

cogió, en cinco volúmenes, bajo el título de *Entre nos (Causeries del jueves)*, colaboraciones que Lucio Victorio Mansilla envió a *El nacional* desde 1879 y la serie que el diario *Sud América* publicó los días jueves a partir de 1888. Dicha edición es hoy una rareza. Tampoco son fácilmente asequibles los dos volúmenes (IX, 1928; XXXIII, 1930) que forman parte de la colección "Grandes Escritores Argentinos," de Jackson. Una edición más manuable era, pues, necesaria. Es la que ahora comentamos, incluida en la colección "El pasado argentino," que dirige Gregorio Weinberg, como "Homenaje al autor en el 50° aniversario de su muerte." El cuidado del texto, reunido en un solo volumen, de fácil manejo, y el "Estudio preliminar," estuvieron a cargo de Juan Carlos Ghiano, ampliamente conocido como escritor y como estudioso de las letras argentinas.

Mansilla perteneció a una familia distinguida por su posición social y por su actuación política, desde la época de Rosas hasta el período de la "Organización Nacional." Viajero por Europa y Oriente en su juventud, polemista y funcionario durante los gobiernos de Mitre y Sarmiento, periodista y legislador, capitán en la guerra del Paraguay y comandante de frontera entre los Ranqueles, amigo y adversario de varios presidentes de la República, es también uno de los prosistas más destacados de la "Generación del 80." Personalidad versátil, mezcla de individualismo liberal y de conservadorismo aristocratizante, sin cultura sistemática pero rico en lecturas y experiencias vividas, escéptico y mundano o idealista pragmático, con fondo romántico y actitud positivista, acaso sea la figura típica de una de las épocas más discutidas de la cultura argentina.

Autor de memorias, recuerdos de viajes, diarios, retratos, ensayos históricos y estudios morales, toda su obra gira en torno a lo que Ortega y Gasset llama "el yo y su circunstancia." Subjetivista que apoya la validez de lo personal en ciertas líneas del cosmopolitismo universalizante, es un fino analista del alma humana y un agudo crítico de la realidad argentina. Su

originalidad no radica tanto en la cantidad de motivos y en la variedad de temas nuevos que introduce en la por demás abierta ideología de sus contemporáneos, sino en el enfoque personalísimo con que discute todo y en las cualidades de su estilo, desigual, pero siempre vivo y a menudo sorpresivo. Los virtudes individuales, los valores sociales, los intereses del pueblo y de la nación, la condición humana afirmada en la libertad, la dignidad cívica y la tradición cultural son los objetivos que mueven su pluma. De ahí el interés de toda la obra de Mansilla, y en especial, el singular atractivo de estas *causeries*, tan deleitables como instructivas, algunas de cuyas páginas son verdaderas joyas de la prosa hispanoamericana de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX.

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*Análisis de la vida argentina.* By EMILIO DE MATTEIS. Buenos Aires, 1962. Editorial Américalee. Biblioteca de Cultura Social. No. 42. Pp. 120. Paper.

Despite its title, de Matteis' book is not "analysis" in any form recognizable to the historian or social scientist. It is, rather, a work of speculative social psychology: "the purpose is that of elucidating the psychological characteristics of the mode of being of the Argentines, highlighting correctible defects, as well as missed opportunities for achieving the national goal" (p. 49). Of the many Hispanic practitioners of the *genre*, de Matteis most clearly models himself on Sarmiento and Ortega y Gasset; he is at considerable pains to dissociate himself from the "school" of his contemporary, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada.

Any evaluation of the work must necessarily be on its own terms. The method is deductive (*a priori* premises being citations from a curious miscellany of Argentine and European writers); the style, lyrical; the dimension, temporal (pre-Hispanic Argentina, the conquest, independence, the immigrants, etc., being dealt with in sequence); and the conclusions, com-

monplace when not downright bizarre. For the author, the formation (or deformation) of Argentine culture has had one overriding determinant: the Spanish language (to which there are numerous panegyrics throughout the book). That is, modern Argentina lacks an indigenous culture due to the failure or unwillingness of more than a cultivated minority (largely alienated anyway) to learn a proper, grammatical, *castizo* Spanish. The historical disasters of the Argentine nation can be explained in a similar way: e.g., the "most decisive determinant" of the anarchy of the post-independence years was the "*murallón idiomático*" between *próceres* and people (p. 79). The author, it must be said, is not afraid to ride his thesis at full gallop right up to the *reductio ad absurdum*: musing on the anomalous case of J. M. de Rosas, the *caudillo* who was also *culto*, de Matteis notes (p. 84) that it must be allowed, after all, that Rosas wrote his diplomatic notes in a cultivated and even baroque Spanish and possessed, besides, *una hermosa caligrafía*.

The argument for multiple causation has never been set out more effectively.

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*La constitución argentina en la teoría y en la práctica.* By JOSÉ ARCE. Buenos Aires, 1961. Ediciones Depalma. Appendix. Pp. xiv, 260. Paper.

The author was a former member of the Chamber of Deputies; in politics, he was one of the leaders of the Conservative Party; as an educator, he was for a time Rector of the University of Buenos Aires; as a diplomat, he was one-time ambassador to the United Nations and served for a period as president of that body. He has written articles and monographs on education and the constitution.

This book, it was said, was written for "simple people," the young, and the "man of the street," who might wish to be given a "look" (*asomarse*) at the problems of the community, "without prejudice." The work is in

two divisions, with the first (pp. 1-164) being a commentary, article by article, on the constitution, although the comment with reference to quite a number of articles is that no commentary is needed. The second part, or appendix, is made up of three monographs (pp. 167-260), all previously written by the author and two of them previously published. The author's commentaries as to length and avowed interest show a prevailing emphasis on the legislative power. His opinions concerning the problems of proportional representation in Argentina and the active interposition of political parties in the deliberations of the Chamber of Deputies may well be read attentively by his selected audience, as well as by others. Those opinions are stated forthrightly, whether or not they are without prejudice.

As respects constitutional history, the author takes a position on which he "insists." The great majority of writers on the Argentine constitution, it is believed, has held that the defeat of the Rosas dictatorship in 1851 opened the opportunity for the formulation of an enduring constitution—that of 1853. The Province of Buenos Aires in 1852 had established an independent government of its own and was not a party to this charter. It is the thesis of the author that the Argentina of fourteen provinces did not come to have a constitution until 1860. In this view the author insists that the *ad hoc* convention of 1860 which adopted twenty-five amendments and four new articles was not merely an amending or reforming body, but a constituent body.

Much attention, noteworthy in a book of this brevity, is given to the distinction between strictly legislative functions (law-making) and non-legislative functions (administrative actions) of the congress, which are constitutionally authorized or required. Such duties are considerable in number and importance in Argentina, although not unique. The author is concerned by the incongruity of the adoption of "laws" rather than "resolutions" in relation to some procedural actions. On the other hand, he seems little concerned with the problem