



## Turn-of-the-Century Buenos Aires: A Capital of Queer Spectacles

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The Latin American capitals of the late nineteenth century exhibited a triumphalist image of unquestionable progress. The redesign of boulevards, opera houses, *plazas* and sumptuous mansions in Havana, Mexico City, Caracas, Bogotá, Lima and Santiago de Chile gave a distinguished contour to the new cosmopolitan cityscapes.<sup>1</sup> In Argentina, the city of Buenos Aires showcased an architectural revolution. The urban layout now appeared as an assembly of fractions taken from various European cities. The great avenues resembled those of Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. In wealthy neighbourhoods, French-style *petits hôtels* abounded; public buildings featured neoclassical and *art deco* facades; the Government House displayed an Italian style, while the iconic Colón Theater and the Palace of the Argentine National Congress displayed an eclectic elegance (Sarlo 2007, 31). Buenos Aires' splendour resulted from the economic and political consolidation of the Argentine conservative elites, which

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A. Bhattacharya et al. (eds.), *Literary Capitals in the Long  
Nineteenth Century*, Literary Urban Studies,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13060-1\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13060-1_4)

reached a radical dynamism in the aftermath of the Civil Wars (1814–1880) between the port city and the provinces. Among the many projects, the Buenos Aires Great Southern Railway (BAGS) (Ferrocarril del Sud) became a powerful symbol of Argentine modernisation (Lewis 1983), and by the turn of the century, British railways in Argentina were one of the most influential companies for foreign investment in Latin America. The Argentine Generation of 1880, a group of intellectuals and political leaders educated in the positivist doctrine, designed a modern republic that looked with optimism at the advance of industrial capitalism, at the arrival of millions of transatlantic immigrants, and the agro-export boom that placed Argentina on the list of wealthy nations. Modernisation, in this particular form, required the adoption of French and British secular principles of scientific innovation, while eliminating from the national imaginary old beliefs rooted in the Spanish-colonial tradition, the memory of enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants, and the indigenous past. But soon, behind the lights of promising modernity, emerged the gloomy discontent of displaced minorities inhabiting the slums that had multiplied in marginalised areas of the city (Viñas 1983, 17).

A remarkable body of critical scholarship about the Argentine turn of the century has shown that the growing clinical literature on vice and crime gave visibility to bodies and urban geographies dissociated from the modernising project (Salessi 1995, 126; Molloy 2012, 140; Yarfitz 2019, 20–40). Trash pickers, sex workers, unwanted immigrants, petty criminals, beggars and abandoned children composed a living tapestry that illustrated the conditions of destitute life. Inspired by Émile Zola's literary school, Argentine naturalism aestheticised the new European doctrines of Social Darwinism with the purpose of warning high society against territories and dissident forms of gender and sexuality that threatened order and progress (Halaburda 2021, 2). Urban peripheries were invested with a power of degradation. Medical discourses on hereditary degeneration saturated Argentine fiction (Laera 2004, 183). Pathologised uses of sex and racial miscegenation accounted for the broken dreams of prosperity projected by the *criollo*<sup>2</sup> nation builders. As Gabriela Nouzeilles argues, Argentine naturalism expressed anxieties about the future of the *criollo* lineages, seen as biological components of the nation. This fear over the cancellation of reproductive futures is part of the wider spectrum of discourses rooted in the form of ethnic nationalism, which 'adopted as its own the all-explanatory principles of racism and its strict criteria of visual discrimination. Once this interdiscursive pact was established, the nation's

ethnic narrative was organised according to the conventions of kinship narratives and the logic of blood ties' (2000, 21). However, I propose to momentarily leave aside discourses on degeneration as the dominant reading model of the Argentine late nineteenth century in order to turn attention to a spatial analysis of the production of queerness, which texts and cultural discourses of the time, inspired by the positivist school of legal medicine, would classify as 'deviance'. Insufficient attention has been given to how urban architecture became a cultural laboratory in order to explore issues of race, gender, sexuality, hygiene and social status during the solidification of the Argentine nation-state at the turn of the century.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I will examine how the literary mapping of Buenos Aires contributed to the cultural production of notions of queer. In particular, I shall explore an architectural polarisation of sexual overtones that takes place in the literary portrayals of private and public cartographies of the city.

The nineteenth-century Buenos Aires oligarchic families generated an aesthetic repertoire in response to a lingering feeling of being invaded by a queer force in their spaces of influence. The 'deviant' factor left a mark on the Argentine *fin de siècle*. The drive to maintain family honour became a national mandate to protect intimate milieus from an impending sense of external corruption (Viñas 1996, 61).<sup>4</sup> I argue that the literary making of heteronormative space depended on the queering of 'outsider' figures, particularly regarding stereotypical figurations of European immigrants, especially Spaniards, Italians and Jews. Drawing on the work of queer theorists Aaron Betsky (1997), Gayle Rubin (2012) and Paul B. Preciado (2017), I use the term 'queer force' to refer to the unstable, hybrid and elusive aggregation of an eroticised otherness that destabilised the pillars of social cohesion, racial endogamy and heteronormativity.<sup>5</sup> Besides referring to same-sex desire, in this chapter queerness accounts for multiple markers of transgression of the standard norms of nineteenth-century sexual conduct, that is, irregular pleasures, eccentric genders, deviations from reproductive heterosexuality and other dissident practices seen as an attack against the conventional sexual order of *fin-de-siècle* Argentina. The queer critique that I propose looks at how the making of a hierarchical heteronormative space in Buenos Aires depended on sexually pathologising the nation's 'outsiders'. As Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba argues, in the context of Latin America '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' (2016, 78). I explore such 'disruption' of the spatial economies of Argentine desire by looking at the procedures of a literary production of 'sexualised villains'.

The first part of the chapter outlines a contextual history that places Buenos Aires within the transnational context of modernisation; it then focuses its attention on the treatment of queerness in the canonical novels *La Bolsa* (The Stock Market, 1891) by Julián Martel and *En la sangre* (In the Blood, 1887) by Eugenio Cambaceres, together with the less-known short story 'De cepa criolla' by Miguel Cané (Criollo Lineage, 1919), published in 1884. In these texts, written by famous naturalist authors of the time, queerness serves to reinforce the principles of Argentine nativism while underlining how spaces associated with power and prestige like the Club del Progreso and the Colón Theatre were subject to a 'perverse' invasion. The second part of the chapter considers the crime story 'Buenos Aires tenebroso: ladrones vestidos de mujer' (Gothic Buenos Aires: Thieves Dressed like Women, 1912) published by the journalist and novelist Juan José de Soiza Reilly in the modernist magazine *Fray Mocho*. Here, the elegant boulevards appear to be taken over by a singular figure of gender dissidence that begins to gain cultural relevance in the early twentieth century: the Spanish *marica travesti*. In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, the names *marica*, *travesti* or *invertido* (invert) referred to non-conforming sexual subcultures that resisted the repressive apparatuses of medical and police control over alternative economies of desire (Salessi 1995, 259). For example, the most famous institute for the incarceration of subjects detained for *délits de moeurs* (gross indecency) was the Depósito de Contraventores (Offenders Prison), an institute for the medical study of so-called alienated subjects. It operated with the joint management of the Police and the Faculty of Medicine. After a clinical diagnosis, psychiatrists would decide whether to hospitalise or release detainees. Based on social hygienic principles of order and work, the institute aimed at the social reinsertion of alienated individuals. For the most part, the detainees were 'prostitutes, transvestites, anarchists, immigrants, and petty-criminals' (Elcovich and Rodríguez Sturla 2014, 32). More than 3000 persons passed through this institution; 1700 were interned and 1300 released. As Elcovich and Rodríguez Sturla indicate, 'the notion of degeneration was the main cause by which the diagnosis of mental alienation was reached' (2014, 33).

A comparative analysis of the selected corpus allows me to draw some conclusions about the turn-of-the-century spatial codes of queerness in a

group of texts of the Argentine naturalist canon. Architecture, as depicted in novels, short stories, crime fiction and photography, operates here with the force of an erotic signifier, accentuating the virtue of *criollo* heteronormativity while condemning the spatial circulation of new racial, gender and sexual sensibilities.

### A QUEER INVASION

The historical cycle that covers the years 1880–1916 was given the names of Conservative Argentina, the Conservative Republic or the Conservative Order, concepts coined by the historian Natalio R. Botana in the 1970s. The period was characterised by the leadership of the Generation of 1880, headed by Julio Argentino Roca (1843–1914), politician, military leader and president of the nation during two periods (1880–1886, 1898–1904). With the National Autonomist Party (PAN), Roca led the social class that modernised the Republic under the motto ‘peace and administration’ (Botana 1977, 40–60). The genocidal wars against indigenous peoples in the Patagonia region, an instance of domestic colonialism known as the *Campaña del Desierto* (Desert Campaign), activated a territorial reordering in order to establish a new racial, economic and political rationale (Viñas 2003, 17).

In 1880, Buenos Aires was declared the capital of the Argentine Republic. The country strengthened its institutions of social control and joined the world economy as an exporter of primary goods, particularly cereals, meats and leather. Foreign investments, especially British, increased. Great Britain invested in Argentine land, banks, meat companies and railways (Cornblit et al. 1962, 3). There were numerous advances in the civil, educational and cultural sectors. The Civil Registry was founded in 1888, which controlled births, deaths and marriages, a task until then reserved to the church. The National Education Council would be directed by the writer and statesman Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888). Key measures for national intellectual development were promoted, such as the Law 1420 (1884) on secular, free and mandatory elementary education. The bill also regulated universities. The Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires was inaugurated in 1896 (Biagini 1995, 26–32).

Along with the economic success of the agro-export model, an ambitious immigration plan was launched in order to populate a country demographically affected by long internal wars between Buenos Aires and

the provinces, as well as the above-mentioned military campaign of extermination of indigenous peoples. This plan was executed due to technological advancements in Europe, notably the steamship, that opened the possibility for thousands of Europeans to migrate to the Americas. Hundreds of thousands of newcomers, particularly Spaniards, Italians, Poles, Russians and Jews from different parts of Eastern Europe, reached the port of Buenos Aires. The causes of their migration were diverse. Some were escaping from political and religious persecution and others from economic hardship. Before 1880, the immigration phenomenon had already been taking place for two decades. The census carried out in 1869 counted 210,000 foreigners out of a total of 1,877,490 inhabitants, or an estimated 12% of the total population. In 1895, a second census reported a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants. Out of 4,044,911 inhabitants, 1,004,527 (roughly 25%) were foreigners. In the decade between 1880 and 1890, the majority of immigrants (70%) were Italian (García and Panesi 1996, 21).

The division of the social field soon became the object of literature. Ideas about morality and hygiene flooded the fictions of the time. *¿Inocentes o culpables?* (Innocent or Guilty?, 1884) by Antonio Argerich, *Irresponsable* (Irresponsible, 1889) by Manuel Podestá, and *Sin rumbo* (Aimless, 1944 [1885]) by Eugenio Cambaceres, among others, were exemplary novels of the nationalist impulse in the literary realm. As Josefina Ludmer has argued in her essay *El cuerpo del delito* (The Corpus Delicti, 1999), the men of the Generation of 1880 built a ‘cultural coalition’ to define their identity as representative of the interests of the entire nation, manufacturing a cultural canon that became instrumental for the reinforcement of state power (Ludmer 1999, 26). But these works, I want to insist, would also establish a mode of spatial inquiry in Argentine naturalism: the impending invasion of private and public spaces by a ‘perverse’ outsider. In what follows, I study this spatial question in three specific texts, beginning with *La Bolsa* (The Stock Market, 1891), a novelistic exploration of the Argentine financial crash of 1890.

*La Bolsa* was written by Julián Martel (1867–1896), a pseudonym for José María Miró. He was a novelist, stock market journalist for the renowned newspaper *La Nación*, and member of an old aristocratic family. The story narrates the life of the speculator Luis Glow, a young and prestigious lawyer of British origin who abandons his profession to become a successful financial investor. His fortune and demise result from a corrupt alliance with business partners, state officials and scammers of various

kinds. But the figure of the Jewish banker, Filiberto Von Mackser, is the scapegoat for Glow's bankruptcy. The novel's representation of the financial crisis of 1890 portrays a looming economic and moral collapse. But it does not stop at this diagnosis. It also offers an extremely reductive explanation which sees the Jews as uniquely responsible for the crisis and as dangerously keen on controlling Argentine finances, 'as exemplified through the machinations of the banker Von Mackser (a Baron's title bought from an impoverished German aristocrat)' (Beckman 2013, 270). As David Viñas argues, since by 1890 'immigration' was equated to 'invasion', it is 'at the confluence of these two problems where *La Bolsa* should be contextualised' (1975, 93). The novel's ending shows that everything easily obtained by speculation disappears as the stock market turns into a monster. This fable of decadence ends when, alone in his room, the businessman is seduced by a beautiful woman who exhibits her sex, metamorphoses and then devours Glow while roaring: 'Soy la Bolsa' (I am the stock market; Martel 1891, 311).

Jack Halberstam argues that 'gothic fiction of the nineteenth century specifically used the body of the monster to produce race, class, gender and sexuality within narratives about the relation between subjectivities and certain bodies' (1995, 6). Indeed, the gothic aspect in *La Bolsa*'s final scene produces the monster as a racialised entity by adhering to antisemitic tropes. Earlier in the novel, Glow claims that Europe was under the 'Jewish yoke' and the Americas (especially Argentina) 'were threatened by the same danger' (Martel 1891, 138) Glow points out that it was necessary to take 'precautions' because there was a lack of attention on the part of the Argentine press in covering the impact of Jewish banking on the world economy. Glow brings about the classic conspiratory belief that 'the rise in gold was due to the devilish machinations of the Jews' (1891, 138). Then, Glow 'enthusiastically' remarks that 'Jews are the vampire of modern society; their job is to suck blood' (1891, 138–139). This antisemitic gothic stereotype invested upon Jewish peoples responds to the discursive constellations of nineteenth-century Argentine antisemitism, for which the signs of Western decadence and capitalist excesses could be explained through the 'Jewish menace'. But I want to suggest that the vampirical monstrosity attributed to Jews, an insistent antisemitic formula of Argentine naturalist fiction, is an insufficient model for the analysis of the text's anxiety about corruption. Glow's moral decline is also manifested in his erotic relation with money and power, specifically with the fetishist/

queer relationship that he develops with a set of luxurious objects in his mansion that trigger his arousal.

In Chapter 3, ‘Dr. Glow in his House’, the novel illustrates a critical moment in the thematic densification of ‘deviance’ and ‘invasion’. While Glow’s mansion starts to be lit up with candles in every single room, a distressing presence lurks in the street observing the splendour. Glow despises anything he finds displeasing. He feels offended by how his servants ruin with their mere presence each of the distinguished corners that shine before him: ‘In the stairways, the impertinent noise of the butler’s boots was heard’ (Martel 1891, 85). Glow then gives the order to ‘light every candle in the house’. After giving this order, the businessman sits in the dark and soon witnesses ‘a marvellous world that emerged from the chaos of darkness. The servant, perched on the top of his ladder, lit the porcelain candles of the great central chandelier one by one. Glow seemed, up there, a god dressed in his tuxedo and before him shone a universe of preciousness’ (Martel 1891, 85). Glow’s house becomes his sensorial armour. The interiors saturated with luxury protect him from the sombre outside, recalling the sensory experiences of Jean des Esseintes, Joris-Karl Huysmans’ eccentric aesthete in *À rebours* (*Against the Grain*, 1884). In Glow’s mansion, the theatrical composition of home comfort stages a transition from darkness to light. The apotheosis comes in the end when the businessman, dressed in his tuxedo, is looking from the heights, conjuring up a spectacular act of sorcery: things come to life from an incessant and promiscuous energy; objects excite him, seduce him, eroticise him. After the artificial lights give a new atmosphere to his house, he ‘enters a state of madness, intoxicated with joy and vanity. Glow began to wander among all the luxurious interiors, contemplating himself in each mirror, ecstatic before each painting, stopping before each piece of furniture’ (Martel 1891, 85–86).

The aristocratic house becomes a queer domain. The candlelights, the gazebos, the gardens and patios, the furniture and paintings fascinate him to such an extent that he reaches a sublime joy by vainly contemplating his image in the mirror. As Aaron Betsky points out, the luxuriant interiors of the nineteenth century, especially those of the French aristocracy, exhibited all the hallmarks of queer space: ‘The walls became mirrors, the orders became rhetorical, the surfaces became sensual, the furnishings were collections of pieces gathered out of materials from all over the world [...]. English observers and some French moralists decried such spaces as being decadent and effeminate’ (Betsky 1997, 52). In *La Bolsa*, the stock



market, then, fabricates this decadent, fetishist regime of quasi-pornographic consumption. In this sense, the pleasure obtained from money, fictitiously reproduced via speculation, cannot be separated from the affective systems that develop through the erotic stimulation of luxury. Speculation and self-excitement are then the orgasmic sequence of a literary programme deployed by Martel. And only the irruption of an outsider can interrupt this libidinal flow, by provoking disgust. Glow witnesses on the other side of the gilded iron gate a group of people who, in the dark, stop in amazement before his mansion, which seemed to host a reception with distinguished guests. Among those individuals in the street, Glow looks at two eyes with feline characteristics, ‘that may belong to some hungry being like those who wander at night around the palaces of the rich, with daggers in their belts, a protest in their hearts, and hunger and envy as their main instigators. At this sight, Glow turns in disgust’ (Martel 1891, 87).

Tracing the elite’s revulsion for the hungry and destitute implies discovering the mechanisms of an erotic withdrawal. Captivated by the opulence of his material belongings, true visual prosthesis for complacency, Glow sees his pleasure interrupted. The architectures of power in 1880s Argentina generated excitable bodies, a ‘sensual workforce’. Glow is sexually aroused before his objects: he touches them, contemplates them, penetrates them with his gaze. His enjoyment is the product of a continuous traffic of goods saturated with erotic potency. The disquieting presence from the outside incarnated in an undistinguishable feline figure comes to deactivate the fetish, disturbing the ecstasy of the speculator. Glow’s ‘queer becoming’ had been initiated through an alternative use of sexual energies. *La Bolsa* presents an excess of luxury and abhorrence for the vulgar presence that lurks from the outside. The spectacular ending shows Glow being devoured by a hypersexualised beast. The erotic relation of the monster and the fetishist patriarch point towards how irregular sexuality, for Martel, equals the demise of modernity, order and progress.

This erotic crisis of the home called for greater attention to aristocratic perimeters. Family novels like *La gran aldea* (The Great Village, 1884; 1943) by Lucio V. López and personal memoirs like *Buenos Aires desde setenta años atrás* (Buenos Aires from Seventy Years Ago, 1881; 1944) by José Antonio Wilde, Vicente Quesada’s *Memorias de un viejo* (Memories of an Old Man, 1887; 1998) and Lucio V. Mansilla’s *Retratos y recuerdos* (Portraits and Memories, 1894; 1900) surveyed the transformation of Buenos Aires from a peripheral rural enclave into a cosmopolitan locus.

Faced with a perceived ‘deviant threat’ in the cosmopolitan masses, it was imperative to erect a cultural wall built on moral enunciations. The idea was to reinforce an alliance between heteronormative/reproductive sex, architectural metaphors and family design. Representative of this *criollo* literary ‘counterattack’ on a constructed otherness is the short story ‘De cepa criolla’ (Criollo Lineage, 1919) by the politician, dandy and writer Miguel Cané (1851–1905).

The text narrates the story of Carlos Narbal, a gentleman from an illustrious lineage. The Narbal family had fled Argentina during Juan Manuel de Rosas’ regime (1835–1852), becoming political refugees in Montevideo. But after Rosas’ fall in the Battle of Caseros (1852), Narbal returns to the homeland. The assets of his family are restored, and soon he travels to England to attend Oxford University, where ‘a radical transformation of his moral organism took place’ (1919, 249). For the narrator, the English milieu turns him into an honourable man as ‘the atmosphere of moral purity that an English home breathes penetrated him completely [...]’. The fundamental trait of his character was the unalterable depth of his affections’ (Cané 1919, 252). In other words, Narbal would be in control of his erotic force, the first sign of obtaining a differential status to return to Argentina and become the moral guardian of his class. Upon his return to Buenos Aires, Narbal becomes an influential man in local politics and an ardent protector of the women of his class. His obsession with racial purity echoes the principles of Social Darwinism, so dear to the Argentine positivist school (Nouzeilles 1994, 78).<sup>6</sup> Narbal demands a vast and complete conception of honour based on strict gender and sexual codes and a request for ‘solidarity’ in a restricted world of class belonging. Afraid of seeing *criollo* women in a romantic affair with a cosmopolitan ‘*guarango*’ (scoundrel) ‘enriched in the shoe industry’, he expresses his terror at seeing the European immigrant ‘in a private club where he enters tripping over the furniture’ (Cané 1919, 259).

For Narbal, stumbling on the furniture goes against standards of conduct, which in the Latin American context has been given the name of *chusmería*. As José Esteban Muñoz argues, ‘*chusmería* is a form of behaviour that refuses standards of bourgeois comportment. *Chusmería* is, to a large degree, linked to stigmatised class identity’ (1999, 182). But in the case of the European immigrant, it is not only vulgarity that deeply upsets Narbal: ‘You have no idea of the great irritation that invades me when I see a delicate, fine, chaste creature, whose mother was a friend of mine, attacked by an insolent inborn, brushed by a tailor, when I observe his

eyes nailing bestially on the virginal body who gives herself in her innocence' (Cané 1919, 259). I want to underline the xenophobic mechanism that operates around the 'irritating invasion' that Narbal suffers in his own body when observing the gaze of the immigrant on the chaste oligarchic lady. The immigrant is constructed as the carrier of an animalistic sexuality. It is in this sense that his body and sex are queered through the trope of monstrosity. As Mabel Moraña notes, 'like the queer, the monstrous is the inappropriate and uncapturable, the "improper life" that James Campbell speaks of, which allows a biopolitical reflection on the thanatic orientation of culture' (2017, 198). Indeed, in the nineteenth century, 'monstrous' sexuality was associated with animal instinct, which the psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing called 'the never ceasing duel between animal instinct and morality' (1939, 5). The literary production of sexual 'beasts' depended on the normativisation of monogamy, racial endogamy and reproductive sexuality. This system of social organisation required patriarchal subjects like Narbal, whose behaviours, values and desires were linked to family, citizenship and nationhood. In contrast, the sexual monster to which Narbal alludes fissured the Argentine civil project, transgressing *criollo* codes of honour due to a supposed untamed erotic drive.

Following Moraña's theory of queer monstrosity, I suggest that Cané's story constructs the immigrant as a queered subject, that is, strange, foreign and anti-normative. In Narbal's perspective, this 'bestly' sexual practice prophesied the dissolution of Argentine endogamous ties. Through the queered image of the beast, 'De cepa criolla' accounts for the affective, ethical and mystical pillars of Argentine respectability. In Cané's short story, the immigrant appears as a queered monster because, as Foucault rightly points out, the monster calls into question the borders between the animal and the human: 'its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also violation of the laws of nature. Its very existence is a breach of the law at both levels' (2003, 55–56). In the voice of Narbal, the immigrant acquires a monstrous/queer sexuality as it reveals the terrors of *fin-de-siècle* hetero-reproductive reason: the immigrant is seen not only as someone who practises an excessive sexuality, but his progeny is presented as potentially degenerative for the human species. In the end, a legitimate biological and political Argentine dominance would be based on the cultivation of honour while marking, regulating and policing the private space of sexuality: 'Let's close the circle and watch over it' (Cané 1919, 259), are Narbal's concluding remarks. Closing the sexual circle implied recognising a problem of internal security. It meant

regulating the spatial diagrams of sex and good taste. But the biopolitical and aesthetic fortress that Cané builds in this fable of *criollo* refinement would be demolished in *En la sangre* (In the Blood, 1887) by Eugenio Cambaceres. In this novel, the ‘temple’ of the aristocracy, the Colón Theatre, is defiled, as Genaro Piazza, the son of an Italian immigrant, breaches the patrician circle by sexually assaulting Máxima, the *criollo* virgin, in one of the theatre’s boxes.

Eugenio Cambaceres (1843–1888) has been the object of numerous studies and controversies. Most critics have identified him as one of the definitive novelists of the canon of Spanish-American naturalism (Jitrik 1968; Viñas 1975; Nouzeilles 2000; Schlickers 2003; Laera 2004). In his 1885 novel *Sin rumbo* (Aimless), the depiction of a man of the landed oligarchy, who engages in his *estancia* in interracial sex with a *mestiza*, caused a scandal. For contemporary critics, Cambaceres was ‘an outlaw that disrespected all established ideas and insulted every virtue’ (García Merou 1886, 73–74). *Sin rumbo* argued that moral decay corroded Cambaceres’ inner circle. But in *En la sangre*, as Alejandra Laera argues, Cambaceres ‘recomposes class alliances, distances himself from his object and builds a closed and compact image of national identity (in which now the immigrant, configured as an invader, is installed on the margins)’ (2000, 146).

*En la sangre* is the story of Genaro Piazza, the son of Neapolitan immigrants. Through an education promoted by his mother, he becomes a respected member of society, although, as the novel’s title indicates, he carries *in his blood* the signs of an allegedly ‘degenerate’ race, evidence of Cambaceres’ adherence to biological determinism. Piazza’s biggest ambition is economic success at all costs. He manages to pass the school exams by cheating. He longs for admission to the Club del Progreso, an aristocratic gentlemen’s club founded in 1852, whose distinguished members included aristocrats, politicians, military and presidents, such as Justo José de Urquiza (1801–1870), Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888), Bartolomé Mitre (1821–1906) and Julio Argentino Roca (1843–1914). Piazza is indeed Carlos Narbal’s worst nightmare: he seduces Máxima, the daughter of a renowned family, and, after a persistent courtship, during the Carnival festivities, he takes her away from her mother to a secluded box in the Colón Theater where he rapes her. Máxima soon bears Piazza’s child. They get married to avoid defamation. Máxima’s father dies. Piazza steals her inheritance and invests it in land speculation, which leads the family to ruin.

The novel is written under the schema of degenerative heredity, a discursive machine that Michel Foucault called a new form of racism: ‘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”’ (2003, 317). *En la sangre* orchestrated these psychiatric 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”’ (1978, 40). Following this argument, Piazza’s crime against Máxima endangers her future offspring. His paternity results from violating Maxima’s body, which establishes a class alliance through forced marriage. Piazza’s ‘aberrant seed’, linked to promiscuous sexuality and a degenerative future, 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 elimination of collective projects: ‘[...] *sinthomosexuals*, like the death drive they are made to represent—and made to represent insofar as the death drive both evades and undoes representation—endanger the fantasy of survival by endangering the survival of love’s fantasy, insisting instead on the machine-like working of the partial, dehumanising drives and offering a constant access to their surplus of jouissance’ (2004, 74). Following Edelman’s proposal, I want to note that *En la sangre* ensures that Piazza’s drive to destroy the reproductive futures of the Argentine elite is activated primordially by his constructed deviant sexuality.

But, as in ‘De cepa criolla’, besides the predatory identity invested in the Europeans by Cané and Cambaceres, it is also the outsider’s vulgarity which serves as a warning against the collapse of the architectures of moral defence. The deflowering of the *criollo* virgin has taken place in the spiritual temple of high culture. The Colón Theatre was the pride of the *fin-de-siècle* Argentine aristocracy. As a chronicler of the time notes, in 1887, the theatre was sold to the National Government by the municipality of Buenos Aires and underwent major renovations in order to become ‘an architectural monument representative of the *grandeur* of Buenos Aires’ (Galarce 1887, VI). In *En la sangre*, such predominance is dishonoured by a sexual crime and a lack of sophistication in the arts of courtship. Piazza takes Máxima to the box and from there he dispatches himself in

insults against the female audience: ‘These women, my God. So nasty. Even dirty!’ (Cambaceres 1887, 194). And then the narrator highlights how Piazza’s presence defiles an architecture of splendour: ‘The air disturbed the atmosphere; it seized the senses; it had an acrid smell of sweat and *patchouli*. The air could cause disgust or desire, as some delicious foods that provoke repugnance or incitement to eat’ (Cambaceres 1887, 194). And then, the unthinkable:

- What? ... no!’— she stammered in amazement.
- ‘Shut up, if they hear you, if they see us, a scandal will break out!’— The elastics creaked, there was a dull and confusing rumble, a muffled noise of struggle, then silence.
- ‘You’re infamous, you’re miserable!’— Maxima exclaimed, standing in the middle of the box, repairing the disorder in her dress, lifting her mask from the ground. Her breath was laboured, her voice moved, her hands trembled. (Cambaceres 1887, 195)

David Viñas has argued that rape was a categorical procedure in the politicisation of Argentine nineteenth-century letters, from the novel *Amalia* (1851) by José Mármol to Esteban Echeverría’s short story ‘El matadero’ (The Slaughter Yard, 1944), published posthumously in 1871. For the Argentine Romantic and realist traditions, sexual violence underlined the barbarity of racial others: *gauchos*, indigenous peoples and *gringos* (white Europeans). Enacting the rape scene, for Viñas, has been used as the conclusive strategy of an aristocratic counter-defence against otherness (1975, 70). And yet, if in the Argentine Romantic project rape occurs in the slaughterhouses against male political opponents and in the indigenous pampas against white captive women, in the literature of the 1880s there is an insistence on protecting urban spaces because danger is perceived as much closer to home.

That Máxima loses her virginity, a victim of rape in the Colón Theatre, implies a regression. It is a terrifying destiny both for the republic and for a literary system of representation of the national woman. Ann J. Cahill notes that ‘the threat of rape, then, is a constitutive and sustained moment in the production of the feminine body’ (2010, 56). In this sense, the crime against Máxima entails destroying her reduced space of sentimental courtship: the Club, the theatre, the mansions of the patriciate. Piazza disturbs the erotic complex of the aristocratic city. Constructing the Italian as a sexual predator required from Cambaceres not only to display

xenophobia in his literary project but also to represent Piazza within the spectrum of ‘deviant populations’ of the nineteenth century. Cambaceres made his protagonist commit the abominable transgression by establishing a direct kinship with the larger ‘family of perverts’ (Foucault 1978, 40) of the *fin de siècle*: the homosexual, the hysteric, the alcoholic, the fetishist. Here lies Piazza’s constructed deviance, a racialised and sexual monstrosity that incited horror from the Argentine elite upon seeing their biopolitical defences demolished by a parvenu.

In *Argentine Intimacies* (2019), Joseph M. Pierce argues that ‘the stakes for maintaining the architecture of patriarchal normativity were high at the turn of the century in Latin America, when the concept of family became a battleground for the consolidation of the discourses, institutions and technologies that shaped modern culture’ (2019, 4). I would add that the modernisation of Argentine literature depended on the delineation of an architecture of sexual suspicion. The violation of female bodies and the invasion of private space were insistent *motifs* that shaped aristocratic paranoia. In Argentina, naturalism *à la Zola* was used as a containment wall against a perceived transatlantic degeneracy. It was a great literary fortress seeking to isolate *criollo* virtue from cosmopolitan vice. But the symbolic walls of naturalist literature, while erected as a warning against European ‘perversion’, were always permeable. There would be no successful therapy of containment. On the contrary, a persistent movement of queer spectacles intensified the awareness of a dispute over public space that saturated representations of the city.

### FEATHERS IN THE BOULEVARDS: THE STREETS AS DRAG SPACE

One of the paramount spectacles of queer desire in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires was dramatised in the *cruising* that took place in the city boulevards. Fictions about non-conforming sexual communities selected architectural and urban *topoi* to define the roads of illicit pleasures: public bathrooms, carriages, hotels and brothels provided a *mise en scène* for queer drama. The expansion of this ‘mala semilla’ (bad seed), as Sylvia Molloy calls the patrician fear of the loss of nationality, was construed as part of the social organism that required prevention or eradication measures (2012, 140).

The streets of Buenos Aires witnessed the recurrence of clandestine desires that gave the urban layout a homoerotic/trans\* design.<sup>7</sup> Erotic dissidence occurred in the dark alleys as well as in the distinguished boulevards, the cafes and private clubs. The discreet interiors of the aristocracy required heteronormative rites of courtship. These were performed by a social class that, simultaneously, repressed their most hidden passions. If decorum and gallantry reigned in official places of power, occasional non-normative pleasures were sought in the streets by the same members of the elite. Queer *cruising* had its well-known locations, which were so well known that they were depicted and classified in the press.

In 1912, the newly released modernist magazine *Fray Mocho* published an article by the novelist and reporter Juan José de Soiza Reilly (1880–1959), entitled ‘Buenos Aires tenebroso: ladrones vestidos de mujer’ (Gothic Buenos Aires: Thieves Dressed like Women, 1912). The article responded to a recognisable format for the reading public eager for stories about *gauchos* fallen into disgrace, or about small urban outlaws, known as *lunfardos*.<sup>8</sup> What makes this chronicle of particular interest for queer scholarship is the literary and photographic visibility that was given to a homosexual/trans\* subculture that until then had gained fame almost exclusively in medical journals, such as the *Archivos de Psiquiatría y Criminología* (1902–1913), which was read by medical and legal experts, or in pamphlets known for their pornographic language.<sup>9</sup> Arguably, de Soiza Reilly’s article is the first modern publication in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires with such an abundant visual record of the existence of a transvestite/homosexual collective.<sup>10</sup> Its primary purpose was to stigmatise the peripheral genders and sexualities of the city. And yet, it is possible to account for certain gestural rites, eroticised spaces and lovemaking transactions among erotic dissidents who are yet to create their own literary tradition in the course of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> By 1912, their visibility in the cultural sphere depended almost exclusively on the medical imagination that shaped de Soiza Reilly’s thinking.

The homoerotic encounter told in this crime story released the energies contained in the closets of the rural *estancias* (ranches) and the urban palaces. The carriage can be seen as the sensual space *par excellence*, a moving interior that put into operation a surprising economy of erotic gratification and that would dissolve, at least momentarily, the restrictions of heteronormative life. ‘Buenos Aires tenebroso’ narrates the fortuitous encounter of de Soiza Reilly with a former schoolmate, now an ex-convict, who reveals the secrets learned in prison about the whereabouts of an erotic brotherhood that exploits the credulity of Argentine gentlemen. He



characterises these subjects as ‘*iniciados y estetas*’ (professional thieves with an aesthetic sense of crime), since by using an effeminate appearance that they meticulously constructed, ‘young boys with beautiful features walked through the dark streets’ in search of wealthy clients (1912, 65). A distribution of queer, villainous cartographies is then recorded. With a stubborn frequency, the ‘*Evas hombrunas*’ (manly Eves) created public domains where the virtue of the bourgeois home, the solemnity of the public buildings and the formality of the offices and banks were diluted (1912, 65). The *maricas* generated counter-sexual spaces and alter-economies of the flesh.

The procedure operated by ‘*falsas mujeres*’ (false women), according to the narrator, involved pretending to be lost in the city, requesting a lift home: ‘I’m lost, sir. You, who seem like such a kind and distinguished gentleman, why don’t you come with me? I’m scared. I’m a widow’ (1912, 65). Here is the mischievous queer script that promised a moment of satisfaction (see Fig. 4.1). But dissident pleasures required a risk, an instant



Fig. 4.1 Queer cruising. The caption reads: ‘Julio Giménez (the man in the circle) known with the name “The Breeze of Spring”, seducing a visitor in the city dressed in female attire’

of vulnerability shared between the homosexual bourgeois who knew the secret code and the queer sex workers who faced arrest. ‘In the depths of a gentleman hides a scoundrel’, de Soiza Reilly claims, suggesting a sharp suspicion of the supposed naivety of the gentleman who co-starred in this queer *flânerie*. More than 3000 queer sex workers paraded the streets of Buenos Aires, according to the statistics provided by the article (de Soiza Reilly 1912, 65). However, de Soiza Reilly would refuse to account for the sexual transaction. Calling the trans\*/homosexual community ‘thieves in disguise’ was part of a wider plan to throw into the closet the very existence of an erotic minority. Homosexuality was diluted into a wider network of criminality (Salessi 1995, 391).

In an examination of the reality of queer urban space in late nineteenth-century Buenos Aires, the stellar figure of la Princesa de Borbón (the Princess of Bourbon), a famous trans\* person, stands out. She had arrived in Buenos Aires from Spain around 1899. By 1912, she was known to have twenty-two arrests for *délits de moeurs*, that is, gross indecency. The urban legend said that she fell in love with a young man from the Chilean aristocracy, who later committed suicide after they broke up. Like other trans\* persons of the time, she cruised the streets of Buenos Aires, where she exhibited her extravagance and staged a small and ephemeral theatre of gendered eccentricities.<sup>12</sup> La Bella Otero, another famous *travesti* of the time, who featured in the medical works of Francisco de Veyga, also transformed the ceremonial silhouettes of the city. She practised one of the trades most detested by intellectuals of the time: fortune telling. According to de Soiza Reilly, la Bella Otero belonged to what an anonymous writer in another article called ‘la plaga de las adivinas’ (the plague of fortune tellers):

With magic powders, the desired person falls in love; illnesses declared incurable by doctors are cured; infallible remedies are available to prevent hair loss; tremendous luck is given in gambling; one speaks with the spirits. Happiness is guaranteed. And such charlatanism is exercised with impunity, under the eyes of the authorities, exploiting the supine ignorance of the foolish, more numerous in this country than might be expected. (Anon. 1920)

La Bella Otero was a trans\* immigrant to Argentina, born in Madrid in 1880. Before practising sex work in Buenos Aires, she had been employed as a maid (Veyga 1903, 494). Like many trans\* figures of the *fin de siècle*, she took the name from the famous actress and courtesan Agustina del Carmen Otero Iglesias (1868–1965), symbol of the Parisian *Belle Époque* who gave herself the name La Bella Otero when she began her career in France.

Those in charge of public health were concerned that these extravagant groups would dispute with medical experts the official knowledge about sex. Furthermore, in the mind of the cultural coalition of male nation-builders, *travestis* organised societies for the exploitation of bourgeois innocence. *Travestis*, sex workers, and fortune-tellers created counter-spaces and counter-knowledges of the body. Through their ‘vulgar parades’, they eroticised the merely commercial and civil territories of the city. Indeed, as Javier Guerrero argues, vulgarity became a gesture of political intervention performed by new cultural subjectivities in the modern city (2017, 54). Far from embodying a family fiction of national belonging, inspired by the aristocratic model, and now imitated by the emerging middle classes, the queer fraternities carried an aesthetic mark that detracted from heroic, reproductive masculinity: ‘Each one of them loves music, flowers, sewing, poetry. They all play the piano. They live off others. And when they fall into the hands of the police, they cry like little girls’, underlines de Soiza Reilly (1912, 66). This queer posing, a mixture of parody and exhibitionism, aimed at resignifying the taste of the bourgeoisie, which caused in patrician circles a persistent terror of seeing the literary buildings of compulsive heterosexuality destroyed.

*Cruising* in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires had its specific name: ‘*plumear*’ (feathering), a novel mix of pickpocket theft and queer seduction dramatised in the prestigious Avenida de Mayo. Feathering, in addition to constituting a conclusive sign of glamour and belonging, also became a survival technique, a small criminal ritual that combined the theft of wallets with the drag parade. De Soiza Reilly says: ‘Sometimes an assistant, the accomplice, goes behind to intervene or repel any aggression. Bella Otero had her nose cut open. The accomplice collaborates in the blackmail. The victims are usually men from outside the city. They choose *hacendados* (ranchers)’ (1912, 67). The queer/*travesti* ‘invasion’ had been initiated: ‘There are several of them who, elegantly dressed, rob in the trains. They sit in a car, choosing any rancher as a fool’ (1912, 67). And thus, the perfect melodrama of plebeian seduction is played out: the

rancher *estanciero*, bearer of innocence and virtue, falls prey to the merchants of infamy. Once more, the queer/*travesti* invasion is enacted in the cultural repertoire of turn-of-the-century Argentina.

Following Daniel Link's theory of crime fiction in *El juego silencioso de los cautos* (The Silent Game of the Cautious, 2003), I am interested in underlining how the drag parades intersected with the modest misdeed of rummaging through careless pockets. Because the criminal act, according to Link, arises from 'a conflict almost always told from the perspective of passion and desire, even in the "hardest" cases of the genre: [crime] is always about secrets, terrors, unspoken anguish, indescribably tolerated infamies, absurd and fanciful projects' (Link 2003, 4). In fact, for de Soiza Reilly, the 'tolerated infamy' was part of the race for progress: 'How has such a criminal industry been able to prosper in Buenos Aires? The fault lies with progress that brings us both mud and gold' (1912, 67). It is assumed, then, that the *travesti* community, although associated with a dirty substance, was a constitutive and visible part of Argentine modernity. The streets of Buenos Aires were 'dragged' by a group of dissidents that wore make-up, skirts, hats, coats and gloves: a remarkable walking sculpture that exhibited with pride a vulgar elegance. According to Paul B. Preciado, the domain of drag is not limited to the act of cross-dressing the body, but also cross-dresses territories: it creates 'performative spaces' (2017, 13). Drawing from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Preciado argues that drag is the name of the theatrical performance of gender. It is a 'spatial dimension' that refers both to the scenario that is installed and to the same norms that define it as a perverse place (2017, 13). Hence, de Soiza Reilly will try to dismantle this great platform of queer subjectivation. The *fin-de-siècle* queer collectives required the street and their 'evil outfits' to gain visibility. They could not have performed their parade without the cosmetic devices that gave them material existence. At the cost of police harassment, invasive psychiatric treatments in the asylum, and jail, the queer spectacle of the turn of the century disputed the uses of public space and its heteronormative aesthetic futures. Their 'perverse' parades deployed provocative tactics that expanded the narrow architectural and erotic limits of the phallogentric city.

### A SPECTACULAR CONTAINMENT

The wider spectrum of nineteenth-century degeneration theories was reinterpreted in the queered representations of Buenos Aires as the locus of a spatial conflict over the futures of sex. In this unstable yet productive alliance between medical discourse, naturalist literature and architecture, queerness permeated the work of Julián Martel, Miguel Cané, Eugenio Cambaceres and Juan José de Soiza Reilly. The queer ecosystem deployed in these literary works was thought to modify dominant systems of gender and sexual stratification. Because, as Gayle Rubin argues, ‘modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value. Marital, reproductive heterosexuals are alone at the top of the erotic pyramid’ (2012, 149). In this sense, it is my contention that in order to solidify a heteronormative and endogamic mapping of the city, it was necessary to erect an impenetrable fortress to contain the movement of subjects thought to embody dangerous desires.

The intellectual elites imagined the aristocratic architectures of the Argentine turn of the century as territory invaded by a queer, anti-future energy. This force, saturated with dissident sexuality, could disfigure the rigid spatial economy of gender and race. The spaces of influence were written as dramatic building complexes. It was terrifying for the elite to imagine a future where ‘erotic outsiders’ took over their architectures of prestige and good taste. The aristocratic house, the Club, the theatre and the boulevards became spectacular buildings of sexual containment. Ballrooms, smoking rooms, bedrooms, theatre boxes and carriages were turned into sexual theatres seemingly attacked by a queer performance: the sinister gaze that interrupts the orgasmic power of the speculator in *La Bolsa*, the uncontrollable libido of the European immigrant in ‘De cepa criolla’ and *En la sangre*, and the ‘criminal outfits’ of queer sex workers in ‘Buenos Aires tenebroso’. Aristocratic space was fictionalised as besieged territory. The literary counterattack on ‘vulgarity’ and ‘deviance’ served to sustain a regime of good manners and optimal Argentine offspring. The counterattack involved an act of recognition of erotic dissidents, their sets, and their ‘perverse’ choreographies.

In the twentieth century, the ‘invasion narrative’ would have a complex afterlife. The notion of ‘threat’ against national homogeneity would be reiterated in the discourses of defence against degeneration in various literary experiments, ranging from *modernista* writings to the so-called Latin American boom. If in the nineteenth century *gauchos*, indigenous peoples,

Jews and Mediterranean immigrants appeared as political dissidents against high society, in the twentieth century anarchists, communists and homosexuals would be represented as the new menace (Giorgi 2004). This collective would lead the dispute against discursive structures that produced the pillars of an orthodox national identity: Catholicism, militarism, conservatism, whiteness and reproductive heteronormativity.

## NOTES

1. This research was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada postdoctoral award and a research assistantship grant from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Toronto. My special thanks to Arunima Bhattacharya, Richard Hibbitt and Laura Scuriatti for their insightful comments and suggestions on the first drafts of this chapter. Susan Antebi, Bob Davidson, Alejandra Uslenghi, Nathalie Bouzaglo, Daniel Balderston and Patricio Simonetto have also provided invaluable feedback to improve this work. Many thanks to my research assistant Christina Wing Gi Tse for her vital contribution to this project. For a recent study of how turn-of-the-century Latin American intellectuals engaged with the world dynamics of economic modernisation, see Beckman (2013).
2. I use the term '*criollo*' to designate the hegemonic groups that inherited colonial power. Ute Seydel develops the historical conditions for the consolidation of this identity: 'The group that presented itself in Latin America and the Caribbean as hegemonic was that of the *criollos*. Although *mestizos* and indigenous peoples also participated in the first independence movement in the viceroyalty of New Spain, which was led by the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the social group that finally managed to achieve independence was that of the *criollos* led by Agustín de Iturbide; that is, both in the New Spanish viceroyalty and in the other Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Latin America and the Caribbean, the *criollos* managed to articulate a political project of self-determination before the colonial authorities. Thus, they put an end to the colonial regime and aspired to occupy the positions previously occupied by the peninsulars' (2009, 191). All translations from Spanish into English are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
3. Patricio Simonetto (2017) has studied the making of homosexual space in the second half of the twentieth century in Argentina (1950–1983). He examined, among other topics, the modes of relationality of homosexual subcultures with other minority groups, resistance practices against police control and the tactics of homosexual visibility.

4. In 1910, the literary critic and politician Roberto Giusti, born in Italy in 1887 and resident of Buenos Aires from 1895 until his death in 1978, published an article in the Argentine journal *Nosotros* (Us) making a case against the racism of the '*criollo*' nationalist Congressmen, who declared that 'los elementos de corrupción y desorden son aquí todos extranjeros' (the elements of corruption and disorder here are all foreign) (cited in Viñas 1996, 61).
5. For a queer history of architecture, see Betsky (1997) and Preciado (2017); for a study of the persecution of 'deviant populations', see 'Thinking Sex' in Rubin (2012).
6. Nouzeilles notes that Argentine positivist doctors and intellectuals 'had access, in the original language, to the most popular heredity theorists in Europe and in France in particular; for example, Darwin, Spencer, Lucas, Morel, Ribot, Le Bon, Moreau de Tours, Letourneau, Griesinger, etc' (1994, 78).
7. In LGBTQ studies, the use of the term 'trans\*' indicates a set of identifications, knowledges and sexo-gender-dissident practices that define trans\* as a sign of new political imaginaries and bodies historically disputed in the sciences of the state. The use of the asterisk is borrowed from the inaugural edition of the *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, in which Avery Tompkins described the role of the asterisk in opening the terms 'transgender' and 'trans' to a greater range of meanings (2004, 26). The trans\* thus refers to an unstable condition of bodily and semiotic boundaries and to a range of indeterminate potentials that blur the established binaries for a hetero-colonial reason.
8. For a study of *gaucho*-themed pulp fiction publications, see Laera (2004) and Adamovsky (2019).
9. 'Plebeian sexualities', as Pablo Ben calls non-normative sexual practices, had their place in various publications for mass consumption that can be accessed in the Ibero-American Institute of Berlin. However, it is necessary to clarify that allusions to homosexuality also circulated orally among the working classes. See Ben (2007).
10. 'Transvestite' is a term coined by the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. He used it in 1910 to describe 'the erotic urge for disguise'. This is how he understood the motivation that led some people to wear clothes generally associated with a different gender than the one assigned to them at birth. For Hirschfeld, 'transvestites' were 'sexual intermediaries', including homosexuals and hermaphrodites. According to Susan Stryker, initially this term was used in much the same way as the identity category 'transgender' is used today: 'to convey the sense of a wide range of gender-variant identities and behaviors' (2008, 16).

11. The existence of a homosexual/gay literary tradition of self-representation and self-discovery in Latin American literature begins to take shape later in the twentieth century, starting in the 1960s and gaining cultural visibility in the 1980s. For an in-depth analysis of the trajectory of gay writing in the region, see Balderston (2006).
12. The police record identified La Princesa de Borbón as Luis Fernández, the name adjudicated to her at birth. It is with this masculine name that she appears in Soiza Reilly's article. In this chapter, I use the feminine pronoun because that is the name that la Princesa chose to affirm her non-normative gender and sexual identity. La Princesa surprises for her ability to capture the clinical and cultural imagination of the turn of the century. She appears in the gallery of 'infamous figures' in criminology studies (Veyga 1903) as well as in police chronicles (Soiza Reilly 1912). In 1914, her name was brought to the theatre by José González Castillo in his play *Los invertidos*.

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