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# Patagonia



Myths and Realities

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## Introduction: Myths and Realities: Mapping Scientific, Religious, Aesthetic and Patriotic Quests in Patagonia<sup>1</sup>

Enacting old myths of a timeless and dehumanised landscape, Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, who unsurprisingly defined themselves as “literary travellers” (1), speculated about the connections between Patagonia and a remarkable group of canonical writers.<sup>2</sup> Through the pages of *Patagonia Revisited* we are invited to trace the influence of “Patagonian” tales of brave seas, and monstrous creatures in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, and Conan Doyle’s *Lost World*, among others. But the intertextual quest does not end there. Both

- 1 Sections of this introduction as well as some of the ideas forming part of my paper on Thomas Bridges were included in my PhD thesis (Peñaloza, 2004) and have subsequently undergone substantial revision.
- 2 For the circumstances of Chatwin’s trip to Patagonia see Nicholas Shakespeare, 287–303. Shakespeare’s account suggests that Chatwin’s knowledge of the Spanish language was very limited (289). This might explain the portrayal of Patagonia as a land of foreigners and exiles. From *In Patagonia* it is possible to infer that Chatwin conducted interviews mainly with people who spoke English. But also, when Chatwin writes about people who could well be either Patagonians by birth, Chileans or Argentines from other regions of those countries, he does not seem to hold conversations with them and sometimes uses terms like “Latins” or “Indian half-breeds” to refer to the locals. In relation to the indigenous peoples, he generally fixes them in the past as massacred populations and therefore extinct. Most recent analysis of Chatwin’s work on Patagonia include David Taylor, “Bruce Chatwin: Connoisseur of Exile, Exile as Connoisseur”, in Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*. London: Zed Books, 1999. 195–211; and Claire Lindsay, “Luis Sepúlveda, Bruce Chatwin and the Global Travel Writing Circuit”, *Comparative Literature Studies* 43.1–2 (2006): 57–78.

authors, but particularly Chatwin in his acclaimed *In Patagonia*, also speculated about the origin of the word that gave name to the region (Chatwin 92–94; Chatwin and Theroux 36–39). The writers refer at length to the controversial issue of the word “Patagonia”. For many years it was thought that Patagonia came from the Spanish *pata*, which literally means *paw*, but can be used colloquially as the equivalent of *foot*.

The supposition behind this interpretation is that when Magellan saw the Tehuelches, he was amazed by the size of their feet, and called them “Big-Foot”, that is “Patagón”.<sup>3</sup> According to María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, the name did not come from the big footprints of the Tehuelches but from the pages of *Primaleon of Greece*, which is the English title for the translated version of one of several sequels to the medieval sagas *Amadis of Gaul* (321–323). Since the book was published in Spain seven years before Magellan’s trip, it is very likely that the Portuguese explorer read or knew about the terrifying beast called Patagón that appeared in it.<sup>4</sup> The 1596 English translation by Anthony Mundy, a supposed friend of Shakespeare’s, led to more speculation. According to this genealogy, the fact that *The Tempest* was published fifteen years after the English translation of *Amadis* indicates that Shakespeare found in the monster Patagón a model for Caliban.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare also used two other texts to create Caliban’s evil deity:

- 3 For a study of the myth of the giants from this perspective see Percy G. Adams. *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660–1800*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962. Chap. II.
- 4 I have consulted the 1619 publication of *Primaleon of Greece* translated into English from French and Italian. In *The Second Book*, Primaleon, the hero of the saga, meets the Grand Patagón. Chapter XXXIII opens with a dialogue between Primaleon and Palantine that takes place while they are hunting: “I heare great marveiles of ye (Sir) answered Primaleon, truly I would gladly see a monster so admirable: never disire the fight of him, replied Palantine, for in sooth ye mere better see the Divell, than Patagón” (255). Even though the connection between *Primaleón of Greece* and Pigafetta’s chronicle might be difficult to prove, textualised Patagonia never seems to disappoint a reader willing to find analogies.
- 5 Shakespeare drew heavily from tales of the “New World”, and in a two-way exchange of meanings, his Latin American readers borrowed heavily from his work as well. The most famous Latin American essay on aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities

Pigafetta's account of Magellan's circumnavigation of the world and Francis Fletcher's journal of Francis Drake's 1577–1580 voyages. In 1904, Walter Alexander Raleigh claimed that it was more likely that Shakespeare had found the name "Setebos" in Fletcher's account (quoted in Mason Vaughan and Vaughan 40–41). In fact, Setebos is the name that Pigafetta gave to the god he thought was worshipped by the Tehuelches, and Fletcher simply reproduced it in his text.<sup>6</sup>

Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux made of Patagonia the perfect setting for their post-modern textualised journeys. The authors engaged their travel experiences to Patagonia through other texts. All the way through their works, they make strategic use of literary invocations, expanding the visions of vastness which, in part, are echoing the images created in the nineteenth century by travellers who ventured to the region. In spite of the deep transformations Patagonia underwent from the "discovery" of the "Patagonian Giants" onwards, the landscape has somehow remained

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is "Ariel" by the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, published in 1900. Whereas the aerie spirit represents the truth and beauty of Latin America, Caliban embodies the utilitarianism of the US. However, it was Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío who in 1895, with the publication of the newspaper article "El triunfo de Calibán", first suggested the metaphorical use of Caliban to represent the US as he alluded to the Shakespearean character to criticise New York's lack of spirituality. In his landmark essay, "Calibán: apuntes sobre la cultura de nuestra América" (1973) Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar inverts the metaphorical use of the characters by suggesting that it is Caliban, not Ariel, who best represents Latin American identity. Whatever the irony contained in the fact that the very recognisable stereotype of the savage native which emerges in *The Tempest* is chosen to rebel against colonial rule, there is no doubt about the profound permeability of textual boundaries. Latin American writers were adding their voice to the pre-existing textual dialogue between Europe and the Americas, and their use of the Shakespearean characters shows that the trafficking of meanings from the metropolis to its periphery is a process that has appropriate power in multiple directions.

- 6 More discussion on this issue is to be found in Marina Warner. "The Foul Witch and Her 'freckled whelp': Circean Mutations in the New World" (97–113); and John Gillies. "The Figure of the New World in *The Tempest*" (180–201), both in "*The Tempest*" and *Its Travels*. Ed. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

the epitome of nothingness, the land of exile, a ghostly scenario where the post-modern traveller can write: “nowhere is a place”.<sup>7</sup>

The intertextual map outlined above links a wide mixture of narratives and their powerful symbolic investments that are therefore intertwined in an ambivalent and ambiguous process of creating, representing and confronting otherness. Such discursive intersections pertain to the western fascination with Patagonia, which can be dated to 1520, the year of Ferdinand Magellan’s circumnavigation. At the time the Portuguese explorer passed from the Atlantic to the Pacific through the strait that was named after him, it was believed that right at the very “end of the earth” there was a terrifying land, the legendary “Terra Incognita Australis”. In Antonio Pigafetta’s account of the Magellan expedition, the height of the first Tehuelche to meet Europeans is emphasised. With the language of amazement characteristic of the Early Modern period and marking the birth of one of the most enduring myths of the region, Pigafetta describes the Tehuelches as being of gigantic proportions. From then on, the southern region of Chile and Argentina has embodied powerful images that so easily appear to convey the monstrous, the uninviting, the alluring and the unexpected. Conquerors, explorers, adventurers, settlers, exiled, outlaws, scientists, missionaries and all kinds of real and imaginary visitors transformed this vast area of over 1 million square kilometres into an enigmatic territory.<sup>8</sup>

- 7 Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux. *Patagonia Revisited*. Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1985. 13. A long-running scientific enquiry around the rumours of giants in Patagonia discredited the tales of the explorers, but only to some extent. The strong belief that supported the myth for many years was the fifteenth century theory affirming that the closer to the North or the South Poles, the bigger the size of the people who live there. With the Enlightenment many journals fed the myth, but several scientists began to regard the issue with scepticism. Among them was the French natural philosopher, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788) who denied the existence of giants by “proving” that animals and plants of the New World were small and degenerate in comparison to European.
- 8 Whereas Chilean Patagonia extends from part of Los Lagos and the whole of Aysén and Magallanes known as the X, XI and XII regions, respectively, Argentine Patagonia is comprised by five provinces: Río Negro, Neuquén, Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego. Argentine Patagonia was centrally controlled by the national government

The land of gigantic inhabitants created by Pigafetta's description of the Tehuelches circulated widely among his contemporaries, and his became the narrative to be authenticated or discredited by later explorers. Furthermore, the claim that there were giants in Patagonia gained widespread acceptance over the centuries, bolstered by both travel writing and fictional narratives. One early European visual representation of the Tehuelches is to be found in *Americae sive quartae orbis partis nova et exactissima descriptio*, one of the most detailed ornate maps of the American Continent of the sixteenth century. Printed in 1562, over forty years after Magellan's circumnavigation, the map was designed by Diego Gutiérrez, an official cosmographer and cartographer of the Spanish Government, and Hieronymus Cock, a noted Flemish engraver of the period. Among images of ferocious sea creatures, exotic animals and monsters, the map depicts two giants with their arcs and arrows standing in *Tierra de Patagones*. One of them is handing an arc to a Conquistador, whose head hardly reaches the waist of the giants. Just below the illustration and reinforcing the effect of the images, a Latin inscription reads "*Gigantum Regeo*". Ten years later, after the publication of *Americae* in 1672, Luis Vaz de Camoens in his epic poem "*The Lusíads*" accuses Magellan of disloyalty for making his voyage under the auspices of the Spanish crown, but also acknowledges his achievements in a prophetic style:

Rather more than half-way from Equator to the South Pole he will come on a land, Patagonia, where the inhabitants are of almost gigantic stature; then, farther on, he will discover the strait that now bears his name, which leads to another sea and another land, that Terra Incognita. (246)

Pigafetta's account shaped the imaginative universe of explorers willing to find giants in the South Seas. References to the Tehuelches' supposedly enormous size are not only to be found among early accounts and contemporary representations. After Magellan's exploration, the Spanish and

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from 1884 when it was declared national territory divided in different sub areas which are now known as provinces. By 1955 all the national territories were declared provinces and therefore became less dependant of central control, except for Tierra del Fuego, which became a province as late as 1991.

the English made a few attempts to colonise Patagonia, but the region remained virtually devoid of European settlements for over 300 years. The most important explorations to Patagonia in the sixteenth century were those of Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa (1578) and Sir Francis Drake (1578).<sup>9</sup> From then on, interest in travelling around the region seems to have faded away until John Byron circumnavigated the globe once again (1740).<sup>10</sup> Lord Byron is the main protagonist of Peter Hulme's essay, which is the first one of this volume. Hulme focuses on Commodore Anson's voyage round the world and the hardships the men on the *Wager* had to endure when the ship was wrecked off the eastern coast of Patagonia in May 1741. By historicising the meanings attached to two specific geographical spaces – islands and beaches – Hulme raises important questions about the dynamics of colonial power. Hulme's reading of Byron's self-representation as a man in a desperate situation shows that the discursive practices that emerged from this particular colonial encounter cannot be reduced to an account of a binary opposition between the colonising subject and the colonised other.

A few decades after the shipwreck of the *Wager*, the Jesuit Thomas Falkner (1774) explored the area while living for thirty years as a missionary in Argentina, and James Cook surveyed the Patagonian coastline (1775).<sup>11</sup> The interest in rare accounts of Patagonia appeared to have gone astray, until the nineteenth century when explorers, missionaries and adventurers

- 9 Edward J. Goodman's historical account of early explorers in Patagonia is still the most authoritative; see *The Explorers of South America*, New York: Macmillan, 1972.
- 10 Byron reported in his own account that the Tehuelches "were all clothed in Skins of wild Beasts of different kinds which they wore as Highlander wears his Plaid, many of these Skins were very curious & very large, as indeed they ought to be to cover these People who in size come the nearest to Giants" (57). In one of the versions of Byron's journal, there is an illustration that shows an English sailor, who like Pigafetta's account and the Conquistador of Gutiérrez's map, can only reach the waist of a Patagonian woman holding a child and her husband standing beside her. There is controversy around the authorship of the journal of Byron's circumnavigation as many versions of the journal were almost simultaneously published.
- 11 According to Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, Falkner's book was in the library of the *Beagle* (34). For the most recent analysis of Thomas Falkner's text see Ernesto Livon-Grosman (51–70).

began to cast their eyes over to Patagonia again. As Ernesto Livon-Grosman observed, the gigantism of the Tehuelches was transferred to a landscape that was seen as equally seductive, due to its exoticism, and disturbing, for its vastness seemed to elude geographical surveys and white settlement (49). Indeed, although it may be that nineteenth-century travellers to Patagonia were less willing than their predecessors to find giants in the South Seas, the myth of gigantism did not completely evaporate; narratives about Patagonia combined the residue of such fantastic stories with scientific inquisitiveness, ethnographic curiosity, speculative commercial profits, missionary visions and aesthetic quests.

Alcide D'Orbigny's *Voyage dans l'Amerique Meridionale. 1826–1833* (1835), Charles Darwin's entries on Patagonia in *The Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle* (1839) and George Chaworth Muster's *At Home with the Patagonians* (1871) are without doubt the most influential texts of the period.<sup>12</sup> However, the list of travelogues, diaries and chronicles is significantly more extensive; it suffices to mention just a few: Benjamin Franklin Bourne's *The Giants of Patagonia: Captain Bourne's Account of his Captivity Amongst the Extraordinary Savages of Patagonia* (1853); William Parker Snow's *A two years' cruise off Tierra del Fuego the Falkland Islands, Patagonia, and in the river Plate* (1857); Julius Beerbohm's *Wanderings in Patagonia* (1879); Lady Florence Dixie's *Across Patagonia* (1880); and Titus Coan's *Adventures in Patagonia: a Missionary's Exploring Trip* (1880).<sup>13</sup> Explorations of

12 British explorations in the area were mostly linked with trade, missionary expeditions, and the establishment of sheep farming companies. In the case of Argentina, these colonial relations included the establishment of a colony formed by Welsh settlers (1865) and the sovereignty conflict for the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). The *Beagle's* enterprise took place in the early stages of this commercial British expansion. As Janet Browne states, the *Beagle* was issued a specific set of instructions from the British Government: "to ascertain the commercial and strategic potential of the east coast of South America" and "to reclaim the Falkland Islands from Argentina, literally showing the British flag" (464–465).

13 *Across Patagonia*, written by Dixie in 1880, is the only published, book-length account of a British woman's journey to Patagonia from this period. There is only one other female-authored travelogue to Patagonia that I have come across so far, the one written by the Welsh descendent Eluned Morgan. Her book is based on her 1899 trip from



this period are the focus of Patience A. Schell's essay, which analyses the relationship between Robert FitzRoy and Charles Darwin, by looking at how perceptions of place are mediated by notions of masculinity and friendship.<sup>14</sup> Schell examines the *Beagle's* enterprise by identifying the role homosocial friendship played in FitzRoy's and Darwin's experience of travel and exploration. Nineteenth-century representations of Patagonia are also examined by Fiona J. Mackintosh, who problematises notions of genre and gender by highlighting Lady Florence Dixie's intricate engagement with imperialistic and masculine discourses. Mackintosh traces these configurations of gender, power and discourse in three texts written by Dixie: her travelogue on Patagonia and two books for children set in the region.

At a rhetorical level, most of the nineteenth-century travel to Patagonia had much to do with hopes of discovery, satisfying the public's curiosity for the then 'unknown' parts of the world with their accounts. Through powerful discursive operations, the natives encountered by the travellers became confirmation of western civilisation's ancestry.<sup>15</sup> In the attempt to

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the Atlantic Coast to the Andes. Her experience across the Patagonian province of Chubut was first published in Welsh and it was entitled Dringo'r Andes. Casnewydd-ar-Wysg: Southall & Co., 1907. Morgan's account has been printed and translated into Spanish as *Hacia los Andes*. Trans. Irma Hughes de Jones. Rawson: El Regional, 1982. Eluned Morgan's father was one of the first settlers to arrive in 1865 to the province of Chubut. She was born on board a Welsh ship while her parents were going back to Patagonia after staying for some time in England in 1870. For more details on Morgan's life see Virgina Hauric, *Mujeres en Tierra de Hombres. Historias reales de la Patagonia Invisible*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998. 883–884. Apart from Morgan's journal, there are two female-authored articles about the region; these are "The Hassler Glacier in the Straits of Magellan," *Atlantic Monthly* 30 (October 1872): 72–478 and "In the Straits of Magellan," *Atlantic Monthly* 31 (January 1873): 89–95. Both were written by Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, who was born in Boston in 1822. She wrote those articles while accompanying her husband, the Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz, on scientific expeditions.

14 This is one of the most tense and significant relationships of British history; therefore, it is not surprising that a recent novel has this subject as central to its plot. See Harry Thompson, *This Thing of Darkness*. London: Headline Review, 2005.

15 By the time European travellers were undertaking their journeys, and the Chilean and Argentine colonising projects were being carried out, there were different groups of indigenous peoples in the Patagonian region. There are many conflicting

trace the prehistory of European culture, travel writers created crystallised moments of *savagery* that were to take the shape of pre-professional ethnographic accounts. Hence, the *savage*, a projection of the nineteenth-century fascination for mapping the origins of mankind, became the essential figure for the creation of a prehistoric record. In this sense, the “other” was always to be encountered as necessarily incomplete, as a fragment of history. By turning the journey into an ethnographic venture, reality remained distant, external and successfully objectified. The illusion this type of narrative conveys is that the traveller and her or his scrutinised object are immune to the transformations that every encounter presupposes. The ethnographic venture is the focus of Fernanda Peñaloza’s contribution to this volume, in which she analyses the two-fold paradoxical project of cultural preservation and transformation by examining the Anglican missionary enterprise of Thomas Bridges. Peñaloza’s main argument is that Bridges’s contradictory engagement with a culture he simultaneously wants to preserve and transform results in a representation in which, by its elusive presence, the “original” reveals with devastating force what Michael Cronin has called “the irreducible otherness of the foreign language and culture” (42).<sup>16</sup>

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interpretations of ethnic classification of native inhabitants of Patagonia. Such controversy arises from the fact that these forms of classification were devised by explorers, scientists and missionaries from the seventeenth century up to well into the twentieth; hence, some of those terms have been discarded by either anthropologists who consider them inaccurate, or by the indigenous communities themselves who consider them offensive. The following is a simple sketch of how the indigenous population is frequently labelled and geographically located by anthropologists and ethno-historians: in the northwest of Patagonia, the Mapuche; in the area between the Limay River (North Patagonia), and the Santa Cruz River (South Patagonia), the Northern Tehuelche; in Tierra del Fuego, the Southern Tehuelche or Aóni-kénk; in the centre, the Selk’nam; in the extreme east of Tierra del Fuego, the Yaghan and the Alakaluf or Kaweskar. For a discussion on the subject from an anthropological and archaeological perspective, see the already mentioned work of Briones and Lanata.

- 16 Most conventional portrayals on the indigenous peoples of the region are – quite predictably – constructed around cultural encounters in which the “other” is an undifferentiated collective ethnic group, to which the generic term “Indian” is applied. Indeed, most of the texts analysed in this volume deploy an individuated “civilised” subject encountering a depersonalised “primitive”, often resulting in stereotyped

But of course, it was not only nineteenth-century anthropological curiosity that became integral in shaping images of Patagonia, so too, were aesthetic frames. Indeed, in the travel-writing tradition the language of aesthetic landscape transformed the Patagonian geography into a sublime experience in which the evocation of an overpowering nature obscures the historical and cultural grounds of the appropriative power of colonial discourse and colonial enterprises. W. H. Hudson in *Idle Days in Patagonia* synthesises the overpowering effects of the Patagonian landscape:

Judging from my own case, I believe that we have here the secret of the persistence of Patagonian images, and their frequent recurrence in the minds of many who have visited that gray, monotonous, and in one sense, eminently uninteresting region. It is not the effect of the unknown, it is not imagination; it is that nature in these desolate scenes moves us more deeply than in others. (193)

Even though, as Joy Logan has observed, Patagonia “is a land locked into the fiction of its existence” (67) both the *real* and *imaginary* possession

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representations. The generic term “Patagonian Indian” – as well as the many labellings and categorisations created around it, including those that aimed at being accurate and descriptive – arose in specific historical contexts and assumed a broad range of forms with concomitant political and cultural implications. Although contributors to this volume do not necessarily have in common similar theoretical and ideological views, what authors do share is an awareness of the implications of this need for classification of the indigenous population of Patagonia. Hence, even when the authors are not explicitly clarifying their position regarding this question, the reader should interpret that when the term “Indian” is being used, this choice does not respond to the attempt to describe indigenous peoples, but rather to contribute to a critical awareness of the creation and trajectory of images and ideas on Patagonia. In fact, when the authors reproduce the term “Indian” as it appears in some descriptions, they are exposing how, when and by whom such terminology is being used, as in many cases, it is virtually impossible to clarify to which specific indigenous group the term is being applied. Therefore, the indigenous peoples of Patagonia, who were scrutinised and written about in many works analysed here, are discussed in this volume in terms of their representation, not because we are unaware of the heterogeneity, mobility and variety of indigenous identities, but rather because this is our workable approach to the study of the representations of indigenous peoples in the region.

of Patagonia are vital for understanding the colonising vision that underlies the discursive ramifications of the fascination for the region, which, in many ways, has been instrumental in the political and economic expansion plans of the Chilean and Argentine governments in their respective nation-building processes. Tales of vastness, emptiness and savagery fitted quite comfortably with the ideological framework that gave shape to the territorial expansion plans conceived by the elite Creoles of Buenos Aires and Santiago. In other words, the images that emanate from these narratives decisively contributed to an intricate ensemble of cultural relations and national concerns already at play in hegemonic discourses on national identity that justified the physical and cultural displacement of the indigenous populations in favour of European and Creole settlement.

In the nineteenth century, a persistent feature of Argentina's attempts to activate the economy was the conflict over land in the countryside, which included the expansion of the frontiers by means of defeating indigenous tribes. From 1853 onwards, different Argentine governments accomplished measures for attracting immigrants from various parts of the world with the aim of establishing white settlements in areas inhabited by indigenous tribes. One of the most remarkable of these ventures was undertaken with the support of a Welsh nationalist, Michael D. Jones, who became convinced that the "desolate" region of Patagonia could be the best place in which to preserve Welsh cultural heritage. Simultaneously, the establishment of a colony in Patagonia was part of the Buenos Aires government's strategy in establishing its authority in the region. The first group of Welsh settlers, about 150 people, sailed from Liverpool to Patagonia aboard the *Mimosa*. On 28 July 1865 they landed in Bahía Nueva, the western extremity of Golfo Nuevo, later to be known as Puerto Madryn. Edwyn Roberts, Lewis Jones and Abraham Mathews were among the first Welsh to arrive in June 1865.<sup>17</sup> Paul W. Birt deals with the Welsh enterprise by exploring the construction of a Welsh–Patagonian sense of identity through a reading of autobiographies. By analysing aspects of the work of several Welsh settlers and writers during the 1915–1935 period, Birt looks at how personal

17 For a well-researched history of the establishment of the Welsh colony see Glyn Williams, *The Desert and the Dream*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975.

and collective memories are intertwined with the founding myths of the colony, including the initial trek in 1865 from the Atlantic port of New Bay South to the river Chubut, the first contacts with the indigenous peoples and the murder of Aaron Jenkins in 1877.

In spite of the successful establishment of the Welsh settlers, many areas of the now Argentine side of the region were still unoccupied by the Government and, consequently, the claims of Chilean authorities over Patagonian territory became a real threat. Indeed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Patagonia became central to both Chilean and Argentine border claims. The political leaders of the newly formed republics showed their inability to cope with the conflicting problems of territorial demarcation that arose after the wars of independence from the Spanish crown. The immediate response to this new state of affairs was the application of the *uti possidetis* principle, which legally defined possession of each colonial jurisdiction previously under Spanish rule. Although the principle was perceived as a practical resolution to possible conflicts, in the southern area of Chile and Argentina the difficulty of implementing the *uti possidetis* principle soon became apparent: justifying that Patagonia was actually explored, occupied and settled during colonial times was not an easy task. Hence, the occupation of the areas inhabited almost exclusively over centuries by indigenous groups, who managed to secure their dominance in the area, became strategic to strengthening Chile's and Argentina's territorial ambitions. Although the Chilean constitution of 1833 recognised as national boundaries Cape Horn on the south and the Andean cordillera on the east, to the south the Mapuche were virtually in possession of all the territory south of the Bio-Bio, successfully impeding the extension of the frontier. In spite of a long sequence of mutual hostility, aggression and bitterness the nineteenth century, heated discussions over Patagonian territory were resolved in amicable terms by the mediation of King Edward VII of England in 1902. As a result of the arbitration, Tierra del Fuego was divided between the two countries, and Chile was given the banks of the Straits of Magellan.

According to Cameron G. Thies, the conflict was triggered by Chile's fears of "British imposition on her sovereign claims to the area, as Britain had recently reasserted sovereignty over the Falkland Islands in 1833" (411).

In order to avoid this situation in what the Chileans considered their territory, "Chile sent an expedition to set up a military base known as Bulnes at Puerto del Hambre (Port Famine) on the Brunswick Peninsula on the Strait of Magellan by 1843, which was later moved to Punta Arenas on the eastern shore of the peninsula in 1849" (Thies 411). As Francisco M. Goyogana observes, the response of the Argentine authorities was rather slow as they addressed this issue four years later: in 1847 Juan Manuel de Rosas claimed in a speech to the legislative assembly that the territory occupied by Chile was in conflict with the sovereignty of the Confederation (Goyogana 33). Whereas foreign interests provoked the immediate reaction of Chile, the Argentine claim to the Patagonian region was prompted by the fear that the Chilean government would implement the ambition to expand its national territory across the Andes range. This period marks the launching of Argentine and Chilean explorations into the bordering territories. Both the enterprises of Guillermo Cox in Chile with his *Viaje en las regiones septentrionales de la Patagonia* (1862–1863) and that of Francisco P. Moreno in Argentina, some years later with *Viaje a la Patagonia Austral* (1879), are illustrative of the territorial ambitions of both countries. Both governments hoped the surveying of the land under dispute would provide the necessary topographic knowledge upon which to base their territorial claims. The geographers, naturalists, anthropologists and adventurers who embarked on these territorial explorations played a key role in the incorporation of Patagonia into the Chilean and Argentine national territories.

Also, it was of paramount importance to provide definite reports on the interior of the Patagonian region in order to evaluate the feasibility of establishing settlements. For instance, Cox writes in his travelogue that his exploration in the area responds "not only to scientific and commercial interests, but also to humanitarian benefits as it aims to facilitate the colonisation of these regions" (Cox 36). Thus, functional to nationalistic agendas and economic interests, Patagonia was conceived first by Chile and Argentina as a region suitable for sheep farming and later for oil exploration and mining. On both sides of the Andes, Patagonia's natural charm and promise of profit remained linked with the idea of an empty space, whose sterility and isolation had only just been heroically confronted by intrepid travellers and brave pioneers. The indigenous peoples remained

marginal to the history of the region, mentioned only as an ethnographic curiosity, romanticised or demonised but, either way, doomed to disappear. The official historical accounts of Patagonia privilege narratives in which the region is the epitome of emptiness, and its land's lucrative potential is only partially and temporarily hindered by vanishing "Indians", unfit to cope with the white creoles' notions of progress. The suffering of the indigenous peoples, who were deliberately excluded or killed in the process, was to be seen as the inevitable consequence of civilisation.<sup>18</sup>

The most dramatic example of such abuse of authority comes from Argentina with the territorial military usurpation led by Julio Argentino Roca in 1879. Known as the *Campaña del Desierto* (Campaign of the Desert), this military crusade killed at least 1,313 and captured over 12,000 people, mostly of Mapuche origin, between April and July 1879.<sup>19</sup> The Argentine government used two strategies to guarantee control over the area: direct violence by killing, imprisoning and expelling from their territories large numbers of indigenous populations; and indirect violence by offering military rank and rations to "Indians" who *showed* signs of loyalty to the country.<sup>20</sup> The Campaign of the Desert also aimed to survey the occupied territory and in this sense it is important to highlight that "the exploration of Patagonia and the indigenes' territories preceded the real dominion of the Argentine state over the region" (Podgorny 161). This period of military advance is discussed by Jens Andermann, whose essay examines how notions of space are configured in the acts of mapping and conquering territory. By looking at the works of Estanislao Severo Zeballos

18 There are many historical accounts that in one way or another subscribe to this view of Patagonia. See for example the works of Aquiles Ygoborne and Roberto Hosne.

19 For detailed figures see Carlos Martínez Sarasola, *Nuestros Paisanos los Indios. Vida, Historia y Destino de las Comunidades Indígenas en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1993. 282.

20 Treaties and agreements between governmental authorities and indigenous leaders known as *caciques* were frequent. For a recent analysis of the complex system of *cacicazgos* see Gladys A. Varela and Estela M. Cúneo, "Líderes indígenas y relaciones interétnicas en la Norpatagonia durante los siglos XVIII y XIX", in Susana Bandieri, Graciela Blanco and Gladys Varela, eds, *Hecho en Patagonia: La historia en perspectiva regional*. Neuquén: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional del Comahue, 2005. 53–84.



and Carlos María Moyano, Andermann argues that in these military ventures, the production of cartography and expedition narratives entails complex discursive operations, which result in the construction of “blank spaces” and “self-effacing protagonists” that are functional to the Argentine project of territorial expansion.

Contemporary to the cartographic and narrative representations mentioned above is the official report of the scientific commission that took part in the expedition to the Río Negro in the framework of the Campaign of the Desert, in which the ambitions of extermination of the indigenous populations are communicated with a tone of triumph: “In order to conquer those 15,000 leagues efficiently, it was necessary to cleanse them completely of Indians [...] The results show that it was feasible, and even easy to extirpate the Indians, down to the very last one, from the area that was the intended addition to the possessions of the Republic” (xi–xii). The report continues by stating that the main outcome of the campaign had been security and protection for a future phase of “civilisation and production” (xii). This triumphant victory over *savagery* achieved by “cleansing” the Patagonian territory is followed by a description of the fauna and flora of the region as recorded by the scientists who joined the campaign.<sup>21</sup> The joint presence of the military and scientific discourses in this report shows the successful assimilation of positivism. The racist hierarchies that ensured the implementation of the civilisation/barbarism dichotomy were legitimised by the adoption of a rigid rational pattern inspired by European values. This traditional dichotomy, made prominent in Argentina with the publication of Sarmiento’s *Facundo* in 1845, remained a constant formula that not only provided the ideological framework justifying the Argentine government’s dominance over the Patagonian territory, but also made it possible to forge a model of national identity based on whiteness and European lineage.<sup>22</sup>

21 The scientists were mostly academics who worked in partnership with the military authorities. Their mission was to create an extensive zoological, botanical and geological catalogue. Among them were Adolfo Doering, D. G. Lorentz, F. Schulz and Gustavo Niederlein (Podgorny, “La Patagonia como santuario”, 166–167).

22 As Nancy Stepan has noticed, this model became more rigid in the twentieth century when Argentina became a paradigmatic case in Latin American debates on eugenics.



The conflicts that arose from the colonising projects of Argentina and Chile over the Patagonian region demonstrate that although the ruling classes endorsed the European ideas of modernity and encouraged European investment and immigration, thereby affirming white supremacy, this process was not a simple practice of replication. The elite Creoles, in their struggle to build up a nation, envisaged a modernisation project that strategically combined local versions of European elements with a search for identity highly attached to a sense of authenticity that the landscape seemed to convey. Far from benefiting from the white Creole's selective use of European creeds, the natives of Patagonia who survived wars of extermination, appropriation of their natural resources, expulsion from their territories, contagious diseases and forced labour had to develop complex strategies of resistance in order to reconstruct a collective historical memory, which was almost wiped out.

Despite a long history of displacement, the indigenous peoples of Patagonia have maintained a dialogue with a fluid cultural network that has often negated their legitimate presence. One cannot miss the continuity of certain forms of historical amnesia, but neither can one ignore that the indigenous voice is dynamically circulating in the culture of the Patagonian region. One example of this lending and borrowing of meanings is a poem that won the highest prize in the Eisteddfod of the Chubut Valley in 1990.<sup>23</sup> From its title we learn that the poet pays tribute to the *kultrún*, a drum used in the *ngillatún*, an ancestral Mapuche ceremony. In the poem the *kultrún* is being displayed in a museum cabinet: "It is as if from the earth a piece of heart had been pulled up and still beating it had been put [...] in the cabinet of things that had died." In spite of apparently being lifeless

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According to Stepan, compared with other countries in the region, Argentina was "the most conventionally racist in its eugenic ideology. In 1918 the country considered itself to be largely white and immigrant; its black population, once quite sizeable, had by the 1880's been reduced to less than two percent of the national population [...] Indeed, Argentina seemed to many Latin Americans to be the only country that had realised its elites' old dream of racial transformation by whitening and Europeanisation" (139).

23 By local poet Juan Carlos Coralini.

due to its forced confinement, the *kultrín* “is still out there – silence that beats – like something that has not yet died, in search of Nguenechén up in the mountain” (quoted in Virkel de Sandler and Gutiérrez de Jones 28).

Here we have the Welsh tradition of the Eisteddfod interlaced with new interpretations of the indigenous culture’s resistance to being objectified and forgotten. The poem attempts to reconstruct an historical scene of appropriation and commodification, and to expose the failure to confine the Mapuche culture to permanent silence. Whereas the poem’s effect should be justly judged as limited because it obviously cannot undo the history of domination it is denouncing, its intention deserves to be viewed as transgressive in the sense that the very same history it cannot possibly change is being retold in a different way. These processes of cultural transformation need to be acknowledged and encouraged as they expose both the difficulties and the possibilities the indigenous peoples of Patagonia are facing in the wider context of Latin American debates on the question of resistance.

Indeed, what the poem briefly discussed reflects is the process by which the indigenous identity, in this case the Mapuche, had to be renegotiated in terms of transculturation where the singularity of such identity, appropriated by the vanishing discourse, is therefore no longer valid.<sup>24</sup> Clifford writes,

Throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of “progress” and “national” unification. The results have been both destructive and inventive. Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex, oppositional context. If the victims of progress and empire are weak, they are seldom passive. (*The Predicament* 16)

- 24 Stuart Hall has suggested that even though there are no authentic roots to which cultures can return, there is a sense of origin which it will be wrong to see as a “mere phantasm” because the “past continues to speak to us”. However Hall continues: “it no longer addresses us as simple, factual ‘past’, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always already ‘after the break’” (395). The positioning of the colonial subject in relation to the histories of contact that shaped it demands recognition of both what is no longer there and what has been created.

One of the ways in which historicised notions of indigenous identities have been invigorated is through the development of the production of a vibrant Mapuche poetry, often published in both Mapudungun and Spanish, and whose most contemporary visible voices are Elicura Chihuailaf, Leonel Lienlaf, Jaime Luis Huenun, and Graciela Huinao.<sup>25</sup> Since the aesthetic project of these poets is at times presented as a denouncing voice of the history of colonisation of the Patagonian region, their works are vital to exploring the interrelations between the commodification of cultural difference and complex forms of cultural appropriation, negotiation and agency. This literary phenomenon, which is usually referred to as “ethnopoetry”, is far more established and recognised in Chile than in Argentina, with a very significant international projection through the Mapuche Diaspora.

However, it is not of course only in the cultural domain where the indigenous peoples are developing dynamic and creative self-representational practices but also in the political arena with their struggle for their rights over land. The region is indeed witnessing the uprising of indigenous movements which are forcing recognition of their culture and their constitutional rights. In the last few decades, the Mapuche have been protagonists of violent confrontations with the police, the legal system and local and national governmental authorities. In Argentina and Chile the Mapuche strategy of occupying land owned by the government or private companies has often resulted in brutal evictions; and street demonstrations aimed at drawing attention to the territorial conflicts frequently end with the imprisonment of the indigenous movements’ leaders. Mapuche activists repeatedly denounce they are victims of all kinds of ill-treatment and abuse from local authorities and landowners alike; and, as a consequence, they resort to extreme protest tactics such as hunger strikes or

25 Academic interest in Mapuche poetry is also well-established in Chile. See for example Sonia Montecino, “Literatura mapuche: Oralidad y escritura”, *Simpson* 7, Vol. II (1992): 155–166; Iván M. Carrasco, “Literatura etnocultural en Hispanoamérica: Concepto y precursores”, *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 42 (1993): 65–72; and Hugo Carrasco, “Poesía mapuche actual: De la apropiación hacia la innovación cultural” *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 43 (1993): 75–87.

they become political exiles.<sup>26</sup> Like many indigenous groups across Latin America, different Mapuche organisations are developing a fluid information network that takes advantage of technological developments brought about by the use of the Internet and they are therefore generating a significant range of online publications as well as magazines, periodicals, newspapers, books, and pamphlets that are channelling the political and social concerns of the Mapuche population. It was precisely this dynamic network of information that attracted international attention to the most visible conflict related to land ownership, between a Mapuche family and the Benetton group. The multi-million investment the Italian designer Luciano Benetton, who according to Susana Mabel López owns 900,000 hectares (130), made in the region is part of a wider phenomenon: the natural riches of Patagonia are attracting a significant number of wealthy entrepreneurs who are speculating with the region's potential profits. This phenomenon started in the 1990s and seems to be developing steadily with uncertain outcomes in the near future.<sup>27</sup>

The tragic irony is that the myth of the End of the Earth still prevails, attracting tourism with commercial benefits for the region, but at same time new forms of territorial expansion have emerged, thus bringing about unsolved problems of the past and causing even more dramatic consequences. Patagonia appears to convey the image of utter wilderness, an empty land of wonders awaiting rediscovery by tourists or preservation

26 These forms of abuse of power are sadly reminiscent of the killing of strikers in Patagonia during the years of 1921–1922, which was a direct consequence of the development of *latifundios* and its system of exploitation. Osvaldo Bayer is the most authoritative historian on these events and published four volumes between 1972 and 1975, which dwelt in detail on the violent repression exercised by the Argentine government against their rural workers. A new edited version of his work is to be found in Osvaldo Bayer, *La Patagonia Rebelde: Edición definitiva*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2002. Bayer also wrote the script of Héctor Olivera's 1974 film *La Patagonia*. Whereas the army claimed twenty-six sheep farmers were killed during the strikes, Bayer asserts there were around 1,500.

27 For an analysis of the economic changes Argentine Patagonia underwent during the period, see Agustín Salvia, ed., *La Patagonia de los noventa: sectores que ganan, sociedades que pierden*. Buenos Aires: La Colmena, 1999.

by ecologists. Not surprisingly, travel books on Patagonia nowadays are usually photographic, depicting Patagonia's natural richness devoid of human presence.

Hence, although Patagonia has been mapped, surveyed and explored for over 400 years, and the narratives that created its most perdurable myths are evidence of histories of contact, colonisation and displacement, the sparse population of the region allows contemporary visitors to recreate the sense of emptiness experienced by the early travellers. As some of the contributors show in this volume, in travel writing aesthetic and scientific discourses can be used to naturalise boundaries and margins under the guise of celebration, nostalgia or disturbing assumptions of otherness. In this sense, it seems clear to me that the experience of travelling to Patagonia and the illusion of reaching the authentic is not an exhausted project. In spite of the social and ethnic conflicts that are to be found across the area, there are still old metaphors in operation on the Patagonian topography that the nineteenth-century explorers contributed to creating. Not long ago, in a newspaper interview in Argentina, Jean Baudrillard spoke about the connection between the metaphor of the ultimate and exile:

Behind the fantasy of Patagonia lies the myth of disappearance, of drowning in desolation, of the end of the world. Of course, this is just a metaphor. I can imagine that travelling to Patagonia is like reaching the limit of a concept, like getting to the end of things. I know Australia and North American desert, but I have the feeling that Patagonia is the most desolate of places [...] a land of exile, a place of de-territoriality. (quoted in Hosne, *Patagonia* 247)

Patagonia has itself become not only a destination for those seeking nature in a pristine state, but also a topography that emerges as an image constantly switching between orders of reality and fantasy. By projecting its collective anxieties and fascination with otherness upon the barren plains of Patagonia, a myriad of textual references created a "fictional" topography frequently nullifying and voiding "reality". Also, the fascination, to which Baudrillard refers, shows how powerful textual webs constantly mediate cultural encounters. Indeed, myths of desolation, vastness and infinitude about Patagonia still circulate widely about Patagonia in Patagonia and elsewhere.

Jason Wilson's essay explores the power of these representations by examining the image of a desolate Patagonia as it emerges in the writings of Charles Darwin, W. H. Hudson, Francisco P. Moreno and Gordon Meyer. Wilson's main argument is that the challenge this group of visitors faces is making sense of the fear the Patagonian silence seems to awake in them. According to Wilson, at the centre of these travellers' reflections on their experiences is the profound sense of alienation they feel as the overwhelming emptiness of the Patagonian landscape seems to elude categorisation.

Karl Posso also discusses the myth of the virgin territory by exposing how the imperialist gaze and nostalgia explicitly come together in Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia*. By comparing Chatwin's book with Evelyn Waugh's *Ninety-Two Days*, Posso argues that regions such as Patagonia and the Amazon have been particularly alluring for twentieth-century English travel writers because their perceived remoteness and wilderness are functional to the imperialist fantasy of penetrating uncharted and unchartable territories.

However, though fantasies of desolation and emptiness are still being projected onto the region, there are intricate and contestatory relations between representation and landscape. As already mentioned earlier, groups of indigenous people, who are fighting for their territorial rights over land now in possession of the state or private owners, are powerfully deconstructing such meanings. For instance, in a letter to the Argentine state, the Organización de Comunidades Mapuche-Tehuelche 11 de Octubre (Mapuche-Tehuelche Community's Organisation 11 October) urges the Argentines to acknowledge their right to the recognition of their identity: "As you can see we are still alive; as long as there will be mountains, lakes, trees, volcanoes, rain, snow, there will be Mapuche-Tehuelche prepared to protect and take care of our *Mapuchemapu* (territory)" (1). The project of recovering and of reterritorialisation undertaken by the indigenous groups is a claim based on the very same landscape from which the texts that constitute the writing tradition about Patagonia discursively remove them.

This example shows how the trope of the "vanishing Indian" is being powerfully challenged by politically committed voices. In turn, these discursive strategies pertain to a larger counter-narrative, which has paved the way for a relocation of alternative readings that can now expose the "certainties" of narratives of appropriation these strategies of resistance are already

unsettling. From my point of view, this is what Edward Said has called “the new global consciousness” which “connects all the various local arenas of anti-imperial contest” (62). Indeed, much of the developments in the vein of critique that has informed this editorial project are indebted to the fluid and subversive dynamics of resistance of such “arenas”. In this sense, the ethno-historical work of Walter Mario Delrío entitled *Memorias de expropiación* (2005) is a significant step towards such endeavours. Through mapping an oral history of the Mapuche, Delrío’s work – albeit not exhausting all the critical potential of his own theoretical framework – clearly demonstrates that there were indigenous collective counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge the dominant version of the region’s history.

Another phenomenon worth mentioning is the vigorous interest in the region from Argentine and Chilean film directors and writers alike, who have produced a significant corpus of texts in which Patagonia is used as a setting for the stories they depict.<sup>28</sup> Looking precisely at this phenomenon, Eva-Lynn Alicia Jagoe sets out to examine the intersections between history and textuality in the work of César Aira. Jagoe deconstructs the notion of *South*, strongly associated with the expansion of the frontier, and the violence exercised on the indigenous peoples. Jagoe argues that contemporary literary representations of the *South* are not only shaped by discursive configurations of Argentina’s own southern region, but also by a revisionist perspective on the territorial appropriation of the region,

28 For example, this relatively recent literary production includes the works of Luis Sepúlveda (*Mundo del fin del mundo*, 1989; *Patagonia Express*, 1995), Eduardo Belgrano Rawson (*Fuegia*, 1991), César Aira (*La Costurera y el viento*, 1994), Sylvia Iparraguirre (*La tierra del fuego*, 1998; *El país del viento*, 2003) and Mempo Giardinelli (*Fin de novela en Patagonia*, 2000). In terms of the Argentine film production, the list of works is fairly extensive, so it would suffice to mention just a few: Héctor Olivera (*La Patagonia Rebelde*, 1974), Raúl Alberto Tosso (*Gerónima*, 1986), Alejandro Agresti (*El viento se llevó lo qué*, 1998), Juan José Jusid (*Bajo Bandera*, 1998), Pablo Trapero (*Mundo grúa*, 1999; *Nacido y criado*, 2006), Carlos Sorín (*Historias Mínimas*, 2002; *Bombón el Perro*, 2005), Luis Puenzo (*La puta y la ballena*, 2004), Eduardo Mignona (*El viento*, 2005), Fabián Bielinsky (*El Aura*, 2005). Patagonia seems to be less important for Chilean directors in comparison to their Argentine counterparts, except for Ricardo Larraín (*La Frontera*, 1991), Adrián Wood (*La fiebre del loco*, 2002), and Alex Bowen (*Mi mejor enemigo*, 2005).



which entails a rewriting of nineteenth-century relationships between the indigenous peoples and white Europeans and Argentine creoles.

Paralleling the growth of interest in Patagonia, an increasing number of cultural events that have the region as their central theme have been organised on both sides of the Andes from the mid-1980s onwards – at times with Chile and Argentina in partnership, at times separately. Additionally, several Chilean and Argentine narrative and poetry anthologies have been published,<sup>29</sup> and particularly in the case of poetry, there is a strong consciousness of how publishing houses and book fairs in Buenos Aires and Santiago perceive these creative endeavours as peripheral alternatives to the dominant literary culture. In such cultural endeavours, Patagonia seems to operate at the frontier of the foreign and the familiar, the hegemonic and the subversive, the unifying and the multifaceted.

Cristian Aliaga's epilogue brings the volume to a close. Rather than making new claims about the symbolic function of Patagonia in western imagination, Cristian Aliaga's text distances itself from academic pursuits and seeks instead to acknowledge the many Patagonian stories that do not often get told. Aliaga draws eclectically from a range of historical facts and anecdotes; such examples stand for the extraordinary flexibility of the term "Patagonia" as a cultural signifier.

Finally, to conclude, we would like to make a few further comments on the rationale that guided the presentation of the essays in this volume as well as some reflections on recent research developments on the topic. Although the authors deal with texts produced in a period that spans from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, we did not follow, strictly speaking, a chronological order. By arranging the essays according to different historical "moments" in the representation of Patagonia, we hope the readers will be able to appraise the multiple discursive ramifications of the narratives analysed here and the contexts in which these have been produced. However, this book does not constitute a history of the representation

29 María Eguenia Correás, ed., *Abrazo Austral: Poesía del sur de Argentina y Chile*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Instituto Movilizador de fondos Cooperativos, 2000; María Concha García, ed., *Antología de la Poesía de la Patagonia*. Málaga: Diputación Provincial de Málaga, 2006.



of Patagonia. Indeed, we would like to highlight the fact that while this volume discusses texts from different periods and attempts to historicise and analyse discursive operations from a wide range of perspectives, it does not however make any attempt at “coverage”. Within the extensive choice of narratives that could serve the purpose of exploring the representation of Patagonia well, the authors have opted for a reading of specific texts that trace different experiences that relate to the region: a shipwreck in 1741 (Hulme), the friendship of Darwin and FitzRoy (Schell), Dixie’s trip to Patagonia as reworked in her children’s stories (Mackintosh), Bridge’s missionary enterprise (Peñaloza), the Welsh Diaspora (Birt), the Argentine colonisation of Patagonia (Andermann), the fear of the Patagonian silence in Darwin, Hudson, Moreno and Meyer (Wilson); Chatwin’s literary pilgrimages (Posso) and Aira’s interpretation of the expansion of the frontier (Jagoe). The different themes on which the essays focus are illustrative of the diversity characterising the representation of this region, and it does therefore undermine any impression of a unified body of texts reflecting all realms experience. However, this volume aims at making a contribution to the significant advancement of innovative studies that take as their field of enquiry the historical circumstances of exploration and colonisation of Patagonia, and the cultural, political and economic outcomes of these processes.<sup>30</sup> The most recent and accomplished example of this line of research is the historical work of Susana López in *Representaciones de la Patagonia: Colonos, Científicos y Políticos (1870–1914)*.<sup>31</sup> From a different approach, Ernesto Livon-Grosman’s *Geografías Imaginarias*<sup>32</sup> is

30 However, narratives of travel and exploration on Patagonia have received little academic coverage in English. Scholarly work is limited to a handful of journal articles such as Joy Longan, “Discovering the ‘Real’: Travels in Patagonia”, *Romance Studies* 21 (1993): 63–70; Gabriela Nouzeilles’s “Patagonia as a Borderland: Nature, Culture, and the Idea of the State”, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8.1 (1999): 35–48; and Eva-Lynn Alicia Jagoe, “Patagonian Peripheries”, *Studies in Travel Writing* 7.1 (2003): 29–45. See also, Gabriela Nouzeilles, “Desert Dreams: Nomadic Tourists and Cultural Discontent”, trans. Jens Andermann, in Jens Andermann and William Rowe, eds, *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture and the State in Latin America*. Berghahn Books: New York & Oxford, 2005.

31 La Plata: Ediciones al Margen, 2003.

32 Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2003.

the first attempt to devote a single work to the study of travel narratives on Patagonia. Livon-Grosman includes in his critical reading the narratives of Antonio Pigafetta, Thomas Falkner, Charles Darwin, Francisco P. Moreno and W. H. Hudson.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, there are numerous and valuable attempts to unsettle the notion of an homogenous Patagonian region by producing scholarly works that attest to the cultural, social and political diversity of Patagonia and the many perspectives from which the wealth of material available can be read.<sup>34</sup> The most important lesson to learn from such scholarly endeavours is that the Patagonian myths have become important not because of the historical truths they seem to elude, but rather because of the significance they have in spite of such historical truths.

The philosophical foundations on which this volume rests can be perhaps better exposed by reminding ourselves that, if studies on the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of culture ought to contribute to a change of existing relations of power, it is necessary to stop seeking “the most desolate of places”, and start “inhabiting” them with overlapping and complementary critical perspectives. This volume is simply a small contribution to creating new analytical spaces for the seemingly ubiquitous mythical Patagonia, so that the region can be read not only as a blank screen where fantasies of all kinds can be projected but also as a site of contested meanings and cultures.

33 Livon-Grosman's work holds the merit of being the first to make the explicit link between the discursive investments that created the political and cultural visions of Patagonia and the expansion of the frontier. However, because he attributes to the narratives chosen the status of “foundational narratives”, he leaves out those that seem undeserving of a thorough critique. Hence the Welsh Diaspora, the Anglican missionary enterprise and George Muster's ethnographic travelogue are left out. But what probably constitutes the most problematic omission in his work is that of the female voice. There is no acknowledgement of the role women like Lady Florence Dixie and Eluned Morgan played in the fabrication of the myth he sets out to disentangle.

34 One should include here the already mentioned work of Graciela Blanco Susana and Gladys Varela, eds., *Hecho en Patagonia: La historia en perspectiva regional*. Neuquén: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional del Comahue, 2005; as well as Aixa Bona and Juan Vilaboa, eds., *Las formas de la política en la Patagonia: El primer peronismo en los Territorios Nacionales*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.