

# FIGHTING WORDS : The Discourse of Insurgency in Latin American History\*

*John Charles Chasteen*  
*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

“What I suffer is pleasant  
because it shows that I am  
putting myself above the run  
of common men, that I am  
worthy of my Patria  
and of you. . .”  
Insurgent officer to his wife, 1893

The appeal of sacrifice so frequently encountered in expressions of nationalism is an equally familiar theme in the rhetoric of political warfare in Latin America.<sup>1</sup> Stories of political warfare take up a considerable part of Latin American historiography. The intent of this exploratory article is to suggest how the rhetoric and narrative written about nineteenth-century insurgency can be read to illuminate the political history of Latin America. Two South American civil wars of the 1890s constitute the empirical starting point for my speculations, although they are scarcely a convincing sample of the hundreds of insurgencies that have occurred since independence. Consequently, these observations on a Latin American discourse of insurgency must largely be content to ask questions, raise issues, and suggest hypotheses.<sup>2</sup>

\*Research for this article was conducted with funds from the Social Science Research Council, the U.S. Department of Education, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

1. The epigraph comes from the epistulary war diary of Angelo Dourado, *Voluntários do Martírio: Fatos e Episódios da Guerra Civil* (Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul: Americana, 1896), 19.

2. Here, the term *discourse* refers to any conscious interplay of signs, from a lover's blandishments or a politician's sophistries to the latest fashion in clothing. It is assumed that there is always an extralinguistic situational element to discourse. The concept's theoretical underpinnings (the servants and not the masters in this interpretation, it is to be hoped) are heterogeneous, drawn more from Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Clifford Geertz than from Michel Foucault. Unusually lucid introductions to this general body of theory are Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977); and Richard Harland, *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987). See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972). Less readable but worthwhile are Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and Michel Foucault's useful overview of his own work: "The Order of Discourse," in *Language and Politics*, edited by Michael J. Shapiro (New York: New York University Press, 1984). Application of these

One point must stand *prima facie* as the premise of all that follows: a discourse of insurgency exists that is independent of any particular political goal, a discourse linking Che Guevara to earlier insurgents like Emiliano Zapata and the heroes of independence. Many insurgents of the twentieth century have identified explicitly with past insurgencies. The Nicaraguan Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional and the Salvadoran Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional both adopted the names of earlier insurgent heroes. Colombia's best-known insurgent army of the 1970s and 1980s, M-19, bid to establish its identity in 1974 by seizing the sword of Simón Bolívar from a museum, returning it ceremoniously after laying down arms in 1991. In the 1960s and 1970s, urban insurgents in Argentina chose the name Montoneros to link themselves with insurgents of the independence period. Across the Río de la Plata, Uruguay's Tupamaros chose a similarly historical name. Significantly, the original Tupamaros of the 1810s coined the name to link themselves with an even earlier insurgent, Tupac Amaru, the Andean leader of the 1780s. In Peru today, yet another insurgent army has adopted the name Tupac Amaru.<sup>3</sup>

Such choices of names point to the continuity and ubiquity of the discourse of insurgency in Latin America but say little about what it might include. To hazard a definition, the discourse of insurgency includes all the public pronouncements of insurgents as well as what they said and wrote to each other regarding their fight. In addition, the discourse of insurgency goes beyond words to involve dramatization of various sorts. The world over, but with notable frequency in Latin America, rebels have defied authority as a gesture of heroic commitment to an ideal in hopes of inspiring a popular response. In such a scenario, making the insurgency visible becomes paramount. Hence the Uruguayan Tupamaros chose such actions as briefly taking over crowded theaters to raise the political consciousness of startled moviegoers, a tactic their theorists called "armed propaganda." In Tupamaro terms, the awaited popular uprising would bring *el salto* ("the leap") to a victory that would be inconceivable in strictly military terms.<sup>4</sup> Although the Tupamaros in Uruguay failed, small groups of flamboyant and determined insurgents elsewhere have occasionally succeeded in sparking popular uprisings, as in Nicaragua in 1979. The

---

insights to political analysis is exemplified in Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

3. Studies of individual Latin American insurgencies abound, but little of a broader interpretive nature has been written since the bad old days of cultural determinism. Recent studies of Latin American insurgency have little or nothing to say about the period before 1945: Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); and *Latin American Insurgencies*, edited by George Fauroil (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1985). On Spain, see Julio Busquets, *Pronunciamientos y golpes de estado en España* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1982).

4. Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, *Actas tupamaras* (Buenos Aires: Schapire, 1971).

tactics employed to achieve an end are in no sense irrational. But their function is as much expressive as instrumental, and consequently, an appreciable amount of insurgent energies is expended on various kinds of signification.<sup>5</sup>

The discourse of insurgency is only one aspect of any rebellion, and many Latin American insurgencies are highly unpopular *golpes de estado* that rely mainly on superior force of arms. This article will make no attempt to identify an "essential" Latin American political culture or even to begin a typology of its kaleidoscopic configurations.<sup>6</sup> Rather, the goal here is to identify some of the conditioning factors and constituent procedures of Latin American political culture, some of its dominant themes and primary figures of speech, by analyzing a particular material context: the Brazilian-Uruguayan borderland in the late nineteenth century.

### "Beautiful Assertions"

The subject of regional political economy was the starting place in researching the two insurgencies that inspired this article. On one level, both these elite-inspired civil wars were simple contests between authoritarian "ins" and militarily capable "outs." In the Brazilian "Revolution of 1893," the networks of patronage and clientelism that had dominated the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul under the later empire declared war on the country's recently established republican government. The leaders of the rebellion were veteran fighters, as were many of the poor soldiers who composed the insurgent ranks. Abundant horses on the southern plains and the proximity of the border offered further advantages to rebels.

Precisely the same could be said of the Uruguayan insurgents who four years later created the "Revolution of 1897" on the other side of the

5. A parallel insight concerning individual acts of self-immolation is developed in James Dunkerley, *Political Suicide in Latin America and Other Essays* (London: Verso, 1992), 1–48.

6. The misconception of culture as an immutable essence has bedeviled most serious attempts at discussing Latin American political culture. See Francisco Antonio Moreno, *Legitimacy and Stability in Latin America: A Study of Chilean Political Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1969); Glen Caudill Dealy, *The Public Man: An Interpretation of Latin American and Other Catholic Countries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977); Claudio Véliz, *The Centralist Tradition in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Susan and Peter Calvert, *Argentina: Political Culture and Instability* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh University Press, 1989). See also Frank Safford's critique of cultural interpretations in "Politics, Ideology, and Society," in *Spanish America after Independence, ca. 1820–1870*, edited by Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 114–18. Rather than emphasize the continuity of an Iberian cultural heritage as do the foregoing works, my article takes a different approach to political culture, attempting to "read" what Charles Taylor has called "intersubjective meanings" (those that emerge only within a shared cultural frame of reference) for a particular historical society. See Michael Brint, *A Genealogy of Political Culture* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), esp. 117–20.

border (see illustration 1). In partisan terms, the rebels were Blancos protesting a generation of political subjugation by the ruling Colorados. In materialist terms, conservative borderland ranchers had lost influence in “modernizing” elites who were attempting to impose centralized control of the border, thus threatening the borderland’s transnational economy. Each insurgency eventually developed a political platform demanding “local autonomy” (which in the borderland always implied thriving contraband). Both “revolutions” also responded to deteriorating living conditions along the border in the 1890s, when fencing, subdivision, and rapid population growth displaced many of the rural poor and left them with little means of earning a living. If an equestrian culture and a long military tradition made rebellion something more than a last resort for borderland ranchers disputing the control of local offices, then fighting among the landowners offered multiple opportunities to the hungry and frustrated poor.<sup>7</sup>

My first tendency was to ignore insurgent discourse because it seemed so remote from the foregoing analysis. Insurgent diatribes never mentioned the economic interests of the cattle ranchers who led the insurgencies, much less those of the poor rural families who supplied most of the followers. Rather, insurgent discourse on both sides of the border depicted a macabre moral decay, held up heroic ancestors as exemplars of warlike virtues, and exhorted its audience to prove the redeeming power of self-sacrifice. The following report from a Brazilian newspaper exemplifies a kind of generic patriotic bombast that seemed to reveal little about the real nature of the conflict: “Taking the floor in the name of his comrades, [the secretary of an insurgent general] offered a wise and brilliant discourse explaining the behavior of the revolutionaries and the motive for the celebration. Among other beautiful assertions in his enthusiastic speech [which preceded a dance in honor of the insurgents], the talented young man declared that true heroes could hardly behave differently, and he called on his compatriots to take up arms. . . .”<sup>8</sup>

Later, that oddly qualified phrase “beautiful assertions” struck me

7. For background on the Brazilian “Revolution of 1893,” see Joseph L. Love, *Rio Grande do Sul and Brazilian Regionalism, 1882–1930* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1971); Sérgio da Costa Franco, “O Sentido Histórico da Revolução de 1893,” in *Fundamentos da Cultura Rio-Grandense* 5:193–216 (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: n.p., 1962); and Sílvio Rogério Duncan Baretta, “Political Violence and Regime Change: A Study of the 1893 Civil War in Southern Brazil,” Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1985. On the Uruguayan “Revolution of 1897,” see José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahum, *Historia rural del Uruguay moderno*, vol. 4: *La historia social de las revoluciones de 1897 y 1904* (Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1972). On the borderland’s contraband economy and state attempts to control it, see Barrán and Nahum, *Historia rural del Uruguay moderno*, vol. 2: *La crisis económica, 1886–1894* (Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1971), 125–28; and Guilhermino César, *O Contrabando no Sul do Brasil* (Porto Alegre and Caxias do Sul: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes and the Universidade de Caxias do Sul, 1978).

8. *Echo do Sul* (Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul), 17 July 1896.

as a Geertzian clue to a foreign sensibility.<sup>9</sup> At the time, however, my attempts to make sense of the verbiage filling the newspapers and most other contemporaneous writings about the conflict failed utterly. Eventually, the political economy of the two “revolutions” emerged in archival sources—tax records, probate inventories, and frustrated administrators’ descriptions of large-scale contraband. Meanwhile, the vehemence of the insurgents’ language, so remote from my original analysis, remained an enigma.

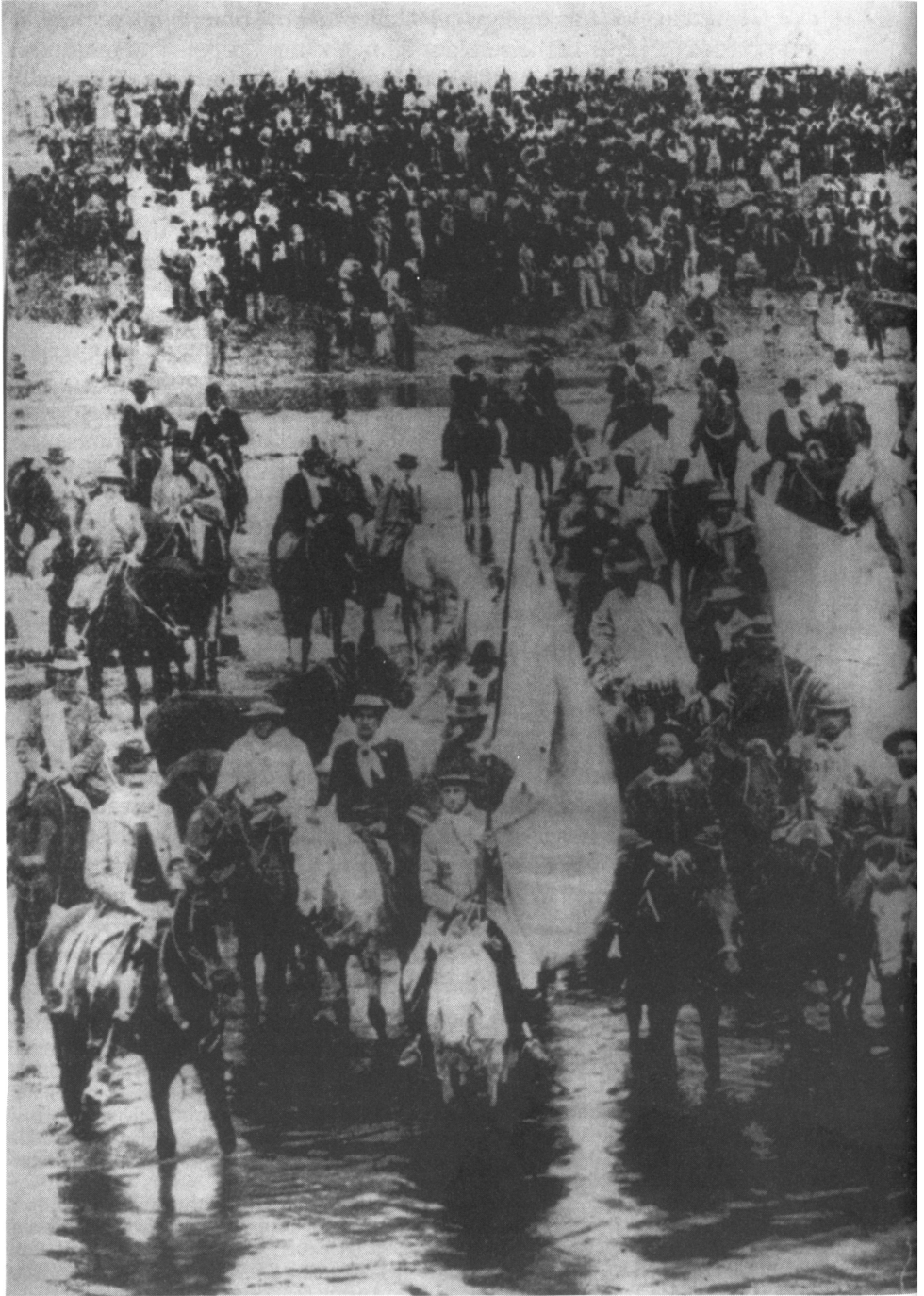
Convinced by the seriousness with which the insurgents themselves regarded their stories of sacrificial heroes and atrocious tyrants, I reread these documents more on their own terms, starting from the premise that nineteenth-century borderlanders regarded partisan rhetoric as a powerful tool of persuasion. Certainly, they poured tremendous energies into producing it. Latin American presses printed vast quantities of partisan literature in the nineteenth century. As a result, political newspapers, fiction, memoirs, broadsides, pamphlets, proclamations, and various other kinds of ephemeral literature constitute a major variety of the historical sources that have survived the period. Long considered useless because they are so strongly “distorted” by the lens of partisanship, these tendentious ephemera do not readily answer questions about “what really happened.” Viewed from another angle, however, the “distortions” themselves make for interesting study, inviting researchers to ask why the participants framed their political language in these terms.<sup>10</sup>

### *Context and Reception*

Contextualization must be the watchword of those who seek to interpret political discourse, for context has much to do with an audience’s reception of language. The borderland of northern Uruguay and southern Rio Grande do Sul, where the revolutions occurred in the 1890s, was one of many cattle frontiers in Latin American history. By the late nineteenth century, Iberian and mestizo settlers had killed most of the native people inhabiting the borderland. Especially in the eastern districts where the revolutions began, no indigenous cultural substrate existed, its labor having been replaced by African slaves. Although slavery had disappeared by the 1890s, a visitor might find little other evidence of the imminent

9. Clifford Geertz has suggested that something seemingly nonsensical, like a joke one does not get, can be a valuable point of entry into a different culture. Robert Darnton takes a similar approach in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

10. Although many historians have limited themselves to ridiculing this language, anthropologists and literary critics have shown more interest. For examples, see Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 60–67; and Roberto González Echevarría, *The Voice of the Master: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), on “The Dictatorship of Rhetoric.”



*Illustration 1. Insurgent volunteers returning from the Uruguayan Revolution of 1897*



arrival of the twentieth century. The borderland, originally similar in many social characteristics to the neighboring pampa of the province of Buenos Aires, remained little changed while the pampa was being transformed by scientific husbandry and agriculture. When visiting the border area, Argentines sometimes expressed the sensation of entering their own past. In the 1890s, the cattle that roamed everywhere were still sinewy Iberian longhorns, and the houses of even the richest ranchers seemed quite rustic. Only wire fences distinguished the borderland landscape of the turn of the century from that of the time of independence—as well as the presence of the poor who had been fenced out. With the coming of fencing, the ranching economy had become less rather than more labor-intensive, and borderland ranchers were notoriously slow to adopt the techniques of scientific husbandry. One frustrated agronomist railed at the conservative ranchers who remained insensitive to the appeals of progress while the landless borderlanders (whom he called *gauchos*) continued to be lost in a “constant dream” of civil war.<sup>11</sup>

War figured prominently in the collective experience of borderlanders. The immense pasture that stretched between Brazil and Uruguay had witnessed steady armed conflict—between empires, between nations, and between parties—throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The shared experience of war created interclass solidarities of unusual strength among rural borderlanders, especially between the landowners and their social and economic dependents, the *agregados*, who often seemed to accompany the *patrón* to war as a matter of course.<sup>12</sup> In the late nineteenth century, however, fencing and rapid population growth combined with a generation of relative peace were imperiling the usufruct rights of the *agregados*. Many of them lost their place on the land and became drifting rural proletarians, inhabitants of hovels that sprang up by the roadside or around borderland towns. For the displaced rural poor, the “glorious” revolutions of mid-century, more pleasant to remember than to live through, took on positive associations. Battlefield valor had brought considerable renown to a number of borderlanders of humble social condition and had assured many more of a place on the land. By the 1890s, borderland paupers might plausibly regard war as an opportunity to win back lost dignity—at any rate, they had little to lose. The numerous land-owning families of modest means also had reason for nostalgia. They were raising more children than their unproductive—and progressively subdivided—ranches could maintain. Some of their offspring might end

11. Francisco J. Ros, *La feria de Melo: reflexiones económicas sobre los departamentos de Cerro Largo, Treinta y Tres, Rocha, Minas y Maldonado* (Montevideo: Tipografía de La Razón, 1902), 10–11 and *passim*.

12. On the social impact of widespread military participation, see Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 20–74.



up as agregados, while many others would have to leave for the cities and face intense competition in an unfamiliar environment. Hence claim to an honorable past became a significant touchstone of identity for rural migrants to the cities. As social pressures mounted, rural people of all social classes began to recall the war-torn past as a golden age when men were men and land abounded. Insurgent calls to arms sought resonance in this collective experience.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to direct life experience, a second matter to consider regarding the reception of insurgent discourse is oral tradition. Appeals to martial values resounded far more powerfully for those who had grown up listening to war stories—a nineteenth-century commonplace of borderland life. The recollections of one borderlander of the 1890s centered on a time when his father and six uncles were all away fighting in a civil war. Around the kitchen fire on winter evenings of the 1840s, he heard the tales of feats of arms told and retold, learned reverence for the name of General Manuel Oribe and the Defensores de las Leyes, and practiced cursing the “savage Colorados” and their European accomplices. Parties of Colorados had sacked his grandmother’s ranch twice, forcing the family to flee to Brazil for months.<sup>14</sup> Historians of various borderland localities in Uruguay and Rio Grande do Sul have recorded oral traditions in which such war stories figure prominently.<sup>15</sup>

Summary retelling of a few such stories will reveal something of their style and content. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the storytellers on the Brazilian side remembered the following details about Seival, a battle of the Farrapo War of 1835–1845. First came a volley with blunderbuss and pistol, and then the two armies (a few hundred lancers on each side) collided at a gallop with lances leveled. The first shock favored the loyalists, commanded by João da Silva Tavares. But suddenly the loyalist commander’s bridle was severed, his horse bolted out of control, and his followers broke and fled, leaving the victorious insurgents in possession of the battlefield.<sup>16</sup> Such battles were contests of speed, skill, and luck, not of attrition. In fact, the total casualties of all Latin America’s nineteenth-century civil wars combined might not equal those of the U.S. Civil War.<sup>17</sup> The comparative scarcity of firearms in Latin America partly

13. This argument is developed more fully in John Charles Chasteen, “Background to Civil War: The Process of Land Tenure in Brazil’s Southern Borderland, 1801–1893,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (Nov. 1991):737–60.

14. See “Refutación histórica,” *El Deber Cívico* (Melo, Uruguay), 11, 14, and 18 Sept. 1894.

15. See Justino Zavala Muniz, *Crónica de Muniz* (Montevideo: El Siglo Ilustrado, 1921); and Manuel da Costa Medeiros, *História do Herval* (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes, 1980).

16. Tarciso Antônio Costa Taborda, *Bagé e a Revolução Farroupilha* (Bagé, Rio Grande do Sul: n.p., 1985), 27–28.

17. David Bushnell and Neill Macaulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 29.

explains this outcome. Yet one might also suspect that killing was not really the primary function of these encounters. Borderland storytellers dwelled neither on gore nor on the strategic significance of the battle. The names of the leaders and who won on what day and where were often all they could remember about a particular skirmish. They lingered instead on audacious deeds, offering vivid detail and sometimes battlefield dialogue.

The defeated loyalist veterans of Seival consoled themselves by retelling the inspirational deaths of two heroes. According to the narrators, when the loyalist line broke, one hero showed his scorn for danger by retreating at a slow trot. Five times he wheeled to face his pursuers, and each time he sent one of them sprawling with his lance. Among the Farrapos that day was his cousin and old friend who, according to the story, had often wanted to try the strength of the retreating lancer. "Here I come," the challenging cousin bellowed in warning. He charged and impaled himself on the deadly lance, bending the metal haft of the weapon with the impact and leaving the lancer unarmed. In this story, the heroic retreating lancer held his pursuers at bay with his look alone until a bullet killed him. An early-twentieth-century memorialist wrote that the Silva Tavares family had preserved the twisted lance for generations as a relic.<sup>18</sup>

One can easily imagine the admiration of borderland men for the prowess of this military athlete. But why did they also make a hero of another combatant that day who, in practical terms, had accomplished nothing? This man had tried to rally the wavering loyalist line by putting himself in front and waving his sword until a bullet shattered his thigh and he slipped off his horse. Hauling himself up, the wounded officer brandished his saber, undaunted by the approaching insurgent lancers. Impressed with the heroism of his enemy, the insurgent commander supposedly said, "Sheath your sword and give me your arm." "My dignity does not permit it," replied the loyalist. Moments later, a less ceremonious insurgent rode by and lanced him through.<sup>19</sup> A modern observer might find this hero's behavior futile or even silly. For nineteenth-century borderlanders, however, his "moment of truth" constituted incontrovertible proof of moral caliber. Indeed, their oral tradition often stresses the expressive over the instrumental function of fighting, a distinction to bear in mind when considering their reception of insurgent discourse.<sup>20</sup>

### *Constructing Collective Identities*

Nineteenth-century caudillos of the Río de la Plata rarely penned their own political statements, looking instead to educated men as wielders

18. Medeiros, *História do Herval*, 101.

19. Tabora, *Bagé e a Revolução Farroupilha*, 31–32.

20. For a comparative perspective, see W. R. Connor, "Early Greek Land Warfare as Symbolic Expression," *Past and Present*, no. 119 (1988):3–29.

of the legitimating language of power appropriate to the solemnity of the purpose. One Brazilian general of 1893, Gumercindo Saravia, refused flatly to speak in public because he lacked the polished Portuguese required, preferring to issue orders in Spanish (the language in which he had some schooling). For the most part, the creators and distributors of "revolutionary" rhetoric were not rural people but frock-coated lawyers. Narratives of the Uruguayan Revolution of 1897 often play on the cultural separation between the lawyers and the rude war captains who constituted the "doctoral" and "caudillesco" wings of the party leadership. The doctors of laws needed the caudillos to support them in the countryside and to make revolutions when necessary, while the caudillos needed the doctors to manipulate the laws and (in case the captains captured the government) to be judges, deputies, and ministers. In Brazil the control of local municipalities exercised by *coronéis* and *bacharéis* constituted an exact analog. The more ceremonious registers of insurgent discourse and virtually all its written forms were monopolized by this small and highly visible group of elite males, whose writing makes up most of the evidence.<sup>21</sup>

One can only imagine how landless men and women spoke about insurgencies among themselves. Partisan politics had no place in court records, practically the sole primary source material in which the voices of the illiterate majority can be detected. One finds only a few suggestive clues on the *divisas*, embroidered hat bands whose colors signified the party allegiance of even the most humble insurgent. Several reportedly read "Aire libre y carne gorda," the gaucho's traditional recipe for an unpretentious good time. Another *divisa* of 1897 sounded an idealistic note more in harmony with the tone of elite discourse but added a nativist twist by using the creole expression "indios" for rustic insurgents: "Porque soy hombre sin vicio yo pertenezco a los indios del General Aparicio."<sup>22</sup> Lyrics of rural Uruguayan folk music of the early twentieth century cast Aparicio Saravia as an admirably tough character engaged in a deadly card game with the government's generals. With his enemies holding the winning cards, Saravia was fated to lose the encounter, but the lyrics celebrate the nativist qualities of the caudillo's speech and attitudes (see illustrations 2 and 3).<sup>23</sup>

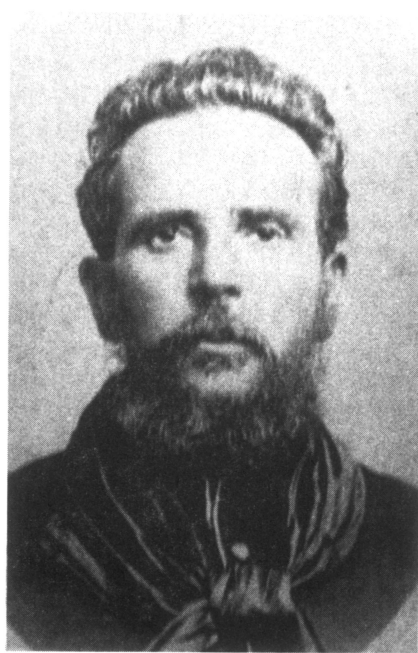
21. On the hegemonic qualities of political language, see the classic interpretation of the roles played by caudillos and doctores by Alberto Zum Felde, *Proceso histórico del Uruguay: esquema de una sociología nacional* (Montevideo: Maximino García, 1919); and Richard Graham's discussion of language and power in *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 115–17.

22. Luis Alberto de Herrera, *Por la Patria* (Montevideo: Cámara de Representantes, 1990), 2:265.

23. The durability of Uruguay's Blanco party has sustained the popular appeal of partisan hero Aparicio Saravia since his death in 1904. See José Virginio Díaz, *Historia de Saravia: contribución al estudio del caudillaje en América* (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1920); José Monegal, *Vida de Aparicio Saravia* (Montevideo: A. Monteverde, 1942); Manuel Gálvez, *Vida*



Gumercindo Saravia  
1852–1894



Aparicio Saravia  
1856–1904

Illustration 2. As heads of insurgent armies in the 1890s, the Saravia brothers became incarnations of nativist identity. Their clothes and manner of speaking, their mistrust of the city, and their knowledge of the cattle country made them “gauchos” in the eyes of followers and adversaries alike. Colored neckerchiefs and hatbands (*divisas*) identified the Saravias and other fighters without uniforms as members of parties. *Divisas* embroidered with slogans expressing selfless devotion were presented to borderland insurgents by women of their party, often in public ceremonies. Gumercindo’s most famous *divisa* read “Tudo pela Liberdade,” while Aparicio’s proclaimed “Por la Patria.” (Photos courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo, Uruguay.)

Occasionally, the folkloric interest of a country physician or other educated man provided evidence about the political attitudes of the poor, and the lawyers who became insurgents frequently wrote memoirs of their adventures. In 1897 a “*doctorcito*” named Luis Alberto de Herrera

---

de Aparicio Saravia, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Tor, 1957); and C. Enrique Mena Segarra, *Aparicio Saravia: las últimas patriadas* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1977). The folk songs are found in the Colección de Lauro Ayestarán of the Museo Histórico Nacional in Montevideo. “Décima” as sung by José Cuadrado is located on Tape 7, Side A, and “Milonga a Aparicio Saravia” as sung by Presbíter Moltracio, is on Tape 10, Side B. As in Uruguay, the politics of nativism are closely linked to the gauchesco idiom in Rio Grande do Sul. See João Simões Lopes Neto, *Cancioneiro Guasca*, 2d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 1960); and Augusto Meyer, *Cancioneiro Gaúcho* (Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 1957).



Illustration 3. A staged photograph of Aparicio Saravia dying surrounded by his loyal officers. After their deaths, both Gumercindo and Aparicio Saravia became emblems of insurgent self-sacrifice. Despite the efforts of Gumercindo's Brazilian eulogists, his cult gradually faded, but the image of Aparicio evolved throughout the twentieth century to become the most familiar icon of Uruguay's durable Blanco party. (Photo from Caras y Caretas.)

(later to become one of Uruguay's great twentieth-century leaders) took refuge from the rain with a group of poor countrymen—also insurgents—in an abandoned shack. In order “to capture a truly gaucho souvenir, a native watercolor,” he eavesdropped by pretending to sleep under his poncho while his gaucho companions told stories of good fights and close calls in revolutions on both sides of the border. One old gaucho spoke the name of rebel hero Gumercindo Saravia with “the devotion of one who kisses a relic.” Then the conversation turned to the younger Saravia, Aparicio, leader of the present insurgency, whom they pronounced a “bull” like his brother. Fascination and condescension blend in the urban youth's description of his rural comrades-in-arms, who showed no concern for the physical hardships of the campaign. As one explained in his rustic manner, the Blanco party is like white flour, “the harder you grind it, the prettier it comes out.”<sup>24</sup>

24. Herrera, *Por la Patria*, 2:263–66.

Finally, fictional accounts by writers with firsthand knowledge of the borderland often refer to popular political attitudes. In Uruguay political journalist Javier de Viana was publishing his short stories about the Blanco insurgent tradition in the newspapers on the eve of the Revolution of 1897. Viana's personal experience as a partisan journalist in the borderland during the 1890s lends persuasiveness to his depiction of political attitudes there.<sup>25</sup> Overwhelmingly, Viana represented partisan conflict as a battle between two multiclass alliances in which political economy had long since given way to what Uruguayans called "the old hatreds" as a basic principle of group coherence: ". . . if someone asked [one implacable Colorado veteran] what his ideals were, or why he fought, he raised his thick eyebrows flecked with grey and pointed to the broad red divisa that covered almost the whole crown of his hat—that faded ribbon, discolored by sun and rain, with its letters stitched in gold thread, blackened now, spelling out the furious motto, symbolizing patria, liberty, friendships, and interests: all mixed together and confused, amorphous and ill-defined."<sup>26</sup> The primacy of partisan loyalty for its own sake was a Uruguayan truism of the day.

Indeed, affirmations of loyalty and collective identity seem to be the heart of most insurgent discourse, especially in its popular dimensions. Since the 1830s, Uruguayans had used the colors white and red to identify Blancos and Colorados. In areas controlled by the Colorado party, a white neckerchief meant trouble with the police, and wearers of red ones fared no better in Blanco strongholds. Partisan loyalty commonly influenced the choice of horses, especially in the Blancos' preference for white horses. When a Colorado president mounted his black presidential guards on white horses, Blancos took it as an insult. According to one story, Gumercindo Saravia was pursued by the government after picking a fight with these black soldiers on white horses. His brother Aparicio supposedly countenanced only white animals around the ranch house.<sup>27</sup> Blanco insurgents usually wore the broad white divisas as their only uniform. One popular refrain extolled its appeal:

La cinta blanca,  
La cinta blanca,  
Que a algunos no gusta,

25. The son and grandson of *estancieros*, Javier de Viana (1868–1926) became one of the most popular Uruguayan authors of the early twentieth century. See Alvaro Barros Lémex, *La obra cuentística de Javier de Viana* (Montevideo: Astillero, 1985). Gauchesco verse long expressed the politics of nativist identity in Uruguay. See Bartolomé Hidalgo, *Obras completas* (Montevideo: Ciencias, 1979); Antonio D. Lussich, *Los tres gauchos orientales* (Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción y Previsión Social, 1964); and Lauro Ayestarán, *La primitiva poesía gauchesca en el Uruguay*, vol. 1: 1812–1838 (Montevideo: Imprenta de El Siglo Ilustrado, 1950).

26. Viana, "La persecución," *Campo* (Montevideo: Claudio García, 1945), 130.

27. Mena Segarra, *Aparicio Saravia*, 13; and José Virginio Díaz, *Los Saravia, una familia de guerreros (apuntes rápidos para una biografía)* (Montevideo: La Razón, 1903), 43.

A mí me encanta,  
 La cinta blanca,  
 La cinta blancaaaaa!<sup>28</sup>

White *divisas* were often trimmed with blue, the other Uruguayan national color. The Colorados generally wore government uniforms, but one general dressed in red from head to foot, looking like an operatic Mephistopheles.<sup>29</sup>

This emphasis on signs of collective identity (rather than on party program) frequently gave partisan discourse an uncompromising tone, one evidenced in a scene described in the memoirs of Uruguayan poet Juana de Ibarbourou. As a small girl, she entered a borderland church to light a candle for her father, who was off fighting in a Blanco "revolution." Inside the church, she recalled, candles flickered and women knelt before two lateral shrines, especially those of the Blancos' Virgin Inmaculada (dressed in white) and the Colorados' Jesús Nazareno (dressed in crimson and holding the Sacred Heart). Straying too close to the Colorado shrine, the little girl was shocked to become the object of scorn from "enemies" she did not know. That day, wrote Ibarbourou, she learned the meaning of war.<sup>30</sup>

Because the discourse of insurgency emphasizes definitions of and distinctions between "us" and "them," it can probably reveal something about the development of other intersecting forms of collective identity, including those based on race, class, region, and nation. Such discourse may tell much in particular about the creation in Latin America of what Benedict Anderson calls "imagined communities," a key to the success of any political project. Like citizens of a nation, members of an insurgent party must feel themselves "tied forever" to a group, most of whose members they will never see or know individually. The struggle to propagate an insurgency frequently implies a contestation of official national identity, and thus insurgent discourse should not be ignored in studying the development of nationalism in Latin American countries.<sup>31</sup>

### *Metaphors and Exclusions*

Elaborate rhetoric was in demand for special occasions precisely because of its distance from popular speech and its association with au-

28. Herrera, *Por la Patria*, 2:265.

29. Javier de Viana, *Con divisa blanca* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 1979), 65.

30. Juana de Ibarbourou, "La guerra," *Chico Carlo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1944).

31. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). On the evolution and contestation of national identities in Latin America, see Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); and Efraim Kristal, *The Andes Viewed from the City: Literary and Political Discourse on the Indian in Peru* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). On the importance of founding myths and stories of common heroes and a shared past in creating national identities, see Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

thority and law. Only a proper *proclama* could define insurgent violence as political. Everyone expected an elevated tone for this ritual, and the distance from everyday speech enhanced the liturgical qualities of the language, as did the concluding “vivas” shouted by the congregated followers after the leaders called out sentiments such as “Long live the Rio Grandense People!”<sup>32</sup> Without this collective formal consecration of political purpose, the government had a better chance of branding the insurgents as “common criminals.” Insurgents therefore had their claims to the legitimate use of political violence printed in newspapers, and they also produced leaflets to distribute in the countryside. These repetitive specimens of a well-defined genre offer a good starting place for discussing metaphors and exclusions.<sup>33</sup>

Religious metaphors are strikingly pervasive in these documents. When Brazilian General Silva Tavares and Colonel Amaro da Silveira “pronounced” in 1893, each announced the sacred nature of the insurgent crusade to a contingent of several hundred men. Tavares’s *proclama* exhorted, “To arms, compatriots! Let us fight for the liberty of the *patria* and God will be with us!”<sup>34</sup> A few days later and a few miles east, Colonel Amaro da Silveira harangued his followers in similar terms: “The patriotic army of which you form a part, comrades, has a sacred duty to fulfill. . . . Our cause is holy and just; we have nothing to fear; God is with us.”<sup>35</sup> A joint communiqué, issued subsequently in March by all the important insurgent chiefs, reiterated their “sacred purpose” of overthrowing tyranny and restoring “rights, justice, security, and liberty.”<sup>36</sup> Three years later in Uruguay, young Dr. Sergio Muñoz stood up before eighty lancers gathered for the *proclama* of the Blanco party’s General Aparicio Saravia, and he read in Saravia’s name an impassioned statement to his “co-religionaries” promising to sustain the “sacrosanct principles” of their party.<sup>37</sup>

32. For other political rituals in nineteenth-century Brazil, see Graham, *Politics and Patronage*, 109–21.

33. On the power of metaphor, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For an examination of political genre in the contemporary United States, see Herbert W. Simons and Aram A. Aghazarian, *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986).

34. “Proclamação do General Joca Tavares distribuida pela campanha a 5 de fevereiro de 1893,” reproduced as document 47 (of 148 primary sources) provided by Epaminondas Villalba in *A Revolução Federalista no Rio Grande do Sul (Documentos e Comentários)* (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Recife: Laemmert, 1897), 13–14.

35. Ladislau Amaro da Silveira’s proclamation of 21 Feb. 1893 is reproduced in an unpublished biographical essay by early-twentieth-century Rio Grandense historian José Cândido de Campos Neto, “Ladislau Amaro da Silveira,” 14. The Campos Neto manuscript is preserved in the private collection of Júlio Petersen of Porto Alegre. The source of the quotation is probably *O Echo do Sul*, a newspaper published in Pelotas.

36. “Manifesto dos Principais Chefes Federalistas,” doc. 1 in Villalba, *A Revolução Federalista*, 3–5.

37. Nepomuceno Saravia García, *Memorias de Aparicio Saravia: relato histórico-biográfico de su hijo Nepomuceno, ilustrado con documentación del archivo del General* (Montevideo: Medina, 1956), 48–49.



Neither the Brazilian nor the Uruguayan insurgents of the 1890s had any special connection with the Catholic Church. Instead, much as in the standard language of European Republicanism, religious concepts figured organically in the discourse of borderland insurgents. Mexico's institutional revolution employed similar rhetoric, even during its anticlerical years.<sup>38</sup>

Celebrated Blanco orator Dr. Eduardo Acevedo Díaz stirred Uruguayan audiences in 1895 with his language of partisan communion and redemption. "Lift up your hearts and spirits those who have the faith of the apostle and the patriot," he thundered in his gravelly voice:

Lift up your republican spirits, those whose manly chests are incapable of calculations; strengthen your spirits in sublime communion, oh new generation of my Patria.

Rise up from the past, oh venerated ghosts, who gave all before the altars of our political religion: I call on you to guide us now, not in ignoble vengeance, but as emblems of supreme valor and abnegation in hand-to-hand combat between the holy aspirations of the people and the iniquitous habits of corruption and decadence.<sup>39</sup>

Although unusually extended, Acevedo's metaphor of civil religion is inevitably familiar. Around the world, the rhetoric of political confrontation has constructed stark moral divides when exhorting followers to kill others and risk their own death. In the United States, invocations of "God's terrible swift sword" characterized the rhetoric of the U.S. Civil War. Perhaps because of the frequency of civil wars in Latin America, partisan language has generally tended to phrase political questions in moral terms—questions worth dying over in a way that fiscal policy, for example, is not. This tendency has accentuated the confrontational partisan style reflected in the names of such radical factions as *Intransigentes*, *Puros*, *Exaltados*, and *Jacobinos*.

The overall metaphor of civil religion harmonizes with the notion of a "sacred" or providential political order, a concept deeply rooted in the experience of Latin Americans. Formally elaborated by the ideologues of the Counter-Reformation, this view of the political order remained conventional wisdom for centuries in universities across the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking world.<sup>40</sup> In the eighteenth century, the Marquis de Pom-

38. Ilene V. O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 27.

39. "Discurso pronunciado en el Club Bernardo P. Berro," 15 Oct. 1895, Acevedo Díaz (h.), *La vida de batalla de Eduardo Acevedo Díaz* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1941), 124-27. On "partisan communion," see "Discurso pronunciado en el Club Pantaleón Pérez," 21 July 1896, reproduced in the documentary appendix of Acevedo Díaz, *La vida de batalla*, 131-32.

40. In emphasizing the concept of natural or providential order, this article owes a particular debt to the ideas of Richard Morse, most recently published in "Claims of Political Tradition," in his *New World Soundings: Culture and Ideology in the Americas* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). See also Roderick J. Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*,

bal required the Portuguese sovereign's laws and decrees to be termed "sacred" and "most holy." The insurgent general of the 1830s who called the Brazilian constitution "the Sacred Code" was following directly in this tradition.<sup>41</sup> Did the language of Catholicism, when applied in a kind of bricolage to parties, rebellions, and constitutions, shape the general understanding of politics? Hypothetically, the internal coherence of this discourse—the metaphors from which the bricolage is put together—might help account for the striking exclusion of plainspoken appeals to economic self-interest in insurgent discourse.<sup>42</sup>

Other common metaphors in the discourse of the 1890s insurgents likewise construct political conflict in terms that present matters as right versus wrong or order versus disorder and consequently exclude discussing material interests. For example, in a letter of resignation to the president of Brazil, one Rio Grandense colonel appropriated Sarmiento's famous dichotomy between civilization and barbarism to explain his confidence in the triumph of the "sacrosanct" cause that he intended to join: because a victory of the current (barbarous) government would "go against the natural order of civilization."<sup>43</sup> The revolution also represented the restoration of civilization in articles like "Brazil or Zululand?" and other newspaper diatribes written by exiled Brazilian propagandist Angelo Dourado.<sup>44</sup> A physician, Dourado also offered an example of a third common type of metaphor, that of organism. A revolution, expostulated Doctor Dourado during his recruiting talks, is a symptom of illness (disorder) in the body politic. The symptom would disappear only when health (natural order) had been restored. Dourado reported that future insurgent General

---

1798–1852 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), 97–159; and O. Carlos Stotzer, *The Scholastic Roots of the Spanish American Revolutions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 16–32.

41. "Manifesto do Coronel Bento Gonçalves da Silva Justificando a Arrancada de 20 de 1835," issued 25 Sept. 1835; Walter Spalding, *A Epopéia Farrroupilha: Pequena História da Grande Revolução Acompanhada de Farta Documentação da Época, 1835–1845* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1963), 283–91. On Pombaline rhetoric, see Dauril Alden, *Royal Government in Colonial Brazil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 9. On Christian imagery, see Jacques Lafaye, *Mesías, cruzadas, utopías: el judeo-cristianismo en las sociedades ibéricas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988).

42. I owe to Tulio Halperín Donghi the idea that early national political discourse was often a bricolage.

43. "Carta do Cor. Salgado ao Mar. Floriano Demittindo-se do Exército Nacional," doc. 51 in Villalba, *Revolução Federalista*, 102–3. Silva Tavares lamented Brazil's humiliation "before the civilized world"; see "Ultima hora," *Jornal do Comércio*, 24 Dec. 1892. Similarly, Amaro da Silveira spoke of Brazil's shame "in the eyes of the civilized world"; see Campos Neto, "Ladislau Amaro da Silveira," 14.

44. The exiled Dourado wrote in Portuguese for the emigré community in northern Uruguay. See *El Deber Cívico* (Melo), 29 July 1892, 20 Sept. 1892, 15 Nov. 1892, and 3 Dec. 1892. Insurgent Admiral Eduardo Wandenkolk used yet another formulation for disorder in calling it "abnormality" in "Proclamação do Alm. Wandenkolk," doc. 55 in Villalba, *Revolução Federalista*, 108–9.

Gumercindo Saravia responded, "You speak a language that I feel here inside."<sup>45</sup>

Firebrand orators and "pronouncing" generals might cite a variety of reasons for rising up against the government, but they rarely mentioned specific interests. Acevedo Díaz invariably appealed for sacrifice without expectation of reward, "forgetting sordid interests."<sup>46</sup> The exclusion of particular economic interests was apparently typical of nineteenth-century partisan rhetoric in Latin America. For comparisons in Anglo-American political culture, one need look no further than the U.S. "founding fathers," who couched their arguments in terms of the commonweal, or the conservative electoral coalitions articulated by "values" issues in late-twentieth-century U.S. presidential politics.<sup>47</sup>

During the 1880s and 1890s, the newspapers in the Brazilian-Uruguayan borderland vehemently debated the twin issues of tariffs and contraband, but never in the same breath with partisan politics. In fact, the newspapers that championed the economic interests of local ranchers and merchants tended to be avowedly nonpartisan in the 1890s. This kind of paper usually advertised its "apolitical" devotion to "local interests and progress" in the masthead, unlike the partisan papers that billed themselves as "organs" of a party. The borderlanders of the 1890s evidently thought it perfectly legitimate to defend their economic interests<sup>48</sup> but thoroughly inappropriate to include such "sordid calculations" in a call to arms. Because of their dependence on buyers across the border in Brazil, the landowners of Cerro Largo, a stronghold of the Blanco party, suffered painful effects of government tariff policies, yet the Blancos never considered making the tariff a partisan issue. The idea would have been unspeakably crass. Moreover, talk of a sacred purpose served the elite far better in making common cause with their poorer neighbors than tax relief for wealthy landowners.

The hypothesis that much partisan discourse ignored "interests" as a result of what Michel Foucault termed one of its "procedures of exclusion"<sup>49</sup> suggests a way of studying the phenomenon of cultural hegemony. Culturally focused alliances across class lines (most often conservative and rural, like those of the borderland) have played an enormous role in Latin American political history, from the struggles for independence to the

45. Dourado, *Voluntários do Martírio*, 13.

46. "Discurso pronunciado en el Club Pantaleón Pérez," 21 July 1896, in Acevedo Díaz (h.), *La vida de batalla*, 131–32.

47. Terence Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse: Political Theory and Critical Conceptual History* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 22–46.

48. See the campaign against the export tariff in *El Cerro Largo* (Melo), 10 Oct. 1885 and 15 Nov. 1885. These were seconded by Montevideo's apolitical Portuguese-language paper, *A Pátria*, 23 Jan. 1885 and 28 Apr. 1885. See also the commercial *Telégrafo Mercantil* (Montevideo), 15 Jan. 1885 and 12 Feb. 1885.

49. Foucault, "Order of Discourse," 109–10.

present day. These alliances, or “historical blocs” in the terms of Antonio Gramsci, have often seemed to defy the logic of political economy.<sup>50</sup> The idea that all understanding of the material world is powerfully mediated by perception and cognition<sup>51</sup> suggests a new analysis emphasizing that individuals respond politically to whatever they *perceive* to be in their interest. This simple but radical shift in emphasis allows a more fruitful rereading of partisan discourse of the first century of political independence. Such a rereading prevents a frustrating search for formulations of economic interest that were frankly excluded by the requirements of the genre and renders many conspiracy theories unnecessary.

### *The Appeal of Self-Sacrifice*

Most nineteenth-century “revolutions” were riveting public spectacles for men of the political elite, who often viewed the particular fracas as an opportunity to make a name for themselves. Heroic deeds constituted obvious assets in building name recognition, but the mere fact of joining a revolution could also signify selfless patriotism of the kind associated in many societies with military volunteers and veterans.<sup>52</sup> Expertise and administrative program counted for little in the partisan imagination of the 1890s. When it came to images of leadership, character was all, and borderlanders considered the disposition to self-sacrifice as a vital indicator of character.

Those assumptions are made explicit in *Volunteers for Martyrdom*, the epistolary war diary of Brazilian insurgent officer Angelo Dourado, whose sentiments were cited at the beginning of this article: “What I suffer is pleasant because it shows that I am putting myself above the run of common men. . . .”<sup>53</sup> Dourado proposed to demonstrate moral superiority over his enemies and conquer public opinion even without winning the war. To the contrary, the slight chance of a military victory constituted a special attraction of the fight. Dourado pictured himself as one of a poor band of half-naked heroes on a quixotic journey into patriotic immortality. He insisted to his wife that his death would be an inspiration to future generations: “Tell my sons that I died at my post of honor, and that in the fatal hour I will envision them in the future fighting like me.”<sup>54</sup> Dourado survived the war, but such posturing occasionally did end in death. The

50. See T. J. Jackson Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities,” *American Historical Review* 91 (June 1985):567–93.

51. Harland, *Superstructuralism*, 9–32.

52. For a further exploration, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Identity, Sacrifice, and Sovereignty,” paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 30 Aug.–2 Sept. 1990.

53. Dourado, *Voluntários do Martírio*, 19.

54. *Ibid.*, 11.

quest for masculine prestige undoubtedly helped fill the galleries of political martyrs. All the contending parties in the borderland of the 1890s had well-furnished pantheons of martyred war heroes,<sup>55</sup> and like partisan politics in general, political self-sacrifice was primarily a masculine game.

The gendered qualities of the discourse of insurgency leap to the eye in borderland war stories, in oratorical appeals to “manly chests” and in the limited reference to women in partisan language as a whole. A Uruguayan stage play written during the Revolution of 1897, *La lucha fratricida y la conciliación*, presents exemplary women only as stoic cheerleaders, even when brother was fighting brother. For example, despite the fact that Doña Leonor’s two sons are fighting on opposite sides in the war, she sternly reprimands her daughter’s criticism of their fratricidal behavior. They must be true to their ideals: “Your good father [who died in an earlier civil war] would have done the same,” and later, “We are not to judge, being women, after all. . . .” Doña Leonor is thus characterized as resigned to seeing her sons fulfill their gender role and determined to teach her daughters to do the same.<sup>56</sup> Women also appeared as emblems and bearers of party identity. When Dr. Acevedo Díaz described the Blanco party as a proto-national group—the Children of Israel wandering in the desert—he ascribed to women the responsibility of preserving and inculcating the collective memory.<sup>57</sup>

Insurgent harangues frequently appealed to the manliness of their listeners. In an effort to spark a revolt, Acevedo excoriated male Blancos for remaining “passive and inert” in a land “fertilized by the blood of heroes and martyrs.” To provide them with patriarchal models, Acevedo had put the “valiant caudillos” of old on display in his historical novels (written while he was in exile in Buenos Aires). Now Acevedo urged his people to recreate the golden age of Blanco pride by reenacting it. Political threats to the virility of his listeners figured among Acevedo’s favorite oratorical themes.<sup>58</sup>

Clearly, insurgency offered a way for men to vindicate their claims to manliness and qualify themselves for leadership in an extremely public forum. Accounts of the 1890s revolutions filled the newspapers, and the

55. See, for example, *Homenagem aos Heróis da Revolução de 1893* (Rivera, Uruguay: Tipografia d’O Maragato, 1901).

56. Antonio N. Pereira, *La lucha fratricida y la conciliación: boceto histórico-dramático* (Montevideo: Imprenta de El Siglo Ilustrado, 1897), 8, 14.

57. “Discurso pronunciado en el Club Pantaleón Pérez,” 21 July 1896, in Acevedo Díaz (h.), *La vida de batalla*, 131–32.

58. See “Discurso pronunciado en Miguez,” *El Nacional*, 14 Apr. 1896. See also “Discurso pronunciado en San José,” 8 Sept. 1896, and “Discurso pronunciado en el Club Bernardo P. Berro,” 15 Oct. 1895, both reprinted in Acevedo Díaz, *La vida de batalla*. See also “Sendas travesías—la vía derecha,” *El Nacional*, 10 Sept. 1895. O’Malley found that *viril* was also the favored adjective among the cults of Mexican revolutionary heroes. See O’Malley, *Myth of the Revolution*, 133.

reputations of the prominent were made or broken in street-corner conversations that buzzed throughout Uruguay and southern Brazil. "The eyes of the nation . . . are on us at this moment," proclaimed Brazilian General Silva Tavares, giving voice to the commonplace concept of "revolution" as theatre.<sup>59</sup> A stage called for protagonists, and like so many other nineteenth-century leaders, Silva Tavares dramatized his own disposition to self-sacrifice in his first statement of insurgent intent, which was carefully timed to appear in the newspapers on Christmas Eve 1892. Despite "the infirmities of age," he offered his blood "in sacrifice to the liberties of the Patria."<sup>60</sup> The old man's infirmities were real enough. Half a century after accompanying his father at Seival, Silva Tavares was sick and incapacitated much of the time. Yet insurgent propagandists delighted in portraying his "imposing figure of a legendary warrior." They presented him as a "living tradition," a permanent inspiration to his men. Apparently, most inspiring to them were things that some might have thought better concealed. The ailing patriarch willingly suffered the rigors of war, explained his eulogists, rather than take a well-deserved rest. Their images thus emphasized the leader's self-sacrifice far more than his efficacy as a commander. For example, insurgent propagandists wanted the world to know that after a long day in the saddle, their general was often unable to dismount by himself.<sup>61</sup> Without an awareness of the centrality of self-sacrifice in the discourse of insurgency, such depictions might appear improbably droll.

Consider the story of Admiral Luís Felipe de Saldanha da Gama, the admiral on horseback who became the greatest insurgent martyr of the Revolution of 1893. An avowed monarchist, Saldanha da Gama had joined the Rio Grandense insurgency without agreeing with its vaguely liberal program. He explained that he had been moved to join by the selfless example set for the nation by the insurgents.<sup>62</sup> Raising the flag of rebellion on one of Brazil's battleships in the Rio de Janeiro harbor, Saldanha da Gama expressed solidarity with the Rio Grandense insurgency and then escaped south to join it. On the rolling plains of the borderland, however, the admiral was literally out of his element, and he was killed the first time he saw action (clutching his saddle, according to snickering gov-

59. "Proclamação do General Joca Tavares," 5 Feb. 1893 (see note 34); and Spalding, *A Epopéia Farroupilha*, 284.

60. "Manifesto do General Joca Tavares," *Jornal do Comércio*, 24 Dec. 1892. This attitude was standard in the self-presentation of nineteenth-century caudillos. For examples, see José Antonio Páez, *Autobiografía* (New York: Hallet and Breen, 1869); José Rufino Echenique, *Memorias para la historia del Perú (1808–1878)* (Lima: Huascar, 1952); and Antonio López de Santa Anna, *The Eagle: The Autobiography of Santa Anna*, edited by Ann Fears Crawford (Austin, Tex.: Pemberton, 1976).

61. "O General Silva Tavares," *O Canabarro* (Rivera, Uruguay), 24 May 1896; and *Homeagem aos Heróis da Revolução de 1893*, 55–56.

62. "Luís Felipe de Saldanha da Gama," *El Deber Cívico*, 30 Mar. 1894.

ernment forces). Yet in the eyes of his followers, Saldanha da Gama's ideological disinterest and ineffectual vulnerability on the battlefield only enhanced the purity of his self-sacrifice. The insurgent newspaper *O Canabarro* devoted issue after issue to the topic, including that dated 17 August, which was dedicated "to his cadaver."<sup>63</sup> Like parables of founding fathers or patriot martyrs in nationalist pantheons around the world, stories of insurgent sacrifice were crafted to create a blood bond and to uplift partisan loyalties to the level of total commitment.<sup>64</sup>

The themes of manliness, sacrifice, identity, and loyalty run through the 1890s discourse of insurgency on both sides of the border, reverberating through calls to arms, partisan journalism, political theater, and also fiction. In one of Javier de Viana's short stories, a wounded man bleeding to death removes the white divisa from his hat and asks another man to deliver it to his son "so that when he grows up, he can wear it and die with it defending his party."<sup>65</sup> A few months later across the border in Brazil, life echoed art when Angelo Dourado employed the same image in a letter to his wife. The central themes of insurgent discourse reverberate again in the fictional representations of Rio Grandense borderlander Alcides Maya, powerfully reminiscent of Viana's fiction in emphasizing partisan identities and the linguistic performances of young elite males.<sup>66</sup> Like their Uruguayan counterparts, fictional and real, Maya's partisan firebrands "prophetically called the patrician youth to battle stations, vigilant, resolute, prepared for sacrifice. . . ."<sup>67</sup>

Themes of sacrifice, issues of gender and class, problems of contextualization and reception—all converge in Viana's story "The Last Campaign." It was probably written in the late 1880s and, like most such stories, was published first in a newspaper. In this story, a couple of old Blanco veterans listen to a city-bred agitator who has come to recruit them for a "revolution." The agitator, a young intellectual "doctorcito" from Montevideo (possibly a kind of self-parody by Viana) affects a common touch to gain the confidence of his rural listeners. He then begins his passionate philippic. Will the youth of today have to resign themselves supinely like women, when the blood of warriors runs in their veins? Carefully modulating his presentation according to the responses of his listeners, the doctorcito drives forward to the ultimate appeal: "Colonel

63. "O Cadaver de Saldanha da Gama," *O Canabarro* (Rivera), 17 Aug. 1895; see also related articles appearing throughout July and August 1895.

64. How well this rhetoric succeeded is an entirely separate question. The admiral's martyrdom clearly left many Brazilians unmoved. In fact, during the carnival of 1895, some street revelers in Rio de Janeiro sported skull masks labeled "I am Saldanha da Gama." See *El deber cívico*, 31 Jan. 1896.

65. Viana, "En las cuchillas," *Gurí y otras novelas* (Montevideo: Claudio García, 1945), 121.

66. Alcides de Castilhos Maya (1878–1944) was a keen observer of the rural milieu. See F. Maya D'Avila, *Terra e Gente de Alcides Maya* (Porto Alegre: Livraria Sulina Editôra, 1969).

67. Alcides Maya, *Ruínas Vivas (Romance Gaúcho)* (Porto, Portugal: Lelo and Irmãos, 1910), 97.

Matos, Colonel Matos, when the patria is dying under the boot of the despot, her true sons must join the fight without counting the cost, without anticipating disasters, and we will rise like giants in victory or fall wrapped in the flag of our immortal love!"<sup>68</sup> On hearing these words, Viana's old veterans feel a chill run through their bodies. Ranch foreman Lucas wants to speak but finds his voice strangled in his throat. Landowner Colonel Matos has tears in his eyes. He strokes his grizzled beard, recalling the suffering and heroism of the party's glory days. Suddenly, he jumps up and speaks to the foreman in a new voice of command:

"Captain Lucas Rodríguez—he said—get my horse ready, prepare yourself, and tell the boys, because we're going to the last *patriada*."

Captain Lucas, radiant and trembling, rushed out of the room waving his hat in his hand, and before reaching the kitchen, unable to contain himself, shouted with all the force of his lungs:

"Muchachos! . . . hay resolución . . . Viva la resolución!"<sup>69</sup>

Although this fictional scene never really happened, scenes like it may have occurred a thousand times on ranches and haciendas all over Latin America, depending on one's perspective on the "reality" of such fictional representations. Like any written evidence, fiction is a particular construction of things, never a direct window on reality. What matters here is the insistent echo of these themes, back and forth across the boundaries of nations and genres, suggesting a coherent interplay of meaning—a discourse.

### In Conclusion

Reading the discourse of insurgency involves studying representations like those of the martyred Admiral Saldanha da Gama or the reluctant Colonel Matos to reconstruct a group's repertory of political images—its collective *imaginario* in Bronislaw Baczko's useful formulation (which is now being adopted by some Latin American scholars).<sup>70</sup> The next step is to ask how those images resonated in followers' life experiences and collective memory because political rhetoric or narrative can only be apprehended as a discourse when understood in context. Only close contextualization—especially local and regional studies—can provide the likelihood of recovering what sense specific groups of historical persons made of insurgent discourse, given the enormous variance of underlying issues and patterns of political cleavage from place to place. Militaristic appeals in the discourse of borderland insurgents, for example, found resonance

68. Javier de Viana, "La última campaña," *Campo* (Montevideo: Claudio García, 1945), 19.

69. *Ibid.*, 20. The Uruguayanism *patriada* refers generically to Blanco insurgencies.

70. See, for example, José Murilo de Carvalho, *A Formação das Almas: O Imaginário da República no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1991).



in a peculiarly bellicose historical experience on the southern plains, where the weakness of non-Iberian cultural traditions contrasted crucially with other regions of the hemisphere. Clearly, those who seek to read this or any other Latin American political discourse must take as their point of departure the variegated social landscape explored by the regionalist historiography of the 1970s and 1980s. To return to the sweeping undifferentiated cultural interpretations of earlier generations of historians would be folly. In addition, new cultural historians of Latin America must assume that theirs is a moving target. Cultural patterns are entirely as contingent as economic ones, in process no less constantly and multidimensionally.

The evolution of Latin American society in the twentieth-century has utterly altered many of the forces in conflict, and today's social revolutions spring from different origins, often apply more incisive sociological analyses, and operate in a radically altered national and international environment. Nevertheless, many twentieth-century revolutionaries have appropriated elements of the older discourse of insurgency, such as its emphasis on the moral dimensions of the proper political order and the redeeming power of self-sacrifice. These themes harmonize with the teleologically nonnegotiable socialist and nationalist inspiration of many recent insurgencies. Far from revealing a changeless cultural monolith, reappropriation of the discourse of insurgency by modern revolutionaries exemplifies the need of all political movements continually to reinvent collective definitions of identity. It also reminds us of the singular importance of historical memory in that endeavor. This preliminary article has advanced some working hypotheses concerning the nineteenth-century tradition on which twentieth-century revolutionaries drew in melding their own discourse of insurgency.

## REFERENCES

- ACEVEDO DIAZ, EDUARDO (H.)  
 1941 *La vida de batalla de Eduardo Acevedo Díaz*. Buenos Aires: Ateneo.
- ALDEN, DAURIL  
 1968 *Royal Government in Colonial Brazil: With Special Reference to the Administration of the Marquis of Lavradio, Viceroy, 1769-1779*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- ANDERSON, BENEDICT  
 1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- ANDRESKI, STANISLAV  
 1968 *Military Organization and Society*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- AYESTARAN, LAURO  
 1950 *La primitiva poesía gauchesca en el Uruguay*, vol. 1: 1812-1838. Montevideo: Imprenta de El Siglo Ilustrado.
- BALL, TERENCE  
 1988 *Transforming Political Discourse: Political Theory and Critical Conceptual History*. London: Basil Blackwell.

- BARETTA, SILVIO ROGERIO DUNCAN**  
1985 "Political Violence and Regime Change: A Study of the 1893 Civil War in Southern Brazil." Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh.
- BARMAN, RODERICK J.**  
1988 *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1798-1852*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- BARRAN, JOSE PEDRO, AND BENJAMIN NAHUM**  
1971 *Historia rural del Uruguay moderno*, vol. 2: *La crisis económica, 1886-1894*. Montevideo: Banda Oriental.  
1972 *Historia rural del Uruguay moderno*, vol. 4: *La historia social de las revoluciones de 1897 y 1904*. Montevideo: Banda Oriental.
- BARROS LEMEZ, ALVARO**  
1985 *La obra cuentística de Javier de Viana*. Montevideo: Astillero.
- BARTHES, ROLAND**  
1972 *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- BRINT, MICHAEL**  
1991 *A Genealogy of Political Culture*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.
- BUSHNELL, DAVID, AND NEILL MACAULAY**  
1988 *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BUSQUETS, JULIO**  
1982 *Pronunciamientos y golpes de estado en España*. Barcelona: Planeta.
- CALVERT, SUSAN, AND PETER CALVERT**  
1989 *Argentina: Political Culture and Instability*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- CARVALHO, JOSE MURILO DE**  
1991 *A Formação das Almas: O Imaginário da República no Brasil*. São Paulo: Letras.
- CESAR, GUILHERMINO**  
1978 *O Contrabando no Sul do Brasil*. Porto Alegre and Caxias do Sul: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes and the Universidade de Caxias do Sul.
- CHASTEEN, JOHN CHARLES**  
1991 "Background to Civil War: The Process of Land Tenure in Brazil's Southern Borderland, 1801-1893." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (Nov.): 737-60.
- CONNOR, W. R.**  
1988 "Early Greek Land Warfare as Symbolic Expression." *Past and Present*, no. 119:3-29.
- DARNTON, ROBERT**  
1984 *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic Books.
- D'AVILA, F. MAYA**  
1969 *Terra e Gente de Alcides Maya*. Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: Sulina.
- DEALY, GLEN CAUDILL**  
1977 *The Public Man: An Interpretation of Latin American and Other Catholic Countries*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- DIAZ, JOSE VIRGINIO**  
1903 *Los Saravia, una familia de guerreros (apuntes rápidos para una biografía)*. Montevideo: La Razón.  
1920 *Historia de Saravia: contribución al estudio del caudillaje en América*. Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos.
- DOURADO, ANGELO**  
1896 *Voluntários do Martírio: Fatos e Episódios da Guerra Civil*. Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul: Americana.
- DUNKERLEY, JAMES**  
1992 *Political Suicide in Latin America and Other Essays*. London: Verso.
- ECHENIQUE, JOSE RUFINO**  
1952 *Memorias para la historia del Perú (1808-1878)*. Lima: Huascar.

- EDELMAN, MURRAY  
1988 *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- ELSHTAIN, JEAN BETHKE  
1990 "Identity, Sacrifice, and Sovereignty." Paper presented to the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 30 August–2 September.
- FAUROIL, GEORGE, ED.  
1985 *Latin American Insurgencies*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL  
1984 "The Order of Discourse." In *Language and Politics*, edited by Michael J. Shapiro, 108–38. New York: New York University Press, 1984.
- FRANCO, SERGIO DA COSTA  
1962 "O Sentido Histórico da Revolução de 1893." In *Fundamentos da Cultura Rio-Grandense*, 5:193–216. Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: n.p.
- GALVEZ, MANUEL  
1957 *Vida de Aparicio Saravia*. 2d ed. Buenos Aires: Tor.
- GEERTZ, CLIFFORD  
1973 *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- GONZALEZ ECHEVARRIA, ROBERTO  
1985 *The Voice of the Master: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- GRAHAM, RICHARD  
1990 *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- HARLAND, RICHARD  
1987 *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism*. London and New York: Methuen.
- HAWKES, TERENCE  
1977 *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- HERRERA, LUIS ALBERTO DE  
1990 *Por la Patria*. Montevideo: Cámara de Representantes.
- HIDALGO, BARTOLOME  
1979 *Obras completas*. Montevideo: Ciencias.
- IBARBOUROU, JUANA DE  
1944 "La guerra." *Chico Carlo*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.
- KRISTAL, EFRAIN  
1987 *The Andes Viewed from the City: Literary and Political Discourse on the Indian in Peru*. New York: Peter Lang.
- LAFAYE, JACQUES  
1988 *Mesías, cruzadas, utopías: el judeo-cristianismo en las sociedades ibéricas*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- LAKOFF, GEORGE, AND MARK JOHNSON  
1980 *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- LEARS, T. J. JACKSON  
1985 "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities." *American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (June):567–93.
- LOVE, JOSEPH L.  
1971 *Rio Grande do Sul and Brazilian Regionalism, 1882–1930*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1971.
- LUSSICH, ANTONIO D.  
1964 *Los tres gauchos orientales*. Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción y Previsión Social.
- MEDEIROS, MANUEL DA COSTA  
1980 *História do Herval*. Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes.
- MENA SEGARRA, C. ENRIQUE  
1977 *Aparicio Saravia: las últimas patriadas*. Montevideo: Banda Oriental.

## Latin American Research Review

- MONEGAL, JOSE**  
1942 *Vida de Aparicio Saravia*. Montevideo: A. Monteverde.
- MEYER, AUGUSTO**  
1957 *Cancioneiro Gaúcho*. Rio de Janeiro: Globo.
- MORENO, FRANCISCO ANTONIO**  
1969 *Legitimacy and Stability in Latin America: A Study of Chilean Political Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- MORSE, RICHARD**  
1989 "Claims of Political Tradition." In Morse, *New World Soundings: Culture and Ideology in the Americas*, 95–130. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- MOVIMIENTO DE LIBERACION NACIONAL**  
1971 *Actas tupamaras*. Buenos Aires: Schapire.
- NETO, JOÃO SIMÕES LOPES**  
1960 *Cancioneiro Guasca*. 2d ed. Rio de Janeiro: Globo.
- O'MALLEY, ILENE V.**  
1986 *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920–1940*. New York: Greenwood.
- PAEZ, JOSE ANTONIO**  
1869 *Autobiografía*. New York: Hallet and Breen.
- PEREIRA, ANTONIO N.**  
1897 *La lucha fratricida y la conciliación: boceto histórico-dramático*. Montevideo: Imprenta de El Siglo Ilustrado.
- ROS, FRANCISCO J.**  
1902 *La feria de Melo: reflexiones económicas sobre los departamentos de Cerro Largo, Treinta y Tres, Rocha, Minas y Maldonado*. Montevideo: Tipografía de La Razón.
- SAFFORD, FRANK**  
1986 "Politics, Ideology, and Society." In *Spanish America after Independence, ca. 1820–1870*, edited by Leslie Bethell, 48–122. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SANTA ANNA, ANTONIO LOPEZ DE**  
1976 *The Eagle: The Autobiography of Santa Anna*, edited by Ann Fears Crawford. Austin, Tex.: Pemberton.
- SARAVIA GARCIA, NEPOMUCENO**  
1956 *Memorias de Aparicio Saravia: relato histórico-biográfico de su hijo Nepomuceno, ilustrado con documentación del archivo del General*. Montevideo: Medina.
- SIMONS, HERBERT W., AND ARAM A. AGHAZARIAN**  
1986 *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- SMITH, ANTHONY D.**  
1986 *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- SOMMER, DORIS**  
1990 *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- SPALDING, WALTER**  
1963 *A Epopéia Farroupilha: Pequena História da Grande Revolução Acompanhada de Farta Documentação da Época, 1835–1845*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército.
- STOETZER, O. CARLOS**  
1979 *The Scholastic Roots of the Spanish American Revolutions*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- TABORDA, TARCISO ANTONIO COSTA**  
1985 *Bagé e a Revolução Farroupilha*. Bagé, Rio Grande do Sul: n.p.
- TAUSSIG, MICHAEL T.**  
1980 *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- VELIZ, CLAUDIO**  
1980 *The Centralist Tradition in Latin America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- VIANA, JAVIER DE**  
1945 "En las cuchillas." *Gurí y otras novelas*. Montevideo: Claudio García.

## THE DISCOURSE OF INSURGENCY

- 1945 "La última campaña." *Campo*. Montevideo: Claudio García.
- 1979 *Con divisa blanca*. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza.
- VILLALBA, EPAMINONDAS
- 1897 *A Revolução Federalista no Rio Grande do Sul (Documentos e Comentários)*. Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Recife: Laemmert.
- WICKHAM-CROWLEY, TIMOTHY
- 1992 *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- WILLIAMS, RAYMOND
- 1977 *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ZAVALA MUNIZ, JUSTINO
- 1921 *Crónica de Muniz*. Montevideo: El Siglo Ilustrado.
- ZUM FELDE, ALBERTO
- 1919 *Proceso histórico del Uruguay: esquema de una sociología nacional*. Montevideo: Maximino García.