At the other end of the spectrum were urban slaves-for-hire, such as this man. Slaves-for-hire worked independently in the streets as carriers or vendors, reporting to their owners daily or weekly to turn over their earnings. They had greater control over their lives, more opportunities to socialize, even occasionally enough earning power to buy their own freedom. This man, more European than African in appearance, was nonetheless plainly a slave, bare feet being the unmistakable mark of slavery in urban Brazil. Very possibly, his father was white and his mother an enslaved woman of light complexion. Until the Free Birth Law of 1871, the children of enslaved mothers were inevitably slaves. Although people in this situation were clearly better off than field slaves, they faced their own special psychological torment. The plight of the almost-white slave was a poignant subject for nineteenth-century novels.

ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

Serviço do Património Histórico e Artístico Nacional (Brazil), copied from Paulo César de Azevedo and Maurício Lissovsky, *Escravos brasileiros do séculos XIX na fotografia de Christiano [sic] Jr.* (São Paulo: Editora Ex Libris, 1988), field slave, plate 68, slave for hire, plate 48

IV

Caudillos

The political history of postcolonial Latin America confronts us with a maze of shifting alliances and a succession of leaders who rise and fall by force more often than by election. The ubiquity of leaders on horseback, called caudillos, and the proliferation of political warfare pose one of the oldest riddles to confound historians of Latin America. Nineteenth-century chroniclers either sang the praises of caudillos or blasted them, depending on each author's political convictions. Many saw caudillos as a collective disorder of political culture, a view that lasted far into the twentieth century. Late twentieth-century interpretations emphasized the financial feebleness, centrifugal regionalism, and wobbly liberal institutions characteristic of Spanish America in the wake of Independence. Caudillos partly filled a power vacuum left by weak states.

Note the use of the term *Spanish* America. In contrast to the republics that had emerged from the political fragmentation of Spanish-controlled lands, Portuguese America—Brazil—had remained politically united under the only lasting New World monarchy. While not immune to political warfare, nineteenth-century Brazil saw comparatively little of it, and the central government of the empire was never overthrown. In Brazil, leaders on horseback were usually colonels in the national guard. These *coronéis* exercised strong local power, and *coronelismo* is a topic of Brazilian history comparable, in some ways, to Spanish American caudillismo. Overall, however, Brazilian *coronéis* were less important than Spanish American caudillos, whose heyday was the 1840s–1860s, when military leaders often occupied presidential palaces all over the region. After 1870, Latin American states consolidated their central power and gradually brought the caudillos to heel. Throughout the twentieth century, however, and even today, powerful leaders arise who sometimes win the name "caudillos" from friend and foe alike.

By definition, caudillos' followers were loyal to them personally. They had an army, we might say, with or without a general's rank. In power, caudillos were conservative, rarely questioning existing social hierarchies or

hegemonic ideas. They tended to mobilize support through family and friends as well as through patronage networks that linked them to people below them in the social hierarchy. Understanding these networks is essential to all interpretations of caudillismo, a variety of patronage politics (what U.S. politicians call pork-barrel politics, or the spoils system). In a nutshell, political parties were basically competing networks of friends and followers who wanted to control the government to trade favors and reap benefits. At the top stood a national caudillo who counted the powerful heads of the country's great families among his supporters. In the next tier down, these powerful supporters had followers of their own, especially lawyers and landowners, in the regions they dominated throughout the country. Below them were clerks, artisans, and rural workers, the clients of the lawyers and landowners. Political support flowed up through the patron-client links of this multitiered social pyramid, and patronage benefits flowed down. Although ideology played a role in nineteenth-century Latin American politics, historians agree on the primary importance of patronage structures.

As often as not, politics was a matter of fighting, which made it a strictly male activity. For example, a challenger to the current government would issue a proclamation of rebellion and parade through the countryside gathering supporters. He displayed loyalty to his friends, gallantry to women, generosity to his social inferiors. In battle, he had to demonstrate (or conceal the lack of) physical courage and a commanding presence. One or two battles revealed the preponderance of power, and the weaker side saw little to be gained by persisting in a hopeless cause. Defeat would send the rebellious caudillo into exile, but if fortune smiled, he might make a triumphal entry into the national capital and assume the presidency. There he would distribute the spoils of office to his loyal friends and they, in turn, would reward their followers, down to the level of the servants and laborers who composed the bulk of each caudillo's army.

Caudillo "revolutions" became integral parts of the political process in postcolonial Spanish America. Limited goals, small armies, and a shortage of firearms kept routine political warfare from producing huge death tolls like those of the U.S. Civil War. Still, if caudillos were so popular, it makes sense to inquire: Why did people follow caudillos? For answers, students can consult samples of three generations of twentieth-century scholarship on the problem and three nineteenth-century primary sources.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Not only primary sources, but also secondary sources written by historians, can sometimes be less than objective. What kind of biases can you see in the following documents? Can you relate them to the time in which each historian was writing?

◆

2. What are main differences in the three secondary sources? Are there any points of agreement? What do they say about the origins of caudillismo?

◆

3. How do the three primary-source excerpts confirm, add to, or raise questions about the secondary sources?

1. Caudillos as Scourge ◆ Charles E. Chapman

This scholarly article exemplifies the "bad old days" of ethnocentric, chauvinistic writing on Latin American history in the United States. For U.S. historian Charles E. Chapman, caudillismo is a shortcoming, a syndrome, a pathology. He presents the caudillos as megalomaniacal madmen. He describes their frequent appearance in Latin American history as a result of the region's "retarded political development," a manifestation of its "inferior races." Caudillismo could possibly be remedied, he suggests, by the "civilizing influence" of the United States, but otherwise he holds out little hope. It is important for us to confront this sort of interpretation, despite its obsolete ideas, not so that we can feel superior (none of us can claim today's better understanding of race as a personal achievement) but so that we can recognize this discourse as a historical factor in its own right. In 1932 this view passed as expert analysis in a respected professional journal.

It is hardly necessary to say that caudillismo grew naturally out of conditions as they existed in Hispanic America. Institutions do not have a habit of springing full-blown and without warning into life. One of the essential antecedents of caudillismo is to be found in the character of the Hispanic races which carried out the conquest of the Americas. Spaniards and Portuguese, then as now, were individualists, at the same time that they were accustomed to absolutism as a leading principle of political life. "*Del rey abajo ninguno*" is a familiar Spanish refrain, which may be rendered freely "No person below the king is any better than I am." It is precisely because of

From Charles E. Chapman, "The Age of the Caudillos: A Chapter in Hispanic American History," *Hispanic American Research Review* 12, no. 2 (May 1932): 286–92.

the strength of this feeling that absolutism has become a necessary part of Hispanic practice, because usually only some form of strong dictatorship has been able to hold Hispanic peoples in check. Otherwise, in a truly democratic country of ten million Hispanic persons there would be ten million republics. Furthermore, it was the most adventurous and least conservative elements among the Spaniards and Portuguese who first came to America. Even some of their illustrious leaders were men of comparatively low origin in the mother country. In America, the conquerors were a dominant minority among inferior races, and their individualism was accentuated by the chances now afforded to do as they pleased amidst subjugated peoples. It must be remembered, too, that they did not bring their families, and in consequence not only was there an admixture of blood on a tremendous scale with the native Indians and even the Negroes, but also tendencies developed toward loose and turbulent habits beyond anything which was customary in the homeland.

In other words, Hispanic society deteriorated in the Americas. To make matters worse, there were no compensating advantages in the way of political freedom, for the monarchy was successful in establishing its absolutist system in the colonies, a system which in practice was a corrupt, militaristic control, with scant interest in, or attention to, the needs of the people over whom it ruled. The Anglo-American colonies were settlements of families in search of new homes. They did not decline in quality, as there was no such association with the Indians as there was in Spanish America and Brazil. In Hispanic America, society was constituted on the basis of a union of white soldiery with Indian or Negro elements. It tended to become mestizo or mulatto, with a resulting loss of white culture and the native simplicity of life. Soon the half-castes far surpassed the whites in numbers, and, especially in the case of the mestizos, added to the prevailing turbulence in their quest for the rights of white men. Even in the eighteenth century it was the custom in Buenos Aires for men to go about armed with swords and muskets, for the protection of both life and property depended more upon one's self than upon the law. As for the Indians and Negroes, they were usually submissive, but shared one feeling with castes and native-born whites: abomination for the government. Most persons in colonial days knew no patriotism beyond that of the village or city in which they lived. For this, in keeping with the individualistic traits of their character, they came to have an exaggerated regard.

Without taking too much space for argument, a few words might be added in order to emphasize the existence of the factor of a favorable atmosphere in colonial days for the eventual development of caudillismo. Indeed, the institution really existed throughout the pre-independence era. What were the conquistadores and even the viceroys but absolute military and political bosses? Not infrequently colonial officials continued to wield power despite higher orders to the contrary. It was a natural transition from native chiefs by

way of Hispanic officialdom to the caudillos of the early republics. The social keynote was one of individualistic absolutism in all classes, instead of that love of, and subjection to, the law which were such marked characteristics of the Anglo-American colonists. In consequence, with the disappearance of the mother country governments at the time of the revolutions, all authority fell with them, and there was no legal consciousness or political capacity ready at hand to cope with the turbulence which was to facilitate the emergence of the caudillos. When the citizens of Buenos Aires came together on May 25, 1810, to begin the movement for the overthrow of Spanish control, it was the first time that the people of that part of the Americas had exercised civic functions. Only the absolutism of the mother country had existed before, and in the bitter war period after 1810 it became a habit to denounce that dominance in exaggerated fashion as a tyranny of which the last vestige should be destroyed. There was no desire for a continuance of the institutions of the mother country such as there was in Anglo America. There was little in the way of political liberty worth preserving in either Spain or Portugal anyway. So institutions were adopted which were as far removed as possible from those of their former rulers, with the result that they did not fit the peoples of Hispanic America. An attempt was made to pass immediately from colonial absolutism to pure democracy. Naturally, the effort failed. It was possible to tear down the outward forms—one might say the nomenclature—of the old system, but its inner spirit remained, for it was ingrained in the habits of the people.

Ignorance, turbulence, and what proved to be their great ally, universal suffrage, combined to assure the rise and overlordship of the caudillos. The overwhelming majority of the people of Hispanic America were illiterate. Certainly, it would be a generous estimate to assert that 10 percent of the inhabitants could read and write. With this impossible background, democratic institutions were attempted. The meetings of the cabildos became demagogic tumults, with the masses sitting in the galleries and cheering the most radical and violent. It was on this account that new institutions were adopted by law which did not fit actual conditions, a prime cause of the failure of the early independence governments. The turbulence of the new alleged democracy could accept nothing less than universal suffrage, which of course was duly proclaimed. That meant the demagogue in the city.

Much more important, it meant the caudillo in the rural districts, for the "sacred right of voting" became the principal legal basis of the power of the caudillos. Out of this there developed that curious phenomenon, the Hispanic American election. Elections were habitually fraudulent. The question about them was whether the fraud should be tame or violent. If there were no resistance, various devices were employed to obtain the vote desired. But if there were opposition, the caudillo nevertheless won, but to the accompaniment of

an orgy of blood. In the beginning the masses supported the demagogue of the city or the country caudillo. In these leaders, with their rhetoric about the "rights of man," they found the vindication of their claims for political recognition. The conservative classes acquiesced. It was better to suffer the mob and grotesque usurpers than to lose one's life and property through any genuine participation in elections. All that remained for the caudillos to do was to conquer the demagogues. Then at last their work was complete.

The different leaders in no respect represented any real political or social conflict, just different leaders. Government reduced itself to dominating and to resisting the efforts of others to dominate. In point of fact this practice of exaggerated expression fitted in with the customs of the people. It was a Hispanic-American habit to conceive of causes in the name of persons. There have been far more "Miguelistas" or "Porfiristas" in Hispanic America than "Progressives" or men of other party names, at least in popular parlance. The leader, which meant the caudillo, was party, flag, principle, and objective, all in his own person. If conditions were bad, it was because another leader was needed, and for that matter each group had its "liberator" or "savior" of the country. Indeed, hyperbole of civic phrase makes its appearance in all the documentation of Hispanic-American history. All prominent men are national heroes or tyrants, according to whatever person happens to be writing. It makes research in this field a matter requiring great discrimination and critical appreciation, for hyperbole, I repeat, was and still is a Hispanic-American disease.

2. Caudillos as Profit Maximizers ◆ Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen

Anthropologists Eric Wolf and Edward Hansen exemplify a very different period of Latin American studies. Gone is the racism and chauvinism of the early twentieth century. Latin Americanist social scientists of the 1960s and afterward took a less judgmental approach, concentrating not on the caudillos' personal attributes but on the economic logic of the social system within which they operated. This emphasis on economic or materialist explanations of politics was typical of Latin American studies at the time. This article, which appeared in the Cambridge journal Comparative Studies in Society and History, *became the single most important statement on caudillismo to be published in English in the late twentieth century.*

From Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, "Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (1967): 168–79. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

In spite of the decline of Spanish power in the late colonial period, the New World planter class proved too weak numerically and too lacking in cohesion to oust the Peninsular forces by its own unaided efforts. To gain their own independence they were therefore forced into political alliances with the numerically strong and highly mobile—yet at the same time economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged—social strata of the population which are designated collectively as mestizos. Not without trepidation, criollo leaders armed elements derived from these propertyless strata and sent them to do battle against the Spaniards. Success in maintaining the continuing loyalties of these elements depended largely upon the ability of leaders in building personal ties of loyalty with their following and in leading them in ventures of successful pillage.

Although the alliances of criollos and mestizos was instrumental in winning the Wars of Independence, granting arms to the mestizo elements freed these to create their own armed bands. The mestizos in turn were thus enabled to compete with the criollos for available wealth. The case of Venezuela, while unique in its extreme manifestations, nevertheless demonstrates this new, and continent-wide, ability of the mestizos to act on their own behalf. There the royalists were originally victorious by granting the llanero plainsmen, formerly armed servants of the criollos, pillage rights against their masters. Having eliminated their own masters, the llaneros then turned upon the royalists and massacred them in an effort to obtain additional loot. In granting independent armament to the mestizos, therefore, the criollo gentry also sacrificed any chance it might have had to establish a monopoly of power.

We must not forget that criollo wealth was dependent upon large landholdings, or *haciendas*. If the hacienda provided a bulwark of defense against the laissez-faire market, the hacienda system itself militated against the development of a cohesive political association of hacienda owners. Geared to a stagnant technology, yet under repeated pressures to expand production, [illegible] the hacienda tended to "eat up" land, in order to control the population settled upon the land. The aim of each hacienda was ultimately to produce crops through the arithmetic addition of workers, each one of whom—laboring with his traditional tools—would contribute to increase the sum of produce at the disposal of the estate. While in some parts of Latin America, notably in the Andes and in Middle America, the expansionist tendencies of the hacienda could be directed against Indian communities, in areas without Indians a hacienda could expand only at the expense of neighboring haciendas. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find that blood feuds among hacienda owners are a notable feature of this period. Each hacienda owner's bitterest enemy was

potentially his closest neighbor. In this competition we must find the economic roots of criollo anarchy.

Such economic determinants of anarchy were reinforced further by social organizational factors. Competition and conflict on the economic plane could, to some extent, be compensated for through the workings of kinship. Arnold Strickon has noted the growth of regional aristocratic families and their role in national politics. We do not yet possess adequate data on how such alliances were formed, how many people were involved, and how much territory they covered. Theoretical considerations, however, lead us to believe that the organizing power of such alliances must have been relatively weak. If we assume that hacienda owners favored the maintenance of large estates through inheritance by primogeniture; if we assume further that the chances are equal that the chief heir will be either male or female; and if we postulate that each hacienda owner strives to maximize the number of his alliances, then it seems unlikely that the number of strategic alliances based on landed property between a hacienda family of origin and other hacienda families of procreation will exceed three. The marriage of Father with Father's Wife creates one such alliance; the marriage of the first-born son with a woman of another family swells the number to two; and the marriage of the eldest daughter with the first son of a third family brings the number of strategic alliances to three. These considerations are intended to yield a measure of insight into the inability of the criollo gentry to form a wide-ranging network of strategic alliances for political purposes.

In analyzing the caudillo mode of political organization, we are forced to rely on materials dealing with caudillos who made their influence felt on the national level. The available literature deals mainly with these national-level or "maximal" bands, but sheds little light on how the "minimal" bands of local chieftains and followers were first formed. The caudillos who emerged into the light of day are thus all leaders who proved capable of welding a series of structurally similar minimal bands into a maximal coalition, capable of exercising dominance over wide regions. The data dealing with such national caudillos, however, permit some generalizations about the patterns of coalition formation, about the distribution of wealth by the leader to his band, and about the sources of political strength and fragility. We are also enabled to make certain comparisons between the different problems faced by mestizo and criollo chieftains. To describe the model, we shall conjugate verbs in the ethnographic present.

The aim of the caudillo band is to gain wealth; the tactic employed is essentially pillage. For the retainers, correct selection of a leader is paramount. No retainer can guarantee that he will receive recompense from his leader in advance, because the band seeks to obtain wealth which is not yet in its possession. All know that the wealth sought after is finite; only certain

resources are "safe game." The band cannot attack with impunity the basic sources of criollo wealth, such as land; and it cannot sequester, without international complications, the property of foreign firms operating in the area. Hence there is not only intense competition for movable resources, but great skill is required in diagnosing which resources are currently "available" and which taboo. The exercise of power therefore gives rise to a code which regulates the mode of access to resources. The code refers to two basic attributes of leadership: first, the interpersonal skills needed to keep the band together; second, the acumen required to cement these relationships through the correct distribution of wealth. Possession of interpersonal skills is the initial prerequisite; it suggests to the retainers that the second attribute will also be fulfilled.

The social idiom in which the first of these attributes is discussed is that of "masculinity": the social assertion of masculinity constitutes what has come to be known as machismo (from *macho*, masculine). According to the idiom, masculinity is demonstrated in two ways: by the capacity to dominate females, and by the readiness to use violence. These two capacities are closely related; both point to antagonistic relations between men. The capacity to dominate women implies the further capacity to best other men in the competition over females.

Assertions of dominance are tested in numerous encounters, in which the potential leader must test himself against other potential claimants. Although Latin American rural communities are frequently isolated by poor communication facilities, the local caudillos are thrown into contact from time to time. Occasionally in activities such as drinking, card playing, carousing, and brawling, a man so stands out that the others automatically accept his authority and extend to him their loyalties. Such situations are charged with potential violence, for in such antagonistic confrontations, the claimants to victory must be prepared to kill their rivals and to demonstrate this willingness publicly. For the loser there is no middle ground; he must submit to the winner, or be killed. Willingness to risk all in such encounters is further proof of masculinity. The drama involved in such tests of leadership is illustrated by the following episode in the rise of the Bolivian caudillo Mariano Melgarejo, an

ignorant and drunken murderer given to the wildest sexual orgies, who ran the country from 1864 to 1871. Melgarejo got into power by killing the country's dictator, [Manuel Isidoro] Belzú, in the presidential palace. The shooting took place before a great crowd which had gathered in the plaza to see the meeting of the two rivals. When Belzú fell dead into the arms of one of his escorts, Melgarejo strode to the window and exclaimed: "Belzú is dead. Now who are you shouting for?" The mob, thus prompted, threw off its fear and gave a bestial cry: "Viva Melgarejo!"

Personal leadership may thus create a successful band. By the same token, however, the personal nature of leadership also threatens band maintenance.

If the caudillo is killed or dies of natural causes, the band will disintegrate because there can be no institutionalized successor. The qualities of leadership reside in his person, not in the office. To establish a system of offices it would have been necessary to reorganize post-Independence society. Attempts in this direction were continuously thwarted by criollo arms. One has to note the defeat of the "centralists" in all parts of Latin America.

Proof of masculinity does not yet make a man a caudillo. Men will not flock to his banner unless he also proves himself capable of organizing a number of minimal bands into a maximal faction, and demonstrates his ability to hold the faction together. To this end, the caudillo must weld a number of lieutenants into a core of "right-hand men." Important in this creation of a core of devoted followers is not merely assertion of dominance, but also calculated gift-giving to favored individuals who are expected to reciprocate with loyalty. Such gifts may consist of movable goods, money, or perquisites such as the right to pillage a given area or social group. The importance of such gifts is best understood as a presentation of favors defined not merely as objects, but also as attributes of the giver. Where the receiver cannot respond with a counter-gift which would partake equally of his own personal attributes, he is expected to respond with loyalty, that is, he makes a gift of his person for a more or less limited period of time. The existence of such a core of right-hand men produces its own demonstration effect. They are living testimony to the largesse of the caudillo aspirant and to his commitment to grant riches in return for personal support.

To satisfy this desire for riches, the caudillo must exhibit further abilities. We have already discussed some of the limitations under which the caudillo labors in acquiring wealth: there are certain groups he may not attack with impunity. To cast about in quest of riches may stir resistance; resistance may imply defeat. To be successful, therefore, a caudillo needs what we may call "access vision," capabilities closely related to the "business acumen" of the North American entrepreneur. He must be able to diagnose resources which are available for seizure with a minimum of resistance on the part of their present owners. He must estimate how much wealth is needed to satisfy his retainers. He must also control the freelance activities of his followers, such as cattle rustling and robbery, lest they mobilize the resistance of effective veto groups. He must be able to estimate correctly the forces at the disposal of those presently in control of resources. And he must be able to predict the behavior and power of potential competitors in the seizure of wealth. Nor can he rest content with initial success in his endeavors. He must continuously find new sources of wealth which can be distributed to his following, or he must attach resources which replenish themselves. Initial successes are therefore frequently followed by sudden failures. Many caudillo ventures end as "one-shot" undertakings. The caudillo may be successful in seizing the government

treasury or the receipts of a custom house, but then no other source of wealth is found, and the faction disintegrates. The more limited the supply of ready wealth, the more rapid the turnover of caudillos. Thus Bolivia, one of the most impoverished countries during this period, averaged more than one violent change of government every year.

Such considerations affected even the most successful caudillos, such as José A. Páez and Juan Manuel Rosas. Páez held sway in Venezuela for thirty-three years (1830–63); Rosas dominated Argentina for twenty years (1829–31, 1835–52). Both owned enormous cattle ranches which furnished large quantities of beef, the staple of the countryside. Both drew their retainers from the ranks of the fierce cowpunchers of the tallgrass prairie, the gauchos in Argentina and the llaneros of Venezuela, whose mode of livelihood provided ideal preparation for caudillo warfare. Time and again, both men defeated the attempts of rivals to set up centralized forms of government Despite the initial advantages of abundant wealth, their control of "natural" military forces, and their ability to neutralize a large number of competitors, however, both men had to beat off numerous armed uprisings, and both ultimately met defeat. Their cases illustrate the difficulties which beset caudillos operating even under optimal conditions.

3. Caudillos as Culture Heroes ◆ Ariel de la Fuente

The following excerpt from a recent book by historian Ariel de la Fuente takes up the subject of caudillos a generation after Eric Wolf and Edward Hansen's influential article. It is a close-up regional study of the sort that the two anthropologists called for in 1967. Focusing on the Argentine province of La Rioja during a seventeen-year period, de la Fuente's book adds a much broader investigation of culture to the economic emphasis of the 1960s. In so doing, he exemplifies the cultural emphasis of Latin American history at the turn of the twenty-first century. The work of de la Fuente (like that of several other contemporary historians whose studies are excerpted in this volume) also shows a particular interest in nonelite culture—here, the oral traditions of the illiterate majority. De la Fuente uses a major 1921 collection of Argentine folklore to probe aspects of nineteenth-century patron-client relations and attitudes toward authority.

From Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853–1870)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 115–17, 125–28.

Politics occupied an important place in the oral culture of the provinces of the Argentine interior in the nineteenth century. This can be seen in many of the songs that remained in the collective memory of the provinces in the early twentieth century. For example, among the thousands of pieces collected in 1921, some 250 songs had a strictly political content, and many of those were principally concerned with nineteenth-century caudillos and their political lives. In terms of the caudillos from the province of La Rioja itself, we find eight songs about Facundo Quiroga and twenty-one about Chacho Peñaloza. The geographic location where the songs were collected reveals the extent of their circulation throughout Argentina. Songs that have as their protagonists Riojan caudillos, for instance, appear not only in the province of La Rioja but also in Córdoba, San Luis, San Juan, Catamarca, Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy. The collection of 1921 also preserved a good number of stories featuring caudillos as protagonists: twenty-two concerning Facundo and thirteen about Chacho were collected in the provinces of La Rioja, Catamarca, and San Juan.

Testimony from some of the caudillos' contemporaries suggested the importance of such songs and stories in political life. In 1862, an observer noted that after Chacho had successfully resisted the troops from Buenos Aires, the gauchos raised the power and prestige of Peñaloza in the provinces of the interior "by singing the glories of the general." And General José María Paz remembered that in his campaigns in the province of Córdoba toward the end of the 1820s, besides confronting Facundo on the battlefield, he also confronted Facundo's prestige within popular culture:

> I also had a strong enemy to combat in the popular beliefs about Quiroga. When I say popular I am speaking of the countryside, where those beliefs had taken root in various parts and not only in the lower classes of society. Quiroga was thought to be an inspired man, who had well-known spirits that penetrated everywhere and obeyed his mandate . . . and a thousand other absurdities of this type.

The beliefs that circulated in the form of stories and songs, and the resulting perceptions that they generated among the rural population of Córdoba, were key elements of the gauchos' loyalty to the Riojan caudillo.

Oral culture, as Paz recognized, was a political dominion, an arena where the struggle between Unitarians and Federalists (Argentina's two parties of the era) was waged. Humor was also used as a weapon in this conflict, and Unitarian and Federalist leaders became the protagonists (as well as targets) of jokes. In the 1840s, a Unitarian from Santiago del Estero named one of his horses Juan Manuel (a reference to the caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas) to depict the Federalist caudillo as a beast, belonging in the camp of the barbarians, the enemies of civilization). When Catamarca was occupied by

Unitarian troops from Buenos Aires in 1862, a poor black of that locality defiantly called a dog "Bartolo" (short for Bartolomé Mitre, leader of the Unitarian Party) and got 500 lashes for his insolence. And after the death of Chacho, in 1863, a poem of Unitarian origin made fun of his supposed hatred of the emblematic Unitarian color, sky blue:

> Peñaloza died and
> Went straight to heaven,
> But as he saw it was sky blue
> He went back down to hell

The Federalist color was red.

Although Unitarians and Federalists competed for primacy in the arena of popular culture, overall Federalism dominated it. Thus, a quick review of the 205 songs collected in 1921 that explicitly referred to the conflict between the two parties shows that two-thirds of them were Federalist. And if we consider the presence of leaders of both parties in those songs, the predominance of Federalism is even more pronounced: of the total number of positive depictions of leaders from both parties, more than four-fifths concerned Federalist caudillos. The names Urquiza, Facundo, Rosas, El Chacho, and Felipe Varela were most often evoked. Among the rarely mentioned Unitarians were the Taboadas, General Lavalle, General Paz, General La Madrid, Mitre, and Sarmiento. While these references do not necessarily reflect the amount of support each party enjoyed, they certainly reveal the predominance of Federalism in the oral culture; and this, in turn, signals the pervasiveness of this partisan identity among the illiterate, the main users of oral culture.

The caudillos, in their day, were perceived as the highest authority. In this respect, popular culture underscored not only their position as political leaders but also distinguished the caudillos as moral authorities and role models in the communities they ruled over. Oral culture integrated well-known motifs from folklore, and invested caudillos with qualities and connotations similar to those that popular classes attributed to kings or patrons in other societies. This association with images of kings stemmed, in part, from the repertoire of preexisting archetypes on which the images of the caudillos were formed, but it could also possibly be the product of three centuries of colonial, monarchical experience, which would have left a model and language through which to define legitimate authority, and the characteristics that holders of that authority should have.

In certain stories, Facundo, hiding his identity, appeared by surprise in various places in La Rioja, although everyone thought he had left the region. These stories attributed to him a special capacity to know what Riojans were doing, and, if necessary, reward or punish them. In one story, after the battle

of La Tablada, a group of young Unitarians got together to celebrate the defeat of Facundo. The young men began to sing a song that painted the caudillo negatively, when they realized that among them was "an individual in a poncho, with practically the entire face covered by a big hat." The man in a poncho "asked them in a polite tone to finish the interesting song." When the song came to an end, "Quiroga (for it was none other in the poncho)" called his soldiers and had the singers shot. "Nobody imagined that the disguised figure was the Tiger of Los Llanos," concluded the story, "for he was thought to be thirty leagues away." Here, using the motif that folklorists have classified as "the king in disguise to learn the secrets of his subjects," oral tradition sought to explain a tragic occurrence: the fact that after the battle of La Tablada, Quiroga did have some Unitarians in La Rioja shot "under the pretext that they had been rejoicing in his defeat." The form the story took spoke of the reach of Quiroga's authority and the control that he exercised over the population of La Rioja. Thus, omnipresence was one of the supposed qualities of Facundo, which also suggests an appreciation of his power. But this capacity "to learn the secrets of subjects" may have been a quality attributed to Federalist caudillos more generally. William H. Hudson remembered that a number of stories about Rosas circulated, many of them related to his adventures when he would disguise himself as a person of humble status and prowl about the city [of Buenos Aires] by night, especially in the squalid quarters, where he would make the acquaintance of the very poor in their hovels.

Mediation in the daily conflicts of rural La Rioja was the responsibility of the caudillos. This included interventions in family disputes or conflicts between gauchos and government officials. Sometimes the caudillos proposed solutions, while on other occasions they made sure that the proper authorities intervened. Conflict resolution and justice, then, were some of the caudillos' duties, and to explain them, gauchos used archetypes clearly drawn from the King Solomon legend. Facundo was portrayed as a Solomon-like figure who used his exceptional wisdom or astuteness to resolve disputes and impart justice.

impart justice.

But the caudillo was the highest authority because he was also responsible, ultimately, for the material and moral preservation of the society. The extent of his authority and the nature of this responsibility were expressed in the language of caudillos and gauchos. Chacho reflected on the dimensions of his own authority:

> I have that influence [over the gauchos], that prestige, because as a soldier I fought at their side for forty-three years, sharing with them the fortunes of war, the suffering of the campaigns, the bitterness of banishment. I have been more of a father to them than a leader . . . preferring their necessities to my own. As an Argentine and a Riojan I have always been the protector of the unfortunate, sacrificing the very last that I had to fulfill their needs, making myself responsible for everything and with my influence as a leader forcing the national government to turn its eyes toward these unfortunate people.

Penaloza's authority and status as a caudillo had evolved through the long political experience that he shared with the gauchos since the 1820s, when Chacho had entered into the party struggles as a subaltern of Facundo. His partisan leadership, however, was only one part of his relationship with the gauchos: "I have been more of a father to them than a leader." That is, he had always been "the protector of the unfortunate," putting the needs of the gauchos above his own and sacrificing for them. As a father, then, Peñaloza had made himself "responsible for everything."

The language of kinship emphasized the nature of the obligation and, especially, affective ties that bound caudillos and gauchos. This explains why references to caudillos as fathers were often articulated in an emotive language. Popular songs defined Facundo, for example, as "a dear father." Likewise, it was said of General Octaviano Navarro, from Catamarca, that "he was beloved by his province, he was the father of said province and his heart was tempered by his very warm soldiers, who loved him so much."

The authority of the caudillo as a "father" had moral and ideological dimensions, too, as reflected in a story featuring Facundo as the protagonist. Here, the caudillo was going through a village when he decided to stop and join a crowd assembled for a wedding. During the ceremony, the bride refused to accept the man her father had chosen to be her husband. She pointed out another man in the crowd and said, "He is the one I love, not [indicating her bridegroom] this one." According to oral tradition, "Quiroga sent his officers to take the girl and hang her from the highest Tala tree and to bring the one she loved to judgment, and give him six shots." It was the caudillo who castigated those who would subvert the functioning of matrimony and the authority of the father to choose a daughter's mate. In this episode, however, the "real" father was absent, transforming the tale into an explicit comment on the caudillo's authority. It was Facundo, the father of all Riojans, who exercised patriarchal authority and did what was expected of any father under the same circumstances. The caudillo was "responsible for everything," including the reproduction of patriarchy. And to fulfill that responsibility, oral culture resorted once again to Facundo's omnipresence, which allowed the caudillo to attend an apparently insignificant wedding.

Riojans, who exercised patriarchal authority and did what was expected of

The stories concerning Facundo and Chacho emphasized that these Federalist caudillos appreciated and rewarded the loyalty of the gauchos. Therefore, he who responded when his leader asked for, or needed, help was compensated beyond what a client would hope for from a caudillo. In one of the stories, collected in San Antonio, the home village of Facundo, in Los Llanos, a peon who, without recognizing the caudillo, helped Quiroga to cross

a river and escape when the caudillo was pursued by government officials, was later rewarded by Facundo with "ten oxen and ten cows." Any landless worker in Los Llanos understood the significance of this compensation. It allowed the peon to begin raising cattle, thereby distancing him from the periodic specter of hunger that was part and parcel of casual wage labor and subsistence agriculture. In other words, the peon's service to the caudillo was more than amply repaid with an amount of animals that surpassed what the sons of modest ranchers received to start their own ranches. This way of rewarding gauchos appears in stories about Chacho as well. After requisitioning for his troops the "four or five cows" that a couple living in a hut had, "Chacho returned not only the five cows but as many more," doubling the stock of these small landholders.

The poor occupied a privileged and almost exclusive position in the representation of the patron-client relation, which gave the caudillo's following a clear social identity. In a story from Los Llanos about the death of Peñaloza, an elderly woman tried to warn him about the fatal event to come, telling him, "Fly from here, I don't want them to kill you, all us poor folk need you." Her warnings were not enough, and Peñaloza died. His death "was felt by all, since he had been so generous in these villages."

In other tales, elements of Chacho's personal history and his special relationship with the poor made him look almost like a saint. "Chacho was a man who had been a priest, and because he liked to sacrifice for humanity he threw off the priest's habit and took up the dress of the gaucho." With this explanation, one story recounts an episode in which Chacho went to the house of "a woman who had a good amount of livestock but she was very tight-fisted, and she had all her animals hidden." When the caudillo asked her "what she had to offer him, chickens or goats, the woman said nothing." Chacho had her punished, and then the woman admitted that she did have livestock and offered it to the caudillo, who reminded her that "with a man like him, one doesn't tell lies."

4. The Lions of Payara ◆ José Antonio Páez

The Venezuelan caudillo José Antonio Páez, a rural man of middling social origins, became a leader during the Wars of Independence and afterward the

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first president of Venezuela. Such social mobility was uncommon, and it usually stemmed from fighting ability. Páez's original supporters were the mounted herdsmen, famous for their military prowess, of the Orinoco plains. Charging lancers, roll calls of heroes, and paternalistic bonds between Páez and his followers give his account of 1836–37 an archaic tone reminiscent of a medieval epic. In this passage from his autobiography (written in an elevated style he would have required assistance in composing), the caudillo describes events that occurred between his two presidencies of the 1830s. Although out of office, he remained the real power behind the government at the time.

After the triumph of Independence, the cattle of the Province of Apure had been distributed among the valiant warriors of the army whose lances doomed Spanish despotism there. By distributing the herds, our country repaid their services and gave them a stake in the prosperity of the territory which they had conquered with heroism and defended with unfailing courage Cornelio Muñoz, intrepid captain of my former guard, had property there; so did Rafael Ortega, my constant companion in hardship and glory, whose recent death still grieved me at the time of these events; then there were Francisco Guerrero (second in command of the army in Apure), Remigio Lara, Juan Angel Bravo, Facundo and Juan Antonio Mirabal, Doroteo Hurtado, Leon Ferrer, Andrés Palacio, Marcelo Gómez, and others whose names I have recorded already when describing my campaigns in the Orinoco plains. Also among them were Juan Pablo and Francisco Farfán, who had aided me on more than one occasion to succeed in my desperate struggle. These two were true bedouins of the plains: gigantic in stature, with athletic musculature and valor bordering on the ferocious, obedient only to naked force. They had served at first in the ranks of the royalist Yáñez. But when I had offered to give the rank of captain to any plainsman who brought me forty fighters, they enlisted with their followers and rode with me in Apure from that time on. If I had been strict with my troops, I would have had to punish these brothers severely, because they often deserted for a time with their men to go on plundering raids. Later they would reappear.

with their men to go on plundering raids. Later they would reappear.

Just before the Battle of Mucuritas the Farfán brothers disappeared on one of these escapades, and I finally threatened to lance them through if they did not get out of my sight with all their people. That is why they did not share in the glory of Mucuritas. Later I allowed them to return, and I have told elsewhere how valuable the Farfán brothers proved in the capture of Puerto Cabello in 1823. They eventually returned to their herds in Apure, and there they lived peacefully until the year 1836.

In that year they raised the flag of rebellion—according to some, in connivance with other rebels on the coast; according to others, in response to a personal affront—without even a pretext of principles to justify their uprising