gabriela Tío Vallejo, “Campanas y fusiles, una historia política de Tucumán en la primera mitad del siglo XIX”, in *La república extraordinaria. Tucumán en la primera mitad del siglo XIX*, ed. Gabriela Tío Vallejo (Rosario, Prohistoria, 2011).

¹¹⁹ The word *ciudadano* had also existed in the colonial tradition, denoting the inhabitant of a *ciudad*. Unlike his rural counterpart, the *ciudadano* was an urban *vecino* who qualified to participate in the *cabildo* elections, either voting or running for office. Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados*, 137; Cansanello, “Ciudadano/Vecino,” 19-22.

¹²⁰ There was however a long list of exemptions from military service, which included foreigners, lawyers, physicians, students, artisan apprentices, notaries, pharmacists, priests, schoolteachers, and all those involved in the administration of hospitals, *saladeros* (jerky beef industries), and rural properties. Armand Ugón et al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos, 1825-1930, Vol. 1 1825-1834* (Montevideo, 1930), 207-209.

one hand, the law did not indicate any form of racial or class discrimination for the lower ranks of the militia. On the other hand, the officers and battalion commanders were described as citizens with certified residency and a stipulated minimum capital. The National Militia Law clearly associated military service with permanent domicile and the free exercise of political rights, but the Constitution of 1830 simply granted citizenship to “all free men born in ... the territory of the state.” In addition, the Constitution extended citizenship rights to all foreigners who had been properly “*avecindados*,” a term which denoted *vecindad* as a path of integration into the national community.¹²¹

Admittedly, most local office holders in the Uruguayan Departments were *vecinos* of privileged standing in their communities. As members of the local elites, these individuals may have attempted to coordinate the political action of the *vecindarios*, yet the petitions and fundraising mobilizations analyzed in this chapter also evince the participation of the larger social groups which had benefited from that recent enlargement of the *vecino* status and ensuing transition toward modern citizenship. As a result, many signatures in the examined petitions belong to petty merchants, artisans, and peasants. The *vecinos* often relied on local authorities to make themselves heard in Montevideo, but they should not be conceived as passive preys to upper-class manipulation. In the example of Las Piedras, which I will later analyze in more detail, a group of *labradores* openly challenged the departmental authorities of Canelones, for they wished to reinstate

¹²¹ The Constitution excluded slaves, women, but also wage workers, lower rank soldiers, the “notoriously idle,” and those with a criminal record. Armand Ugón et al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 242-266; The *vecino* identity also informed the writing of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 and its notion of modern citizenship. Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 1, 9.

a teacher of their choice and to protect a public school they believed belonged to the community.¹²²

According to Herzog, Hispanic political practices were perceived as belonging to a set of universal principles that applied to everyday moral life regardless of the intention of rulers and states. In his words, “for most people living in eighteen-century Spain, nature, reason, justice, and universality were different expressions of the same reality, which, embodied in natural law, united religion, morality and politics in a single body of thought.” In that case, “local norms were always a reflection of higher norms,” conceived as moral guidelines common to all Christians.¹²³ That moral continuity connected the political life of the local communities with the larger imagined communities, be it Spain or Christendom.

That moral and political continuity was also evident in early modern Uruguay. The public school was not conceived as an alien entity imposed from Montevideo, but as an institution that should be incorporated into the communal life of the pueblos. Thus, instead of portraying local communities as “traditional” bastions against the expansion of universalistic modernity, this chapter examines how the vecinos’ mobilization on behalf of public schooling evinced their political integration into the Uruguayan national community. Accordingly, there is simply no evidence of a general discontent with the presence of the school in the pueblos. Quite the opposite, it was in the interest of the vecinos to reaffirm the public and national character of their “communal” institution. In

¹²² In the colonial and early modern era, the word *pueblo* was still loaded with a corporate and political meaning. The pueblos were collective units organized as cities or towns according to the old Hispanic municipal tradition. Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados*, 114-115.

¹²³ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 167-168.

November 1832, “several vecinos from this pueblo [of Mercedes] . . . have presented themselves” to the local police department, complaining that the teacher Francisca Garcia de Perichon was charging eight monthly pesos from her students. The Junta of Soriano had granted her permission to do so, which explains why the vecinos had reached out for the police. The vecinos however wondered if the school was indeed “set by the state and paid for by the [National] Treasury,” and they further inquired whether the teacher “enjoys any payment from the government.” Those were, of course, rhetorical questions. On the assumption that the school was indeed still public, the vecinos believed “it is not fair that this sacrifice [the monthly payment] is expected from the vecindario, [because] the many families that cannot afford this sacrifice are deprived of that education that could be given to their daughters.”¹²⁴ The vecinos of Mercedes were well-informed on the institutional role of the Uruguayan educational system. Not only did they support the concept of public schooling, but they also expected the school to remain public and fully funded by the central state.

The Political Initiative to Create New Public Schools

The legal framework that regulated the postcolonial public school system had started with the Provisional Government’s Decree of February 9, 1826. That pioneering directive authorized the creation of “schools of elementary education in all the pueblos of the Province,” thereby distinguishing the local communities as primary targets and beneficiaries of governmental policy. Two additional decrees emerged in May 1827. While the first created the Normal School, the second authorized the inauguration of

¹²⁴ AGN, AA, Box 835, Folder 7.

elementary schools in at least thirteen pueblos of the interior. Concomitant to the inauguration of a school, the contemplated pueblos were also told to organize the *Juntas Inspectoras*, whose members were a *Juez de Primera Instancia* (in his absence, a *Juez de Paz*), plus two “respectable vecinos.” The *Juntas Inspectoras* were the predecessors of the later *Juntas Económico-Administrativas*, evincing the central state’s early attempt to mobilize the vecinos to participate in the administration of the schools.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, the examined sources for this chapter only cover the so-called Constitutional Period, hence the difficult task in assessing the actual role of the vecindarios in the foundation of the original thirteen schools, or even in confirming whether these institutions were indeed functioning prior to 1830. We may deduce from Juan Manuel de la Sota’s *Ensayo* of 1834 that the Florida decrees had at first limited practical effect. The Normal School Teacher identified the schools of Canelones, Maldonado, Durazno and Mercedes as the only operational ones by early 1829. Nevertheless, the Provisional Government presumably hit its target in April 1829 with the inauguration of the Normal School in Montevideo, plus new elementary schools in Cerdón, Minas, Rocha, San Carlos, Santa Lucía, San José, Rosario, Colonia, Soriano, Paysandú, Porongos, Melo, and Florida.¹²⁶ Other archive sources corroborate the claims of De la Sota to a limited extent. For example, the Provisional Government’s official list of civil servants includes a few teachers hired in that period, including Ignacio de Zufriategui (Canelones, 1827), Tomás Julián Ortiz

¹²⁵ Armand Ugón et al., *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, 25-26, 77-78.

¹²⁶ Juan Manuel de la Sota, “Ensayo sobre la Adopción del Método de Mutua Enseñanza para las Escuelas Públicas de Primera Instrucción en el Estado Oriental del Uruguay,” Montevideo, 1834. The original manuscript is in Archivo General de la Nación (Argentina), Archivo Andrés Lamas, Legajo 48, 2651.

(Mercedes, 1827), Lázaro Gadea (Durazno, 1827), and Juan Lopes Formoso (Maldonado, 1828).¹²⁷ By contrast, Santa Lucía does not emerge in the examined sources until at least July 1831.

Issued in less than fourteen months after the signing of the Constitution, the *Circular* of September 2, 1831, ordered the creation of five public schools in the pueblos of Salto, San Salvador, Las Víboras, Las Vacas, and Las Piedras.¹²⁸ Thanks to the *Circular*, we may finally analyze the role of the *vecindarios*, identifying two contrasting stances toward public education. On the one hand, the *vecinos* of San Salvador and Las Víboras had previously petitioned the Ministry of Government for a school, so that we may interpret the *Circular* as a response to their pleas.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the Junta of Paysandú neglected the ministerial instructions regarding the school in Salto, not fulfilling its obligations until at least March 1832. On top of that, the Junta of Canelones initially dismissed the school for Las Piedras, arguing that the small size of the local population made it unnecessary.¹³⁰ The Junta unexpectedly changed its mind a few months later, so that the school was inaugurated on December 13, 1832. Notwithstanding the original rejection, the Minister of Government later alluded, perhaps ironically, to the “recurring requests of the *vecindario* ... of Las Piedras.”¹³¹ Yet the *Circular* had, in

¹²⁷ AGN, AA, Book 86, Empleados Civiles 1825-1829.

¹²⁸ Signed by Rivera and Ellauri, the *Circular* is in *Acuerdos y Decretos del Ministerio de Gobierno*, Libro 1401, 1830-1852.

¹²⁹ The Junta of Soriano had originally argued for a school in San Salvador in March 1831. AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12. The original request from Las Vacas also preceded the *Circular*. AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12; Box 826, Folder 11.

¹³⁰ AGN, AA, Box 833A, Folder 12.

¹³¹ Its first teacher was Luciano Lira. AGN, AA, Box 836A, Folder 8.

practice, nothing but authorized the Juntas to start working toward the inauguration of a school. The effective implementation of that order heavily relied on the mobilization of the local communities, as observed in the case of Las Piedras, whose school was only inaugurated once the local *vecindario* and the Junta of Canelones had committed to the project.

Apart from the Juntas, various office holders alternatively addressed the Ministry of Government on behalf of the *vecindarios*, especially those representing the villages that were not seats of a local government.¹³² Willing to “support the government’s efforts to educate the children,” the Juez de Paz of San Fructuoso (Tacuarembó) was coordinating the establishment of a new school. Although the government had not yet authorized the inauguration of that educational establishment, an unnamed *vecino* had already offered a house for the school, while “others are contributing with benches, tables, etc.”¹³³ A second letter appealing for a school in Tacuarembó later arrived on July 12, 1837, this time signed by the President of the Republic, Manuel Oribe. The letter at least partially justified the school on the aspirations of the local population. In the words of Oribe, “the numerous inhabitants who populate these fields wish to educate their children, and since most of them are Brazilians,” it was in the interest of the Uruguayan republic to “teach them the language of this country, so that they may nationalize themselves from a young age.”¹³⁴ It was in fact customary for the various figures of

¹³² In rare cases, the teachers themselves petitioned the state for new public schools. In August 1836, Juan Salazar addressed the Ministry of Government, for he understood “the need for a school of *primeras letras* in the district of Peñarol.” AGN, AA, Box 887, Folder 9.

¹³³ This is an undated letter, but probably redacted in early 1837. AGN, AA, Box 894.

¹³⁴ AGN, AA, Box 899.

authority to justify their requests on the professed aspirations of the vecinos. Thus the Juez de Paz Juan Albares carefully placed the political initiative on the “ciudadanos” of Florida, explaining that “the vecinos of said village had presented themselves before me,” asking him to forward a petition for a school to Montevideo.¹³⁵

Out of the 39 identified public institutions for the 1830s, only ten were schools for girls. The high incidence of petitions on behalf of the latter likely resulted from the negligence of the central state, for the Provisional Government’s original decrees and the Circular of 1831 had utterly forsaken the “education of the fair sex.” With the notable exception of the two schools of Montevideo, the remaining institutions all originated from the political initiative of the local communities. Paysandú, for example, successfully applied for such an institution in early 1831, while the many “demands and petitions” from the vecindario of Mercedes resulted in a new school in April 1832.¹³⁶ Following the necessary authorization from the Ministry of Government, the installation procedures did not differ from the customary practices adopted for the analogous schools for boys. The Juntas and Education Commissions were likewise expected to assist the state on its search for a candidate teacher and a suitable schoolhouse. Thus, in late 1837, the Junta of Maldonado recommended the teacher Francisca Faxardo de Formoso, while Josefa Revillo offered a house for 15 monthly pesos, later reduced to 13. The school was

¹³⁵ The school was inaugurated on March 8, 1831, and its first teacher was the “ciudadano” Gabriel Lezaeta. AGN, AA, Box 811A, Folder 6.

¹³⁶ The Junta’s suggested teacher was Maria Josefa Mendoza de Perez. AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12. According to the Junta of Soriano, the vecinos received the news from Montevideo with great “enthusiasm.” The Junta found a suitable house for 15 monthly pesos, and its teacher, Francisca García de Perichon, would arrive around mid-June. At inauguration, the school only counted with ten students. AGN, AA, Box 828; Box 829A, Folder 13; Box 830/A, Folder 13.

inaugurated in November, “with the provisional [pedagogical] materials that the vecindario and teacher have provided.”¹³⁷ That is not to say that the vecindarios were always successful in their petitions. The Junta of San José, for example, “repeatedly petitioned” for a school for girls in 1833, arguing that there were no such institutions in that Department. The Junta had even located an aspiring teacher and a suitable schoolhouse, but the Ministry of Government still stubbornly rejected every single petition.¹³⁸

Whereas the political initiative to open new public schools was shared with the local communities, the decision to close them was an exclusive prerogative of the central state. The schools of Las Víboras and Cardal were respectively terminated in 1834 and 1835 due to disappointing enrollment figures, which in the opinion of the General Inspector did not justify the governmental expenditures. Although the Minister later favored their restoration, the two schools failed to meet the stipulated minimal attendance, and were therefore permanently discontinued.¹³⁹ If the state was looking for an excuse to close the school for girls of the Aguada, it certainly found one in early 1838, and just a few months after inauguration. The local vecindario had once “justly demanded” for a school in August 1837, prompting the Minister to declare that “the fair sex” should not be “deprived from the joy of knowledge.” Yet the task to set that establishment was given to Emilio Duclos, who was already in charge of the local public school for boys. Duclos had located a candidate teacher and a schoolhouse for no

¹³⁷ AGN, AA, Box 901.

¹³⁸ AGN, AA, Box 837, Folder 7; Box 849, Folder 6.

¹³⁹ AGN, AA, Box 862, Folder 6; Box 863/A, Folder 12.

additional costs, but the Minister would soon discover that there were strings attached to that alluring proposal. The house Duclos had in mind was actually his own home and school, and the candidate teacher was his wife, Josefa Agualevada. Unsurprisingly, the school did not survive its first inspection, because the Junta reported a scandal: boys and girls studying almost side by side in the same building. Gender segregation should be strictly enforced, hence the Ministerial order to close the elementary school for girls of the Aguada.¹⁴⁰

The *Subscripciones*: Fundraising Efforts in the Vecindarios

The republics of the Rio de la Plata regularly summoned the vecinos to publicly demonstrate their support for diverse civic causes. Whether voluntarily or not, the vecino should not only be seen at the public events, but should also contribute with his private resources toward military mobilizations, patriotic festivities, and the reform of public buildings. These fundraising efforts were however rooted in old colonial practices, and constituted a form of bargain with the state; they utilized the euphemistic and ambiguous language of gift, itself embedded in the tacit agreement of reciprocity and preservation of common good. As political acts, the subscripciones, as they were called in the Banda Oriental, tied local corporate units and individuals to the interests of the Spanish monarchy and the later republic, feeding into the notion of service in exchange of reward. While examining such fundraising mobilizations in Salta for the 1810-1825 period, Marcelo Marchionni noticed that the vecindarios, and particularly its most preeminent

¹⁴⁰ Apparently, it was an obvious choice, for the Minister would not close the school for boys. AGN, AA, Box 899A.

members, were often called at times of emergency to contribute in the form of compulsory donations and loans.¹⁴¹ In the Buenos Aires *Rosista*, the *fiestas federales* of the interior were, as a rule, funded by the *vecindarios*, even if the provincial state customarily paid for the capital's celebrations.¹⁴² According to Eugenia Molina, the contributions incremented the *vecino's* standing in the community; they enhanced his honor and prestige, and his inclusion in the "patriotic lists" constituted a useful capital at the moment of presenting oneself before the authorities.¹⁴³ In the words of Viviana Grieco, the contributions "represented a transformative political experience for the donors as their collection coincided with the *vecinos'* engagement in a more active type of *vecindad*."¹⁴⁴

Fundraising efforts in early modern Uruguay often focused on local projects, such as the construction or reform of communal installations, such as temples, graveyards, and schools. The *vecinos'* civic contributions to the construction works of a schoolhouse underscored the symbolic incorporation of that institution and its communal "ownership." However, just like the temple was institutionally subordinated to a higher entity, the

¹⁴¹ Marcelo Daniel Marchionni, "Cabildos, Territorios y Representación Política de la Intendencia a la Provincia de Salta (1810-1825)," *Cuadernos de Trabajo del Centro de Investigaciones del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas del Departamento de Humanidades y Artes, Serie Investigaciones* 15 (Universidad Nacional de Lanús, 2008). http://historiapolitica.com/datos/biblioteca/marchionni_dt.pdf

¹⁴² Ricardo Salvatore, "Fiestas federales: Representaciones de la República en el Buenos Aires Rosista," *Entrepassados* 6, n. 11 (1997): 45-68.

¹⁴³ The *Mendocinos*, for instance, supported San Martín's Army of the Andes with wine, wheat, corn, and large quantities of silver. Eugenia Molina, "Politización y relaciones sociales en Mendoza (Argentina) durante la década revolucionaria. Conflictos y consensos en la configuración de un nuevo orden," *Boletín Americanista* 58, (2008): 251-271.

¹⁴⁴ Viviana Grieco, *The Politics of Giving in the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: Donors, Lenders, Subjects, and Citizens* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 1-5, 10-11.

Catholic Church, so was the school an agency of the state. The church provided a space for various parochial social gatherings, which nonetheless connected the vecinos to the Catholic Church, its universalistic religion, the worldwide community of Christians. As a modern temple, the postcolonial school provided a new public space which also belonged to the community, yet it connected the vecino to the republic, to the imagined national community, and to the models and ideals of universalistic modernity. Thus, in the process of incorporating the school into the community, the vecinos were simultaneously confirming their integration into the cosmopolitan spaces of Western modernity.

The central state was, in principle, responsible for the material support of its public schools, yet the Ministry of Government was highly receptive to the voluntary contributions of the pueblos. As a result, I have collected twelve examples of subscripciones from the AGN. Such mobilizations were more common in the early 1830s, when the central state worked with a limited budget, and several schools were inaugurated in a short period of time.¹⁴⁵ Most subscripciones targeted the construction or reform of a schoolhouse (see figure 4.1 for an exemplary project from Mercedes), while others aimed at the purchase of pedagogical materials. For example, in August 1832, the General Director Lázaro Gadea noticed that the public schools of Durazno had “run out of everything,” and thus suggested locals to organize a “*donativo*” to purchase a few benches. In November 21, 1837, the Junta of Maldonado informed that its new school for

¹⁴⁵ Although this section focuses on successful fundraising efforts, some Juntas failed to persuade the vecinos of the benefits of public schooling. A subscripción from Durazno, for example, only received donations from two individuals. The first was the parish priest, while the second was Gabriel Borrá, the local teacher. According to the Junta, most parents “do not see these things as we do.” AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12.

girls was ready to open “with the provisional útiles provided by the vecindario and the teacher.”¹⁴⁶

Written in 1822, the *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster*, which once regulated the Lancasterian Society of Montevideo, described the organizational practices and general purpose of the subscripciones. In order to spread the Lancasterian system throughout the country, the Sociedad should first identify the most influential vecinos in each pueblo. These local figures of authority should then entice as many donors as possible, offering them concrete guarantees that their contributions would be carefully handled and exclusively invested in the “creation and maintenance of a school or schools in that same pueblo.” The Reglamento nonetheless predicted that the limited resources of the pueblos would not be enough for the maintenance of a school. Thus, whenever the subscripciones were insufficient for the establishment and up keeping of a school, “as it may be in the beginning, since it is necessary to establish the schools and provide them with slates, pencils, lessons, etc.,” the cabildo should “meet the deficit ... by any means necessary.”¹⁴⁷

The fundraising practices would not change much in the following years. In the postcolonial era, the designated individuals who worked on the mobilization of the vecindarios were, as expected, local office holders, and most often members of the Juntas. Moreover, the sources often allude to the difficult task of seducing vecinos to make their donations. The first of its kind for the Constitutional Period, the Circular of

¹⁴⁶ AGN, AA, Box 901.

¹⁴⁷ *Reglamento para la Sociedad de las Escuelas de Lancaster* (Montevideo, Imprenta de Perez, 1822), 15.

November 23, 1830, authorized the collection of donations for a new *Colegio* in the Uruguayan capital. The Ministry of Government expected the “*vecinos pudientes*” to contribute with a fixed amount, 150 pesos each. The Junta of Montevideo however required supplementary information on the school’s curriculum and internal regulations in order to “inspire” the parents to participate.¹⁴⁸ In its strategy to attract as many donors as possible, the Junta was willing to inform the general public “through the newspapers that the indicated subscripción will be open at the house of the [Junta’s] president.” In addition, the Junta would commission “each of its members to exercise their influence and special connections with the *vecindarios*.” These excerpts denote the highly personalized character of these fundraising mobilizations, for their success also relied on the social standing and prestige of the organizers.¹⁴⁹

In a few cases, the orders to organize a subscripción had come directly from the Ministry of Government.¹⁵⁰ In late 1831, the state recommended the pueblos of Las Vacas and Las Víboras to collect donations for the construction of a building made of “wood, that is, *pau-a-pique*, thatched roof, like the other houses in the village.”¹⁵¹ It seems that the two pueblos were successful in their efforts, because the Junta of Colonia later

¹⁴⁸ Even though the text gives the false impression that it only addressed the Junta of Montevideo, the Circular was in fact distributed among all Departments. Despite the initial mobilization, the intended *Colegio* for girls was never created. *Acuerdos y Decretos del Ministerio de Gobierno*, Book 1401 (1830-1852).

¹⁴⁹ AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12. Triggered by the same Circular, the Junta of Maldonado replied that it would select a few individuals “*de mejor concepto*” to stimulate its pueblos to organize subscripciones. There is evidence that San José complied with the orders, while Canelones informed that it would work on project as soon as possible. AGN, AA, Box 808, Folder 10.

¹⁵⁰ In August 1831, Soriano was instructed to mobilize “the *vecinos* ... who which to voluntarily pay for any project.” AGN, AA, Box 814, Folder 4.

¹⁵¹ AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 12.

reported about the “houses [built] by the vecindario for the schools.”¹⁵² When the village of Porongos asked for a new schoolhouse in January 1834, and then again in February 1835, the General Inspector simply instructed them to collect the necessary sum from the local inhabitants.¹⁵³ As a result, the vecindario managed to raise the modest quantity of 79 pesos for the reform of its deteriorated schoolhouse.¹⁵⁴

The subscripciones enhanced the political capital of the vecindarios and their corporate representatives, for they underscored the patriotism of all those who voluntarily contributed to the progress and welfare of the republic. In early 1833, after recognizing the “exhausted state of the national treasury,” the Junta of Paysandú presented a new project “funded by the vecinos who voluntarily wish to contribute” to the construction of a schoolhouse. The Minister of Government replied expressing his satisfaction over “the repeated testimonies of patriotism and civic virtues displayed by the vecindario of Paysandú through its local authorities.”¹⁵⁵ Even though the schoolhouse was still not ready in 1834, the Junta announced that its treasury had ascended to 1,500 pesos, an impressive sum raised “from a voluntary subscripción for the construction of a house for the school.”¹⁵⁶ The patriotic donations were also used to extract supplementary funds from the central state, as they increased the vecindarios’ leverage in their negotiations

¹⁵² AGN, AA, Box 826, Folder 11; Box 862, Folder 8.

¹⁵³ The Porongos school had been open since 1830, and 29 students had already graduated from it in 1834, while its current roster counted with 40 students: 6 practicing on writing slates; 16 writing on paper; 18 learning to read. AGN, AA, Box 863/A, Folder 12.

¹⁵⁴ AGN, AA, Box 863/A, Folder 12.

¹⁵⁵ AGN, AA, Box 837, Folder 7.

¹⁵⁶ AGN, AA, Box 851, Carpeta 6.

with the different levels of the administration.¹⁵⁷ When the vecinos of Florida addressed the Minister of Government in March 1832, they explained that “the vecindario, due to its patriotism, has gathered one hundred pesos for the purchase of a suitable [house], whose total value is that of two hundred fifty. So if the government helps with one hundred fifty, it [the government] has a house of its own.”¹⁵⁸

Unfortunately, there is scant information on the actual “grassroots movements” of the vecindarios, since the Juntas generally focused on their financial achievements rather than on the description of their fundraising practices. Nevertheless, the AGN holds more detailed information on a particular subscripción organized in Canelones toward a schoolhouse for girls.¹⁵⁹ In 1831, the Minister of Government received from that Department a comprehensive account of all individual donations, complementary state

¹⁵⁷ The Junta of Soriano, for instance, asked the state to send complementary funds to the pueblo of Dolores, for the local vecinos were already building a new schoolhouse on their own. AGN, AA, Box 857, Folder 6.

¹⁵⁸ AGN, AA, Box 827A, Folder 11. The Minister agreed with the proposal, but the vecinos of Florida were still struggling with their schoolhouse in September 1835. On that occasion, two private individuals, Faustino Lopez and Pedro Ojeda, were in charge of a new subscripción, whose plan involved the construction of a “large room of 14 yards,” plus an area for the teacher’s living quarters. Yet the sources indicate that the schoolhouse was still not ready in January 1836, and the project was probably abandoned. AGN, AA, Box 827, Folder 5; Box 874, Folder 10; Box 877; Box 880. Private individuals also coordinated a subscripción in Durazno. In 1835, the local Junta intended to reform its church, prison, and schoolhouse. The letter named the two individuals responsible for the fundraising efforts, Manuel Dias and Felipe Martinez, “both from this vecindario and [local] commerce.” AGN, AA, Box 874, Folder 4; Box 875, Folder 5.

¹⁵⁹ Prior to the subscripción, the central state had already spent a significant amount of resources on the project. The sources indicate that the old Junta Inspectoral had received 750 pesos from the General Director, while additional funds, 218 pesos and 8.5 reales, came by the hands of Pedro Gereda. At that point, the total expenses had ascended to 962 pesos in construction materials and labor costs. In March 1831, however, the newly instituted Junta Económico-Administrativa informed the Ministry of Government that its coffers had nothing but 7 pesos. AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 9.

contributions, and corresponding expenses.¹⁶⁰ Called *Subscripción Filantrópica*, the document lists 89 individual donations, which were made in varying quantities of silver, Brazilian copper currency, and construction materials. The list reflected the hierarchical nature of the local community, so that the first names identified the members of the Junta and other local office holders, who thereby certified their political commitment to the cause of public education.¹⁶¹ Forty-seven individuals donated small quantities ranging from one to five copper coins, while fourteen vecinos contributed with at least six or ten. There were only three donations in the 20-29 interval, while one vecino made a single large contribution of 100 copper coins. The total contribution in Brazilian copper coins was 949 pesos and 7.5 reales (for the sake of comparison, public school teachers received 720 pesos a year). All those who contributed in silver donated something in between one and ten, totaling 43 coins. Manuel del Pino and Juan Maria Francisco contributed with 1,000 bricks each, while Manuel Alonso handled 500 more. A separate document indicates that Gabriel Palomeque, who had previously donated ten copper coins, later contributed with “three *carradas* of fine sand.”¹⁶² The gender distribution among the 89 listed names was overwhelmingly male, although 11 donors were women. The list does not provide any additional information on their social background, yet we may assume

¹⁶⁰ The report was titled “*Subscripción filantrópica promovida por la Junta Económico-Administrativa del Departamento de Canelones en 1831, a efecto de concluir la Casa Escuela de Niñas del pueblo cabeza del referido Departamento.*” AGN, AA, Box 809, Folder 10; Box 811, Folder 12.

¹⁶¹ The Junta’s president, Marcelino Santurio, donated 20 copper coins, the same amount given by the members Ramon Marques and Cirilo Santurio, while Pedro Espinosa contributed with 10 coins. The priest Juan Francisco Larrobla donated 25 copper coins, while the Jefe Político, the Alcalde Ordinario, and the Juez de Paz offered 8 coins each. The Teniente Alcalde donated 5 copper coins.

¹⁶² AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 9.

that, perhaps with the exception of the women, all listed donors were socially recognized as *vecinos* in Canelones.¹⁶³

In January 1832, the Junta announced that the building for the public school for girls of Canelones was finally ready, and that “largely due to the *vecinos*’ philanthropy under the direction of the Junta.”¹⁶⁴ The primary goal of the *subscripción* had been reached, then it was the central state’s turn to supply the school with the required pedagogical materials, pay for the teacher’s salary, all for the benefit of the “youth of the fair sex.” However, Minister Santiago Vazquez did not ignore the central state funds sent in the previous year, and immediately demanded copies of all receipts and a detailed account of all the money delivered from Montevideo, since, according to the Treasury, the government had authorized the expenditure of 1,257 pesos in that project.¹⁶⁵ It is difficult to accurately date the inauguration of the school, but the sources suggest that the teacher Ramona Mentasti de Villagran was already working in there in March 1833. The public school for girls of Canelones was amongst the most stable institutions of the republic, for it remained operational almost uninterruptedly until at least March 1839.

¹⁶³ An undated letter describes the expenses for that enterprise. At that point, the *subscripción* had raised 331 pesos and 4 reals, which were still in the Junta’s treasury. The remaining funds were spent in all sorts of construction materials, including nails, timber, bricks, sand, plus labor and transportation costs. AGN, AA, Box 809, Folder 10.

¹⁶⁴ According to the Junta’s president, Marcelino Santurio, the building was “20 yards long, and 6 wide,” with enough capacity for 100 or 110 students.

¹⁶⁵ AGN, AA, Box 811, Folder 9.

The Teachers's Relationship with the Vecinos

If the role of the school in the community was, to some extent, modeled after that of the church, then so was the role of the teacher relative to the priest. The two had been appointed by a higher authority, and arrived as outsiders who should quickly integrate into the communal life of the vecindarios. In a society that placed a high value on face-to-face interactions, the teacher should carefully cultivate his personal relationships and political alliances; he should present himself as an honorable *hombre de letras* worthy of the villagers' trust and, why not, friendship, charming them to support his educational institution by consigning their children to his care. The teachers were, in principle, exempt from enlistment in the militias, yet they still had at their disposal the other traditional avenues of integration. After being assigned to a new post in the interior, these individuals would customarily move in with their families, adopting the schoolhouse as their new permanent residency (a building that, in some cases, the vecinos themselves had built). The schoolhouse was often located at the center of the village, so that the teacher and his family were made accessible and visible to the whole vecindario. Gradually becoming part of the local community, the teacher and his family socialized with the locals during Mass and assorted social gatherings, not to mention that their own sons and daughters studied side by side with the local children at the school. Successful integration meant that the teacher had become more than just a foreign agent sent by an external entity. Once he was deemed worthy of recognition by his peers, he could also embrace the political identity of the vecino for himself. The public school teacher Custodio Echagüe, for example, had already been living in his host community for over

five years when he addressed the Ministry of Government in 1837, writing as a “vecino of the village of San Juan Bautista.” The teachers’ *sui generis* integration however happened *through* the school. If the schoolhouse was his home, therefore determining his place in the geography of the village, then his profession defined his symbolic role and standing in the community. From the perspective of the other vecinos, a majority of them illiterate individuals of humble background, the teachers were *preceptores de primeras letras* and *empleados del estado*; they were priests of a modern kind, at once linking the local community to that universalistic higher culture (the *letras*) and to the modern transformed church (the *estado*). Although the teacher’s social standing was certainly lower than that of the priest, he had also been sent to exercise a specialized magisterial role, a secularized ministration, and to work for the common good of the pueblo.

Most teachers successfully settled in their host communities, achieving the desired stability that benefited the continuity of their pedagogical work. Nevertheless, some teachers got involved in the local power struggles, and even turned the school and themselves into focal points of a political dispute. As it often happened on behalf of a priest, the vecinos could either mobilize their political capital in support of a teacher or take action for his removal. In their letters to the state, the vecinos generally backed up their appeals with the withdrawal of children from the school, a form of political pressure that was taken seriously by the government. Since public school teachers enjoyed the constitutional prerogatives and protections of the civil servants, their relative autonomy from the Juntas oriented the resolution of all such conflicts to Montevideo. Consequently,

and fortunately for us, the archive of the Ministry of Government holds extraordinarily detailed accounts of these communal disputes.

Withdrawing children from the school was a common form of political pressure, a strategy either employed against an unpopular teacher, or for the reinstatement of an esteemed one. In April 1836, the “padres de familia and vecinos” of Minas, Department of Maldonado, informed “that the education of their children is so neglected that ... they cannot see in them any advancement, which is why they had been forced to remove their sons” from the school. Knowing that “the boys do not learn,” the vecinos had decided to replace their teacher, a man who “devotes his attention to other matters or disputes ... [and] distracts himself from his duties.” The vecinos therefore asked the state to replace the negligent teacher “for the sake of that pueblo.”¹⁶⁶ In a few cases, the vecinos also appointed their preferred replacement candidate. In April 1837, the vecindario of Mercedes requested the substitution of Domingo Osorio with Carlos Genta. Due to Osorio’s “vicious and incorrigible behavior,” the parents were “hesitating to send their children to be educated under the direction of a man who is generally deprived of reason.” Conversely, the priest Carlos Genta was an “individual of sound morality, and liked by all in that pueblo.”¹⁶⁷

The favorable opinion of the vecindarios was particularly useful for the teachers who had fallen from grace with the Juntas. The teacher of the Aguada, Emilio Duclos, was in good terms with the Education Commission of Extramuros until late 1837, when

¹⁶⁶ AGN, AA, Box 883, Folder 12.

¹⁶⁷ AGN, AA, Box 896.

he and his wife persuaded the state to inaugurate the first public school for girls of that locality. Yet the decision to discontinue that educational establishment in early 1838 severely strained the teacher's relationship with the Commission. The conflict between the two quickly escalated, as Duclos became increasingly hostile toward the Commission, which in turn started a smear campaign that went as far as questioning the legitimacy of his marriage. Duclos was the first and only public school teacher in the Aguada, where he had been working since February 1834. After so many years in charge of the local children, Duclos was sacked, yet his good relations with the parents resulted in the mobilization of the 18 "undersigned vecinos of the Aguada." The vecinos petitioned for his restitution, declaring "that Don Emilio Duclos has been an elementary school teacher in this place for four years and three months," and they certified his "behavior and morality, which have earned him our appreciation."¹⁶⁸ Duclos was however not reinstated. The public school of the Aguada was once more operational in January 1839, albeit with a different teacher.

The vecinos of the Cardal, also in Montevideo Extramuros, were remarkably loyal to Vicente Miranda, their public school teacher.¹⁶⁹ Miranda was fired in early 1836, yet his replacement, Juan Antonio Labandera, was fiercely rejected by most parents. As a result, 16 vecinos later complained to the Ministry of Government that the school had been closed for four months, arguing that the parents were refusing to entrust their children to Labandera. Miranda had opened a new private institution in the vicinity, but

¹⁶⁸ AGN, AA, Box 913.

¹⁶⁹ Located in Extramuros Montevideo, the school was alternatively known "school number 4," or school of "the Aldea."

his services were restricted to the children “whose parents can afford to pay,” while “the majority ... is exposed or abandoned to its fate, and vulnerable to not enjoying the citizenship rights due to not learning to read and write, as prescribed by the third chapter of the Constitution, starting in the year 1840 and forward.” The 16 vecinos even dared to lecture the Minister on his duties, reminding him that “this private school [directed by Miranda] ... does not relieve the government from its obligation to offer primary instruction, [and] the vecinos of the Cardal do not have less rights than those of the other places to claim for this concession.” After demonstrating their correct understanding of the modern public school system, its institutional role, and the correlation between formal education and citizenship, the vecinos appealed for Miranda’s return, because his “dedication in the performance of his duties is, for them, notorious.”¹⁷⁰ The vecinos had sent a clear message; they had rejected the new teacher, and therefore removed their children from the school, yet they would soon learn that their strategy had backfired. Once the Junta realized it would not succeed in installing its preferred teacher, it stroke back, arguing that the public school was no longer needed, for the parents would rather have their children under Miranda’s private direction. The vecindario refused to back down, reaffirming that their “poor opinion on the teacher Don Juan A. Labandera” was the only reason why they had withdrawn their children from the school. Although they pled for the Minister Francisco Llambí “not to close the school, but to remove its current

¹⁷⁰ AGN, AA, Box 896; Box 880; Box 890.

teacher, and to replace him with said Miranda,” the institution was shut down on November 30.¹⁷¹

The available sources tend to omit the true identities of the vecinos, because the state usually treated them as generic members of a corporate entity. Miranda’s separate attempt to restore his honor and job nonetheless give us a glimpse of his supporters. Shortly after his removal in early 1836, Miranda personally addressed the Ministry of Government to “claim my rights,” complaining that the Junta had previously insinuated an alleged case of public intoxication. In his defense, Miranda requested the local Juez de Paz to interrogate seven “honest individuals,” who voluntarily testified in his favor in order to attest for his morality and conduct at the school. The seven witnesses were: Julean Virrier, 45 years old, illiterate, peasant (labrador); Luis Virrier, 37, illiterate, peasant; Manuel Virrier, 56, illiterate, peasant; Marcial de Leon, 39, literate, peasant; Domingo Rubim, 50, literate, peasant; Manuel Rodriguez, 23, literate, owner of a “business house;” and Fernando Chacón, unknown age, literate, also owner of a business house. Thus his supporters were all adult males; five were peasants, and three were illiterate. All deponents declared that they had known Miranda for at least one year or more, and denied that they had ever heard of the teacher’s alleged drinking problems. In addition, Miranda had been educating the children of at least four of his supporters. Julean Virrier, for instance, had “one son under his direction, learning the first letters.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ AGN, AA, Box 880.

¹⁷² Luis Virrier had two sons, De Leon three, and Rubim had a nephew at Miranda’s school. AGN, AA, Box 882/A, Folder 13.

In early 1837, the vecinos of the Cardal renewed their efforts to restore their esteemed public school, and once more pledged for the return of Miranda. For unknown reasons, the Junta of Montevideo and the Education Commission of Extramuros had changed their attitude toward the teacher and the school; they reported a “very favorable” opinion on Miranda, and recognized the “need for a school in that locality.” The Ministry of Government immediately approved their request, and thus the public school of the Cardal and Vicente Miranda were officially reinstated on April 12, 1837.

The teacher Custodio Echagüe had arrived in San Juan Bautista, Canelones Department, in late 1832. Thus “for five years,” he declared in 1837, “I have performed the position of teacher in the school of first letters of that village with assiduous dedication and care.” Echagüe was convinced that he had successfully “inspired the students to love their study, imprinting in them the good maxims of morality and religion.” With those words, Echagüe begun his fight against a local rival, the teacher Severino Largacha. In the following months, the two teachers would not only quarrel for that teaching post, but also for the preference of the vecindario. In May 1837, the Junta commanded Echagüe to handle his school to Largacha, because “the vecinos of that village have submitted to the Superior Government ... [a petition] in which it was said that ... the parents expressed their discontent and distaste for ... the teacher Echagüe.” The school was “often closed,” they argued, “when there should have been students attending it, and the said former teacher [Echagüe], rather than working to fulfill his prime duties at the school, spends his time in affairs of private interest.” An attached report from the Education Commission confirmed Echagüe’s faulty “attendance and

dedication ..., whereas the current teacher ... Don Severino Largacha correctly fulfills his duties.” It was late July when, in an unexpected twist, the Junta admitted to ignore Echagüe’s personal conduct. The negative opinion on the teacher was entirely based on a single petition, “which was forwarded by this vecindario through the Jefe Político of Canelones Don Juan Maria Turreyro ..., without the [direct] participation of the Junta.”

In his second letter to Montevideo, Echagüe protested that his honor had been “violated after the sinister and vicious reports drawn from a petition regarding the alleged faults which concerned my [personal] conduct.” The teacher challenged the legitimacy of the petition, adding that the vecinos had been tricked to sign it. Since that document stood as the only piece of evidence against him, Echagüe was disappointed to find out how “easy it was for the Junta to believe in a petition undersigned by individuals of known ineptitude.” By contrast, the teacher forwarded the “sixteen attached declarations by the most respectful vecinos of the village of San Juan Bautista,” whose testimonies demonstrated “the falsity of that miserable slander,” which he believed had been perpetrated by his rival, “*el Señor Largacha*.” The 16 individuals who supported Echagüe were current or former vecinos, who were also members of the local elites. Among his supporters, there were former members of the Junta and Education Commission, a former Juez de Paz, and a one-time Jefe Político. There were also testimonies from a retired Colonel and a priest, plus a few parents who used to send their children to his school. The testimonies certified Echagüe’s honor, morality, pedagogical competence, and general commitment to the cause of public education. Furthermore, they certified the teacher’s prestige and personal relationships, which he had carefully cultivated during his time in

that village. Writing as a former member of the Education Commission, José Antonio Maciel had known Echagüe “for more than five years,” and “he had always deserved the favorable opinion of that pueblo and vecindario ... [not only] for his honor and good manners, ... [but also] as a son who shares the product of his labor with his mother and family.” The priest José Leon y Lopez had known Echagüe “for the time of forty-three months,” and recognized the teacher “as a man of honor.” The priest had never “heard any vecino of this village complaining about his political or moral conduct, or that he had not fulfilled his obligations in the education of the boys.” As a former member of the Junta, Antonio Vidal had visited the school on several occasions, starting in 1835; he confirmed that Echagüe had worked “in the most honorable way,” and thus certified “his moral conduct, ... [and the] regular performance of his ministration.” José Maria Gutierrez, a “vecino and vice-president of the Education Commission of this village,” believed the teacher deserved “the gratitude of all vecinos, [for] we have entrusted the literary and moral education of our sons to his management.” José Rovíria identified in the teacher “an irreproachable moral conduct, and an assiduous dedication to the performance of his ministration.” A few of the declarants had sent their children to the public school under Echagüe’s direction. The father Augustin Mechozo recognized the teacher’s “flawless honorable conduct,” to whom he owed “the advancement of my son.” Juan Carrera certified Echagüe’s “constant dedication to the performance of his school obligations,” as observed the “advancement of my son, who is of a very tender age.” Without a doubt, the boy’s educational progress “could not be attributed to any other reason but to the dedication and capacity of the teacher.”

The testimonies on behalf of Echagüe unanimously condemned Largacha. José Maria Gutierrez was familiar with his “intrigues” and “slanders,” while José Soriano outright accused him of forging the petition. Augustin Mechozo described an encounter with the rival teacher: “Largacha and his wife had approached my home,” Mechozo declared, in order to persuade “me to deliver them my son, and to remove him from the school of Echagüe.” The two had presented themselves “not once, but several times,” asking Mechozo “to sign a petition that said Largacha had done against the teacher, and with it [the petition] he and his wife went from house to house, deceiving some vecinos and making them sign things they did not know.” According to the Fiscal General Francisco Solano Antuña, it was indeed “quite noteworthy ... that said petition had been forwarded ... without the involvement of the Junta ..., which is the one which should watch over the conduct of the teacher.” The Fiscal questioned the statement that the school was “abandoned,” since several vecinos of prestige certified the very opposite. In conclusion, the petition evinced Largacha’s “trickery and interest,” proof of his devious manipulation of the vecindario.¹⁷³

Following the ousting of Manuel Oribe and the *Blanco* party, Echagüe contacted the new Minister of Government, the *Colorado* Santiago Vazquez, in February 1839. As evidence of his successful integration in the community, Echagüe had chosen to stay in that village even after losing his job, and therefore presented himself again as a “vecino of San Juan Bautista.” While asking for his reinstatement, Echagüe chose to politicize his old dispute with Largacha, and directly blamed the Blancos for his demise. In the updated

¹⁷³ AGN, AA, Box 899A.

version of his story, he had been “stripped of his job . . . , which he had performed for more than four years to the satisfaction of that vecindario and local authorities, by the administration of Don Manuel Oribe in early 1837.”¹⁷⁴ Notwithstanding Echagüe’s insistence, Largacha would remain in the school of San Juan Bautista until his death in May 1839.

The Teacher Gabriel Lezaeta and the Vecindario of Las Piedras

In October 1835, the Junta of Canelones forwarded to Montevideo “the petition made by the vecinos of the pueblo and jurisdiction of [Las] Piedras,” asking the state to send them “an honest and knowledgeable teacher.” The previous incumbent, the “meritorious young Don Luis Ricardo,” had recently passed away, causing the parents to withdraw their children from the school, because his interim replacement, “the youngster Nicanor Vidal,” was seen as too inexperienced. The vecinos recommended the “competent authority, in compliance with its duties and to the benefit of the public good,” to hire Guillermo Garcia, a private instructor in the nearby Cordón. Eighteen vecinos had signed the petition, yet the Minister would follow the advice of the General Inspector, assigning that post to Carlos Gonzalez Alvelar.¹⁷⁵ The vicar of Las Piedras, Lázaro Gadea, later informed that the school was “in ruins” in early 1836, for Alvelar had departed shortly after Christmas. The news of a vacant spot in Las Piedras would somehow reach Gabriel Lezaeta, who had been a public school teacher in Florida for

¹⁷⁴ AGN, AA, Box 913.

¹⁷⁵ AGN, AA, Box 876, Folder 5.

nearly four years until December 1834. Lezaeta immediately volunteered for the job; he was hired, and started working in his new school on May 8, 1836.¹⁷⁶

Lezaeta's time as a teacher in Las Piedras is certainly the better-documented example in the sources, presenting us with a thorough account of his relations with the local authorities and the broader vecindario. His presence in Las Piedras was nevertheless quite short due to the teacher's involvement in a local dispute between the two opposing factions which struggled to assert their control over the school. His rivals had a clear political advantage, for they occupied the most preeminent positions in the Department of Canelones. Among his adversaries were the Juez de Paz Francisco Jimenez, the vicar Lázaro Gadea, the Jefe Político José María Turreyro,¹⁷⁷ the members of the Junta, and Francisco Simonet, who presided over the Education Commission. The teachers' allies were the *Teniente Alcalde* Gregorio Betancourt, the owner of a *pulpería* (general store) Guillermo Garcia (the vecindario's original choice for the teacher position), plus several vecinos of humble background, most of them peasants (labradores) who had recently immigrated from the Canary Islands. With the notable exception of the local priest, Lezaeta's rivals held influential Department-level positions, whereas his allies were simple vecinos in Las Piedras, a rural village in the outskirts of Montevideo. As expected, the focal point of the dispute was whether Lezaeta should retain his job or be discharged.

Following the recommendation of the Junta, the Ministry of Government had fired Lezaeta in February 1837, ordering his replacement with Ramon Muñoz. In his

¹⁷⁶ AGN, AA, Box 882/A, Folder 13.

¹⁷⁷ Turreyro was also involved in the almost simultaneous ousting of Custodio Echagüe, from San Juan Bautista.

appeal, instead of underscoring his pedagogical achievements or training in the Lancasterian methods, Lezaeta portrayed himself as a “community organizer,” someone who had managed to mobilize the vecinos on behalf of the school. Upon arrival in May 1836, Lezaeta had found the schoolhouse in a dreadful state, thus he persuaded “the parents ... to erect a new building with enough capacity.” In order to increase student enrollment, the teacher had “urged the parents to send their sons to the school, ... [and thus] the school, which never counted with more than ten or twelve students, was daily attended by thirty-five.” Lezaeta had cultivated good relations with the locals, and believed that there was “not a single vecino in Las Piedras that would not do him justice.” From his viewpoint, the social role of the teacher transcended his classroom work, for his most visible accomplishment was the successful mobilization of the vecinos for the prosperity of the school.

Lezaeta’s pleas arrived with an attached petition signed by “several labradores, vecinos of Las Piedras.” The parents who “have their sons under the direction of ... Lezaeta” were determined to defend the teacher, “because that is just and he deserves it.” The petition focused on his attentive treatment of the children, and on his and the vecinos’ mobilization for the construction of a new schoolhouse. To begin with, the vecinos were “pleased to see a well-attended school and well-directed children.” The petitioners acknowledged Lezaeta as “fully committed to the education of the boys; ... he treats them in a way that, instead of chastising them, he attracts and inspires them toward the desire to learn, and they see, finally, that their children are advancing.” The parents had also “witnessed the care with which he has ... guarded the schoolhouse that was

[once] abandoned, and they were committed to erect in this autumn a new house with enough capacity for the school.” They trusted the government to endorse their petition, “because they are sure that no vecino in Las Piedras could argue the opposite.”¹⁷⁸ The Minister of Government however requested an updated report from the Junta of Canelones, which in turn held that the alleged “attendance of thirty-five students is false,” and reiterated its recommendation to replace Lezaeta with Ramon Muñoz.

What followed was a long exchange of accusations, denoting the increasing hostility between the vecindario of Las Piedras and the authorities of Canelones. On May 31, the vecinos forwarded a second petition, for they had received the news of Lezaeta’s removal “with great sadness.” The Minister had “certainly yielded to reports that were not consistent with the conduct of this employee [the teacher].” Lezaeta had just been fired, yet he still worked for the education of the children; he had “no salary, no suitable house, no pedagogical materials, ... [but] he continues ... with the strength of his philanthropic heart.” A third petition was prepared on July 8, counting with the signatures of 22 vecinos. Once again, the locals requested the government to “reinstate ... the teacher of our dear sons, who with his honor, perseverance, ... and determined patriotism, continues to teach the good morals and the necessary *letras* for their happiness.”¹⁷⁹ We may assume that the state did not comply with their request, for the vecinos returned with a fourth petition on July 19. This time, apart from renewing their preference for Lezaeta,

¹⁷⁸ AGN, AA, Box 894.

¹⁷⁹ In a separate letter, the *Teniente Alcalde del Pueblo de Las Piedras* attested the legitimacy of the twenty-two signatures. AGN, AA, Box 899.

they also alerted the central state of the “three individuals [who] work for his destruction.”

The Ministry of Government ultimately ceded after nearly five months of pressure, recognizing the legitimacy of those who had “again petitioned ... and requested ... the reinstatement of Lezaeta.” The Junta however deeply regretted that decision, and accused the parents of expecting the “Treasury to pay for a teacher, pedagogical materials, etc,” when only a small number of students attended the school. Due to strong local resistance, the Junta had in fact given up on Ramon Muñoz, hence its final recommendation to simply terminate the school. The Junta was also surprised to discover that the fourth petition was “signed by fifty-five vecinos who declared to have children under the direction of Mister Lezaeta.” That “singular document is either the work of the most daring trickery, or is evidence ... that the witnesses ... acted as impostors.”

We know that the ministerial order to reinstate Lezaeta had no immediate effect, because the teacher complained ten days later that Francisco Simonet and the Education Commission were still preventing him from returning to the school. Fearing for his life, Lezaeta revealed that he had been “hiding for two days, fearful of the threats” he had received. The situation turned increasingly dramatic, for Department-level authorities reputedly threatened a civil servant, and were openly resisting ministerial orders. In his advice to the Minister, the Fiscal General Solano Antuña, stressed that “however strong are the causes ... to resist the reinstatement of the teacher,” the members of the Education Commission had “assaulted the due respect for the Supreme Authority,” and added that “tolerance for such an abuse may, in time, have dire consequences.” Expressing its

“painful regret,” the Education Commission eventually confirmed Lezaeta’s return on August 24, yet it anticipated the “fatal repercussions” of that decision. The teacher had his own reasons to protest, for he had reencountered his schoolhouse “in a sad state, ... destroyed, in ruins.” In addition, he had lost most of his students to “the harmful advices of the presbyter Gadea.” Lezaeta was nonetheless optimistic; he had done “the best he could do to the school,” although he still needed the Minister to “admonish the [Education] Commission” to persuade the students to return.¹⁸⁰

Lezaeta was still struggling with the Education Commission when José Maria Turreyro, the Jefe Político of Canelones, started to examine the legitimacy of that fourth petition. Turreyro was indeed determined to “travel through said Department with the purpose of recognizing the [55] signatures” — every single one of them. The investigation had just started when the Teniente Alcalde Betancourt reached out for the Minister, referred as the “father and protector to whom implore the inhabitants of the pueblo of [Las] Piedras.” Betancourt, the village official who had once certified those signatures, warned the Minister that the Jefe Político “had demanded him, under oath, to testify contradicting what he had previously manifested.” Betancourt had reluctantly acceded, but only out of “timidity and fear of persecution.” The Minister and the Fiscal General would eventually conclude that the interrogation process was invalid due to the

¹⁸⁰ AGN, AA, Box 894.

witnesses' harassment and intimidation.¹⁸¹ Although the investigation had no legal value, the Jefe Político produced a remarkable document, revealing the identity of all vecinos who supported Lezaeta. Moreover, Turreyro's inquiries cast light on the very process of vecindario mobilization, the organization of petitions, the collection of signatures, and how the vecinos persuaded one other to participate toward a particular political cause. The investigation gives us a rare glimpse over the vecinos and the parents with children in school, especially those of more humble background. We may further learn about the vecinos' personal relationship with the school, helping us understand the role of that institution from the perspective of the local community.

Regrettably, there are several pages missing from the interrogation process, which for that reason contains 48 testimonies out of the original 55 signatures.¹⁸² A critical problem in the verification of the signatures resided on the illiteracy of many signatories.¹⁸³ It was common practice in early modern Uruguay for literate individuals to sign on behalf of the illiterate. Thanks to the Jefe Político, we know that all supporters of Lezaeta were adult males. Only seven were born in Uruguay, two were Portuguese, one had come from Asturias, thirty-three were immigrants from the Canary Islands, while the

¹⁸¹ According to the Fiscal General, Turreyro had alerted the Ministry of these mobilization methods which exploited "the innocence and the good faith of the countryside people, with the purpose of wresting their signatures." However, the Jefe Político had exercised judicial powers that he did not have, and had "wrongly disturbed the vecinos." The Fiscal could not attest if the signatures were indeed false, since the investigation of the Jefe Político "has no legal value." AGN, AA, Box 902.

¹⁸² Yet two individuals might have been interrogated twice, for they emerge with the same name, nationality, civil state, and lived in the same town. In addition, the Jefe Político had failed to locate Bruno de Armas and another unnamed vecino, while one of the undersigned, Juan Antonio Leon, was declared "*demente*," which automatically nullified his signature. For the entire process, see: AGN, AA, Box 899A.

¹⁸³ A few vecinos denied that they had ever signed the petition. Alvarez Abreu, for example, declared that he knew nothing of it, and could not recognize his signature.

others were of unstated nationality. The declarants either lived in Las Piedras or in neighboring villages, an expanded *vecindario* that included Toledo, Peñarol, Miguelete (three districts of Montevideo Extramuros), Pando, and the city of Canelones. Only three *vecinos* were identified as single, six were of unspecified civil state, and the remaining ones were all married. Thirty-seven were *labradores*, two *negociantes*, one *abastecedor de carnes*, one *tahonero* (a baker or miller), one physician, and six were of unspecified professions. Thus the “average” Lezaeta supporter was married, a peasant, and an immigrant from the Canary Islands (locally known as *Canarios*). Some *vecinos* were connected through family ties; there were brothers-in-law, a father and a son, and four individuals were listed with the last name Curbelo. One of the signatories, Andrés Corujo, admitted that he was not sure if he should have signed the petition, because “he did not regard himself as a *vecino*.” Since most signatories were foreigners, we may conclude that the term *vecino* was still more inclusive than the constitutional definition of *citizen*. Based on peer recognition, the *vecino* status was a more maleable and elastic concept, which the petitioners had stretched to include as many supporters as possible.

A married *labrador* from the Canary Islands, José Rodríguez Curbelo revealed the identities of the *vecinos* responsible for the collection of signatures. To begin with, the *vecino* cautiously omitted the direct participation of Lezaeta, and instead explained that he had organized the petition together with “the Teniente Alcalde Don Gregorio Betancourt, Don Guillermo García, Don Pedro Camejo, Don Bernabé Curbelo, ... and Don Juan Medida,” although at least “twelve or fourteen” others had helped in some way or another. Curbelo had personally collected around twenty signatures, and stressed that

he had been honest in reassuring the vecinos of the political goals of his group. In some cases, the vecinos were “ambushed” when they came to Las Piedras to attend Mass, to visit their relatives and friends, or at the local general store (the pulpería). Francisco Gonzales, for example, recalled meeting Lezaeta at the “pulpería of Don Guillermo Garcia.” Lezaeta had explained him that the petition asked the government “for a schoolteacher, and the declarant . . . replied that he was about to go home, but if the attendant [Domingo Arce] wanted to sign on his behalf, then he could do it.” Antonio Rodriguez remembered the “day when he had come to Mass, [and then] to the pulpería of Don Guillermo Garcia.” At the general store, Lezaeta had approached him, asking for his signature, “and the declarant acceded to his request.” Knowing that his brother-in-law had already signed it, Rodriguez decided to do the same, “in the understanding that his brother-in-law would not have signed if it were not right.” Juan Medina “was at the house of his brother-in-law Bernabé Curbelo . . . , when José Rodriguez Curbelo arrived with the mentioned petition.” Knowing that the other vecinos, including Garcia, had already signed “that same petition that would be forwarded to the superior government, he signed it” as well. Tomas Garcia declared that Camejo and Curbelo had paid him a visit at home, where they “persuaded the declarant that Don Gabriel Lezaeta was a capable schoolteacher, because he had advanced their sons in a short time . . . , and believing in good faith in all that he was told, he replied that he would sign it if all the others did the

same.”¹⁸⁴ Thus many of the undersigned vecinos knew each other, most of them were Canarios, friends or relatives, and they felt reassured to know that others in the vecindario had already given their signatures. In other words, the petition, they believed, was an expression of their social bonds and collective will.

Only ten of the undersigned vecinos were sending their sons to Lezaeta’s school, yet they were his most ardent supporters. These parents employed the typical language of individual advancement. José Rodríguez Curbelo, for instance, believed Lezaeta was “capable to advance the boys, because he did so to his [son] in a short time, and ... is careful in their treatment.” Bernabé Curbelo had three sons, two of them “in the public school of this pueblo” for “six months or more,” and he had noticed their “substantial advancement.” Pablo Ordoñez had a positive impression of Lezaeta, for his son had “advanced for good.” Francisco Gonzales even linked his decision to remove his boy from the school with Lezaeta’s discharge; he once “had a son in the school, ... [but] as soon as they removed the teacher he removed his son.” Some of the parents had no choice but to balance the education of their children with their household demands. Martín Betancourt “sometimes sends two [of his sons to the school], sometimes three, ... according to the needs of his home.” In his attempt to justify the irregular attendance of his children, Pedro Diaz explained that he “is poor, and when he has no peons, he needs his sons.” Diaz was not familiar with Lezaeta’s “capabilities or abilities,” yet “what

¹⁸⁴ Apart from ambushing vecinos in Las Piedras, Curbelo and his colleagues traveled around the village’s rural surroundings in search for more signatures. Thus Andrés Corujo remembered the “day when the declarant was leaving his home to harvest maize,” someone whose name he “does not know” had asked him to “give his signature ... with the purpose of providing a teacher for the school of Las Piedras.” On his part, Baltazar Borges explained that, “at the time of harvesting wheat, ... José Rodríguez Curbelo presented himself, asking for his signature.”

matters to him is that the government has some teacher in there, so that he can send his sons.” Gonzales confirmed his signature, for he was “eager for a teacher to whom he could entrust his son.” The father could not tell why Lezaeta was fired, “but he knows that the current Juez de Paz, Mister Simonet, has removed him.” Nevertheless, most of the undersigned did not have children under Lezaeta’s responsibility. In one of his letters to the Minister of Government, the priest Lázaro Gadea recognized that most parents did not send their sons to school at all, declaring that “the Canarios, who are the most numerous in these towns, would rather send their sons to a barbecue than to the school.”

Since only a few parents sent their children to school, Curbelo and his colleagues tended to stress the notion of *bien público* in their attempt to mobilize the other vecinos. Most petitioners could not justify their signatures on the individual “advancement” of their sons, hence the emphasis on the public service that the school and the teacher were providing to the community as a whole. The notion of “public good” was therefore used to further universalize the school, not only to underscore its notorious public character, but also to render it part of the community. Antonio Abreu, for instance, explained that “at first he was against it, but then at the instance of [Domingo] Arce, who made him understand that it was a public good, he ceded to his request and signed on a piece of paper that came full of signatures.” Marcial Perasa had signed it, because “they persuaded him that the petition was useful for the vecindario.” Victor Rosas recalled the occasion when Arce, the attendant at the general store of Garcia, had asked for his signature. Rosas understood that they were “asking the government for a schoolteacher for the pueblo of Las Piedras, and since that was for the public good and ... advantageous

for all, he [Arce] had no doubt that the declarant would give him his signature.” Vicente Augustin Viera signed the petition in the understanding that it would result “in something good for the pueblo of [Las] Piedras.” Evidently, the notion of *bien público* was not a meaningless abstraction. In fact, at least eleven vecinos explicitly used the words *bien público*, *beneficio público*, and other similar terms in order to justify their signatures, as they linked the public school to the communal welfare of Las Piedras.¹⁸⁵

On September 24, 1837, the Jefe Político Turreyro defended his interrogation process from the charges of intimidation; he knew that “it was publicly said in [Las] Piedras that the Canarios Don Guillermo Garcia, Don Pedro Camejo, and the Teniente Alcalde ... had protested to the Superior Government, saying that they had suffered violence and threats inflicted by me to declare [during interrogation] in the way that they did.” The Jefe Político also tried to depreciate the political mobilization of the vecindario, suggesting that Lezaeta himself, “at the head of seven or eight Canarios, [had] collected the signatures, ... enticing some, taking others by surprise.” Lastly, Turreyro argued that at least thirteen signatures of the total fifty-five were by some means falsified.

At the request of the newly installed Minister of Government Juan Benito Blanco, the Fiscal General Antuña examined all official documents sent from Las Piedras, including Turreyro’s interrogation process. Antuña was at first unconcerned with the outcome of that local dispute. Instead, he would rather focus on the roots of the conflict,

¹⁸⁵ Antonio Vega also understood that “the reason why he was compelled to give his signature” was in the belief that “it was for the public good.” José Alfaro understood that the petition “asked for a schoolteacher for the pueblo of Las Piedras, and considering that this measure would result in public benefit,” he decided to give his signature. Manuel Coello told the Jefe Político that José Rodríguez Curbelo once presented himself with a petition asking for Lezaeta’s reinstatement, and “that was convenient for the public good.”

and the means to prevent similar incidents from repeating in the future. In his report, the Fiscal stressed the necessity “of gradually reforming certain practices in the administration.” To begin with, the public school teachers were employees of the state, but the Ministry of Government “does not know them; they are not required to provide evidence of their capacity and moral conduct, they do not take exams,” and a simple report from the Juntas or “some petition from the *vecindarios*” were apparently sufficient causes for these civil servants to lose their jobs. Antuña acknowledged the teachers’ excessive dependence on the good will of the local communities, and wondered if those “of morality and knowledge” would ever choose to follow such a “precarious” career. The article 81 of the Constitution had bestowed upon the Executive Branch of the Republic, not upon the Juntas and *vecindarios*, the authority to hire and discharge all civil servants, public school teachers included.¹⁸⁶ Yet the Ministry of Government should strengthen its authority over its employees beyond the mere enforcement of its constitutional prerogatives. That authority implied in more careful selection and training processes, at once strengthening the teachers’ professional status and job security, making them less susceptible to the arbitrary preferences of the local communities. Indeed, Antuña foresaw the increasing professionalization and autonomization of the educational field. Returning to the concrete case of Las Piedras, the Fiscal concluded that, “however good are his intentions, Lezaeta does not have the necessary qualities for a schoolteacher;

¹⁸⁶ The article 81 of the Constitution listed a few prerogatives of the President of the Republic, which included the power to “*proveer los empleos civiles*,” a task that was customarily delegated to the Ministry of Government. *Constitución de 1830*. In: Ugon. *Compilación de Leyes y Decretos*, Tomo 1, 1825-1834, 255.

he should not have been assigned for that post, and it is appropriate to discharge him.”¹⁸⁷

The teacher’s emphatic reiteration of his patriotism and commitment to the school was to no avail, for the Minister not only discharged Lezaeta on October 26, but also summoned him to Montevideo “in order to give verbal explanations on this matter.”¹⁸⁸

Once he had finished with the analysis of the teachers’ professional standing, the Fiscal General briefly commented on the article 142 of the Constitution, which had secured “the right of petition to all citizens.” As a nod to the vecinos of Las Piedras, who were mostly foreigners, Antuña consciously underlined the word *citizens*. The nod evinced the blurry lines which separated the colonial vecino from the modern citizen; the former constituted a status largely based on communal peer recognition, while the latter rested on a constitutional definition supported by the nation-state. Moreover, the right of petition, whose colonial roots can be traced to the vecino, had been transferred to the modern citizen. The Fiscal condemned what he believed was the conspicuous abuse of that constitutional right, arguing that those conspiring to remove a state employee, “a priest, or a schoolteacher, may [simply] forge a petition.” Antuña recommended the Minister to put an end to these petitions, which in fact not only distorted the political will of the vecindarios, but also challenged the sovereign authority of the central state, “just like the Brazilian rulers used to do in order to gloss over the usurpation of our country.”

Two years later, the coup d’état that removed Manuel Oribe and the Blancos from the government opened a new window of opportunity for Lezaeta. Hoping to restore his

¹⁸⁷ AGN, AA, Box 899A; Box 902.

¹⁸⁸ AGN, AA, Box 902.

old position, the teacher addressed the new Minister of Government, the Colorado Santiago Vazquez, in January 1839. Vazquez and Lezaeta were probably acquaintances of each other, because the teacher first digressed about his wife and her gardening activities before turning his letter into an attack on the previous administration. The teacher vehemently protested against the “tyrants Llambí, Turreyro and Father Gadea,” who had “taken away my life, and laid me to die.” Presenting himself as a friend of the Colorados and a victim of political persecution, Lezaeta reinterpreted his difficult time in Las Piedras. The teacher obviously knew a lot more about his time in that village than we may ever know from the sources, and perhaps he was indeed a Colorado at heart and a friend of Vazquez. Nevertheless, it is likely that the teacher exaggerated his past troubles, portraying them as a partizan dispute involving Blancos and Colorados in order to secure the favor of the new administration. In any case, the sources do not support his claim.¹⁸⁹ Lezaeta had long departed from Las Piedras, yet he was still obsessed with the local public school. It “is the one I want,” he declared, “it is mine; I had fixed it . . . , and I was instilling in my disciples the best sentiments of humanity, patriotism and freedom.” Lezaeta did not forget his loyal friends, and still remembered that the “entire district wept over my departure; they repeatedly petitioned for me, but that tyrannical government . . . treated them with severity and contempt.”¹⁹⁰ Lezaeta never returned to his beloved

¹⁸⁹ Lezaeta accused Llambí of persecution, but that Minister had, in the end, sided with the teacher, and reinstated him against the will of the local authorities. It was Benito Blanco, not Llambí, who later discharged Lezaeta.

¹⁹⁰ AGN, AA, Box 912.

school, but was instead promoted in March 1839 to a better position in the city of Canelones.¹⁹¹

The new Colorado government was apparently trying to accommodate the situation in Las Piedras. After assigning the school of Canelones to Lezaeta, the state authorized Lázaro Gadea to take over the institution of Las Piedras, for the priest had “offered the Ministry to perform [that task] for free.” Perhaps evincing Gadea’s ongoing animosity with the vecinos, the priest later regretted to inform that his “efforts are futile.” No more than six boys had enrolled in the school, while only two were regularly attending classes in early 1840. Consequently, Gadea resigned on May 8, 1840, and the Minister ordered the school of Las Piedras to close due to the general “absence of children.”¹⁹²

Conclusion

In the Banda Oriental, the transition from *subjects* to *citizens* did not unfold in a linear progression. The modern equivalent of the colonial subject was, perhaps more precisely, the *Oriental*. If the former identified those subjected to the patriarchal authority of the Spanish King, the latter corresponded to the members of a national community, those subjected to the authority of the new *padre amoroso de los pueblos*, the nation-state. In the Uruguayan censuses of the late 1830s and 1840s, the government started to label all individuals born in the territory of the republic — regardless of class, race,

¹⁹¹ Lezaeta was still the teacher of Canelones in June 1840. AGN, AA, Box 914/915.

¹⁹² AGN, AA, Box 925.

gender, age, or educational background — as Orientales.¹⁹³ Yet only a privileged subcategory of Orientales had access to citizenship rights, just like a select group of colonial subjects were once socially recognized as vecinos. The institutional continuity between the vecino and the citizen is highlighted by their demographic continuity, for the two political identities had disproportionately favored adult males of Iberian ancestry. Colonial society was certainly quite complex and fluid with its multiple layers of fueros and statuses, and not rarely non-whites enjoyed some of the rights and prerogatives we associate with the vecinos. However, full political rights were restricted to a rather small number of colonial subjects, namely the vecinos of urban residency, whose civic traditions had somewhat survived in the citizens of the Uruguayan Republic.¹⁹⁴ If the vecino status was enlarged during the revolutionary era, gradually encompassing broader social groups, that process continued during the later nineteenth century, so that the political identity of the citizen would almost completely overlap with that of the Oriental in the twentieth century.

The cross-generational transmutation of the vecino into a citizen was quite visible in the postcolonial public school, which, for all its claims of universality, privileged the education of boys of European ancestry. In the early nineteenth century, the vecino status was more inclusive than that of the citizen, allowing even recently arrived immigrants to quickly integrate into the hispanicized hinterlands of Montevideo. The vecino's

¹⁹³ For example, the censuses for the Department of Montevideo of 1836 and 1843 (although in the former the *patria* of some of the inhabitants was still listed as “Montevideo”). AGN, Books 146-149; 263.

¹⁹⁴ That is not to say that the vecino identity had simply disappeared. Not only did it coexist with the citizen during the 1830s, but it would in fact survive as a politically relevant identity throughout the nineteenth century.

privileged status and cultural familiarity with the ideals of modernity naturally translated into privileged access to formal schooling, itself turned into privileged access to citizenship rights. As suggested by this chapter, the *vecinos* perfectly understood why they were sending their children to school, and, from their perspective, that had little to do with enforcing social order, or instilling blind obedience to the ruling elites. The child went to school because he or she should “advance” in life through education.

Advancement entailed moving toward citizenship, toward modern society’s idealized models of individual emancipation and agency. Teachers were therefore expected to develop in the students the “love of study,” enhancing their intellectual and physical skills, and formally introducing them to the universalistic culture of modernity. As the children “advanced” in their education, they learned to emulate the idealized citizen, simultaneously distancing themselves from the “brute” underclasses and their unpolished ways. The schooled individual was invested with the higher authority of that universalistic culture, which simultaneously legitimated his political agency and symbolic ascendancy above all those excluded from “the joy of knowledge.” Moreover, one could recognize that authority in his speech, writings, behavior, actions, general appearance, aesthetic tastes, values and beliefs — in sum, in his cultivated performance of power.

Although the neoinstitutionalist theory treats the phenomenon of inherited privilege as a non-intentional byproduct of mass schooling, it is important to underscore that the *vecinos*’ cultural and institutional proximity to the modern citizen certainly benefited

them in the smooth transmission of their relative privilege to their children.¹⁹⁵

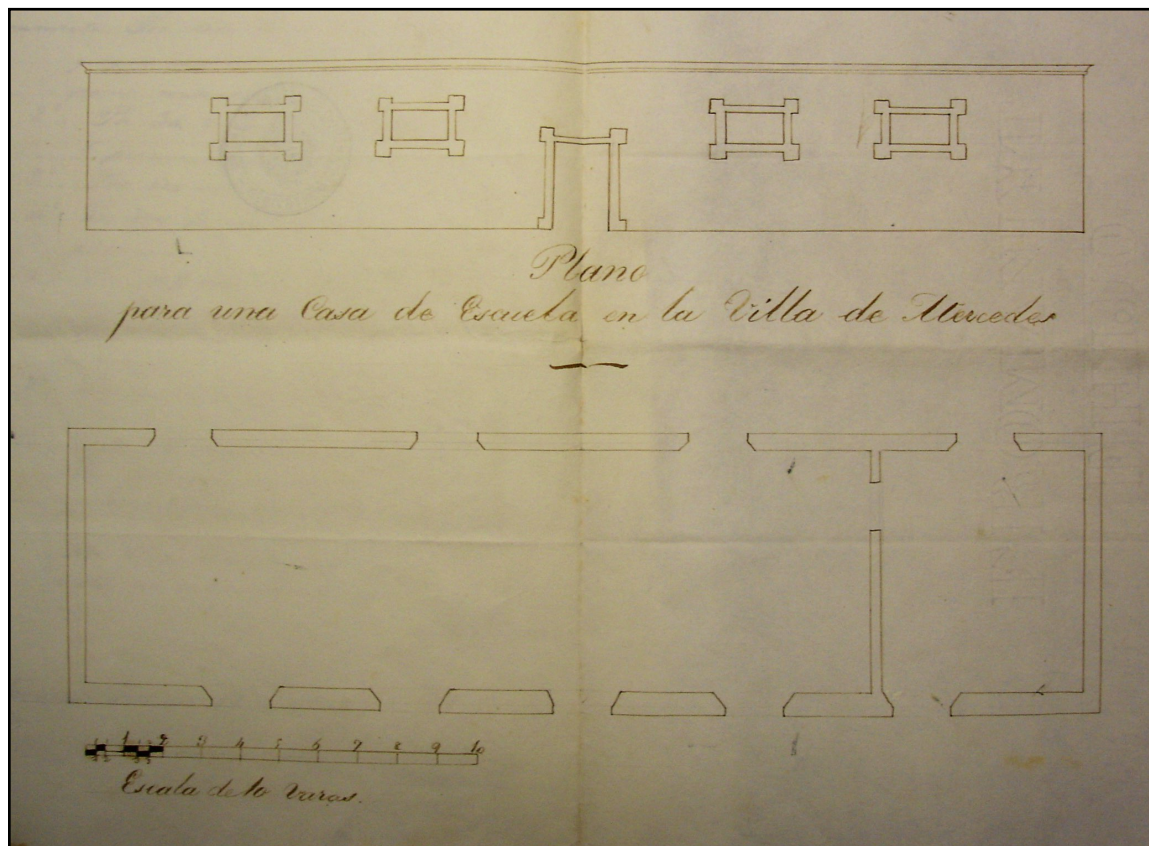
The vecinos' civic involvement in the school further legitimated them as agentic members of society, insofar as their political action recognized the nation-state as a provider of elementary education. While negotiating the terms of that old relationship of paternalistic reciprocity, the villagers exercised their political rights, requesting the opening of schools, raising funds for the construction or reform of a schoolhouse, and influencing in the appointment of a teacher. As suggested by this chapter, the cooperation of the vecindarios was a *sine qua non* for the proper functioning and success of a school. Through their professional practice, teachers also behaved as political actors, as they worked for the improvement of the school, and defended themselves against threats to their honor and job.¹⁹⁶ But the vecinos did not merely act as private individuals, for their petitions represented their collective action and will. Attending Mass, visiting the family, and meeting friends at the local *pulpería* were opportunities to socially interact with their peers. In these social gatherings, they debated the main issues of their community, including problems and disputes involving the local public school. The mobilization of the vecindarios was legitimated by the notion of *bien público*, which in the early modern era simultaneously concerned the welfare of the local and national communities. Through

¹⁹⁵ I hesitate to call them "elites" because, in many cases, they are the Uruguayan equivalent of the American "white trash," so that their privilege only existed vis-à-vis the underclasses. It is clear that the state officials of Montevideo, including the Ministers of Government who were actual members of the ruling elites, treated these peasants as their subalterns. The passage from *vecino* to citizen was nonetheless relatively unproblematic for the hispanicized populations who had a relationship of familiarity with both premodern and modern Western cultures, so that the passage from Monarchy-Christianity to Republic-Secularized Christianity was certainly not as traumatic as the extreme uprooting experienced by those who arrived in Montevideo on a slave ship.

¹⁹⁶ Veiga reached similar conclusions in her study of Imperial Brazil. Veiga, "Schooling," 41-42

their political mobilization, the vecinos symbolically incorporated the public school into the vecindarios, yet through that incorporation they confirmed their involvement in that expansionist, all-encompassing, progress-oriented project of modernity.

Figure 4.1 - *Plan for a new schoolhouse in Mercedes, February 1834.*



Source: AGN, AA, Box 860, Folder 6.

Conclusion

The Bourbon Reforms had a profound impact on the integration of the Banda Oriental into the wider Atlantic World. As a late colonial settlement situated on the periphery of the Spanish Empire, Montevideo's population and economy developed and flourished during the eighteenth century, as the original military outpost matured into a thriving merchant town. The local market was fully integrated into larger economic spaces, so that Andean, Brazilian, and European goods circulated in the Banda Oriental, not to mention that, as a port engaged in the transatlantic slave trade, Montevideo also helped connect West Africa to large portions of South America. International events have always resonated in the Rio de la Plata, compelling the *muy fieles* subjects to mobilize their human and material resources on behalf of the Spanish crown, as it happened during the frequent clashes with the northern Luso-Brazilians and the later British Invasions (1806-1807). The Napoleonic Wars and the forced abdication of Ferdinand VII however pushed the local population toward greater political autonomy and, eventually, full independence. During the Age of Revolution, the Banda Oriental was further exposed to a renewed influx of goods, ideas and peoples. Modern political concepts, such as notions of national community and citizenship, were introduced to a vibrant arena of public debate. The optimistic culture of modernity infused Uruguayan political discourse with the hope of a better future, because history itself had given the *Orientales* an opportunity to install a new independent republic. Whereas modern collective identities underscored radical discontinuity with the colonial past, the new political culture actually evinced the

region's continuing integration into wider transnational spaces. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the newly created *República Oriental del Uruguay* presented themselves as active participants in a progress-oriented universalistic culture which presumedly encompassed the whole of humanity as a subject.

While privileging a cultural perspective, one centered on the Uruguayan engagement with the transnational phenomenon of mass schooling, this dissertation was a contribution to the study of the transition from colonial to modern society. Through the study of an educational system, I have hoped to better understand the ideological and institutional continuities which linked the Spanish monarchy to the Uruguayan republic, and the Christian religion to the culture of modernity. The once paramount goal of evangelization was nonetheless displaced by the nineteenth-century sacred mission of earthly salvation. Thus the culturally constructed notions of *individual*, *society*, *national community*, and *citizenship*, were all embedded in the modern school, itself conceived as a progress-oriented institution. The two turning points in the Uruguayan history of education were the arrival of the Lancasterian monitorial system in 1821 and the establishment of an integrated public school *system* in the early 1830s. Not only did the new republic inaugurate numerous elementary schools throughout the country, but it also integrated them into a rationalized and standardized set of organizational and pedagogical rules. Indeed, the school was an extension of the nation-state and its educational policies, but it was also incorporated into the communal life of the *pueblos*. Thus shifting away from the traditional dichotomy which opposed parochial and universal cultures, this dissertation has portrayed the school as an institutional bridge which reinforced the

cultural connection between peripheral Uruguayans and the cosmopolitan spaces of modernity.

The optimism of the early 1830s however quickly lost ground to reality, as the Uruguayan civil war escalated and merged with the neighboring Argentine conflict. A coup had removed Manuel Oribe from the presidency in 1838, yet he returned to the Banda Oriental in 1842 with the military support of Juan Manuel de Rosas, the Governor of Buenos Aires. After defeating the *Colorados* in the battle of Arroyo Grande, Oribe laid siege to Montevideo in 1843, starting a stalemate that would last for nine years. As a result, Uruguay became a divided country, since two competing governments claimed to rule in the name of a fractured nation. Due to the increasing presence of foreign military units, there was a generalized fear among Uruguayans, regardless of political affiliation, that the country was about to lose its independence. Argentine troops fought on both sides of the war, while large numbers of French and Italian voluntaries took part in the defense of Montevideo. Moreover, the French and English Navies prevented the blockade of Montevideo's port, thus in practice making the siege ineffective. If the Blanco State was a *de facto* satellite of Rosas, Montevideo had become a European protectorate, for its continued existence relied on the good-will of immigrant communities and foreign states, themselves eager to extract the highest possible gain from the besieged government.

In its early stages, the *Guerra Grande* had disastrous consequences for the public school system. While 34 educational establishments were inaugurated during the relatively peaceful first half of the 1830s, the stagnation of the later years resulted in just five new schools. From 1836 onwards, and even prior to the return of Oribe and the start

of the Great Siege, the central state frequently lost contact with many towns and villages; teachers had a hard time receiving their wages, and schools suffered with the chronic shortage of pedagogical supplies. The financial crisis that ensued from the war further prevented the government from supporting its schools, resulting in permanent closures in Tacuarembó, Florida, Colonia, Mercedes, Paysandú, Minas and Montevideo. Yet the worst blow to the public school system was the very fact that, after 1843, none of the two political factions had secured control over the national territory. That is not to say that public schools had entirely disappeared, but the coherent and integrated educational *system*, as originally planned and implemented in the early 1830s, was no more.

Notwithstanding the many setbacks of the 1840s, we must not overstate the impact of the Guerra Grande. The war was indeed more intense in its first years, but once the siege was laid, the conflict turned into a stalemate, so that the two rival factions tended to co-exist in relative peace for long stretches of time while waiting for the international actors to intercede in one or another direction. According to Eduardo Acevedo, there were 32 elementary schools in Montevideo alone in 1850, 22 of those were public. After the end of the war, the National Budget of 1854 projected expenses for 55 institutions, but only 11 for the capital. Despite another war in the 1860s, which even included a Brazilian invasion, the country's population continued to grow, mainly through immigration. Yet compared to the total population, the number of public schools increased at an even faster pace. If at least 41 elementary schools provided education for the country's 125,000 inhabitants in 1835 (about 3,048 individuals per school), then 157

institutions were operational for an estimated 350,000 in 1868 (2,229 per school).¹⁹⁷ In 1876, on the eve of the Valerian Reform, there were 196 public and 225 private institutions, with 24,082 enrolled students, although the total population was already close to 400,000 (950 per school). Admittedly, these are rough estimates, yet they suggest that the public and private sectors had achieved significant gains, as they slowly amplified elementary-school coverage in the space of forty years.¹⁹⁸

Those were convoluted times, yet the project of public education was never abandoned, because its moral imperative rested on a much deeper cultural foundation, one which transcended anecdotal partisan rivalries and ephemeral political conjunctures. Implemented during the last quarter of the century, the groundbreaking reforms of José Pedro Varela entailed noticeable ideological continuities with the earlier 1830s. Writing in 1876, Varela reproduced in his *La Educación del Pueblo* the entrenched notion of education as a process of individual cultivation and emancipation. Modern schooling was still conceived as a rationalized, intentional intervention on the individualized child, with a strong emphasis on the development of his moral, physical and intellectual faculties. Varela described humans as changeable, adaptable beings, so

¹⁹⁷ Apart from 34 operational public institutions, there were, according to Juan Manuel de la Sota, seven private schools in Montevideo in 1833. AGN, AA, Box 845A, Folder 12.

¹⁹⁸ The school per inhabitant ratios are misleading figures, because they do not take into consideration the fact that the schools themselves grew in size and capacity. Whereas early Lancasterian schools were single-room, single-teacher institutions, the later establishments generally counted with more instructors and higher attendance. The figures on this paragraph were taken from Eduardo Acevedo, *Anales Históricos del Uruguay II* (Montevideo: Casa A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1933), 239, 467, 580; Luis Eduardo Morás, *De la Tierra Purpúrea al Laboratorio Social* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2000), 77; U.S. Bureau of Education, *Circulars of Information*, n.1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1873), 50; and Carlos Zubillaga, “Breve Panorama da Imigração Maciça no Uruguai (1870-1931),” in *Fazer a América*, edited by Boris Fausto (São Paulo: Edusp, 1999), 438.

that the proper cultivation of future selves relied on adequate pedagogical environments and controlled stimuli. It was “through their many different states of infancy, childhood, youth, [and] adulthood” that humans developed their “physical, intellectual and moral nature.” Moreover, teachers were still expected to enhance the agency of their students, giving them the “power to acquire and preserve” their own “happiness.” In sum, the *locus* of intervention was still the individualized child, but formal education should generate “advantages and benefits to the individual *and* to society.”¹⁹⁹

While comparing “Easterns” to Western Europeans, Varela described the former as “obedient beasts,” but the latter as citizens educated on their rights and duties, products of a modern educational system. Thus if “in a despotic government human faculties are mutilated and paralyzed, in a republic they grow with intense strength.”²⁰⁰ The correlation between citizenship and universal education was also preserved, since “the extension of suffrage to all citizens demands . . . the diffusion of education for all.” Hence, in a society conceived as the sum of its individual members, there was a strong correlation between collective and individual emancipation, because the formation of citizens was equated to the development of their “necessary aptitudes for self government.” But Varela was not merely copying the 1830s. Social contract theory, for instance, was thoroughly rejected. The Uruguayan pedagogue was also a strong advocate for compulsory education. In his major contribution to the debate, he conceived elementary education as a “right of the minor.” In his own words, he believed that “if the

¹⁹⁹ José Pedro Varela, *Obras Pedagógicas* (Montevideo: Biblioteca Artigas, 1964), 20-22, 24-25, 27-30, 36, 39-40.

²⁰⁰ Varela, *Obras Pedagógicas*, 67-68, 70.

state demands certain conditions for the exercise of citizenship, [conditions] which can only be acquired through education, [then] the father who deprives his son of that education commits an abuse.” Further undermining the pedagogic authority of the *pater familias* in favor of the modern schoolteacher, Varela blamed the large numbers “of poor people, beggars, vagabonds, and criminals” on traditional household upbringing. After all, the formation of emancipated moral individuals could only happen at the public level, in an elementary school managed by professional educators.²⁰¹

When I first located the *Almanaque de la Provincia Oriental para el Año de 1829* in the Uruguayan National Library, I immediately noticed how its list of historical events resonated with the much older work of Guaman Poma, the well-known *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*. The Andean author juxtaposed the Christian creation of the world to analogous indigenous traditions; he recounted the epic of conquest, and described colonial society as connected to a “higher” imagined community, one tied to the Catholic Church and the Spanish Monarchy.²⁰² The Nueva Corónica has, of course, many unique traits, for it is an expression of an early seventeenth-century *mestizo* culture. The inhabitants of the Rio de la Plata were not familiar with the Andean chronicle, which was not “rediscovered” by historians until the early twentieth century, yet the 1829 Almanac still presented a timeline in which a peripheral society was conceived as part of a much broader sociocultural context. As a second curious connection between the Nueva

²⁰¹ Varela, *Obras Pedagógicas*, 82-83, 93-95.

²⁰² Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1980), 34. Volume 2: 354-355.

Coronica and early modern *Rioplataenses*, the Sun God of the Incas, depicted in many of Guaman Poma's illustrations, reemerged in an almost identical depiction in the national flag of Uruguay as the Sun of May. In 1832, the newspaper *El Indicador* hailed that "beneficial star, God of man in nature, [God] of the Incas," and a symbol which reminded Uruguayans of "who we were before the year 1810, what we are now, and the destiny that is prepared to our descendants!"²⁰³ The Sun of May, the *criollos'* cultural appropriation of an Incan symbol and deity, is also the same which is referenced at the title of this dissertation, the one which schoolchildren were called to celebrate in the *Fiestas Mayas*. The *Orientales* commemorated their release from colonial "oppression," from the unjust subjection depicted by Guaman Poma two hundred years earlier. Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, they perceived themselves as collective participants in a new epic, one of progress and emancipation, at once local and universal.

²⁰³ *El Indicador*, n. 274, May 24, 1832.

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