

Lunfardos: Queerness, Social Prophylaxis, and the Futures of Reproduction in Fin-de-Siècle Argentine Dramaturgy

Carlos Gustavo Halaburda

“¡Crónica cruel y descarnada, que presenta debilidades de vida y fortalezas de muerte! [...] Desfile de vicios ¡de muchos vicios! Trasunto de crueldades inconscientes y de maldades meditadas, pensadas y realizadas con la perversidad de una degeneración en actividad [...]. La teoría negra, el desfile macabro, serían interminables. Por eso hago síntesis” (García Velloso 2). Such are the opening lines of the play *En el barrio de las ranas* (1910) by the Argentine playwright Enrique García Velloso. In this dramatic chronicle, he presented Buenos Aires as a purgatory in which an active process of degeneration was deteriorating the social tissue. His work displayed quasi-liturgical acclamations to define bodies that carried the stigma of difference: “Para ellos pido más que penas, misericordia: son escorias del hervidero social” (2). The playwright’s sermon would then pronounce a final homily: “Caiga vuestra mirada misericordiosa o vengativa, indiferente o interesada sobre las pasiones del Hampa” (2). From such effective preachment, the public seems to become a prophylactic community in holy struggle against the reproduction of the “scum.” By the time of Argentina’s 100th anniversary of her first independent government (1810-1910), and in the context of a triumphalist fable of prosperity eclipsed by the irruption of the cosmopolitan masses, traditionally associated by the elites with anarchy and deviance, theatre began to dramatize the intensification of political conflicts and national crises.¹

En el barrio de las ranas represented the lives of a group of marginalized subjects who survived by begging and precarious jobs such as theft and prostitution. The story takes place in one of the first urban settlements, Las ranas, a landfill from the late nineteenth century in the south of Buenos Aires, abandoned by 1917 (Snitcofsky 286). The play expressed anxiety



En el barrio de las ranas (1910) by Enrique García Velloso. Magazine cover. *La escena*, 1921. Argentine Theater and Literary Periodicals. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

over the integrity of the Argentine population. Inspired by the latest expert knowledge, García Velloso, like many other playwrights of the time, dramatized the narratives of psychiatry and criminology grouped in clinical literature under the concept of degeneration.²

Degeneration theory spread throughout South America, revolutionizing the scientific and literary circles of the turn of the century. Individuals bearing stigmata inherited from their descendants were classified as degenerates, as disease was conceived as a collective and intergenerational phenomenon. The deviation from intellectual and social progress was perceived as the decline of evolutionism and of the perfection of the human

species, a pervasive ideology that dominated Western centers of power and knowledge. In *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine* (1857), the French alienist Bénédict Augustin Morel argued that “the degenerate human being, if he is abandoned to himself, falls into a progressive degradation. He becomes [...] not only incapable of forming part of the chain of transmission of progress in human society, he is the greatest obstacle to this progress through his contact with the healthy portion of the population” (quoted in Shorter 229). By the end of the century, the physician and social critic Max Nordau published his essay *Degeneration* (1892), where he argued that the *fin de siècle* was a sick and decadent time resulting from the vertiginous changes of modernity.³ As an expanding bibliography about mental disorders emphasized that social chaos could be explained through biological inheritance, the truth-producing apparatuses of medicine metastasized through vast transnational networks of scientific innovation and aesthetic experiments that determined the development of Latin American legal medicine and culture.⁴ And as a symptom of early

1900s Argentine drama, the interests of the lettered elite over the reproductive futures of the nation seen as a future-oriented living organism would build a peculiar theatrical archive of eccentric forms of life associated with the unfit.

This article explores a series of dramatic texts that, like García Velloso's play, staged the lives of the extremely impoverished and destitute in the context of an emerging modernity in the Río de la Plata, a group whom a series of scientific and literary works, including criminology, psychiatry, philology, and dramaturgy, called *lunfardos*.⁵ Trash pickers, sex workers, unwanted immigrants, petty criminals, beggars, and marginalized children composed a living tapestry that illustrated the conditions of homeless life and its successive displacements and migrations. In addition to *En el barrio de las ranas*, I engage with Enrique de Vedia's *Transfusión* (1914)—a novel written almost entirely in dialogue form—and with the plays *¡Al campo!* (1902) by Nicolás Granada and *Yerba Mala* (1908) by José Enéas Riú. These writings warned of the endangered biological futures of healthy sectors of the population. Before the emergence in the political field of figures of deviance and crime, drama culture put on a show to suggest that Argentine society needed to be defended against the abnormal. Animated by dreams of social prophylaxis, these fictions suggested that deviant forms of life were disassociated from progress.

A queer reading of the *lunfardo*'s staging seeks to interrogate the prophylactic reason that constituted the structure of the dramas of degeneration. The theatre of the early twentieth century assigned itself the task of producing performative enunciations to stage a eugenic program. This theatrical hygiene warned that degeneration proliferated through the reproductive transmission of forms of life unviable for national progress. As Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba argues, "queer studies are not only about self-representation of the queer subject but also about a circulation of queerness in the production, reception, prohibition, and disruption that occur within the patriarchal realm" (78). This transgression of the normative that the *lunfardo* as a queer and non-hegemonic body produces in the symbolic space of inclusions and exclusions that we call the nation is the point of departure of this critique. In this respect, I use the terms queer and *lunfardo* as interchangeable notions that relate sexual dissidence to a perceived disability. As Paul B. Preciado argues, "las nociones de heterosexualidad y homosexualidad aparecen en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, [...] prácticamente en el mismo momento, entre los años 1830 y 1850, que aparecen también las nociones modernas de deficiencia y discapacidad, física, psíquica, entendidas como patologías"

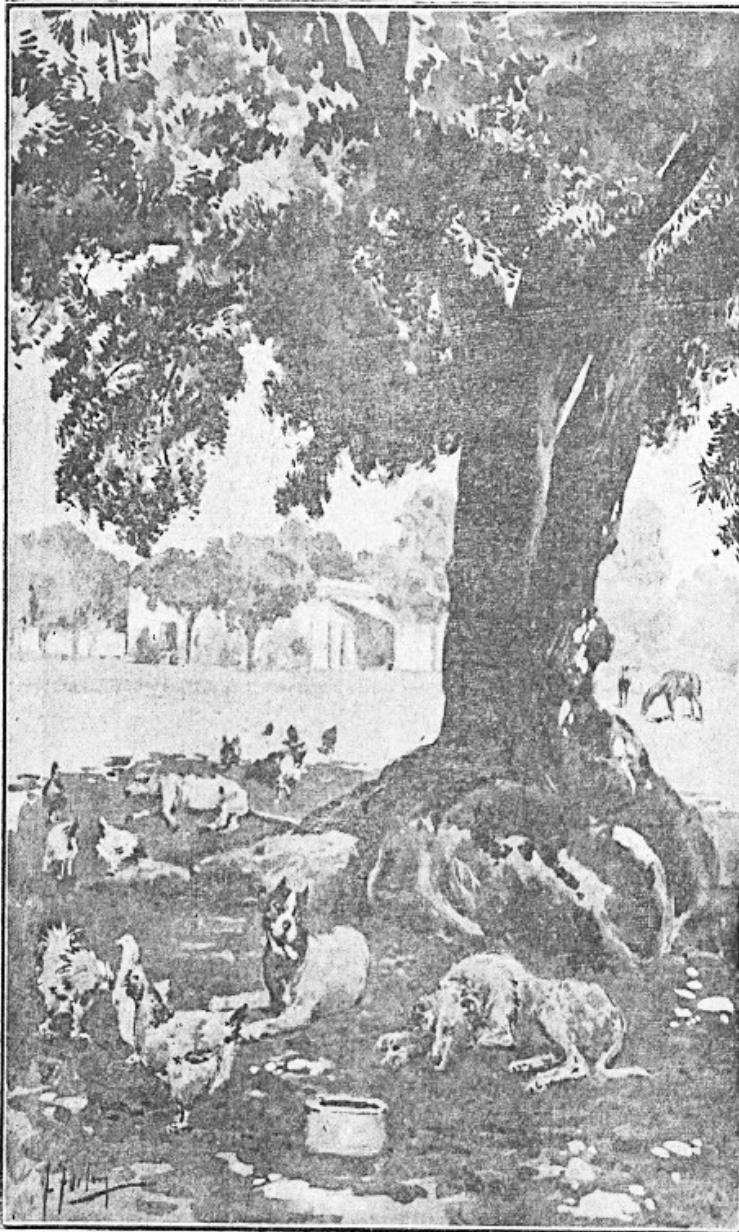
(¿*La muerte de la clínica?* 11). Tracing the dramatic construction of sexual transgression and “unfitness” will also show the different ways of putting onto the stage bodies that were designated as disabled, as reproductive transmitters of harm, as bio-conductors from which degeneration would reproduce in the next generations. The government of *lunfardo* life would not be carried out by biopolitical techniques, that is, by technologies of power that Michel Foucault called strategies for optimizing life. The works in question will instead call for a thanatopolitical plan of action, that is, a mode of administration of bodies destined to perish in order to prevent their reproductive futurity.

A Scatological Invasion: Nativism and the Migrant as Impurity

“—¡Pero! ¿qué es lo que hay? — repitió Ricardo.— Dos gringos, che—le contestó Melchor, — dos bribones... que quieren pasar aquí la noche.— ¿Y...? déjalos...— ¡ Ni pienso!... Vaya, Baldomero, y hágalos salir del campo...” (Vedia 15). In perhaps one of the most exemplary dialogues of the dramatic literature on migration in early twentieth-century Argentina, Melchor, a man of the landed class who takes shelter in his *estancia* from Buenos Aires’ chaos, orders his foreman, the *gaucho* Baldomero, to throw the immigrants off his land and out of the Pampas. The passage is quoted from a preview chapter of the dramatic novel *Transfusión* by Enrique de Vedia, a renowned journalist of the newspaper *La Nación* and the principal of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires between 1902 and 1911. First serialized in the weekly magazine *La vida moderna* in 1908 and then published in book form a few years later, *Transfusión* (1914) portrays the Pampas as the last refuge of the *criollo* oligarchy. The dialogue captured the sensibility of a social class that looked to the foreigner as the expression of an irruption capable of infringing damage to the homeland. In figure 2, the bucolic image that illustrates the passage contrasts with the apocalyptic tone of Melchor, who claims: “Olor a porquería; tal es, precisamente, el olor a ciudad... me gusta Buenos Aires para pasar breves temporadas; ¡pero me sofoca la vida entre más de un millón de personas que se agitan, hablan, se mueven, atropellan, contagian, pegan, muerden!” (Vedia 39-40). According to David Viñas, the contagion of the multitudes spread out in the Buenos Aires of the *belle époque*, turning the city into a degraded territory (*Anarquistas* 16). The possibility of having to integrate a strange agent into the Pampas would release a specter, an unassimilable difference. The foreigner threatened to extend his transgression and make the nation unrecognizable to itself.⁶

Contemporary criticism thought of *Transfusión* as a piece of “bella concepción dramática” (Murguiondo, “Prefacio” 10). The plot revolves

TRANSFUSION. (Del libro en prensa de Enrique de Vedia, que aparecerá en breve)



mente sobre el sol, encimóle una arizada de nubes que lo velaron un poco, mientras el grueso de la tempestad proyectaba á lo lejos negras sombras que se disipaban á trechos cada vez que del seno de las nubes partía el repentino fogonazo de un relámpago, cuya luz se mostraba por grandes faros en la sombra del suelo, á manera de los que se abren en los camalotes ó en las algas que cubren aguas tranquilas, cuando se arroja sobre ellos una piedra.

De pronto cruzó una ráfaga de aire fresco que se aceleró por instantes, intensificándose hasta disolver los grupos de sofocadas gallinas, levantar torbellinos danzantes de polvo, sacudir los ramajes y aun tober las copas de los mismos ombúes gruesos y anchos, como una satisfacción sardesca.

Las palomas salieron del sopor en que habían dormitado, lanzándose en bandadas á combatir con las rachas, como los escuadrillas que evolucionaran en un mar agitado, para regresar al puerto en línea de combate, por rumbos contrarios.

De pronto, también, las copas de los árboles volieron á su posición recta; el polvo quedó en suspensión descendiendo lentamente sobre el suelo; las haciendas levantaron la cabeza como investigando la causa de aquel cambio; los caballos relincharon una protesta; el sol brilló de nuevo ruceroso y candente; la tormenta había pasado en su rosal ruta parabólica rumbo al poniente, donde pareció detenerse como á esperar al sol.

Balbonero, de pie en la puerta de su dormitorio, dijo, prendiéndose el cinturón que sujetaba sus bombachos, y mirando á la tormenta:

— ¡Ah, canalla!... No quisiste descargar... Si la seca se afirma... yo no sé que va á ser...

Y como si la tormenta, envuelta en el congelamiento de sus cirrus, obedeciera á su voz, empezó á moverse hacia el sud siguiendo la línea del horizonte, lentamente, casi agazapándose, como si quisiera realizar un movimiento envolvente para tomar al sol por retaguardia, mientras éste seguía en su aparente caída diurna.

Al llenar el cuadrante que recorría, la tormenta esplegó sus arañadas hacia el zenit, desarrollándose en toda su amplitud, y á medida que el sol descendía á su ocaso ella ocupaba la imponderable inmensidad del cielo, anticipando y obscureciendo la luz crepuscular de aquella tarde.

Cuando el sol se hundía, como una enorme elipse roja tras las capas atmosféricas que ondulaban sobre el suelo, la tormenta, silenciosa, solemne, triunfal, descargó sus primeras gotas, que amplias y gruesas golpeaban en los ramajes y levantaban del suelo tenues circujillos de polvo finísimo.

Sin relámpagos, sin truenos, la

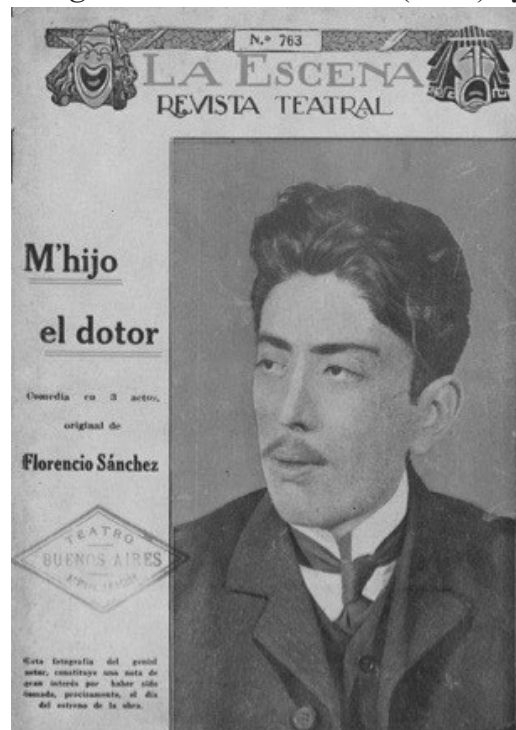
Bucolic image of the countryside in Centennial Argentina. Preview chapter of *Transfusión* by Enrique de Vedia. *La vida moderna*, 1908. Cultural Magazines of Latin America. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

around Ricardo and Lorenzo, two friends afflicted by the evils of the city, who travel to Melchor's *estancia*. Melchor would then act as the spiritual source of healthy blood to be transfused to his friends' ill bodies: "la salud espiritual de Melchor [será] absorbida por Ricardo y por Lorenzo, los que a su vez le han dado a respirar a sus almas enfermas" (Murguiondo, "Prefacio" 10). Among the many concerns that would arise from their extensive conversations, the *criollo* health and vigor that contrasted with European decadence would take on special relevance. Melchor argues: "los gringos: se perfeccionan aquí entre nosotros... [Europa] nos manda residuos cloacales y nuestra vitalidad social los depura" (Vedia, *Transfusión* [1914] 68). In this passage, scatological metaphors are used by de Vedia to characterize immigrants. The sewer personified in the figure of the *gringo* links a corrupt matter with the newcomers. The impure world of the cosmopolitan innards is confronted with a clinical gaze that purifies, perfects, and gives new vitality. In *Transfusión*, Argentina becomes the sanitary hospital of the Old World's plebs.⁷ The men of the oligarchy not only cured themselves of the urban evils that afflicted them; they also believed to hold a power to immunize the territory against the "plagues" that arrived from the other side of the Atlantic.

De Vedia's dialogues were never adapted for the theatre, although the critic Alejandro V. Murguiondo expressed "el deseo de verla hecha carne y hueso en la escena de un teatro" (11). But *Transfusión*'s epidemiological outlook would be deployed on the Buenos Aires' dramatic scene in multiple plays to give expression to bodies perceived as deviant and infectious, as *lunfardos*. In mid nineteenth-century Buenos Aires, the term *lunfardo* referred to members of the lower classes associated with street crime. The concept has a long history, particularly in medico-legal texts. In 1879, Benigno Baldomero Lugones, a writer for the Police Department, published in *La Nación* a group of texts where he theorized about criminal activity and forms of *lunfardo* language. A few years later, *Galería de ladrones de la capital* (1887) by José Sisto Álvarez (Fray Mocho) became one of the first Argentine books on criminal anthropology. By the end of the century, Luis María Drago in *Los hombres de presa* (1888) and Antonio Dellepiane in *El idioma del delito. Contribución al estudio de la psicología criminal* (1894) contributed with a study of crime in Buenos Aires, in which they included the first dictionary of *lunfardo* slang. The criminological construction of the popular classes responded to a need to keep the city clean from the "impurities" of peripheral areas. A diversity of behaviors was condensed in the phenomena of alcoholism, begging, vagrancy, prostitution, and simulation, this last a medical notion paired with

homosexuality.⁸ These so-called immoral behaviors gave rise to the notion of *la mala vida*, an intermediate area between crime and insanity (Conde 40).

Scholarship on nativist dramaturgy has explored Centennial Argentina's dreams of "peace and administration" and racial purity, slogans of The Generation of '80, the political elite that modernized the nation. Nativist ideology turned into an aesthetic manifestation that reacted against accelerated progress by turning to the Pampas as an idyllic space of agglutination of values and "identificación nacional" in the figure of the *gaucho* (Mogliani 36). As Ezequiel Adamovsky argues in his recent book, *El gaucho indómito. De Martín Fierro a Perón* (2019), popular *criollismo* had a socio-critical component but held deeply xenophobic views against immigrants: "la crítica al gringo y el lamento por la postergación del gaucho son explícitos e insistentes" (72). On the other hand, theatre historian Osvaldo Pellettieri examined the transformation of the criminal *gaucho* in *Juan Moreira* (1886) by Eduardo Gutiérrez and José Podestá into the good man in *Calandria* (1896) by Martiniano Leguizamón. *Calandria* inspired a series of works in which the *gaucho* underwent a metamorphosis: from being the irredeemable bandit of the Pampas, he became a responsible citizen and a faithful ally of the landed oligarchy. *La piedra del escándalo* (1902) by Martín Coronado and *Jesús Nazareno* (1902) by Enrique García Velloso reinforced the Argentine fin-de-siècle moralizing realism that would reach its ultimate expression in *M'hijo el dottor* (1903) and *Barranca abajo* (1905) by Florencio Sánchez. In these dramatic tales of national unification, tradition (the Pampas), and progress (the city) find a consensus through allegories of marriage between the peasant woman and the educated *criollo* from Buenos Aires (Pellettieri 22).⁹



M'hijo el dottor (1903) by Florencio Sánchez. Magazine cover. *La escena*, 1933. The legend reads: "Esta fotografía del genial autor constituye una nota de gran interés por haber sido donada, precisamente, el día del estreno de la obra." Argentine Theater and Literary Periodicals. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

Sánchez's social universe, more than staging a sensationalized urban underworld, told the lives of peasants, students, workers, housewives, land speculators, construction workers, bankers, judges, and policemen. This portrayal of petty-bourgeois existence differed from the stories of crime and deviance of the *teatro orillero*, also known as *drama criollo*, which irradiated extraordinary sources of energy and disturbance. Domingo Casadevall explains:

El teatro orillero está considerado, con razón, como una consecuencia del teatro gauchesco. Los tipos sociales de la campaña argentina tuvieron sus símiles en los arrabales porteños: el gaucho bueno y malo, el paisano y el semi gaucho rurales correspondieron en los suburbios de Buenos Aires, respectivamente, al guapo, al malevo, al orillero laborioso y a la especie del compadrito ducho en las mil maneras de “parar la olla” [eating] de cada día. (30)

On the stage, dramatists of the *teatro orillero* thematized non-normative sexual practices, drug trafficking, organized crime, smuggling, gang violence, and sexual slavery, themes that the realist novel remained reluctant to present to its bourgeois readers. A significant example of how the novel reflected on *orillero* theatre is the elite's reaction against the gloom of the *orillas* expressed in *Nacha Regules* (1919) by Manuel Gálvez. This classic melodrama tells the romance of a wealthy man, Fernando Monsalvat, and Nacha Regules, a woman who tries to abandon *la mala vida* and who finds redemption through a sacrificial love for the *porteño* gentleman. In a typical conversational scene of the realist novel, a lady complains: “Ah, pero al Odeón no se puede ir! [...] No se vé en el escenario sino gente mala... Es una ofensa la que hacen a los abonados, obligarlos a oír dramas entre obreros, atorrantes, ladrones, ¡toda la chusma, en fin!” (81). The *orillero* drama, indeed, was a combustion chamber nourished by the crudest form of realism, representing what Gálvez's aristocratic woman refers to as “la chusma”: “conventillos, borrosas y agresivas figuras de inmigrantes, escenografías barriales, obreros, el gangoseo de los ladrones, huelgas, trabajo humillante, encierro, penumbra. Gorki muy cerca [...] [y] el rezago naturalista surgiendo por todas las fisuras,” in the words of David Viñas (*Literatura argentina* 81-82).

For some medical experts, the dramatization of crime constituted in itself an offence against decency. In his 1904 essay, “Estudios sobre el suicidio en Buenos Aires. La influencia de la edad y del sexo,” the physician Fermín Rodríguez wrote in the journal *Archivos de Psiquiatría y Criminología*:

Por curiosidad he asistido a una representación del incalificable drama criollo. En una de esas escenas en que tan solo se escucha la respiración jadeante de los combatientes y el ruido de los aceros, he visto a un niño de familia respetable, levantarse electrizado de entusiasmo, su cuerpo rígido hacia adelante, la pupila dilatada y los hermosos rizos esparcidos sobre su frente que iluminaba un fuego interior, admirable modelo de un David vengador, hasta prorrumpir en ronco grito de salvaje alegría, ante el triunfo de su héroe y un cuerpo humano que caía pesadamente, en la simulación de una instantánea muerte. ¡Qué triste enseñanza! Esas representaciones, dignas de reprobación, estimulan y despiertan los instintos brutales que dormitan en la organización humana, que parecerían el indicio oculto de una bestialidad atávica.¹⁰ (5)

As Rodríguez points out, this “atavist” dramaturgy, so far removed from Florencio Sánchez’s stories, provoked eccentric body responses. It exacerbated the primitivism of the public, a phenomenon that educators and intellectuals in official circles dreaded. Scandalous works such as *Los invertidos* (1914) by José González Castillo, *Gracia plena* (1919) by Alberto Weisbach, *Los dopados* (1922) by Alberto Weisbach and Raúl Doblas, *Los dos caminos* (1921) by Julio Escobar, and *El degenerado* (1910) by Emilio Lola portrayed homosexuality, drug consumption, infanticide, prostitution, fortune-telling, gambling, alcoholism, and suicide. This thematic spectrum sensationalized Buenos Aires’ underworld and soon became a theatrical phenomenon that the elites condemned in their moralizing campaigns.

However, despite Rodríguez’s intention to protect future generations from the perverse influence of the arts, *orillero* theatre held a paradox. Its ability to stimulate low instincts did not prevent its rhetoric from being disciplinary and didactic at the same time. Although it sensationalized the abnormal, it also demanded preventive methods to defend society against it. Far from being a licentious celebration of the queer *arrabales* seeking to corrupt its audience, it shared the concerns of medical-legal circles about national health. *Orillero* theatre, like other symbolic spaces used in the hunt for degenerates, borrowed from the representational machine of psychiatry. As Foucault points out, with modernity, the government of the masses needs to guarantee socially intelligible individuals.

With the term biopolitics, in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Foucault accounts for the modern processes in which the natural life of the individual



Los invertidos (1914) by José González Castillo. Magazine cover. *El teatro argentino*, 1920. Argentine Theater and Literary Periodicals. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

began to be integrated into the techniques of a political power oriented toward optimizing life. The body would be “imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population” (139). Essential to this differentiation between the optimal and the abnormal was psychiatric racism: “The new racism specific to the twentieth century, this neoracism as the internal means of defense of a society against its abnormal individuals, is the child of psychiatry [which]... essentially functions as social defense or, to adopt the terms of the nineteenth century, which functions as a hunt for ‘degenerates’” (Foucault, *Abnormal*

317). *Orillero* theatre orchestrated these eugenic phantasies by staging what Foucault defined as “the numberless family of perverts who were on friendly terms with delinquents and akin to madmen. In the course of the century, they successively bore the stamp of ‘moral folly,’ ‘genital neurosis,’ ‘aberration of the genetic instinct,’ ‘degenerescence,’ or ‘physical imbalance’” (*History of Sexuality* 40). The fact that theatre in Argentina began to pay attention to this queer family is proof of the international alliance between medical science, the arts, and police power in general to have a sanitary control over queerness.

In line with *Transfusión, ¡Al campo!* by Nicolás Granada exploits the recurrent motif of perversion that finds its battlefield in a territory in dispute: the skin of the *criollo* woman. Granada wrote plays and poems and was a renowned journalist, politician, and soldier. On September 26, 1902, the

Hermanos Podestá Company premiered the play. Like García Velloso's *En el barrio de las ranas*, it had its successful debut in the Apolo Theater. *¡Al campo!* dramatized the erotic tension between two *criollos*, Gilberta (Lea Conti) and Gabriel (José Podestá).¹¹

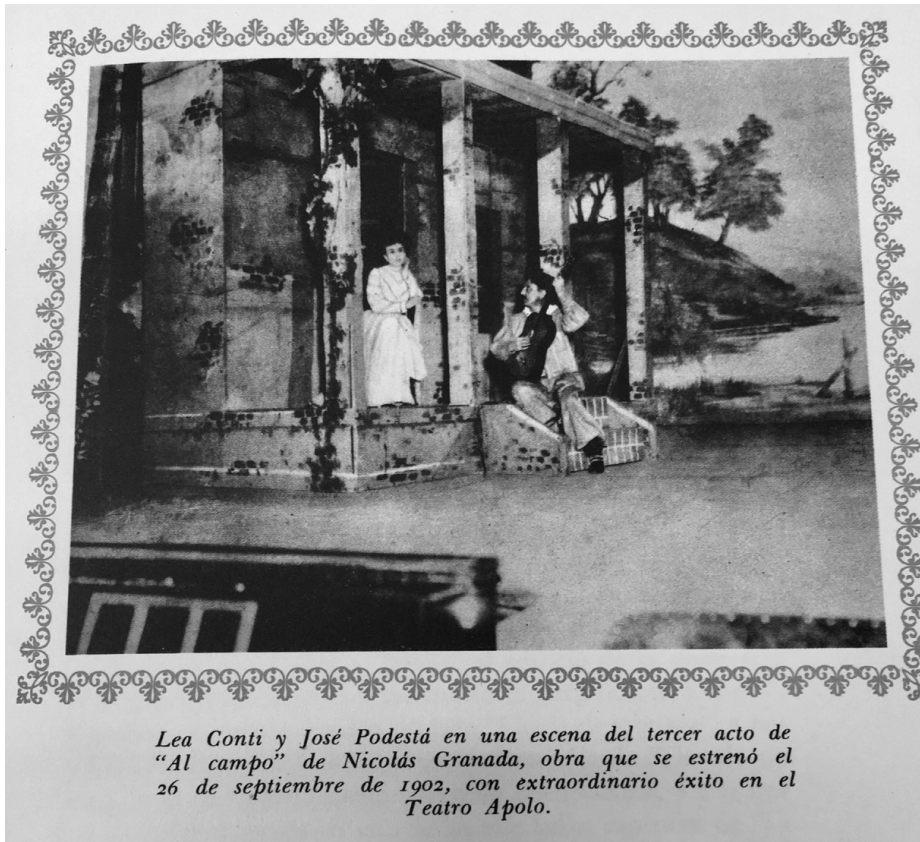
The plot of *¡Al campo!* offers a productive space in which to trace how the hygienic imagination intersected with nativist feelings. The *patroncito* Gabriel's enduring love for Gilberta, the heiress of the *estanciero* Don Indalecio (Pablo Podestá), expresses a desire to strengthen the futures of privilege for the landed class. Gilberta travels to the city with her mother, Doña Fortunata, to assist Don Indalecio, who needs a doctor's appointment. But Gilberta would soon refuse to return to the *estancia*. She falls prey to the charm of the cosmopolitan Buenos Aires "tomada" by foreigners. Gabriel travels from the purity of the countryside to the "infected" city to rescue the body of the maiden from whom the new and progressive nation would be born, as the play allegorically implies. Gabriel characterizes the city as a furious Babylon of polyglots, clowns, and vicious profiteers: "venir a la ciudad a vestirse de barrilete, a hablar en gringo, y a asolar las calles en coche como compañía de pruebistas anunciando la función" (17). The city is for the young *criollo* the space of racial miscegenation, of "purito mestizaje," a space of circuses and excesses of the body, of *gringos* "cuatrerros," and "farsantes" who "andan atrás de los cueros ajenos" (17). This fear of the mixture of races was the Argentine response to an expanding migratory influx. As Sylvia Molloy notes,

En general, la "simiente" de cualquier clase debe ser considerada en el contexto de la inmigración en general, esa "plebe ultramarina," como la llama [Leopoldo] Lugones. El miedo a la mala semilla es, precisamente, uno de los temas elegidos por la ficción del período, una mala semilla que frecuentemente aparece más asociada con la pérdida de la nacionalidad que con su refuerzo. (140)

Indeed, in *¡Al campo!*, the bodies of the *criollo* class are presented as the private property of the oligarchy, as bodies forbidden to the migrant mobs that carry "the poisoned seed." The theatrical complaint against the immigrant seen as a predatory criminal (*cuatrero*) pursuing "someone else's skin" is one of the most revealing enunciations of the play and its hygienic reason. Deployed as an aggressive contagious agent, the *gringo* was invested with a *lunfardian* identity. Granada's colonial gaze expressed panic at the image of incompatible skins. The male immigrant was staged as a possible threshold of transmission of degenerative defects. The uncontrollable sexuality of the

gringo threatened a future *criollo* mother who was reserved to guarantee the vitality and expansion of a racial group perceived to be outnumbered by the migratory influx. Ultimately, Gilberta, persuaded by her family circle, returns to the countryside to marry Gabriel amid the celebration of masters, *peones*, and servants who have become now allied together against the foreigner:

- GILBERTA: (*Toma dos paisanitos niños por las manos, y se adelanta hasta la batería*). ¡Gracias! ¡Muchas gracias!... Nos unimos, no tan solamente por nuestro amor, sino por el de ustedes, representado en estos niños, que son el porvenir. Esta es la verdadera caridad. Yo los educaré; él los enseñará a trabajar...
- DON INDALECIO: (*Con entusiasmo*). ¡Y ansina es que haremos patria! (*Vivas y aplausos de todos. Telón*). (44)



September 26, 1902. ¡*Al campo!* by Nicolás Granada. Premiere. Lea Conti and José Podestá. Photo from *Memorias de un hombre de teatro* by Enrique García Velloso. Kraft, 1942. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

Granada intersects romantic sentiments and remnants of Gauchesque poetry to idealize the *criollo* race in opposition to the cosmopolitan plebs. The playwright closes the sexual and reproductive circle of the landed elite in a native alliance against foreign races associated with queerness. In *¡Al campo!*, imagining the homeland depended on the enactment of a reproductive futurism premised upon a fear of the end of the species. The dangerous immigrant's seed linked to promiscuous sexuality resonates with Lee Edelman's theory of *sinthomosexuality*. Edelman uses this neologism to define queerness as a category of anti-sociality. *Sinthomosexuals* are understood as living examples of the impediment or extermination of collective projects: "[...] los *sinthomosexuales*, al igual que la pulsión de muerte que son obligados a representar —y obligados a representar en tanto que la pulsión evade y descompone a la representación—, ponen en peligro la supervivencia de la fantasía del amor [...]" (126). Indifferent to an idea of reproductive continuity, *sinthomosexuals* lack family attachment, as they undermine male heroes, heterosexual marriage, and the future progeny (Deutscher 95). In light of these formulations, *¡Al campo!* emerges as a fiction that staged bio-defensive mechanisms to preserve a reproductive regime. The *gringos* symbolized the inevitability of mortality as their sexuality was associated either with promiscuity and crime or with *mestizaje*, with the mixture of races that, in Granada's eugenic gaze, meant the proliferation of weak populations. The immigrant was invested with a power of death while the *criollo* child worked as an illusory continuity of life and the social order.

Granada's text runs through the bodies in search of a hierarchical organization of races. Its dramatic outlook identified the *criollo* female body that would preserve the racial configuration of the motherland. Husband and wife would then organize a series of knowledges about morality and work ethics that would shape the future of the national family: "él los enseñará a trabajar" (44). The future of the population depended on locating the disease, its distribution, its dynamics, its anatomy, in order to neutralize it. The evil was in the city, in the Babylonian Sodom where the *gringo* language was spoken and where the foreigner disregarded the regime of biological property. The allusion to the *lunfardo* lexicon of criminality, powered forward with a reference to sexual deviance, put into operation a conglomeration of discourses against immigrants. Gabriel, the *criollo* man responsible for ensuring the health of the native population, diagnoses the disease. He gives his medico-nativist sermon to Gilberta, whom he forces to return to her place of origin, the countryside: "¡Al campo! ¡A la estancia! ¡Allí sos una

raina; ¡aquí una mujer güena pa la diversión de los ociosos, o una mina pa los aprovechaos!” (17). The *gringo* introduced chaos in the administration of desires and reproductive futures. The Pampas, on the contrary, represented a place of origin, vigor, and discipline. The *criollo* union promised fertility and gave the audience a promise of good health.

In 1902, the same year that *¡Al campo!* premiered, the “Ley de Residencia,” written and sponsored by the writer and statesman Miguel Cané, led millions of immigrants to face the terror of deportation and exile. Cané and the lettered elite closed the native circles in their literary works through allegories of marriage. But they also promoted xenophobia in the laws that they sponsored as members of Congress. The Ley de Residencia allowed for the expulsion “de todo extranjero cuya conducta comprometa la seguridad nacional o perturbe el orden público” (quoted in Lafforge 457). The dramaturgy of nativist fantasies echoed the medico-legal discourses of order, security, and good conduct. The *drama criollo* looked to the foreigner as the agent capable of harming, a presence that fissured the peculiarities of the rigid world of *criollo* alliances.

Infected Waters: The Bare Life of Trash Pickers and Beggars

If the pressure of biological inheritance on the dramatic scheme shaped Granada’s text, epidemics and hunger would be the two great theatrical formulas in *En el barrio de las ranas* by García Velloso and *Yerba Mala* by José Enéas Riú. These plays enacted numerous uncertainties about the levels of productivity, health, and moral integrity of a territory in the process of modernization. The staging of vagrancy in García Velloso’s work unfolds through a common matrix of *orillero* theatre: the ordinary life of the *hampa*, the daily search for food in the garbage dumps, sexual exploitation, and violent robbery. The slum represented in the play is the historic Barrio de las ranas, also known as Barrio de las latas, in reference to the animals that inhabited the area and the precarious type of housing. According to historians, this settlement emerged around 1885 and is considered the first one in the city of Buenos Aires. It was located on the edges of the Matanza River, better known as the Riachuelo. The area was used for garbage accumulation (a *basural*), where residues were burned. “La quema,” as it came to be known, had a diverse population, including peoples of African descent, *mestizos*, Europeans, and indigenous groups (Paiva and Perelman 4-5).

As the initial didascalia that opens this essay shows, the play emulated a sort of criminological thesis in line with the medico-legal texts that circulated in scientific journals such as the aforementioned *Archivos*. The plot conveys

the dense interiority of the underworld, with characters that become a source of inspiration for Raimundo, a painter who confesses to his friend Benegas that he intends to immortalize in his canvas the decadence of the *orillas*:

RAIMUNDO: —Ya llegamos al término de nuestra peregrinación.
No dirás que has perdido la noche...

BENEGAS: —Ciertamente que no. Esto es fantástico...
Inverosímil.

RAIMUNDO: —Si te lo cuentan no lo crees, ¿verdad ?...

BENEGAS: —¿Aquello es la quema de basuras?

RAIMUNDO: —Sí. Desde la barranca de la casa de aislamiento no pudiste darte cuenta bien; porque la neblina envolvía el paisaje. ¿Confías ahora en el éxito de mi cuadro? Este es el escenario. Aquí viven mis personajes accesorios y mis protagonistas.

BENEGAS: —Lo que yo no concibo es cómo la autoridad permite estas madrigueras.

RAIMUNDO: —Desgraciadamente no hay fuego purificador para estos desperdicios, como para los otros. Aquí tienes tú una gran campaña periodística que podrías llevar a cabo. El día que desapareciera este hacinamiento de casillas lúgubres y trágicas, que prestan refugio al delincuente; que ofrecen facilidades a la vagancia, a la vida crapulosa, y que resumen el asilo de todas las depravaciones, la crónica del delito llegaría seguramente a ínfima expresión. (16)

Raimundo describes the bodies that live in *la quema* as bio-pollutants. The inhabitants are conceived as conduits through which there is a degraded transmission of life that proliferates in the mists and among the waste of the garbage dumps. Both the painter and Benegas maintain a vigilant gaze that identifies an active degeneration. The lives of Ñata, Walkiria, el Zurdo, el Manco, Melena, el Silletero, Lunfa, Tero, Chaucha, Piojito, Sabina, and the numerous *changadores* (trash pickers) embody the depravity that generates transmission thresholds that threaten to expand. Hence the request for state intervention, for the “purifying” authorities in the face of a diasporic danger.

The stigma that operates in the extreme impoverishment of the popular sectors cannot be understood without the hyper-sexualization of their bodies. The eviction of *la vida crapulosa* that Benegas requires from the

state responds to an administrative vision of the public space. Benegas condemns the reproduction of *lunfardos* as these non-hegemonic forms of life were associated with animality and put the civilizational curve in check. In this rewriting of Esteban Echeverría's *El matadero* (1838-1840), degeneracy would be represented by a racial conglomerate that stimulates the panic of hegemonic sectors of the imminent propagation of an infectious focus on barbarism.¹² The making of the painting where the slum would be immortalized anticipates its very disappearance. Raimundo rushes to make an aesthetic object out of the misery that he and Benegas, as *flâneurs* of the *orillas*, witness with fascination and disgust.

These lethargic forms of vagrant life that García Velloso creates through his liturgical commentaries trace a theatrical circuit of biblical allusions. Pilgrimages to the underworld and "purifying fires" form a fundamental core that results from the dramatization of a search for purity. A fixation with asepsis characterizes a text that conjugates religious tones with eugenic dreams. The calls for eradicating homelessness are made through messages about perversion, sin, contagion, and death. In sum, in 1902, with its panic of miscegenation, *¡Al campo!* had opened a racist circuit that de Vedia's *Transfusión* amplified through the motif of the "transatlantic pestilence." The circuit would be closed in García Velloso's drama of putrefaction. In *Las ranas*, the abject masses' biopolitical infringement takes shape in a colossal garbage dump awaiting its conflagration to ensure that only the fittest forms of life proliferate in the emerging republic.

The dramatization of social hygiene was a strategy to consolidate a national identity tied to productivity and optimal procreation. Those bodies incapable of adapting to the imperatives of work would be invested with a disability, which resulted from defective sexuality and its hereditary vices, from alcoholism and hysteria to homosexuality.¹³ The processes of invention of the sexual subject were not independent of the set of processes that imagined the body as capable or disabled. A queer reading of the treatment of disability in *orillero* theatre demonstrates the inseparability of the concept of sexual deviance from the colonial categories of the nineteenth-century clinic, as neurological, racial, and gender differences were the starting points in the making of mental and physical pathologies. As Paul B. Preciado points out: "Allí donde el movimiento queer o black analiza y deconstruye los procesos sociales y culturales que producen y estabilizan las relaciones de opresión sexuales, de género y raciales, el movimiento por la diversidad funcional

muestra que la discapacidad no es una condición natural, sino el efecto de un proceso social y político de discapacitación” (*Un apartamento en Urano* 175).

The stylistic perseverance of the theme of degeneracy in García Velloso extends to José Enéas Riú’s treatment of physical disability. *Yerba Mala* premiered in 1908, sponsored by Pablo Podestá’s theatrical company in the Marconi Theater. The text is organized around the story of El Pedigüeño (Pablo Podestá), an old man who maintains a romantic relationship with Nicasia (Herminia Maneini), a beggar who controls money stolen by her son, Lunfita. In the final scene, mother and son try to escape from the abuses of El Pedigüeño, but the woman dies at the hands of the old man, who says, “¡Serás mía o sino de la nada! ¡De los gusanos!” (30). The play is populated by “mendigos, inválidos, ladrones, mudos y ciegos, rengos y harapientos” (5). The initial didascalia talks about crippled bodies associated with animality and disease: “Las campanas desde antes de elevarse el telón llaman a misa. Los fieles de las diversas clases sociales pasan por medio de dos hileras de numerosos mendigos, horribles tipos de la fauna mendicativa que, al ostentar repugnantemente sus llagas, defectos y miserias, favorecidos por el lugar religioso, imploran a la caridad Cristiana” (5).

The text depicted the growing levels of deterioration of bodies, living in a zone of indistinction between life and death, amid the city’s most destitute people, as figure 6 shows. *Yerba Mala* staged lives that were banned, abandoned by the state’s sovereign power. Giorgio Agamben offers theoretical resources to understand how Argentine dramaturgy conceptualized mendicant lives as bodies to be banned in pursuit of the *criollo* population’s survival. Agamben explains that in Ancient Greece two words referred to life. One was *zōe*, the other *bios*. The first term defined only that which was barely living, that is, every mode of existence without self-realization: natural life. The second term referred to a qualified way of life (*Homo Sacer* 1). Biopower, the power over life, according to Agamben, aims at transforming life into mere productive and disposable matter reduced to natural existence. From such power emerges “bare life,” a life exposed to sovereign power and deprived of a *bios*. This, for Agamben, is the life of the *homo sacer* (*Homo Sacer* 8-9). Bare life suffers from the arbitrariness of both legal and illegal powers. For those in this ambiguous area, life becomes disposable:

He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but is rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and the law, outside

and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order. (*Homo Sacer* 28-29)

Political life is then canceled. The banned individual is exposed to death, condemned to remain on the threshold between bare life and the law, outside and within it. The banned subject lives as an outlaw. Reading Riú in Agamben's light shows how both dramatic literature and biopolitics were crucial political battlefields in early twentieth-century Argentina. *Yerba Mala* dramatized banned subjects, unable to govern their bodies, that is, disabled. The bare life of Riú's characters accounted for the explosion of the apparatuses of biopolitical control, that is to say, of all knowledge, legal practice, and institution that reduced the "behaviors, gestures and thoughts of human beings" to mere utilities and exchange value (Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?* 12). This series of apparatuses, along with the governmentalization of the state, produced populations of inert bodies deprived of praxis and led "to catastrophe" (*What is an Apparatus?* 24).

The biopolitical gaze that identified "las vidas repugnantes" in *Yerba Mala* operated by reinforcing such apparatuses of control and desubjetivation in the theatrical scene. Nicasia compels Lunfita to beg, but the young boy refuses, suggesting that petty theft is preferable to looking disabled: "Tengo vergüenza;" "Es que ya soy un hombre;" "Esos [los mendigos] han perdido la vergüenza;" "Yo soy fuerte, puedo vivir de otro modo;" "Prefiero ser ladrón que mendigo" (6). Nicasia responds with regret: "¡Ah muchacho, te da vergüenza! Cuando no nos queda otro camino pá cruzar la vida. ¡La vida!" (6). Nicasia's lamentations are a call for the resignation of the boy's agency under a biopolitical regime that produces bare life. In the theatrical arena, the *bios*, the qualified form of life, seems to remain cancelled, suspended for bodies staged as disposable.

While leaving the church, some ladies express their amazement at the excess of vagrant life: "¡Dios mío! Entre tantos no sé a quién favorecer;" "(*Con repulsión*) ¡Salga, por Dios, con solo mirarlo me da asco!" (7). The beggars supplicate: "Señora! Una limosna. Yo tampoco puedo trabajar. Mire, me caí del andamio! Tengo hijos chicos..." (8). The utterance of disgust at the worker's disabled body now turned into a beggar embodies an exemplary mode of the psychiatric gaze. Riú would distribute a vision of medical surveillance upon the pathologies of the urban space: "Usted, porque pide?" "Hubiera hecho fortuna cuando joven." Con el trabajo," a woman claims (7). "¡Oh, si he trabajado!... tanto que ni tiempo he tenido para formar familia,"



Pablo Podestá as El Pedigüeno. Hostech y Fortuni Editores, 1908. Argentine Theater and Literary Periodicals. Library collection of the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut, Berlin.

the disabled worker responds (7). The episode turns disability into a spectacle of revulsion. The vagrant body is objectified as popular entertainment while, ultimately, the theatrical exhibition of disability stages the social phobias of a wealthy sector of the population, mainly vagrancy and property crime. The play stages the new visibility of bare life in Centennial Argentina, the life of the *homines sacri*, foreigners to the nation, immersed in a regime of exploitation, exposed to death while their lives were merely valued according to the productivity of their bodies.¹⁴

En el barrio de las ranas, Transfusión, ¡Al campo!, and *Yerba Mala* considered Argentina as a territory in dispute. The political irruption of non-hegemonic bodies threatened to harm the nation. *¡Al campo!* identified in the *gringo* an

undisciplined form of life; the *gringos* disregarded the place they occupied in the universe of labor and desire. For Granada, the *gringo* was a queer form of life without a national family. His vehement body carried a desire that disputed the imperatives of reproduction of life that ensured both territorial security and the sexual status quo.

While Granada promoted a nativist-eugenic romance, García Velloso and Riú brought bare life up on the stage. Riú built his aesthetic laboratory from where he observed disabled lives. The *bios*, the political way of life, was reserved for subjects able to reproduce a healthy offspring, thereby securing collective futures. The beggar's life was instead portrayed as dehumanized, silent, solitary: "¡Sufrirás en una cueva negra, miserable, la amargura de estar sola! ¡sin amparo, aislada, como una leprosa, sin tener una sonrisa, una

palabra cariñosa, *como algo que vive muerto*, lejos de la vida! muy lejos!” says “con sentimiento” El Pedigüeño to Nicasia (11, emphasis mine). The mendicant experience is reduced to an indistinguishable zone between life and death, “lejos de la vida.”

The beggars turn into living dead. Neither dead nor alive, a threshold capable of causing terror in the rest of the vagabonds who become aware that such a state of suspension of life reaches them as well: “¿Acaso no estamos lejos de la vida?,” asks Nicasia. El Pedigüeño concludes: “Estamos... si! Pero más estaremos si no pensamos en unirnos.” “¡Sí, por la zanja del amor, como dos charcos, pá formar uno más grande que nunca se seque, que flote en su agua sucia como señal de vida, mucha yerba, aunque sea mala, mala!” (11). The dirty water accounts for a moment of maximum vulnerability for the population. The theatrical alert warns of an imminent corruption of the social body due to the presence of live pollutants. *Orillero* theatre enacted an epidemiological reason in order to control the vagrant life that rotted in water and that produced the diseases that a whole family of perversion shared: the mentally ill, the homosexual, the consumptive, the prostitute, the syphilitic, the neurotic, the blind, the deaf-mute. Hence a queer critique of the play’s biopolitical reason, which produced and staged the drama of degeneration.

Conclusions: Theatre’s Social Prophylaxis

Orillero theatre pursued a hygienic model based on theatrical techniques of epidemiological control. The dramas examined bodies associated with disease, social impediment, and the interruption of collective futures. The theatrical prophylaxis borrowed from the languages of legal medicine to sterilize those spaces that remained on the threshold of the visible: garbage dumps, *arrabales*, and various kinds of rookeries, all of which gave shape to the peculiar scenography of the new dramatic enunciation of Centennial Argentina. The transmission of the social disease carried by racially and sexually subaltern individuals, whose origin lay in the “seed of degeneration,” was presented as the disability of a part of the national body that required preventive or eradication measures. Theatre became a laboratory of national sterilization. The dramatists of the Centennial suggested that the *orillas* were populated by forms of disabled life linked to animality and dysfunction. The hygienic statements, from purifying fires, calls for state authorities to eradicate burrows to images of human life degrading in rotten water, functioned as true dramatic manuals of a surgical procedure. The proposed therapy was to raise symbolic barriers mounted on both aesthetic and medical standards.

This prophylactic architecture accounted for what David Viñas called “la polarización cada vez más crispada entre los *beaux quartiers* y los llamados barrios bajos.” According to Viñas, this urban antagonism defined the spatial itineraries of *la mala vida*: “prostíbulos, fábricas, conventillos, mataderos, hospitales, morgues, cárceles y cementerios” (*Anarquistas* 15). The spatial configuration would require a disciplinary intervention that conjugated both theatrical and medical scripts. In 1910, the Argentine psychiatrist Francisco de Veyga published *Los lunfardos. Psicología de los delincuentes profesionales*. In this document, written as a training manual for the police, he argued for a program of social prophylaxis to protect Argentine society from degeneracy. His semantics of crime shared many similarities with the hygienic scripts written by García Velloso, de Vedia, Granada, and Riú:

Mi opinión es que de estos individuos, dada su falta absoluta de disciplinamiento y de apego al trabajo, poca cosa se podría obtener; sin contar que por su notoria invalidez mental, los oficios o funciones a que se les pudiera dedicar serían muy reducidos a la par que de muy reducido aprovechamiento... la reclusión perpetua, previa declaración de incapacidad civil, es la única solución legal y eficaz del problema profiláctico que he sentado. (31-32)

De Veyga’s book encapsulated the psychiatric imagination of the time captured by *criollo* dramaturgy. Associating optimal life with the nation, perceived as a future-oriented living organism, implied the diagnosis of non-normative lives as vectors of mortality and social backwardness. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this alliance between science and dramaturgy mounted a biopolitical fiction to restrict the multiplication of *lunfardo* life, which was seen as a thanatic surplus. In this sense, reading the *lunfardo* body as a conglomerate of deviance allowed a queer critique of theatrical statements that scripted degeneration through a disciplinary system of representation of race and sexuality in the context of migratory flows and major changes in the urban design of Buenos Aires.

Northwestern University

Notes

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The 1880-1916 era takes the name of Conservative Argentina, The Conservative Republic, or The Conservative Order, concepts coined by the Argentine historian Natalio R. Botana. The period was characterized by the leadership of *el roquismo*, a political movement led by the Generation of the 1880s and headed by Julio Argentino Roca (1843-1914), a politician, military leader, and president of the nation during two periods (1880-1886/1898-1904). With the Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN), Roca led the political class that modernized the republic under the motto “peace and administration” (See Botana). The extermination of indigenous peoples was Roca’s definitive plan of territorial reorganization to establish a new racial, economic, and political rationality. (See Viñas, *Indios, ejército y frontera*, 15-20).

² García Velloso, born in Rosario, Santa Fe province, was an author, professor, journalist, and first president of the Sociedad de Autores Dramáticos, which he founded in 1910. He premiered his first play in 1895 in Buenos Aires at age 15 and wrote 119 highly successful pieces in all genres, including collaborative works and translations. He published the three volumes of *El arte del comediante* in 1926, the year he became vice-director of the brand-new Conservatorio de Música y Declamación. In 1942 he published his *Memorias de un hombre de teatro* (Seibel 27). *En el barrio de las ranas* premiered on November 3, 1910, at the Apolo Theater. The newspaper *La Nación* noted: “No es una obra en el sentido franco de la palabra; [...] Y tan le consta ello al autor, que de crónica dramática, y no otra clasificación, ha dado él espontáneamente a su trabajo” (quoted in Castagnino 30). For a study of the intersections of literary naturalism, medicine, and degeneration theory in the Argentine cultural context, see Nouzeilles.

³ In addition, one of the most widely read medical manuals in 1800s Argentina was the *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865) by Claude Bernard, which began to be read in Buenos Aires around 1879. (See Schlickers 30).

⁴ For more on the reception of degeneration theory in turn-of-the-century Argentine medical circles, see Salessi.

⁵ For a philological study of *lunfardo* language, see Borges and Quesada. Francisco de Veyga, famous psychiatrist and editor of the journal *Archivos de Psiquiatría y Criminología*, wrote one of the first treatises on *lunfardo* life from a criminological perspective that illustrates the beginnings of eugenics in the Southern Cone. Domingo Casadevall examined the dramatic treatment of *lunfardo* life in *El tema de la mala vida en el teatro nacional* (1957).

⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, almost 50% of the population of Buenos Aires was immigrant. Between 1881 and 1914 more than 4,200,000 persons arrived in the port city, half of them Italian. The migratory context led to a sudden increase in population in urban areas without adequate infrastructure. Ideas about morality and social hygiene flooded the literature of the time. Discourses about pollution and disease deprived them of social mobility due to their supposed inability to assimilate to the “healthy body” of the nation. For demographic statistics and an examination of Argentine social history in the period in question, see De Torres.

⁷ It is necessary to clarify that the term “oligarchy” refers to a heterogeneous identity in the fin-de-siècle. Starting in 1880, the Buenos Aires elite reached a new social dynamism as a result of conflict resolutions that took place in the aftermath of the Civil Wars between Unitarios and Federales. The aristocracy, a class that stood out for its sumptuous lifestyle through certain consumption habits and behaviours, made a pact with the *patriciado*, that is, a select group of families of colonial lineage that led

the Wars of Independence. For some historians, this union gave origin to the oligarchy, a social class and a political group that differentiated from *el pueblo* (the pleb), composed by the new multiethnic masses. See Losada and Ramos.

⁸ For a study of simulation and crime, see Ingenieros.

⁹ Jorge Dubatti further explains Sánchez's political stance: "La tesis de Sánchez propone que tradicionalismo y modernización, la doxa arraigada en la visión de mundo del hombre común y el intelectualismo ideológico innovador deben equilibrarse, influirse mutuamente, aspecto que se sintetiza en la pareja formada por Jesusa y Julio y el nacimiento futuro del hijo" (4).

¹⁰ The journal *Archivos de criminología, medicina legal y psiquiatría* (1902-1913) was one of the most renowned scientific publications in Latin American medical circles of the turn of the century. The journal was edited by the Italian-Argentine psychiatrist José Ingenieros.

¹¹ The newspaper *El Diario*, where Granada worked as a literary critic, stressed how the play attracted "numerosas familias conocidas." President Julio Argentino Roca himself and his ministers, among them Joaquín V. González, Senator Carlos Pellegrini, and Benito Villanueva, president of the Chamber of Deputies, visited the dressing room to congratulate the director José Podestá. As Beatriz Seibel suggests, "esta obra señala la transformación de los actores, que abandonan los arreos gauchos y visten la indumentaria ciudadana" (21).

¹² As Salessi argues, "*El matadero* de Esteban Echeverría, [es] el texto que connotó la barbarie como sodomítica en los "Corrales" insalubres de Navarro, en el espacio del procesamiento de la carne donde se confundieron promiscuamente la muerte y los cuerpos de personas y animales de género dudoso" (54-55).

¹³ Homosexuality and immigration are closely related in the clinical literature of the time. In 1908, police chief and writer Adolfo Batiz published *Buenos Aires, la rivera y los prostíbulos en 1880*, where he presented his ideas about immigration and sexuality. As Salessi notes, in Batiz, "era notable, además, una adjudicación de roles en la identificación de una pederastía italiana "activa" que seducía a una juventud argentina de 'pederastas pasivos'" (252).

¹⁴ For more on the spectacularization of disability, see Antebi.

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