



La Plaza Mayor y la Iglesia
El 25 de Mayo de 1810

//Homenaje a Académicos Fallecidos

-Homenaje al doctor Edberto Oscar Acevedo con motivo de su fallecimiento **3**

//Actividades de la Academia

-Incorporación del Dr. Gerardo Rodríguez como académico correspondiente **6**
-Ciclo "Nuevos enfoques en la historiografía argentina" **7**
-Ciclo Diálogos sobre libros **7**

//Exposiciones académicas

-Presentación del Doctor Robert Darnton **9**
-Blogging, Now and Then (250 Years Ago) **12**

//Novedades Editoriales

21

Homenaje a Académicos Fallecidos

Homenaje al doctor Edberto Oscar Acevedo con motivo de su fallecimiento

Por el académico de número, DR MIGUEL ÁNGEL DE MARCO*

El fallecimiento del doctor Edberto Oscar Acevedo, ocurrido el 12 de diciembre de 2015, produjo profunda impresión en esta Casa a la que se hallaba vinculado desde su incorporación como académico correspondiente en la provincia de Mendoza hacía 55 años. En sus últimos años una pertinaz afección en la vista lo alejaba cada vez más de una de las actividades que le producían mayor satisfacción y alegría desde su retiro de la vida universitaria: la lectura de libros y revistas de historia y otros temas que lo apasionaban. Sin embargo, procuraba estar siempre informado sobre las actividades de la Academia. Durante mi última presidencia, si yo demoraba en comunicarme como parecía establecido en una especie de pacto no escrito, él llamaba desde su casa para saber de sus colegas, de las candidaturas en curso y de las actividades que se proyectaban.

El 20 de mayo de 2013, tuve la satisfacción de entregarle en el ámbito de "su" Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Mendoza, la medalla de oro que acreditaba sus cuarenta años como académico de número y fui testigo del afecto y la consideración que le tenían sus ex alumnos y colegas. Acevedo pronunció unas cálidas palabras y yo, al expresarle los plácemes de los miembros de la Academia, tuve la ocasión de recordar que nos conocíamos hacía más de cuarenta años, cuando en 1966 se realizó en Buenos Aires el Cuarto Congreso Internacional de Historia de América.

Los eminentes y en apariencia solemnes académicos de entonces no tenían a menos tratar como colegas a jóvenes que hacían sus primeras armas, y en aquellos días se registraron conocimientos, intercambios de trabajos, promesas de correspondencia frecuente (a máquina rémington o a pluma pues nadie imaginaba que podría comunicarse instantáneamente por internet), proyectos de investigaciones en común...

Acevedo fue académico de número un año después que a mí se me designara correspondiente por Santa Fe siendo muy joven. Accedí a una vacante de numerario varios años más tarde. Desde entonces, en cada sesión o encuentro, nos profesamos permanente y mutuo respeto y cordialidad. El hecho de haber tenido los mismos profesores en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid; la circunstancia de mantener con ellos una fructuosa amistad; el haber pasado largas temporadas en los archivos españoles y compartido en distintas



épocas los cafecitos -cafelitos se dice por allá- en el bar que hacía esquina con el Archivo de Indias con don Juan Manzano, Guillermo Lohman Villena, Paulino Castañeda, Paco Morales Padrón y otros; las reuniones en la Escuela de Estudios Americanos o en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras hispalense ubicada en el imponente edificio de la Fábrica de Tabacos de Sevilla, nos daban motivos más que suficientes para rememorar y reír.

El doctor Acevedo desempeñó importantes tareas en las comisiones académicas, y fue un colaborador sincero en sus críticas y leal en sus procederes. Sin duda no se lo recuerda por la jocundia ni por la pertinacia en intervenir en todas las sesiones para hacerse oír, pero los que llevamos ya largos años en nuestra casa lo recordamos sentado del lado izquierdo, cerca del doctor José María Mariluz Urquijo y de otros antiguos amigos, siempre atento a las palabras de los colegas, a la lectura de las actas y los dictámenes, muchos de los cuales suscribió a lo largo de tantos años de labor en esta casa, casi siempre serio y aparentemente ensimismado.

Acevedo, mendocino de adopción, había nacido el 20 de mayo de 1926 en Chacabuco, provincia de Buenos Aires, aunque gran parte de su infancia y adolescencia la pasó en Junín, de donde egresó



de la Escuela Normal Mixta en 1943 con el título de Maestro Normal Nacional.

Sus estudios universitarios los hizo en Mendoza, en la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, recientemente creada, porque sus padres se trasladaron allá. Egresó con el título de profesor de Historia y Geografía en mayo de 1949.

Obtuvo una beca para seguir sus estudios superiores en Sevilla, donde ya estaba su entrañable amigo nuestro colega fallecido profesor Jorge Comadrán Ruiz. Acevedo residió en la Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos, que tan conocemos muchos de nosotros por haber vivido, estudiado o disertado en ella. Su director de tesis fue el eminente americanista navarro Octavio Gil Munilla, y versó sobre *La Intendencia de Salta del Tucumán en el Virreinato del Río de la Plata*. La defendió en Madrid y obtuvo la nota de sobresaliente en 1953. Un año antes había recibido el Diploma de Estudios Americanos, con mención de honor, en la Universidad Hispanoamericana de Santa María de América.

Su tesis doctoral fue publicada en 1969 por la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo y obtuvo el Primer Premio de la Academia Nacional de la Historia y la "Faja de Honor" de la Sociedad de Historia Argentina.

El 11 de septiembre de 1973 ingresó como miembro de número de la Academia y su conferencia versó sobre "Etapas en la historia contemporánea de América". Presidía nuestra institución el inolvidable maestro doctor Ricardo Caillet-Bois y la presentación estuvo a cargo de quien era su amigo y el de muchos de nosotros, profesor Carlos Segreti.

En obsequio a la brevedad diré que Acevedo fue profesor de la cátedra de Historia de América I y II de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo; director del Instituto de Historia de la misma casa de estudios, y anteriormente jefe ad honorem de la Sección de Historia Americana y Argentina de dicho Instituto y encargado del Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Mendoza. Era miembro de número de la Junta de Estudios Históricos de Mendoza y de varias academias de España e Iberoamérica.

Entre sus libros cabe señalar *El ciclo histórico de la Revolución de Mayo*, *La rebelión de 1767 en el Tucumán*, *Informe sobre la documentación histórica relativa a Cuyo existente en el Archivo (y Biblioteca) nacional de Santiago de Chile*, *Revolución en Mendoza (Investigación*

sobre el periodo 1810-1820), *Orígenes de la Organización Judicial de la provincia de Mendoza*, *Investigaciones sobre el comercio cuyano: 1800-1830*, *La revolución y las intendencias*, *Viajeros por América*, *La Independencia de Argentina*, y *La revolución de Mayo en Salta*, reeditado en 2010, e *Ilustración y liberalismo en Hispanoamérica*.

Omitimos decenas de artículos eruditos debidos a su pluma, muchos de los cuales aparecieron en nuestra *Investigaciones y Ensayos*.

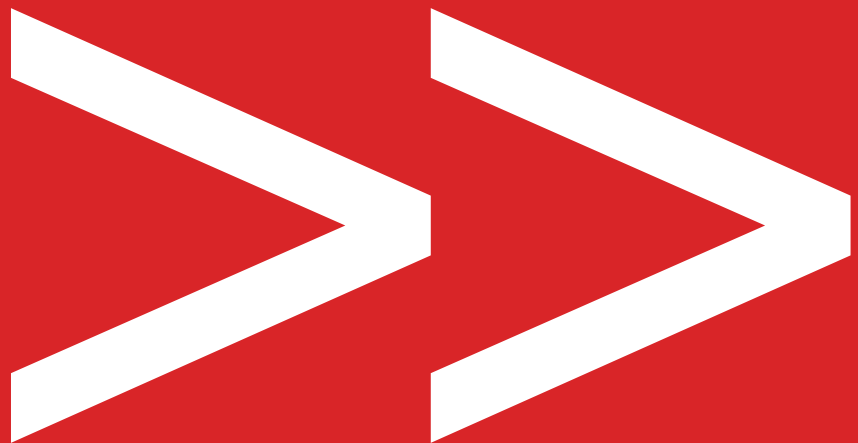
Nuestro recordado colega proyectó su magisterio en la formación de caracterizados discípulos y el ejemplo de su vocación, trasladado al seno del hogar, hizo que dos de sus hijas, que hoy nos acompañan, se graduaran en Historia y participaran activamente en la investigación y la enseñanza.

Por todo lo expresado, Edberto Oscar Acevedo tiene ganado un lugar importante en la historiografía argentina y merece el recuerdo de sus colegas.

***Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión privada de la Academia Nacional de la Historia del 12 de abril de 2016.**



Actividades de la Academia



Incorporación del Dr. Gerardo Rodríguez como académico correspondiente

El 12 de abril se incorporó el doctor Gerardo Rodríguez como académico correspondiente en Mar del Plata, provincia de Buenos Aires. Abrió el acto el Presidente, doctor Roberto Cortés Conde, quien le entregó los atributos académicos. Lo presentó la doctora Nilda Guglielmi y a continuación el doctor Rodríguez disertó sobre: *"La devoción guadalupana a ambos márgenes del Atlántico. De Extremadura a América, siglos XIV a XVIII"*.



Ciclo “Nuevos enfoques en la historiografía argentina”

Desde abril del 2016 se retomaron las actividades pertenecientes al ciclo de conferencias titulado: “Nuevos enfoques en la historiografía argentina”.

En su marco, se realizó el 28 de abril la mesa redonda titulada: “Nuevas perspectivas en la historia de la prensa”. Contó con la disertación de: Lila Caimari, Claudia Román y Juan Buonuome.

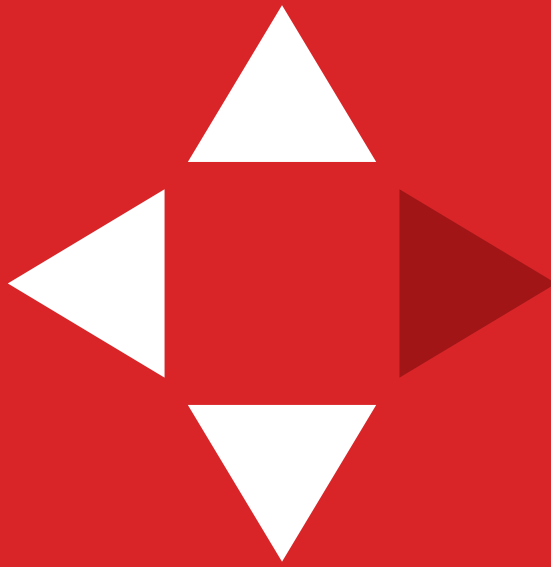


Ciclo Diálogos sobre libros

Los días miércoles 6, 13, 20 y 27 de abril el académico de número doctor Marcelo Monserrat organizó el curso “El siglo XX. Una mirada crítica”. La actividad tuvo una notoria concurrencia de público general.



Exposiciones Académicas



Presentación del Doctor Robert Darnton

Por el académico de número, DR MARCELO MONTESERRAT

Permítanme comenzar estas palabras con una breve anécdota personal. Hace un tiempo, una vivaz estudiante me pidió que le sugiriera algunos temas para su monografía. Recuerdo que le propuse éste: “Acerca de la relativa fragilidad de las presentaciones académicas” Debo decir que no se animó y eligió otro tema, seducida quizás por alguna variante del deconstruccionismo o algún pensador temerario, como diría Mark Lilla.

El profesor Robert Darnton se graduó en Harvard en 1960 y es Ph. D. en historia de la Universidad de Oxford en 1964. Fue profesor de historia en la Universidad de Princeton en 1968, emérito en 2007 y director de la biblioteca de la Universidad de Harvard. Caballero de la Legión de Honor francesa en 1999, mereció el premio mundial Ciro del Duca en 2013, fue presidente de la Asociación Estadounidense de Historia y es, obviamente, una personalidad mundialmente reconocida en el ámbito de la historia cultural por su renovación de los estudios culturales del Antiguo Régimen y la Revolución Francesa, y por su indagación sobre la historia del libro y de la lectura. Gracias a las traducciones realizadas por el Fondo de Cultura Económica, desde *La gran matanza de gatos* hasta *El negocio de la Ilustración*, sus obras han podido ser apreciadas en el ámbito argentino.

Los historiadores de nuestro país vivieron apegados a la influencia europea –sobre todo francesa–, lo que no es inexplicable pero presenta aspectos algo curiosos. La generación del ochenta no concebía otros modelos historiográficos que los europeos y mucho me temo que el capítulo veinte del segundo volumen de *La democracia en América* de Tocqueville (“Algunas tendencias particulares de los historiadores de los siglos democráticos”), tan rico en agudas observaciones, no haya sido interpretado en profundidad, sobre todo en este notable fragmento: “La Fayette ha dicho en sus Memorias que el sistema exagerado de las causas generales

era muy ventajoso para los hombres públicos de mediano talento, y yo añadiré también lo es para los historiadores mediocres. Suministra siempre algunas grandes razones que le sacan pronto de apuros en lo más difícil de sus escritos y favorece la debilidad o la pereza de su espíritu, haciendo honor a su capacidad”.

Quizás por eso, la intuición de Sarmiento fue tan brillante, al conocer y reconocer el valor de la cultura estadounidense. Las estrellas del hemisferio celeste austral fueron por vez primera ordenadas científicamente por un astrónomo norteamericano, Benjamin Apthorp Gould en su *Uranometría Argentina* (1879), ante las sonrisas escépticas de los herederos de Europa, cuando no de las ácidas imputaciones de “yanquetista” que recibía Sarmiento, dominado, según se escribía, por “el órgano de la yanquetividad” que un discípulo de Gall discernía en él.

Es que la Argentina, a la que alguna vez he calificado de “relato inenarrable”, era en parte, y aún lo es, como canta una copla popular de algunos años atrás, un país con “una ciudad que tiene un puerto en la puerta y una expresión boquiabierta para lo que es novedad”.

Paradójicamente, cuando la novedad es verdaderamente valiosa, como del propio Darnton, cierta tendencia ligeramente esnob reenvía, sin mayor fundamento, de Braudel a Hayden White, flanqueada por una acentuada apropiación ideológica de la historia. La obra del profesor Darnton me incita a pensar en una inversión sugestiva: la historia no es ya la maestra de la vida, como quería Cicerón; por el contrario, la vida es la maestra de la historia, esa vida, en sucesos aparentemente triviales, es cultura viva interpretada por un historiador que considera como “buenos vecinos” a la sociología del conocimiento y a la antropología, como escribe en *El beso de Lamourette*.





Confieso mi predilección por este libro. En él, Darnton exhibe la trama teórica de su estilo historiográfico, reflexiona –como él mismo escribe– sobre la propia historia cultural. El autor de esta historia clara y abierta no vacila en analizar los reclamos de un “nueva historia” en la Polonia de los huelguistas de Gdansk, y como periodista que fue del New York Times, ironiza sobre el oficio y la televisión, y diseña una interpretación sutil del Danton de Andrzej Wajda sobre la base de un “double entendre”.

El sexto ensayo de esta segunda parte: “La edición como estrategia de supervivencia” – es menester recordar que Darnton fue durante cuatro años miembro del consejo editorial de la Universidad de Princeton - , constituye una muestra de esclarecedora ironía, que a la distancia evoca la “Batalla de los libros antiguos y modernos” de Jonathan Swift y la sarcástica descripción de la gran Gran Academia de Lagado en la versión del capitán Gulliver, sólo que sin la acritud algo siniestra del clásico de lengua inglesa, con un ánimo que bien podría llamarse de ironía compasiva. Las seis “sencillas estrategias” para lograr la edición de un libro que culmina con la recomendación de un título, son de una verosimilitud regocijante.

“La palabra impresa”- tercera parte de la obra- introduce al lector en la historia del libro y de la lectura. Debo recordar, entre nosotros, la obra de Alberto Manguel, Una historia de la lectura publicada en inglés en 1996 y traducida al español en 2005, fuente de solaz intelectual sobre todo en su capítulo sobre Ambrosio, Agustín y la lectura silenciosa. La cuarta parte de El beso de Lamourette –“El estado de la cuestión” – es una profunda revisión de las corrientes historiográficas más novedosas del siglo XX. En primer lugar, la historia intelectual desde Arthur Lovejoy hasta el eje Past and Present- Annales,

que hacia 1970 avanzaba arrollador. Escribe con razón Darnton que “El empate entre la historia y la antropología ha beneficiado a ambas disciplinas, ya que ellas proporcionan caminos complementarios para alcanzar el mismo objetivo: la interpretación de la cultura. Más aún, la antropología le ofrece al historiador lo que el estudio de la mentalité no le ha dado: una concepción coherente de la cultura, a la que Clifford Geertz definió como un modelo de significado transmitido históricamente corporizado en símbolos”.

En segundo término, la historia social de las ideas a partir de Peter Gay un descendiente de Cassirer, y de la obra colectiva *Livre et société* (1970), Darnton sugiere que esta disciplina “debe levantarse de su etapa del sillón y desplazarse hacia los archivos, recurriendo a nuevas fuentes y desarrollando nuevos métodos”, Finalmente, le toca el turno a la seductora historia de las mentalidades, que según la formulación de Pierre Chaunu apelaría a un “tercer nivel de la historia”, a una nueva versión superestructuralista. Si bien es cierto que la historia de las mentalidades obligó a los historiadores a reconsiderar la condición humana, Darnton opina que los primeros maestros – Burckhardt, Huizinga y hasta Lucien Febvre -atribuyeron un alto grado de autonomía a las fuerzas culturales y no trataron a la cultura como a un epifenómeno de la sociedad, con una intuición eficazmente antropológica.

La quinta parte del libro se centra en el reconocimiento de “los buenos vecinos”: la sociología del conocimiento, con autores como John Lough y Daniel Roche y la literatura, que Darnton analiza a través del clásico de Jean Starobinski, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*. La transparencia y el obstáculo, y de sus otros intérpretes como Lévi-Strauss y Derrida, este último deconstruido por Paul de Man. El elogio de la antropología completa esta polftica de buena vecindad.





Para finalizar y aprestarnos a escuchar al profesor Darnton, nuestro nuevo académico, ¿Qué impresión deja en el lector – historiador o no- esta obra y, aún diría, toda la obra de Darnton? Daré, si me permiten, un último rodeo para contestar la pregunta, quizás algo pretenciosa. En junio de 1984, la Universidad de Harvard invitó a Italo Calvino a ocupar la cátedra de las Charles Eliot Norton Poetry Lectures. El escritor italiano eligió sus propuestas literarias para el próximo milenio, que nunca fueron leídas porque Calvino murió el 13 de septiembre de 1985, una semana antes de emprender el viaje a los Estados Unidos de América. Uno puede admirar en la obra de Darnton la pasmosa erudición, el impecable manejo de las fuentes de todo género, la ironía compasiva y, obviamente, su libertad de pensamiento y la tenaz búsqueda de la verdad y la verosimilitud históricas.

Pero me parece también imprescindible mencionar su exactitud, su precisión, que es el tema de la frustrada tercera conferencia de Calvino, quien escribe: “A veces tengo la impresión de que una epidemia pestilencial azota a la humanidad en la facultad que más la caracteriza, es decir, en el uso de la palabra, una peste del lenguaje como pérdida de fuerza

cognoscitiva y de inmediatez, como automatismo que tiende a nivelar la expresión en sus formas más genéricas, abstractas, a diluir los significados, a limar las puntas expresivas, a apagar cualquier chispa que brote del encuentro de las palabras con nuevas circunstancias”.

Si la claridad es la cortesía del filósofo –según Ortega- también lo es del historiador, abrumado por aquello que Darnton denomina el monografismo y la legitimación profesional endogámica. No me parece enteramente cierta la melancólica constatación de Borges que alguna vez escribió “Funes el memorioso”: “Ya a nadie le importan los hechos. En las escuelas nos enseñan la duda y el arte del olvido”, cuando no – digo yo- el culto incierto de la deveniencia, tan caro a los meteorólogos y a los encuestadores de opinión pública. Todo depende de la capacidad de discernir aquellos hechos realmente significativos; creo con Flaubert que “Le bon Dieu est dans le détail”. La originalidad no es la enemiga de la claridad y la precisión. En todo caso, si se me permite, me he de remitir a un “buen vecino” poético, violentando el inglés de Robert Frost:

*“The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose,
But the theory now goes
That the apple’s a rose,
And the pear is, and so’s
The plum, I suppose”.*

La obra del profesor Darnton, leída por tantos cultores de la historia y reconocida por colegas como Peter Burke en su libro *Formas de historia cultural*, es tan delicada y permanente como la rosa de Frost y constituye una guía ineludible no sólo para los historiadores culturales sino para todos los historiadores, y, me atrevo a decir, para todos los que amamos a Clío.



Blogging, Now and Then (250 Years Ago)

Por el académico correspondiente DR ROBERT DARNTON

Many people today feel they are living through a revolution as great as that in the era of Gutenberg, and the feeling isn't comfortable.¹ The ground seems to shift beneath our feet as the information landscape changes before our eyes. We are bombarded by information, and it comes in tiny units – sound bites, flashbacks, snippets, tweets. It strikes our consciousness like pellets of rain on a windshield, so thick and fast that we cannot get a clear view of the surrounding landscape. How to make sense of it all?

We might begin by acknowledging the fragmentary character of information in general, not just today but in the distant past. Hundreds of years before the Internet, an early modern variety of blogging kept a vast public of readers fascinated with the kind of material that now appears in the Drudge Report and the Huffington Post –that is, scandal. Of course, a lot of other material also circulated through the channels of communication in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I want to concentrate on gossip mongering, despite its seeming triviality, because it can tell us a lot about the media, the messages they transmitted, and the way information systems operated.

Moreover, it is not as trivial as we commonly suppose. Consider this observation by Stendhal: “Just think that what fools despise as gossip is, on the contrary, the only history that, in this affected age, gives a true picture of a country . . . We need to see everything, experience everything, make a collection of

anecdotes”. Stendhal was expressing an eighteenth-century concept of the anecdote and a widespread practice that Louis Se’bastien Mercier described as “anecdotomanie”. I will discuss the views held under the Ancien Re’gime shortly, but first I would like to offer some background information about gossip.

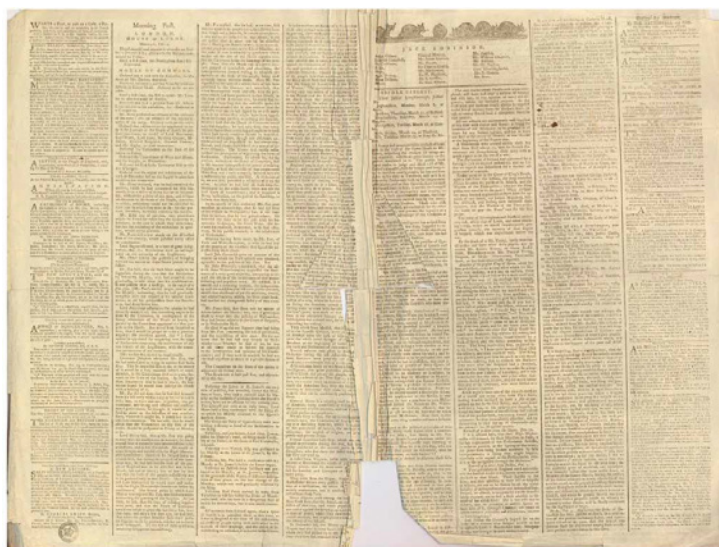
The greatest gossip monger of the past, the Ur-grandfather of the whiz kids at PerezHilton and Gawker, was Pietro Aretino, who rose to fame in the early sixteenth century from the sonnets he composed and pasted on the statue of a figure known as Pasquino, located off the Piazza Navona in Rome (Figure 1). The sonnets ridiculed cardinals who were candidates for the papacy in the pontifical election of 1522. They succeeded so well that they gave rise to a genre: short, slanderous lampoons known as pasquinate, pasquinades, or pasquinades. Pasquinades have appeared in public places for the last five hundred years. The statue of Pasquino still serves as a bulletin board in Rome, and short, slanderous notices appear everywhere on walls during periods of crisis, such as the student uprising of May–June 1968. Many current graffiti descend from Aretino, and they illustrate the main theme that I want to develop – namely, that information comes in fragments and embeds itself in whatever niches are provided by the surrounding environment.

The most effective niches today are websites, and the modern equivalent of the pasquinade is a posting on a blog. The parallel isn't perfect, I know; in fact,



Statue of Pasquino in Rome (left) and notes posted on walls in Paris





Pages from London's Morning Post (1784)

it is outrageously anachronistic, but I want to use it as a provocation for rethinking the nature of books. I should also acknowledge that websites contain many kinds of information, and only a minority of blogs specialize in scandal mongering. Moreover, scandal was mongered during the early modern period in many forms beside the pasquinade. The most common was known as the "anecdote," a key term, which I will come back to in a moment. For now, I would like to illustrate some cases where the parallel seems valid – that is, modern blogs that resemble eighteenth-century anecdotes. I will choose examples from recent postings on the Web and from a notorious "gazette scandaleuse" from 1771, *Le Gazetier cuirasse', ou anecdotes scandaleuses de la cour de France* (The Iron-Plated Gazetteer, or scandalous anecdotes about the French court).

A typical posting from a gossip blog, *Thesuperficial.com* (25 February 2010) reads: "Carrie Prejean is living in sin." The accompanying picture conveys a message beyond.

the power of the printed word. But consider the caption in isolation: "RadarOnline reports 'traditional marriage' crusader and former Miss California Carrie Prejean is living in sin with her fiance' Kyle Boller of the St. Louis Rams where they're no doubt eating shellfish. BURN THEM!" It is very short, just one sentence, except for the ironic kicker at the end, "Burn them." And it reworks its material from another blog, *RadarOnline*; so blogging often involves recycling material from other sources, including other blogs – a point I want to emphasize, because recycling of this sort, known as "aggregating" today, was also a widespread practice in the publishing of anecdotes in the eighteenth century.

Here is a translation of a similar anecdote from *Le Gazetier cuirasse'*: "It is said that Mlle. Romans [a notorious actress] will marry M. de Croismare,

governor of the *Ecole militaire*, who will take six aides de camp from the first class of his school to perform the conjugal duty in his place". Again, it is a kind of news flash, in one sentence, and it contains an implicit reference to recycling information from another medium, in this case rumor, known in French as an "on dit" ("it is said ...").

The comparison doesn't work as well as it might, because the French text lacks pictures. Occasionally, however, engravings accompanied anecdotes from the eighteenth century, as in the case of an illustration from an English scandal sheet, the *New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, from 1769. It shows George III blindfolded and being led by a leash attached to his nose by his mother, the princess dowager, who makes an obscene gesture to the Earl of Bute, her supposed lover and the main power behind the government, who lurks behind a tree, signaling his presence by his emblematic boot. It's not very different from a blog by *Perezhilton.com* (21 January 2010) that ridiculed the mayor of Las Vegas when he was running for governor "with showgirls on his arm." Sex and politics provided inexhaustible material for ancient anecdotes as well as modern blogs. Public figures always provided targets, even when the news reports focused on trivial incidents.

A political blog from *theawl.com* (8 June 2009) makes fun of stalwarts from the British Labour Party by means of a two-sentence anecdote about a minor accident – a Labour MP got bumped by a cow – which supposedly illustrated the fact that everyone, even animals, had come to detest British politicians during the last years of the Labour government. A similar and even shorter report of a supposed accident concerning a former foreign secretary of Louis XV read: "It has been confirmed that Monsieur the duc de Prasli[n], having bitten his finger while chewing on his nails, has fallen into a state of self-poisoning [un acce's d'hydrophobie], which carried him off



within twentyfour hours” (Le Gazetier cuirasse´ 27). This anecdote would easily fit on Twitter as a tweet. Having heated up during recent election campaigns, the rakish side of politics continues to sizzle on the Web today. The scandal surrounding representative Anthony Weiner, who sent obscene photos of himself to woo a woman on the Web soon after his wife became pregnant, gave bloggers a field day, and it was mild compared with the blogging connected with the sex scandal that forced Dominique Strauss-Kahn out of the French presidential race in May 2011. The sexual-political scandal mongering from the eighteenth century is very similar, although the gossip often dwelt on subjects with special shock-value for an early modern public, such as venereal disease in high places: “Rumors are circulating that the young vicomte du Barry is in [the prison of] Pierre-Encise for having given the countess of the same name certain little worries about her health, which she communicated in the same manner to the king” (Le Gazetier cuirasse´ 44). By the same token, today’s blogs are tinged by allusions that appeal to today’s readers: thus the off-color gossip about federal judges in *Underneath Their Robes*, a blog developed by “desk jockey lawyers.” But despite the different contexts, the themes remained essentially the same from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. Then as now, the gossip often shaded off into the genre of the dirty joke.

The Weiner blogs punned endlessly on his name, as in this typical headline: “Weiner’s Weiner All Over the Internet, While Weiner’s Wife Is Pregnant.” A similar attempt at ribald humor from the eighteenth century reads: “The duke of . . . surprised his wife in the arms of his son’s tutor. She said to him with the impudence of a courtier, ‘Why weren’t you there, Monsieur? When I don’t have my squire, I take the arm of my lackey’”.

Sex among public figures provided endless material for eighteenth-century pamphleteers just as it does for today’s bloggers. In some ways, the eighteenth century offered a broader range of targets, because its gossips could play on the widespread hostility toward the clergy and the Court: “The Chancellor, it is asserted, doesn’t treat his women in a way to keep them for long, as he was caught having scandalous ‘affinities’ with some Jesuits; the lieutenant general of the Parisian police reproached him in person for having had commerce with five members of that society in three days” (Le Gazetier cuirasse´ 41).

Loggers, however, are able to take aim at movie stars. A Gawker headline quotes an aged Warren Beatty: “I Did Not Have Sex With 13,000 Women.” Sex among seniors also tickled the fancies of readers before the advent of Hollywood, thanks to the inexhaustible appeal of anticlericalism: “It is said that the curate of Saint Eustache was caught in flagrante delicto with



Interior of a London Coffee-house, late seventeenth century

the deaconess of the sisters of charity in his parish, which would be greatly to their honor, since they are both in their eighties” (Le Gazetier cuirasse´ 51). I could go on and on citing examples, but I don’t want to overdo it. Historians can always select evidence to make the present look like the past. By doing so, they create a specious sense of continuity: plus ç’a change et plus c’est la meˆme chose; the more things change, the more it’s the same. But I am not arguing that twentyfirst- century blogs are the same thing as eighteenth-century anecdotes or that history is repeating itself through the Internet. On the contrary, I want to point out the differences underlying the similarities in order to understand something about information: not only its fragmentary character but the way those fragments fit together. Scandal has always existed, and reports about it have often come in bits and pieces – furtive remarks, scribbles on scraps of paper, images on iPads. But these tidbits of information do not exist in isolation. They circulate in communication systems, which are shaped by the currently available media and are peculiar to time and place. Blogs and anecdotes warrant study, because they can help us understand how information operates.

First, consider blogs.² Seen in a broad context, they belong to the realignment of the media in what has become a new information ecology. Free and instant communication through the Web has undercut the traditional role of newspapers. Their revenue from advertising, and especially want ads, has plummeted, because readers search for jobs and consumer information online. Readers increasingly get their news online, too. Print papers have reduced the number of their column inches, closed bureaus, fired staff, and gone out of business. Sixteen thousand journalistic jobs disappeared in 2008, and since then the situation has got worse. Despite the online editions of a few excellent newspapers, online news tends to be short and superficial, and a large proportion of it takes the form of blogs. Anyone can easily set up a website and publish news reports (or anything else) by using a blogging platform such as www.blogspot.com.



com. As bloggers often have particular obsessions, they appeal to particular sectors of the public such as movie buffs (PerezHilton), political junkies (Wonkette), college students (Ivy Gate), and lawyers (Above the Law). But all of them conform to a formula of old-fashioned tabloid journalism: names make news. By the end of the first decade in the twenty-first century, the blogger was replacing the reporter.

That is an oversimplification, because some seasoned reporters like Andrew Sullivan and Josh Marshall have made successful transitions to the Web, and most bloggers do not deal in news; they post reports that read like personal diaries. But the Web contains so many sites that readers seeking newsy information are likely to gravitate to aggregating websites like the Huffington Post, which amalgamate information through ceaseless searches on the Web. The aggregators make money from advertisements, and they hire bloggers who comb the Web for material and add comments of their own, the snarkier, the better. The pay is miserable, if it exists at all. Until recently it was twelve dollars per post for twelve posts a day for the top people at Gawker Media.

But the bloggers tend to be young people like Emily Gould, who developed her blogging skills as an amateur in college and migrated to New York, where Gawker provided her with a way to break into the media world. Bloggers exist in a peculiar social space on the margins of the movie industry in Los Angeles, the magazine trade in New York, and the respectable world of journalism everywhere. They often live down-and-out in Brooklyn or Boston just like the hack writers who inhabited the Grub Streets of London and Paris in the eighteenth century. And the gossip in their posts expresses “the anxiety and class rage of New York’s creative underclass,” as Vanessa Grigoriadis puts it. Now let’s examine some of the shards of information that circulated in London and Paris 250 years ago, beginning with London.

Here is a notice in the Morning Post of 13 December 1784 about an English gentleman turned gigolo in the service of Marie-Antoinette in Paris:

The Gallic Queen is partial to the English. In fact, the majority of her favourites are of this country; but no one has been so notoriously supported by her as Mr. W____. Though this gentleman’s purse was known to be de’range’ when he went to Paris, yet he has ever since lived there in the first style of elegance, taste, and fashion. His carriages, his liveries, his table, have all been upheld with the utmost expense and splendor.

Like most modern blogs, it is very short, only one paragraph, and it appears in a column composed of similar paragraphs, one more slanderous than the other. I would like to pause over the notion of the paragraph, which was the English equivalent of the anecdote in eighteenth-century France. Unlike France, where newspapers were heavily censored, England had a booming, rough-and-ready journalistic culture.³ London’s first daily began publication in 1702, whereas Paris did not have a daily until 1777, and it contained very little news, certainly nothing that could offend the government, because of the censorship. In 1788, London had ten dailies, eight tri-weeklies, and nine weekly newspapers – more than it has today, and their content was often more scandalous. Yet their appearance, to the modern eye, was staid. Figure 2 shows two pages from a 1784 edition of the Morning Post. Like most London newspapers, they look like a sea of print: undifferentiated paragraphs piled up in columns, four columns to a page, from four to eight pages in an edition. The paragraphs are autonomous units. They succeed each other pell-mell, without any concern for coherence in their subject matter. You cannot even distinguish them from advertisements.

They are not set off by headlines or any other kind of typographical articulation, except occasional leading



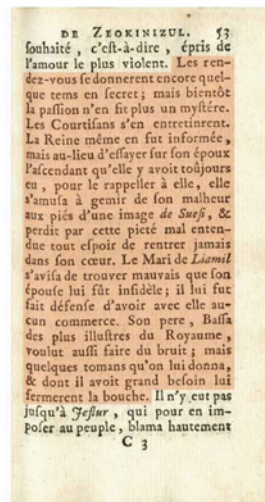
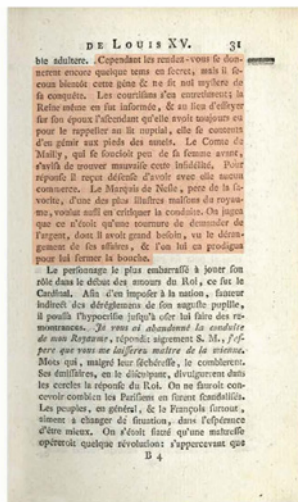
“The Art and Mystery of Printing” from *The Grub Street Journal*, 26 October 1732



Plagiarism: Adapting a Passage

Vie privée de Louis XV, vol. II, p. 31

Les Amours de Zeokinizul, p. 53



The author of *Vie privée de Louis XV* followed *les Amours de Zeokinizul* closely when he lifted passages, but he modified the phrasing slightly, usually to make the text more succinct. The key to *les Amours de Zeokinizul* identifies the words in italics: *Suzei* meant *Jésus*, and *Liamil* meant *Mally*.

Plagiarism. adapting a passage

or lines. News “stories,” as we call them today – narratives of several hundred words – did not exist. Information came in fragments, as a succession of unrelated paragraphs.

Until 1771, when reports on parliamentary debates were tolerated and political coverage became more extensive, newspapers did not have real reporters and editors or much in the way of professional staff. They depended for copy on “paragraph men” who picked up information in coffee houses and reduced it to a few sentences on a scrap of paper, which could be set in type and inserted in the next available space of a column on the composing stone. A German visitor to London in the 1760s marveled at the proliferation of “paragraph writers, who go to coffee houses and public places to pick up anecdotes and the news of the day, which they reduce to short sentences and are paid in proportion to their number and authenticity.”⁴ Coffee houses served as filters for all kinds of information, whether it came in pamphlets and newspapers or rumors, political disputes, and reports on finance and shipping. It was easily compressed into paragraphs by men who sold it to editors or provided it free of charge in order to promote interests of their own.

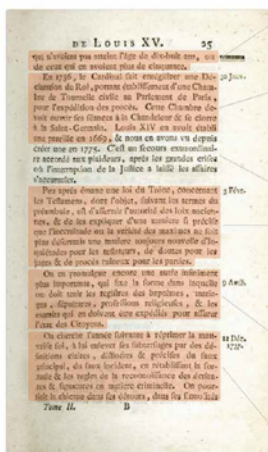
As you can see by this contemporary print (Figure 3), bits of paper circulated everywhere along with talk in coffee houses. The coffee house therefore served as an important stage in the diffusion of news where oral and written messages came together. The next stage was in the printing shop. Figure 4 shows an eighteenth-century printing shop, and it is very accurate in its details, although it pictures the workers as devils, who are printing scandal sheets.

During the early eighteenth century, most London newspapers limited themselves to the “freshest advices” about anodyne subjects like the arrival of ships and events in foreign countries. A new tone of outspokenness and provocation set in, at least among the papers of the West Side, during the Wilkite agitation of the 1760s, and a new variety of scandalous journalism took root with the founding of the Morning Post in 1772 by the Reverend Henry Bate. Although he was a clergyman (chaplain to Lord Lyttleton), Bate specialized in scandal mongering, and he slandered his victims so outrageously that they demanded satisfaction, “with sword and fist and pistol”. He demolished them in a series of fights and duels, which increased the sales of his paper and earned him the title of “the Reverend Bruiser.” Bate eventually quit the Morning Post and founded a rival and equally scandalous paper, the Morning Herald. The Post then hired an even more vitriolic editor, who was also a clergyman, Reverend William Jackson, known as “Dr. Viper” for “the extreme and unexampled virulence of his invectives ... in that species of writing known as paragraphs”. The two men of the cloth, Reverend Bruiser and Dr. Viper, slugged it out in their newspapers, making scandal and sensationalism a staple ingredient of English journalism. Scandal mongering in eighteenth-century France commonly took the form of anecdotes, a term that one encounters everywhere in underground literature such as *Anecdotes sur Mme la comtesse du Barry*. It could be used as an equivalent to the English notion of a journalistic “paragraph,” because most anecdotes, when they appeared in news-sheets, were reduced to paragraphs consisting of only a few sentences. But the word had a particular connotation. “Anecdote” in the eighteenth century

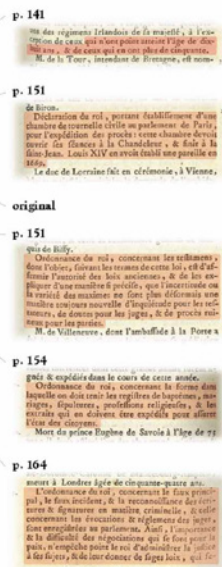


Plagiarism: Cobbling Passages Together

Vie privée de Louis XV, vol. II, p. 31



Journal historique, ou fastes du règne de Louis XV



Pages of *Vie privée de Louis XV* often combined paragraphs lifted from different sections of *Journal historique, ou fastes du règne de Louis XV*, a legal publication which provided a chronology of important royal edicts.

Plagiarism. cobbling passages together

meant nearly the opposite of what it suggests today. We think of anecdotes as brief accounts of relatively trivial incidents, and we don't give them much credence, as indicated by the expression "anecdotal evidence," meaning information that is untrustworthy or unconfirmed and possibly false. In eighteenth-century usage, an anecdote referred to something true – that is, something that had really happened but had been kept secret or suppressed. Thus the standard definition from the dictionary of the Académie française in 1718: "a particular circumstance of history, which had been omitted or suppressed by previous historians." And the first example cited is the Anecdotes of Procopius.

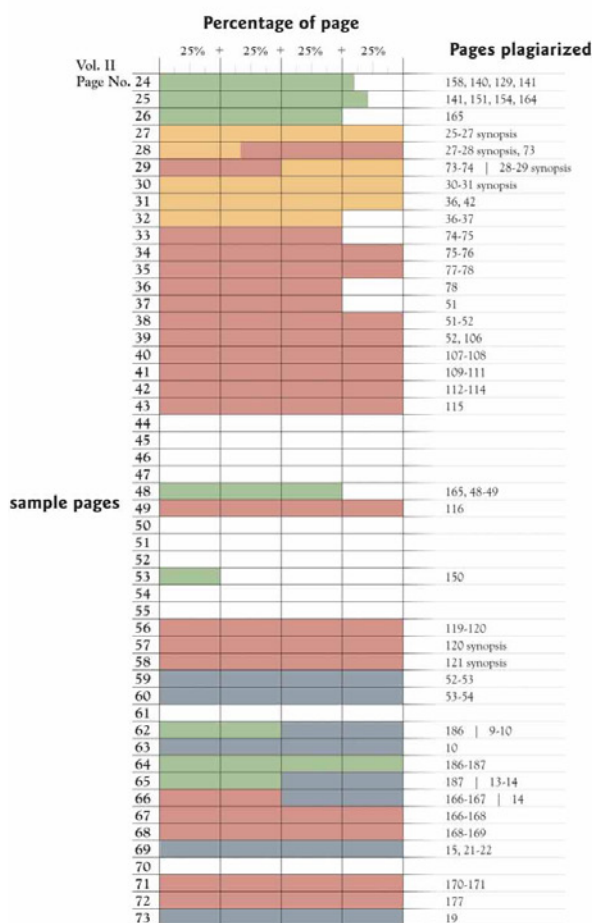
Samuel Johnson produced a similar definition in his dictionary: "Something yet unpublished, secret history. It is now used, after the French, for a biographical incident; a minute passage of private life." Diderot's Encyclopédie elaborated on this definition in a way that brought out its implications: "This word is used in literature to signify the secret history of facts that happened in the inner cabinet or courts of princes and in the mysteries of their politics (dans les mystères de leur politique)." Politics in the eighteenth century was considered a mystery or a secret that took place in "privy" or "secret" cabinets (Privy Council, Conseil privé, Geheimrat) and by its nature should be hidden from the public. It belonged to the secret sphere known as "arcane imperii" or "le secret du roi." The reference to Procopius, the Byzantine historian of the sixth century A.D., crops up everywhere, and the Encyclopédie article explains why. In his formal histories, Procopius covered the main characters – the Emperor Justinian, his consort

Theodora, his general Belisarius – with praise. But he also wrote secret histories, known as Anecdota, which exposed the sordid private lives of the same people and made their personal depravity serve as an explanation for the decadent state of the Roman Empire. To writers and readers of the eighteenth century, "anecdotes" expressed a Procopian strain in history – the true story of the secret elements that determined the course of events. In practice that often meant revelations about the private lives behind public affairs. Dozens of "private lives" appeared throughout the eighteenth century, all of them pretending to be secret histories recounted by means of anecdotes. The two best known works in this genre in pre-revolutionary France were *Vie privée de Louis XV, ou principaux événements, particularités et anecdotes de son règne* (1781) (The Private Life of Lewis XV, in which are contained the principal events, particularities, and anecdotes of his reign) and *Anecdotes sur Mme la comtesse du Barry* (1775).

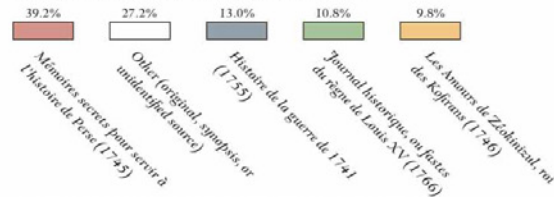
Of course, sophisticated readers did not take this sales talk seriously. Although anecdotes were defined as hidden truths, they were often understood to be half truths. In fact, they sometimes presented themselves in this way, teasing the reader with winks and nudges that belonged to a rhetorical game that was peculiar to some kinds of light literature in the eighteenth century. A note in a French chronique scandaleuse informs the reader, tongue in cheek, "Half of this article is true" (Le Gazetier cuirasse 34). Which half? It is up to the reader to decide. Where did anecdotes originate? From gossip, rumor, and what the French called "public noises" (bruits publics).



Plagiarism: The General Pattern



Total percentage of the 50 pages' content



Plagiarism. the general pattern

Parisian café's, like London coffee houses, were key nerve centers in an oral communication system. The French equivalent of the English paragraph man was the "nouvelliste" or news-man, who stationed himself in a café – or some other diffusion point such as a certain bench in the Luxembourg Gardens or the Tree of Cracow in the garden of the Palais-Royal – in order to pick up anecdotes. He would scribble the latest tidbit on a scrap of paper; and when he had an ample supply, he would retire to his garret and transcribe the anecdotes onto bulletins known as "nouvelles a` la main." These manuscript news-sheets were then copied and sold to subscribers throughout France and the rest of Europe.

The whole business was illegal, but it was so widespread that the police tolerated moderate nouvellistes and occasionally even collaborated with

them. One prote'ge' of the police, a scribbler named Foulhioux, operated from a certain table in the Cafe' du Caveau, one of the greatest rumor mills in Paris. Once, after he published something that displeased the powers in Versailles, a police inspector showed up at the table and hauled him off to the Bastille. His defense during his interrogation was that he had only written down what everyone was saying and that his gazette was nothing more than "the echo of public noises".

I mention this incident because it illustrates the importance of oral communication as a source of news. Strictly speaking, information about current politics could not appear in print, and the French did not have anything comparable with the outspoken English press. Newspapers existed, but they could not discuss affairs of state, which was the king's business. They had to obtain a privilege from the king and to submit to strict censorship. By 1780, fifteen French-language journals were published outside France and permitted to circulate within the kingdom, but they, too, were subject to censorship or sanctions such as exclusion from the postal system.

Manuscript nouvelles a` la main were the main chink in this tightly-controlled system. They belonged to a separate system of underground information, and the crucial ingredient in this system was the anecdote – a witty remark, a doggerel poem, a tidbit of gossip – jotted down on a scrap of paper.

When the police arrested a nouvelliste, they often confiscated these scraps from his pockets while frisking him in the Bastille, and the scraps can still be found in the Bastille archives – moving examples of reportage under a regime that repressed it. These nuggets of information were so popular in Paris that people often collected them, copied them into journals or pasted them into scrapbooks. I have found hundreds of them in various archives – so many, in fact, that I think we should take the French anecdote, despite its seeming triviality, as an object worthy of serious study. By following the path of anecdotes, like particles in a blood stream, we can see how information passed from oral to written circuits of communication and eventually appeared in print. The manuscript news-sheets were often sent to printing shops outside France, joined



together in chronological order, printed as books, and smuggled back into the kingdom, where they sold like hot cakes in the underground book trade. The most famous of these works, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France* (Secret Memoirs to Serve for the History of the Republic of Letters in France), stretched to thirty-six volumes, and was described by a contemporary as “a chain of anecdotes that please everyone: the public loves to see the foolishness and the feebleness of princes”.

Anecdotes therefore followed a consistent pattern of diffusion, passing through the three most important media of the time. If read carefully, the final product, the printed book, often reveals traces of the diffusion process – even in the case of the booklength biographies known as “private lives.” As an example, consider *Vie privée de Louis XV*, a very popular anonymous work first published in 1781 and reprinted at least four times before the Revolution. Seen from the outside, it looks impressive: four solid volumes, often bound in attractive calfskin, which recount the entire history of the kingdom as well as the life of the king from 1715 to 1774. When examined up close, however, it turns out to be a collage of anecdotes lifted from other works and cobbled together to form a continuous narrative. For example, a typical passage (2: 31) was quarried out of an earlier work, *Les Amours de Zeokinizul roi des Kofirans*.

As Figure 5 shows, the author followed his source closely, but modified the phrasing slightly to fit into the context of the biography. A nearby page (2: 25; Figure 6) was composed by rearranging five different passages from the *Journal historique, ou fastes du règne de Louis XV*, a legal publication that provided a chronology of important royal edicts, and joining them by an occasional passage of original prose. Figure 7 shows the pattern of plagiarism across fifty pages. The horizontal bars represent pages, and the coloring on them shows what portions of their text were lifted from other works. The blank spaces indicate passages that probably were written by the author – probably, but not certainly, because I may have failed to identify all of his sources.

Moreover, just as this book was a composite of other books, so, too, did it provide fragments for still more books, notably a two-volume history of Louis XV's reign, *Les Fastes de Louis XV* (The Annals of Louis XV), published a year later. The anonymous author of *The Annals* extracted the juiciest passages from *The Private Life of Louis XV*, added ingredients pilfered from other books, including *The Iron-Plated Gazetteer*, spiced it up with some prose of his own, stirred well, and served it up as a new work. He hardly disguised his plagiarism, as he admitted in the preface: “Like him [the author of *The Private Life of Louis XV*, who also remained anonymous, as did

all authors of scandalous works] we compile; we are privateers; and like many others, we look upon everything good as our legitimate prize” (*Fastes* xiv). As this remark indicates, pilfering was standard practice among the hack writers of Paris and London in the eighteenth century.⁵ To call it “plagiarism” hardly does justice to their way of making books – a process of quarrying fragments out of other texts and cobbling them together, or creative bricolage. The conventional concepts of “author” and “book” do not fit this early-modern mode of literary production.

Nor do they fit the digital future, or at least the future as it is described by the science writer Kevin Kelly: “We'll cobble together new books from bits and pieces lifted out of old ones. Once digitized ... books can be unraveled into single pages or be reduced further, into snippets of a page. These snippets will be remixed into reordered books.” As Lawrence Lessig of the Harvard Law School puts it, “We live in a ‘cut and paste’ culture enabled by technology” (105). He treats peer-to-peer file sharing as an example of the bricolage inherent in many kinds of creativity, that of Walt Disney and Bob Dylan as well as Shakespeare. Marcus Boon, a professor of English at York University, Toronto, takes the argument further in a recent book, *In Praise of Copying*. He treats fragmentation and montage as a main concern of contemporary culture, and he describes copying as “a fundamental part of being human”. To earlier critics like Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes the fragmentary qualities of literature corresponded with modernistic ways of apprehending the world, and they had not dreamt of computer science and the Internet, which makes copy-and-paste and mix-and-mash everyday experiences for ordinary people. But



Cartoon in a French Canadian comic book



judging from the rampant copying of the eighteenth century, we may tend to exaggerate the divide between the early-modern and the post-modern worlds. Returning now to ways of writing under the Ancien Régime, I suggest that we imagine the authors of works like *The Private Life of Louis XV* sitting in a garret at a table covered with books, manuscript news-sheets, and notes scribbled on scraps of paper. Out of this heap of material, they selected bits and pieces and rearranged them to make new books. The books themselves were almost incidental, because the most important unit in this kind of literature was the fragment, the shard of information, which could be recycled indefinitely. I propose that we rethink literary history by beginning with the notion of fragmentation. I realize, of course, that this proposal pertains especially to anonymous works of a scandalous character, those built out of anecdotes. But that literature was enormous, and I have read enough of it to be convinced that systematic study would reveal how anecdotes passed through oral, written, and printed sources, gathering force and ultimately forming a kind of political folklore, which conveyed a collective sense of the nature of the French monarchy on the eve of the Revolution.

Let me cite one last example, an anecdote that profoundly marked the collective French imagination – or so I believe, although I cannot prove it. It constitutes a paragraph in *Anecdotes* about Mme la comtesse du Barry, and I will quote it in full:

We find in the manuscript journal [i.e., the nouvelles à la main] that often guides us in assembling the facts of our history, an anecdote relating to the period of Madame du Barry's life that we are discussing. From it one can infer what was then the general opinion of the public about her domination of the king. It appears under the date of March 20, 1773. "The talk is all about an incident that the courtiers have carefully noted and that proves that Mme la comtesse du Barry has not lost in favor or intimacy with her royal lover. His Majesty likes to brew his own coffee and by this innocent occupation to relieve himself from the heavy demands of government. Recently, when the coffee pot was on the fire and His Majesty's attention was occupied by something else, the coffee began to boil over, and the beautiful favorite cried out, 'Hey France! Look out, your coffee is bugging off [fout le camp].' It is said that this title of France is the familiar expression used by this lady inside the [private] petits appartements [of Versailles]. Such details should never be repeated outside of them, but they leak out, owing to the malignity of the courtiers." (Anecdotes 215).

This anecdote, which passed from gossip and manuscript bulletins to a best-selling book, made the monarchy look tawdry and ridiculous – not

merely because it stressed the vulgarity of the royal mistress, who, as it emphasized, had once been a whore, but also because domestic servants were often called by the name of their home province; so by calling the king "la France," Mme du Barry was treating him as her lackey. The coffee-spilling anecdote is one of the best-known from the Old Regime, and it is still alive in the collective memory. I found this image (Figure 8) a few years ago from a French Canadian comic book. The artist got the mistress wrong (she was not Mme de Pompadour), but he got the message absolutely right. The message I want to convey concerns the fragmentary nature of information and the way it is reworked in communication systems. Those systems have differed enormously throughout history. So I am not claiming that eighteenth-century anecdotes and twenty-first-century blogs are the same thing. I am arguing the opposite: by noticing their similarities, we can understand their differences. They had a common property, fragmentation, but they conveyed messages by the way they figured as fragments in profoundly different information ecologies. By consulting the blogosphere, I think we can appreciate an aspect of communication history that has never been studied – in fact, never even noticed.

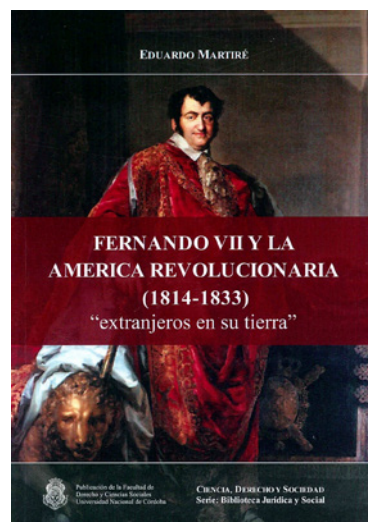
Novedades Editoriales



Reciente publicación

Eduardo Martíre, Fernando VII y la América Revolucionaria (1814-1833), Córdoba, Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Córdoba, 2015.

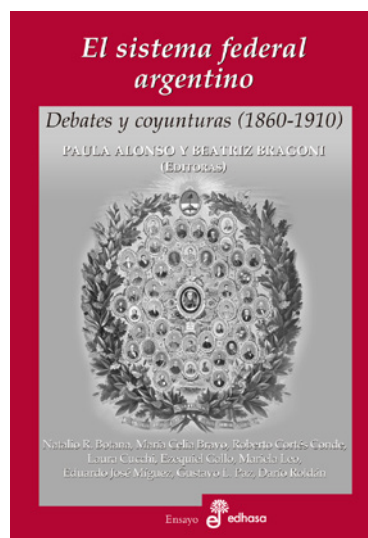
A su vuelta al trono y hasta su muerte, Fernando VII mantuvo firmemente dos objetivos fundamentales para su gobierno: afirmar su carácter de monarca absoluto a la vieja usanza y la recuperación inexcusable de las colonias de América, ya fuera por dignos acuerdos o por la fuerza de las armas. Las realidades americanas a las que se suman las exigencias internacionales, lo lleva, ya cerrado el círculo, a cambiar su actitud negativa frente a la Constitución de Cádiz y proclamar su vigencia el 10 de marzo de 1820, revirtiendo la orientación del gobierno español y con la América española.



Paula Alonso y Beatriz Bragoni (Coord.), El sistema federal argentino. Debates y coyunturas (1860-1910), Buenos Aires, Edhasa, 2015.

Este tema, como otros que fueron centrales durante el siglo XIX, ha sido durante mucho tiempo propicio para la simplificación. Lo que es decir, para el uso político de la historia. Las virtudes o los defectos se han exagerado hasta construir un discurso unívoco que no respeta el entramado de acciones, rectificaciones y retrocesos que tiene cualquier proceso decisorio. Más aún si es un proceso político, que involucra gobiernos provinciales y nacionales; pujas distributivas; disputas territoriales, todo en un clima habitualmente faccioso, en un país en ciernes. A esto habría que sumarle que la mayoría de los análisis han sido centralistas: se ha pensado e investigado esta coyuntura casi exclusivamente desde la administración nacional, como si la dinámica del conflicto hubiera estado solo en sus manos.

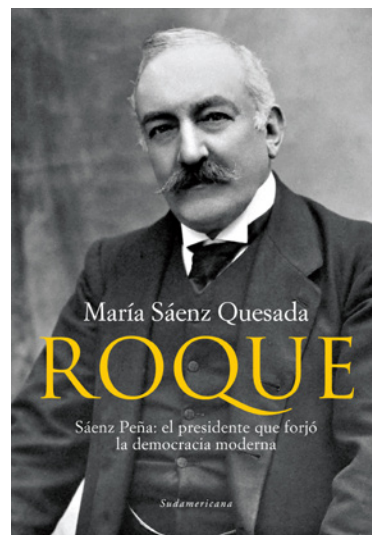
Los trabajos reunidos en este excelente libro, compilado por Paula Alonso y Beatriz Bragoni, sacan a la luz la complejidad de aquel proceso político. Los apremios económicos y fiscales; los alineamientos políticos; los efectos de las políticas del Virreinato, y muy especialmente, el modo en que este proceso se experimentó desde las administraciones provinciales. Riguroso y diverso, El sistema federal argentino es un mapa ajustado de un tiempo convulso.





María Sáenz Quesada, ROQUE. Sáenz Peña: el presidente que forjó la democracia moderna, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 2014.

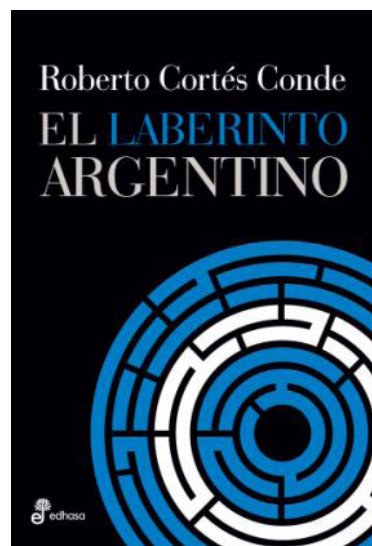
Sobre la base de una documentación rigurosa y en gran parte inédita, Roque narra la vida del presidente Sáenz Peña, al que se recuerda por la ley electoral que lleva su nombre y por la invocación "América para la Humanidad", del discurso de Washington. Más allá de estos hitos, el libro explica por qué su personalidad despertó la simpatía, la admiración y los recelos de sus contemporáneos. De origen patricio, fue nieto de juristas de filiación federal y fe católica, y a la vez su formación intelectual lo hizo liberal y masón; esta pertenencia a los dos mundos en que se escindió la sociedad argentina después de Caseros lo ayudó a entender la realidad sin fanatismos. María Sáenz Quesada nos ofrece una biografía intimista en lo personal y lúcida en lo público. La autora ilumina el lado humano de un político clave para su generación, fiel a sus principios, enamorado desdichado que luchó en la Guerra del Pacífico por el ideal, el coraje y el honor. De un abogado prestigioso, amigo y confidente de los más destacados hombres de su época. De un hijo que moldeó su carácter en la relación con su padre, don Luis. De un hombre cuya enfermedad dejó a mitad de camino la reforma integral que se proponía. En la Argentina del siglo XXI, en que las divisiones en torno al pasado se vuelven cada vez más rígidas, la vida de quien condujo la transición del gobierno del patriciado al gobierno de la democracia nos invita a mirar la historia sin prejuicios. En este libro, la historiadora María Sáenz Quesada logra devolverle a Roque el lugar que se merece en la historia argentina.



Roberto Cortés Conde, El Laberinto Argentino, Buenos Aires, Edhasa, 2015.

¿Por qué es tan difícil entender a la Argentina? ¿Cómo es que saltamos de tiempos de redención a otros de profunda caída, con reiteradas crisis económicas y recuperaciones rápidas que al poco tiempo se agotan? ¿Por qué es difícil vivir con un régimen político estable? En fin ¿por qué la Argentina no puede ser un país normal?

Naturalmente, las respuestas no son simples, y lo primero que hay que desterrar es la idea de una única causa. Una nación, una sociedad, es un trama compleja de relaciones políticas, culturales y económicas. Más de doscientos años de historia legan tradiciones virtuosas y nocivas; hallazgos y tragedias; decisiones erróneas que lleva décadas revertir. En este ensayo, Roberto Cortés Conde revisa la historia argentina, con especial énfasis en el siglo XX. Y en el marco de las crisis en el mundo. Lo hace analizando la política y la economía, y el modo en que las raíces del siglo XIX y las coyunturas mundiales han influido en su evolución. Se pregunta: ¿por qué y cuándo comenzó la declinación argentina? Y ¿por qué parece que estamos en un laberinto que recorremos interminablemente para llegar, finalmente, al lugar de donde salimos?



Miguel Ángel De Marco, Alem. Caudillo Popular, Profeta de la Republica, Buenos Aires, Planeta, 2015.

Cuando en 1880 se planteó en la legislatura porteña la cesión de la ciudad de Buenos Aires para que fuera convertida en sede de las autoridades nacionales, Leandro N. Alem afirmó con palabras proféticas que la concentración del poder político en la ciudad más grande y rica de la Argentina sería negativa para el país en su conjunto. Tras superar con esfuerzo la pesada herencia de su padre, miembro de la mazorca de Rosas fusilado después de Caseros, Alem combatió en la guerra de la Triple Alianza, desempeñó funciones diplomáticas en Brasil y Paraguay y ocupó bancas por el Partido Autonomista en las cámaras de diputados de Buenos Aires y de la Nación. Luego de unos años de voluntario ostracismo político, le tocó acaudillar la Unión Cívica de la Juventud, encabezar la revolución del 90 contra el gobierno del presidente Juárez Celman y constituir la Unión Cívica Radical, que pronto se extendió por todo el territorio patrio. Su intransigencia hacia el régimen lo llevó a conducir alzamientos armados en 1893 que, aun vencidos, quedaron en la historia como expresión de resistencia al autoritarismo y de exaltación de la decencia cívica.

Miguel Ángel De Marco dedica al “caudillo de Balvanera” una biografía en la que su equilibrio de reconocido historiador y sus conocimientos sobre el personaje y su época contribuyen a perfilar y valorar tan notable trayectoria.

