Fictions of the Bad Life

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Chapter 1

1. Although prostitution functions as a discourse and I analyze it as such in this chapter, part of its discursive specificity is the way that it jumps from one discourse to another—particularly back to the legal and medical discourses from which it emerged. This happens most notably in defining, classifying and explaining the literary prostitute. For this reason, I think that the most complete and accurate way to view prostitution is as a discourse that is also inherently inter- and metadiscursive.

2. For a discussion of this tendency of legal histories to represent the law as a progressive development, minimizing ruptures, see Farinati 42–44; see Atondo Rodríguez 30–52, for a discussion of how the practices of prostitution were "transplanted" from the metropolis to Mexico in the sixteenth century. One clear continuity is the idea that it is the prostitute’s visibility—and hence the visibility of prostitution—that is the problem (D’Halmar 167; Gamboa, Santa 126–27, 256).

3. The abolition of prostitution was not entertained seriously at the time, as the attitude of tolerance as the lesser of two evils extended to Queen Isabel la Católica (Ladero Quesada 252). See Atondo Rodríguez 30–52 for a detailed discussion of how the practices of prostitution were “transplanted” from the metropolis to Mexico in the sixteenth century.

4. While Portuguese laws on prostitution had differed and would again differ from Spanish laws, under the Philippine union (1581–1640) the main trends in prostitution law in America were set by Spanish law and administered by the Inquisition. Spanish law had discounted prostitutes as witnesses implicitly since at least the mid-thirteenth century, when Alfonso X discredited the testimony of anyone “que fuere de mala vida” (Siete Partidas 67).

5. According to Socolow, while there was no clear legal difference under Felipe II among adultery and premarital sex and prostitution—all were lapses in “virtue” that jeopardized family “honor”—in practice this was about regulating the sexuality of the women who belonged to upper-class men. Thus, “there was little direct control over the sexuality of lower-class women” (Socolow 8). Prostitution thus represented the one terrain in which the sexuality of
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working women was directly regulated. The prevailing racism of colonial thought adds another layer to the selective enforcement of sexual norms: sexual “excess” was already attributed to women of color and was used both as grounds to ignore their victimization as prostitutes (Waldron in Levin 168) and as a way of stigmatizing the choice to avoid domestic service or slavery (Socolow 141).

6. Patricia Manning has chronicled the practices of Inquisitorial literary censorship, which were broad and thorough, but eclectic enough to seem incoherent, since any precise explanation of their criteria has been lost (Manning 6). At the same time, it is clear that the Inquisition was not particularly concerned with literature itself until the seventeenth century, at which point it became very concerned with hidden meanings in literary texts (10).

7. Darwinism, Positivism and Higienismo all dovetail in Latin America, where these trends all more or less arrived at once and took off at an accelerated pace, and where national prophylaxis laws and practices came together with Panamerican health initiatives such as the Oficina Sanitaria Internacional and the Unión Panamericana. For a detailed history of this nexus of law, medicine and religion in Chile, see Subercaseaux 203–31; their role in Argentina and Uruguay is also discussed in Guy 1999; 2000 and Trochon 2003; 2006, respectively. See Nouzeilles, Ficciones somáticas for her fundamental analysis of how literature of the era thematized higienista preoccupations as an ailing body of the nation. See Salesi, Médicos maleantes for the study of higienismo as a nexus of medical, legal and literary discourses targeting homosexuality and how that which it criminalized was also something it disseminated.

8. The arguments over abolition, legalization and regulation continued into the twentieth century. For a thorough periodization of prostitution in Santiago de Chile, see Góngora Escobedo; in Buenos Aires, see Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires and White Slavery and Mothers Alive and Dead; in Montevideo, see Trochon, Las mercenarias del amor; for a comparative approach to prostitution in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, see Trochon, Las rutas de Eros; in Mexico, see Núñez; Atondo Rodríguez; Ríos de la Torre and Suárez Escobar.

9. This organization is today the Panamerican Health Organization (PAHO), part of the World Health Organization. See Kiernan, “100 años de panamericanismo 1902–2002,” for a history of the organization.

10. Within this overview, the central tension of hygienism between epidemiology and morality played out differently in foreign policy within each bilateral national relationship. For example, in U.S.–Chile relations, the abolition movement was strengthened by the substantive involvement of U.S. physicians as advisors to the Chilean Ministry of Health: a piece of legislation known as the Código Long, named for its author, the U.S. hygienist John Long, came out the year after the Código Panamericano. The Código Long abolished the existing national regulation of prostitution and sought to criminalize the exercise, solicitation and promotion of prostitution (see Góngora Escobedo 276–278 and Pieper-Mooney 34–35). At the same time, Chile’s role in the OIS up until the 1920s had been fundamental in developing a modern and unified corpus of national regulations for prostitution in the interest of preventing the spread of diseases.

11. By the second conference of the OIS, in 1905, countries reported on the virtual extermination of syphilis through the quarantine of prostitutes in a so-called Model Hospital (Guatemala); the creation of a new Consejo Nacional de Higiene (National Health Board), moving the health inspections of prostitution from the municipal to the national level (Uruguay) (International Union of American Republics 383, 419–20). Other examples of “vital international health issues” seemed murkier: Venezuela reported exhaustively on the statistics of marriage, including of ethnic and national intermarriage (429); and an exhaustive statistical composite was maintained of not only of infectious diseases but of all diseases and causes of death in the Americas in a bit of a Positivist delirium (for example, ten cases of “non-classified
diseases of female genitals” [437]). Immigration laws and quarantine practices were also discussed (International Sanitary Conference of the American Republics 150).

12. Such a generalization relies on existing legal scholarship that has studied the persistence of colonial views of women and the lower classes in the consolidation of modern Latin American penal codes. Osvaldo Barreneche argues in Dentro de la ley (2001) that the “transitional” period in Argentina, between the Virreinato de la Plata (1776) and the first modern constitution (1853), is when all of the main features of the modern justice system were formed, which were then unfit for implementing democracy, such that a highly unequal system of punishment replicated colonial practices, blurring the distinctions between colonial and modern law (see Barreneche). This is a growing area of interest within legal studies, producing scholarship that breaks with dominant views of national legal histories. See also Sedeillan (on the development of the municipal penal code in Buenos Aires in the late nineteenth century); León (Chile, 1810–1860).

13. Gálvez, La trata de blancas. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

14. Gálvez also took anecdotes from current newspaper articles; his statistics were taken from the Dispensario de Salubridad [so-called Public Health Clinic], which functioned as the registry for prostitutes, keeping track of their medical examinations beginning in 1889. For the checkered history of the practice of registering prostitutes in Buenos Aires, see Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires; a summary of the statistics Gálvez used can be viewed in Anuario estadístico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires 217.

15. Sicardi, El libro extraño. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.


17. Ignacio Sánchez Prado’s 2009 book Naciones intelectuales: Las fundaciones de la modernidad literaria Mexicana, 1917–1959 argues, in distinction to traditional literary histories, that modern Mexican literature was founded in postrevolutionary articulations of “the Mexican” that both elide and complement the literary and political institutions of the time. See Sánchez Prado.

18. See Butler, Subjects for the notion of lack in the history of the subject in relation to Hegel. It is striking how much scholarship is dedicated to treating the prostitute as “marginalized subject” and yet is rooted as it is in the notion of the subject, it reinscribes the same “enigma” of the legal prostitute: a secret that remits to another secret in an unending chain. See Roby for the prostitute as politically challenged subject; see Smyth Anderson and Estes, for whom the insufficiency of the subject to define the prostitute is due to the way society “bars” the prostitute-subject; see Dickenson, who denies that either women or property are objects, yet uses this interesting premise to anchor a moral critique of social practices in which the inflexible category of the subject makes for a “feminist” analysis in which the role of prostitution is to point out the need for women to be fully realized as subjects, and the dangers “when they are not” (yet there is no positive example of women fully actualized in this way).

19. Schlickers provides an exhaustive and rigorous approach to these questions, as well as a chronology of the novels that assess them thematically and stylistically, from 1880–1910. See also Nouzeilles, Ficciones somáticas and Prendes.

20. Among the writers who published their works on prostitution under pseudonyms are César Tiempo, D’Halmar, Fray Mocho, Julián Martel and María Carolina Geel, which enhances the sense that the theme of prostitution is taboo, while it also adds power metatextually to their protagonists’ name changes.

21. See Lepine for the military tradition of the nom de guerre in the French Army.

22. D’Halmar. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

23. Purisimita is an affectionate diminutive of the superlative purísima (purest) frequently applied to the Virgin Mary.
24. The social intention of the novel and its break with classic determinism was clear in the original title: the book was initially published as *La Lucero (Vicios de Chile)* in 1902; D’Halmar eventually dropped the subtitle and changed the title to *Juana Lucero*.

25. Gamboa, *Santa*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine. See Chapter 2 for a detailed analysis of Santa’s name.

26. Cambaceres. All citations to the text refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

27. Gnutzmann. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine. As we shall explore in Chapter 2, we can also consider Cambaceres’s first-person narrator as instantiating the metatextual tendency within the discourse of prostitution.

28. Peluffo. The Martinian idea of “tiempos ruines,” to which Peluffo alludes comes from the prologue to Juan Antonio Pérez Bonalde’s *El poema de Nicaragua* (1882), in which Martí contrasts the baseness of modern times with the poetic spirit.

29. Sánchez, *Historia de la literatura peruana*. Peluffo addresses the nicknaming of Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera in the context of professional jealousy and misogyny.

30. Valenzuela. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

31. Zeiger, *Nombre de guerra*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

32. Guerra, *Muñeca brava*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

33. Rivera Letelier. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

34. Lamborghini. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

35. Fuguet, *Tinta Roja*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

36. Díaz-Mas.

37. See Westphal for a history of the torture ship as well as references to the various human rights reports that led to its exposure. For the role of the eponymous ship in the War of the Pacific, see Espinosa.

38. Ludmer, *El género gauchesco*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

39. I am invoking Ludmer’s idea of “use” to designate the literary specificity of how the prostitute’s voice is constructed in literature to signify within that literature as “other.” This focus is different from what John Beverley and others began calling “la voz del otro [the voice of the other]” in the early 1990s, which brought postcolonial theory to bear on the literary genre of *testimonio* in order to deconstruct the authority with which first-person narratives of marginalized people can be assessed “objectively” as more or less truthful. Focusing on the “use” of the prostitute’s voice allows us to analyze in literary terms how the voice is manufactured, how it “sounds,” and how this sound and construction functions within the broader discourse of prostitution.

40. Gálvez, *Nacha Regules*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

41. See Chapter 2 for a detailed analysis of another attempt Santa makes to tell the story of how she got her name. In this case, the narrator summarizes the sequence of events leading to her baptism in much the same way, removing it from the dialogue she is having and translating it into pure information (Gamboa, *Santa* 358).

42. Tiempo, *Versos de una p . . . . .*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

43. For an overview of the Clara Beter controversy, see Glickman, *The Jewish White Slave Trade and the Untold Story of Raquel Liberman* 34–37; Graff Zivin 101–107; see also Tiempo, “La verdadera historia de Clara Beter.”

44. In fact, Tiempo chose the name “Beter” because it evoked the English word “bitter”—apparently not realizing that it sounded exactly like the word “better” (Tiempo, “La verdadera historia de Clara Beter”). As we shall see, there are important exceptions to the “rule” that the prostitute dies at the end of the Naturalist novel; in fact, Latin American Naturalism (and particularly later Naturalist texts) found many ways out of this, as the inevitable ravages of illness became less central as ideas about the synonymy of moral and physical health were at
times invoked and at other times pushed aside. However, the basic story arc of the Naturalist
prostitute involves a rise and a decline.

45. López Bago. López Bago was a well-known Spanish writer who traveled extensively in
Latin America and wrote several other novels about prostitution.

46. In later literature, the tropes of the destroyed body remain startlingly similar. In Chil-
ean José Donoso’s El lugar sin límites (1966), the madam known as “La Japonesa Grande” is
described as “grande y gorda [big and fat]” with “senos pesados como sacos repletos de uva
[breasts heavy as sacks full of grapes]” (Donoso 44); the young and ambitious Manuela nar-
rates how she tried to overcome her disgust of La Japonesa in order to inherit the brothel,
describing the madam’s body as “desnudo y asqueroso pero caliente [. . . y] en medio de esa
carne, la boca de esa mujer que buscaba la mía como busca un cerdo en un barrial [naked
and disgusting but warm [. . . and] in the middle of that flesh, the mouth of that woman that
sought mine like a pig searches in mud]” (Donoso 102). All citations refer to this edition; all
translations are mine.

47. Stanchina. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

48. Stanchina shared the attitude toward prostitution of other Boedo writers, which was
simultaneously Naturalist and anarcho-idealist: while the sympathies of writers like Stanchina,
Tiempo, Castelnuovo, as well as Nicolás Olivari (La musa de la mala pata [1926] and El gato
escaldado [1929]) lay with the prostitute, they assimilated aspects of prevailing higienista
views. The belief that prostitutes transmitted venereal diseases to clients—and that men played
no part in the spread of disease—was commonly held among the higienista generation.

49. Nouzeilles points out how Sarmiento and Alberdi had proposed a cultural-moral basis
for controlling sexuality in the form of the family. This view was, in turn, based on the politics
of domination exercised corporally on the “indomitable” bodies of the gauchos (Nouzeilles,
Ficciones somáticas 44). In this way, higienismo is the reemergence of an existing ideological
assemblage in new conditions and within a new discipline.

50. Nouzeilles, Ficciones somáticas. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are
mine.

51. Eduardo Wilde described the far-reaching, expansive nature of this new notion of social
health:

_Nosotros tenemos que entender por salud del pueblo, todo lo que se refiere a su
bienestar y este compromete todo lo que contribuye a su comodidad física y moral._

Luego las palabras salud del pueblo, quieren decir: instrucción, moralidad,
buena alimentación, buen aire, precauciones sanitarias, asistencia pública, benen-
ficencia pública, trabajo y hasta diversiones gratuitas. [We must understand
public health also mean: instruction, morality, proper nutrition, clean air, sanitary pre-
cautions, public assistance, public benefits, work and even free entertainment.]
(Quoted in Nouzeilles, Ficciones somáticas 37)

52. By the next decade, the prostitution/anarchism criminal justice imaginary would
become an international phenomenon. In 1916, Ernesto J. J. Bott published a conference paper
written for the World Purity Federation of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in English in the abolitionist
magazine _The Light_; it was reproduced in Spanish for the Boletín del Museo Social Argentino.
He gave an overview of prostitution in Buenos Aires for an international audience, asserting
that the 1913 Ley Palacios was insufficient to prevent the spread of prostitution, and insist-
ing that the legal resources for persecuting traffickers were the same that had been hard-won
five years before against the anarchists (“después de dos o tres tentativas de éstos [sic] para
terrorize the population with the explosion of bombs”] (Bott 9). See Close for a reading of the tropes of the dangerous, bomb-throwing anarchist and their endurance far beyond their historical referent, at the same time that they erase and replace the presence of actual anarchist movements in the literature of the time, as well as his argument that Arlt enacts “textual anarchy” as aesthetic practice (Close, La imprenta 13–43).

53. The link between prostitution and anarchism was, of course, not limited to Argentina. See Hutchinson for a study of anarchist publications on prostitution in Chile during the first decades of the twentieth century; in Mexico, the anarchist movements prior to the Revolution of 1910 cleaved to international ideas that prostitution would “naturally” disappear with socioeconomic equity, whereas after the Revolution prostitutes participated in anarchist-organized demands (José María González cited in Hart 53; Hart 135). For an anthology of early-twentieth-century South American anarchist writings on prostitution, see Andreu et al. 151–58.

54. An elaborate description of the relationship between Germán and Goga and how they become the head of a mass movement of swelling human sickness, only mediated by the novel’s “moderate”—fanatical Catholic Elbio Errécar—can be found in the previous chapter of Hacia la justicia:

El alma lóbrega de Germán atizaba las malas pasiones, saltando de taberna en taberna, de mechinal en mechinal, siempre agitado, siempre consejero del delito, mientras Goga, la meretriz, corrompía las muchachas de los talleres. Pero muchas veces se volvía indócil, resistiendo las órdenes del anarquista. Entonces éste la abofeteara hasta sacarte sangre y cuando ella se quejaba exclamando: —¡Jesús! ¡Jesús! ¡Dolores sálveme!—; Germán la arrastraba de las mechas por el pavimento de ladrillo. Húía ella después, perdiéndose días enteros y vagando por la ciudad como un alma desconsolada. Iba siempre hacia la casa de Méndez. Quería hablar con Dolores; pero cuando llegaba cerca, se la veía retroceder y perderse lejos de nuevo. Volvía a ser una orgiástica; volvía a Germán, hechizada por aquel corazón ponzoñoso. Mientras tanto, éste, en su propaganda, se había encontrado muchas veces con Ricardo. Habían tenido diálogos acerca de los prosélitos en esa lucha formidable, en que los católicos aumentaban sus sociedades y se fortalecían por la fe y la riqueza. Entre las dos fuerzas, Elbio Errécar trabajaba para que sus amigos no se afiliaran y una gran masa de obreros lo seguía, seducidos por su honesta palabra y porque preferían no ser sectarios. Eran un enorme grupo de robustos y de sanos, esos vencedores del porvenir. Se llamaban: ¡libres trabajadores! Los socialistas por su parte, se agitaban y se confundían con los de la anarquía, en su lucha contra los católicos. Eran conferencias, reuniones en media calle, protestas, amenazas y un furioso bregar por enfermos, mientras otros arrastraban como podían sus organismos convalecientes, señalados todavía con el lívido estigma de la enfermedad pasada, ¡porque María la dulce madre había mitigado sus dolores, acariciando de noche la frente exacerbada por el insomnio y visitándolos en sus delirios, rodeada de luz, entre los cánticos paradisiacos, acompañada por millares de ángeles, volando en largas espirales y susurrando las palabras de la esperanza! Entonces las flores frescas de sus jardines eran para la divina madre, que da pan a los pobres, rociaba a la naturaleza y salud a los chicos enfermos, que ellas cargan en ese momento, para ofrecerlos en su santuario. Así se ven algunos rostros, llenos de costras negruzcas y cicatrices de viruela, pieles manchadas, tumores, infelices que van a pedir paz para sus espasmos histéricos, coreicos que saltan por la calle, con la
cara descompuesta por horribles muecas. Y mientras la peregrinación blanca marcha entre las avemarías del rosario, entre el perfume de las flores votivas, todo alrededor se difunde como una hediondez de hospital, como un vaho mal-sano desprendido del pecho aplastado de los tuberculosos, sucios de sudores, que arrastran consigo ese calor acre de la cama enferma, donde se condensan las náuseas y las podredumbres. . . Y se ven caras flacas y amarillas; enormes vientres de hidrópicos y monstruosas fisonomías de leprosos delirantes; se hue-len bochornos pecaminosos de ocultas apostasmas y se adivina en las mortales palideces la ponzoña de las fétidas malezas, que cuajan las ropas y señalan a lo lejos el camino del sepulcro. Aquí un alucinado, allá un epiléptico, más lejos un hemipléjico, describiendo curvas para arrastrar su pierna paralítica y algún aullido entre la monótona letanía, interrumpida a ratos por el patalear de los atáxicos sobre el piso de madera; el templo y el hospital en marcha, la religión de los felices y la religión de los desventurados y de los miserables. (204–6)

[Germán's gloomy soul stoked the base passions, going from tavern to tavern, from putlock to putlock, always agitated, always crime's accomplice, while Goga, the prostitute, corrupted the young girls in the workshops. But often she became restless, resisting the anarchist's orders. Then he would beat her until she bled and when she complained exclaiming "Jesús! ¡Jesús! Dolores save me!" Germán dragged her by her hair along the cobblestones. Then she would flee, disappearing for whole days and wandering through the city like a tormented soul. She always went to the Méndez house. She wanted to speak with Dolores; but when she got close, she could be seen retreating and disappearing again. She always went back to being a bacchanalian; she went back to Germán, spellbound by that poisonous heart. In the meantime, he, in his propaganda, had met up many times with Ricardo. They had had acrid dialogues. They got the converts worked up in that formidable fight, in which the Catholics increased their societies and were strengthened by faith and wealth. Between the two forces, Elbio Errécar worked to keep his friends from joining up and a great mass of workers followed him, seduced by his honest words and because they preferred not to be sectarians. They were an enormous group of robust and healthy men, those winners of the future. They called themselves: free workers! The socialists for their part got agitated and were confused with the anarchists, in their fight against the Catholics. They [sic] were conferences, meetings in the middle of the street, protests, threats and a furious slog by the sick, while others dragged as their convalescing organisms as they could, still marked with the livid stigma of the past illness, because María the sweet mother had eased their pains, caressing their forehead aggravated by insomnia at night and visiting them in their delirium, surrounded by light, amid celestial song, accompanied by thousands of angels, flying in long spirals and whispering words of hope! Then the fresh flowers of their gardens were for the divine mother, who gives bread to the poor, dew to nature and health to sick children, which they carry in that moment to offer in her temple. That is how some faces look, full of dirty scabs and smallpox scars, stained skins, tumors, unhappy ones who are going to ask for peace for their hysterical spasms, choreics who jump through the street, with their face distorted by horrible expressions. And while the white pilgrimage marches amid the Ave Marias of the Rosary, amid the perfume of the votive flowers, everything around spreads like a hospital stink, like an unhealthy vapor released from the squashed chest of the tuberculous, dirty from sweats, who drag with them that
acrid heat of the sickbed, where the nausea and the rotting is condensed. . . . And one sees thin and yellow faces; enormous stomachs of those with dropsy and the monstrous physiognomies of delirious lepers; one smells sinful hot breezes of hidden abscesses and one can make out in the mortal paleness the poison of the fetid weeds, that curdle the clothing and let you see from far away the path to the tomb. Here someone hallucinating, there an epileptic, farther off a hemiplegic, tracing curves to drag his paralyzed leg and some howl amid the monotonous litany, interrupted at times by the kicking of those with palsy against the wooden floor; the temple and the hospital on the march, the religion of the happy and the religion of the unfortunate and the miserable.]

55. Ingenieros. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
56. The narrator offers a complete vision of this contradictory attitude in the following passage:

Y por ahí caminando los traidores a la patria, los ladrones de sus dineros, truhanes de frac que venden sus secretos y contaminan su honra olvidados de las glorias inmaculadas de la tierra donde nacieron -así por treinta dineros como Iscariote sin que sus cuerpos ahorcados y pendientes de un árbol cualquiera se hamaque de aquí para allá con el rostro azulado y los ojos en arco fuera de la órbita sucia la lengua sangrienta mordida entre los dientes. Y todo porque es necesario comer [. . .] como esa madre que va por allí, deslizándose a lo largo de las paredes y que acaba de dejar en la cama de un corrompido el cuerpo virginal de su hija. La ha vendido por treinta dineros en vez de enseñarle a trabajar o precipitarse con ella antes bajo las ruedas de una locomotora para que la doble, la quiebre y le triture los huesos y le quite la vida, tirando a los costados el picadillo de sus carnes.

[There go the traitors of the patria, the thieves of their moneys, knaves in tuxedos who sell their secrets and contaminate their honor forgetting the immaculate glories of the land where they were born—so for thirty pieces of silver like Judas Iscariot without their bodies hanged and swinging from any old tree should sway this way and that with the face turned blue and the eyes rolled back in the sockets the dirty, bloodied tongue bitten between the teeth. And all because it’s necessary to eat [. . .] like that mother who’s walking over there, slipping along the walls and who just left in the bed of a degenerate the virginal body of her daughter. She has sold her for thirty pieces of silver instead of teaching her to work or throwing herself along with her under the wheels of a locomotive. [. . .] (Sicardi, Libro Extraño IV: 65)

Chapter 2

1. Gamboa, Santa. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine. Santa was also the subject of four films, the first in 1918, and the second the first Mexican film with sound. The novel has had enduring commercial success and evident critical relevance both inside and outside of Mexico, and it has recently been translated into English by John Charles Chasteen. See Gamboa, Santa: A Novel of Mexico City ix–xiii for a longer list of Santa’s recent avatars. See also Olea-Franco for the proceedings of the 2003 international colloquium at the Colegio de México in honor of the novel’s centenary, which models a wide range of critical approaches.
2. Arlt, *Los siete locos*. All citations refer to this edition. All translations are mine.

3. It is well-established in feminist scholarship that Marx’s relegation of women’s work to an anomaly under capitalism is at best inadequate and at worst indicative of a foundational flaw in his economic theory. However, the fact that Marx did consider prostitution “labor” is a less popular point, except to be debunked. See Dickenson for a summary of the chief points of dissatisfaction and of feminist attempts to extend the Marxist notion of “alienation” to women’s domestic and reproductive work—which Marx and Engels did not consider “labor,” a category they reserved for that which produced (exchange-)value but which Dickenson and others wish to claim for women’s domestic work. For Barry, valorizing domestic work as labor is linked to further devaluing prostitution from its already marginal role in Marx.

4. The quotation is translated more poetically as “as though its body were by love possessed” (*Grundrisse* 704).

5. Meeks traces the dubious morphologies of words denoting the “idea” (or spirit) of love and the “place” (or body) of love date back to the Hebrew of the Solomonic Proverbs, in which one vowel separated the two words. See Proverbs 5:18–20 and 7:18 in particular for examples of punning between “fill of love” and “fill of breast(s).” This was sometimes mistranslated—or deliberately obscured—such as in Luther’s German translation of the Old Testament, which renders all references to “love” and “breast(s)” as “Liebe” (Meeks 952n).

6. Marx distinguishes the exchange-value of labor-power from the (necessarily greater) value of the capital it produces: “The value of labour-power, and the value which that labour-power creates in the labour-process, are two entirely different magnitudes; and this difference of the two values was what the capitalist had in view, when he was purchasing the labour-power [. . . ]. What really influenced him was the specific use-value which this commodity possesses of being a source not only of value, but of more value than it had itself. This is the special service that the capitalist expects from labour-power” (*Capital* 188).

   In the quote from *Grundrisse* in question, Marx is still using the category of “labor” rather than labor-power as that which is sold under capitalism. I have been deliberately substituting the anachronistic ‘labor-power’ at times for the sake of clarity, in order to distinguish it from the sense Marx gives labor elsewhere in *Grundrisse*: “the living, form-giving fire; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time” (*Grundrisse* 361).

7. Dogmatic Marxism also grapples with the fact that, today, more money is apparently made “by money” than “by labor” (which phenomenon we often categorize as that of “soft money,” as in the stock market); and some economists have bridged Marx and Gesell by adopting the view that interest, in its broadest definition, is merely a particular case of surplus-value (see, e.g., Beams).

8. See Blanc for a contextualization of Gesell’s theory in the context of practical experiments with “free money.”

9. Schroeder, in the tradition of Marx and Gesell, creates an economic argument on the basis of literature, arguing that markets themselves are fundamentally libidinal, and using Greek and Roman mythology to illustrate how “romantics” unwittingly mirror “utilitarians” in their assumptions, even as they attempt to critique the consequences of these assumptions (see *The Triumph of Venus*).

10. The workers’ singing annoyed Mephistopheles enough to transform it into the workers’ destiny, using their own coarseness against them:

   If I am right, we heard the sound
   Of well-trained voices, singing chorus;
   And truly, song must here rebound
   Superbly from the arches o’er us. (Goethe, *Faust* I 76)
The refrain truly “rebounds” upon the workers, as they are animalized, turned into the very rats of their song, writhing in the indiscernibly agonizing and ecstatic, nonverbal death of a coarse beast.

11. This is functionally similar to Gesell’s Robinson Crusoe on the deserted island. The Devil produces wine with no cost, no labor, just as Crusoe’s possessions—while they may have cost him labor in the past—exist as a type of inherited advantage upon the Stranger’s arrival, with which an “economy” exists for the first time on the island.

12. As the scene concludes, the subdued laborers question each other:

SIEBEL ’Twas all deceit, and lying, false design!
FROSCH And yet it seemed as I were drinking wine.
BRANDER But with the grapes how was it, pray?
ALTMAYER Shall one believe no miracles, just say! (Goethe, Faust I 85)

13. Reflecting on her first obligatory medical exam, Santa has the following associations:

Como al propio tiempo se le viniese a las mientes el otro calificativo, el que a contar de entonces correspondía, cerró más sus ojos, llegó a taparse fuertemente con la mano el oído opuesto al que la almohada resguardaba, recogió las piernas flexionando las rodillas, y, sin embargo, el vocablo vino y le azotó las sienes y el cráneo entero por adentro, le aumentó la jaqueca.
—No era mujer, no; ¡era una . . . !

[Since at the same time the other word came to her mind, the one that from then on belonged to her, she shut her eyes more tightly and covered the ear that wasn’t resting on her pillow with her hand and, nonetheless, the word came and it whipped her temples and her whole skull from the inside, and made her headache worse.

She wasn’t a woman, no; she was a . . . !] (Gamboa, Santa 80)

Of course, the first two times the ellipsis denoting puta appears, Santa calls herself “ . . . ,” recognizing that she has been recognized such. Only “El Rubio” actually calls her a “ . . . ,” the third and final time the “word” appears.

14. In the first edition of Gamboa’s novel, published in 1902, the word “puta” was in fact censored by the prurient censors of the Porfiriato. Subsequent editions reintroduced the word.

15. The original betrayal, of course, is that of Santa’s alférez, who leaves her pregnant and disgraced. But it is, notably, not because of Santa’s dishonor alone that her family disowns her, but because she refuses to betray the man who has betrayed her; and thus she denies her brothers their only possibility for avenging the dishonor she has caused them:

[N]o le exigiesen pronunciar el nombre de su amante, nunca, averiguáranlo ellos si podían.
—Aunque me maten, no he de decíro, ¡no, no y no!

[They couldn’t make her pronounce the name of her lover, never, find it out themselves if they could.

“Even if they kill me, I won’t say it, no, no, no!”] (Gamboa, Santa 122)

The chain of events which begins with this refusal to reveal the alférez’s name follows the devaluation of Santa’s own name and culminates in the loss of it.

16. Klossowski. All translations are mine.

17. In Specters of Marx, Derrida emphasized that Marx’s notion of “idealization” always produces ghosts:
Marx always described money, and more precisely the monetary sign, in the figure of appearance or simulacrum, more exactly of the ghost. He not only described them, he also defined them, but the figural presentation of the concept seemed to describe some spectral “thing,” which is to say, “someone.” What is the necessity of this figural presentation? What is its relation to the concept? [. . . ] The whole movement of idealization (Idealisierung) that Marx then describes, whether it is a question of money or of ideologemes, is a production of ghosts, illusions, simulacra, appearances, or apparitions. (Derrida, Specters of Marx 55)

18. Piglia, “Roberto Arlt: Una crítica de la economía literaria.” All translations are mine.

19. Compelling readings of the novels have evoked their relationship to the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky (Close, La imprenta; González), Simone de Beauvoir and Nomy Arpaly (Garth) and others. Following Piglia, there have also been a series of readings linking the novels’ grotesquery and “bad” writing style to the politico-historical context, which irrigate the novels with a steady stream of references to journalism, science, politics and psychoanalysis of the time period (Piglia, “Roberto Arlt: Una crítica de la economía literaria” 68; Piglia, “Roberto Arlt: La ficción del dinero” 132; Masotta 53–54; Close, La imprenta 13ff; Brown 103–4). Thanks to the varied and rigorous critical bibliography covering the period since the early 1970s and devoted to reclaiming the “bad” writing of these novels through such readings, it is possible to see larger patterns emerge in the novels whereby some of these topoi of Arlt criticism begin to intersect.

20. Nitric acid plus copper gives nitric oxide in an exothermic reaction. The expanding gas displaces water from another flask; when the gas cools, the water is drawn back into the flask, dissolving the nitric oxide and forming a blue solution with the copper ions still there. See “Coin-Operated Red, White, and Blue Fountain.”

21. The Peso Moneda Nacional was in circulation from 1881 to 1969 and during Arlt’s time coins were mostly made of cupro-nickel (25% copper, 75% nickel) with the exception of the 50¢ coin (100% nickel). See Janson.

22. Except, of course, for the Ley de Convertibilidad de 1991, by which then-Minister of Economy Cavallo established the 1:1 convertibility of the peso with the dollar.

23. Of course, “Dios canalla,” the nonexistence of God and the contemplation of Jesus Christ’s likely suicide could be seen as directly related to the 1929 economic crisis, including the devaluation of currency and the nonconvertibility of the peso and gold.

24. This sense is in part supported by the Convertibility Act of 1927, and is at least understandable in Marxist terms, since Marx insists that the price of gold and silver, though first and foremost dependent on the cost of production in its countries of origin, is less bound to production costs than almost any other material, since precious metal is also the sign of wealth and is thus related to the absolute accumulation of wealth at a given time in society.

25. The Commentator is generally not read as omniscient, as he refers explicitly to his “sources” throughout. This, however, does not do away with the metatextual uncertainty, and in fact can complicate it by referring to the Commentator as though he were a real person and unintentionally privileging the more coherent assertions by the Commentator as defining all of his contributions. An editor’s footnote by Ana María Zubieta in the present edition asserts that “El proceso por el cual el Comentador se entera de otros detalles y sucesos que no le cuenta Erdosain revela que realiza una verdadera investigación, que consulta otras voces y luego ordena el material [The process by which the Commentator becomes aware of other details and events that Erdosain doesn’t tell him reveals that he completes a real investigation, that he consults others and then organizes his material]” (308).
26. The error of writing "lógica" instead of "logia" is suggestive of the lodge as self-similar with its ideas.

27. The Commentator later tells us that Haffner, the pimp, believed that Erdosain had an unconfessed crime weighing on him, and for that reason he systematically sought out such degrading states—the Commentator agrees with him (329), and further speculates that Erdosain had unconsciously wished to kill Barsut all along (80).

28. The only other member of the conspiracy who survives the exodus of the revolution itself, the war machine rolling off into the sunset, is Barsut, who is arrested for paying with a phony $50 bill and ends up fleeing along another line of simulation, ultimately hired to film the "fictional version" of the dramatic story that has just finished unfolding.

Chapter 3

1. The "Jewishness" of prostitution in Argentina is seen clearly in the Lunfardo (regional argot) words for pimps. Caftén, pimp, is a synonym of cafishio or proxeneta. It is widely thought to derive from caftán (Yiddish kaftan, cloak) and thought to have referred synecdochically to Jewish pimps, calling them by the word for the long cloaks traditionally worn by Jewish men. Some also ascribe the origin of cafishio to a modification of caftán. Polacas (female Poles), which gives the title to Schalom’s novel, was a common term for Jewish prostitutes. The same is true in Brazilian Portuguese, and a broader study should consider Rio, São Paulo, Pernambuco, Montevideo and other cities among which pimps fled when prosecuted by national authorities in Argentina, together with Buenos Aires and Rosario. However, in contemporary historical fiction of white slavery the archetypal narratives of the blanca play out in national terrain. There are thus parallel fictions about Brazilian Jewish prostitutes from the same period, such as Esther Largman’s Jovens polacas (1993).

2. See, for example, the TV miniseries written by Myrtha Schalom, “Te llamarás Raquel” (1993), which tells the story of Raquel Liberman and her struggle against the most powerful Jewish prostitution mafia in Argentine history, the Zwi Migdal. According to Schalom, Raquel Liberman’s granddaughter contacted her after recognizing a photograph of her grandmother during the program, thus initiating a relationship that contributed to the research that culminated in La Polaca (13). Multiple radio programs have addressed aspects of the Jewish white slave trade (See "Cementerio de Rufianes" and "La Kosher Nostra"). It is common when talking of contemporary sex trafficking and prostitution in Argentina to make reference to a seamless history of white slavery in the country, “established for more than a century” (see, e.g., “La trata de blancas en la Argentina”). The equation of “white slavery” then and now (and including the use of the term “white slavery” without explanation or qualification) is also evident in the overlapping of historical white slavery with contemporary “white slavery” in TV programming today, such as the based-on-real-events soap opera Vidas robadas [Stolen Lives] (Telefe, 2008), the TV documentary “Esclavas [Slaves]” in the series Humanos en el camino (Telefe, 2007), hosted by Gastón Pauls, as well as the ongoing campaign by Cosmopolitan TV to raise awareness of sex traffic, which began with the premiere of the documentary Mujeres que no callan [Women Who Won’t Keep Silent] (Cosmopolitan, 2008), hosted by acclaimed actress Cecilia Roth.

3. In this way, whereas contemporary historical fiction of white slavery does demonstrate certain of the defining traits of the New Historical Novel—they use famous historical characters as protagonists; they use metafiction (though often constraining it within a prologue); and, as we shall see, they certainly invoke “the impossibility of ascertaining the true nature of reality or history” (Menton, Latin America’s New Historical Novel 23)—they
take these definitions to hitherto unimagined extremes, and thus serve as to demonstrate an unspoken assumption undergirding the New Historical Novel as a critical category: the decision to focus on novels of great critical acclaim without looking explicitly at the consequences of this choice. See Menton, *Latin America’s New Historical Novel*. Menton along with Noé Jitrik, María Cristina Pons and others have studied the emergence of the popularity of the form as it was buoyed by novels that whether pre-Boom, Boom, or post-Boom, share great literary skill and complexity. While as a critical field the New Historical Novel did not limit itself to “great works” it did privilege them, and thus it can be tricky to distinguish works that superficially exhibit the traits of the New Historical Novel—and benefit from its cultural credibility—even as they break radically with the experimental spirit of the genre as defined by Menton. See also Jitrik, “From History to Writing”; Pons, *Memorias del olvido*; Pons, “Neoliberalismo y literatura en Argentina.”

4. The various terms used for admixtures of history and fiction in the last ten years are themselves transgeneric, including those arising first in film (*ficción documental* and *documental de ficción*) and then applied metonymically to novels (see, e.g., Zeiger, “Febril, la mirada”). The adjective “*documental*” is often appended to novels, works of theater, etc.

Of course, documentary itself began as a blend of genres, fusing fact, speculation and poetry in a blend of ethnographic and literary tactics to create a seamless narrative. This can be observed readily in the early examples of Argentine documentary (see, e.g., *El último malón* [The Last Indian Attack] [Alcides Greca, 1917], parts of which can be viewed online, as well as more broadly in the documentary boom worldwide in the 1920s, and persisting into the “docudramas” and historical reenactments of all kinds today. While it exceeds the scope of this study, it seems timely to reconsider the relation between the historical emergence of documentary and that which, today, we qualify (and justify) with the term, and particularly how documentary demonstrates both a desire for a science of truth-telling and practices inseparable from storytelling in all its ambivalence, with a particular *style* of dealing with what are much older tensions as if they were brand-new problems created by the modern moment.

5. This putative increase in the publishing and consumption of historical novels is hard to define precisely. References to the boom abound in newspaper accounts, tending to suggest that it is just happening now, whereas María Cristina Pons posits a long slow increase from the end of the 1970s throughout Latin America, taking on force during what she terms the political crisis of the 1970s and the economic crisis of the 1980s. (See Pons, “Neoliberalismo y literatura” 10th para.)

6. Of course we must concretize the notion of literary marketplace. For the purposes of this chapter, I limit myself to a handful of texts, and yet in no way is their real production as books circumscribed by the geography of their subject matter. *Bodies and Souls* (2005) was originally published in English by William Morris for HarperCollins in New York (its author is Canadian, of self-proclaimed Portuguese heritage). *La Polaca* (2003) was published in Buenos Aires but Grupo Editorial Norma has offices in 14 countries including the U.S., is partnered with Google Book Search to maximize global web traffic, and distributes Microsoft’s computer and educational software in Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina and several other countries (see “Google Book Search Partner Success Stories” and “Grupo Editorial Norma”). *El infierno prometido* (2006) was published by Editorial Sudamericana, a publishing house associated since its inception in the 1930s with Argentine intellectuals and representative of the first great metropolitan publishers in Latin America but now “overseen” by Random House and now wholly owned by its parent company, media giant Bertelsmann (see “Random House”).

7. See Nirenberg. All citations refer to this edition.
8. Schalom; Drukaroff, *El infierno prometido*; Vincent, *Bodies and Souls*; Alsogaray. All citations refer to these editions; all translations are mine.


10. Hugo wrote in 1870, “The slavery of black women is abolished in America, but the slavery of white women continues in Europe” (Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* 13). While information on the history of slavery in Argentina is readily available for anyone who is looking for it specifically, Google searches over time have suggested a flattening out of the meaning of the term “slavery”: in 2006, a search of “Argentina,” “Slave” and “Trade” yielded a top ten in which two referred to contemporary sex trafficking, two to historical white slavery, two to the African slave trade, two to contemporary sweatshop labor conditions, and two to the practice of recruiting soccer players from other countries. In fall 2009, five of the top ten referred to Jewish white slavery (four of which linked to Nora Glickman’s book). In spring 2010, however, three referred to Jewish white slavery (two to Glickman’s book), two to contemporary trafficking, one to contemporary sweatshop labor conditions, and four to historical slavery.

Of course, the importance of this is merely anecdotal (since Google’s results change rapidly and results can always be shifted by modifying the search terms slightly). It should, however, be noted that the importance attributed to the ranking of Google results is that of how popular the sites are—the top-ranked pages are those to which the greatest number of other pages hyperlink, suggesting that in a rather literal way the popular marketing of the white slavery “issue” does displace others. (See Rogers.) However, in Argentina, the conflict about the extent of historical slavery ties into huge variations in the estimates of African ancestry among Argentines today, ranging between 10,000 and 4,000,000, suggesting not only lack of certainty but also symbolic investment in rigid self-identifications. (See Ackerman, Amato and Kingsberg; see also Kaminsky 99–120 for a discussion of the ambivalent erasure of blackness in Argentine national identity.)

11. I am indebted to Sander Gilman’s various studies of the complexity of “whiteness” as it has been applied to Jews over time and interrelated with other fields of study and discourses. See particularly *The Jew’s Body* and *Difference and Pathology*.

12. Records of the ethnic and racial heritage of prostitutes in Argentina during the time are spotty at best. The reason we have as much information as we do is because of municipal laws that required prostitutes in Buenos Aires to register with the police and provide their country of origin (but not race, religion, or other ethnic information). As Guy has noted, these partial statistics were the basis for the stories about white slavery that circulated even in the era, and she traces some of the notions about ethnicity back to the florid interpretations of these numbers (Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires* 7).

13. Most of the derogatory reports about the Zwi Migdal and other Jewish prostitution rings (namely the earlier Varsovia Society and the Asquenasum) came from very few sources, all of which were written with the agenda of “[informing] the Argentine public of the alleged activities of nefarious Jewish pimps whose political and police protectors had allowed them to continue working” (Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires* 124). Julio Alsogaray (1933), Albert Londres (1928), Ernesto Pareja (1937) and Victorio Besserro (1930) all focused their studies on the power of Jewish pimps in Buenos Aires. For example, as Guy points out, [Policeman Ernesto J.] Pareja went so far [in his 1937 book] as to list the nationality and numbers of all registered women [prostitutes] as of December 1934, but he purposely failed to print the Argentine percentage in the chart. “Had he done so, it would have revealed explicitly that although 40 percent (seventy) were Polish, 43.9 percent (seventy-six) were locals. [. . . ] Pareja and Alsogaray dwelled on the Jewish presence while they ignored incidents such as the 1929 detention of ten white slavers, of whom eight were French and only two were of eastern
European extraction. They never examined scandalous behavior statistics that identified many more Argentine and non-eastern European prostitutes than Jewish women registered at the Dispensario. Instead they, like Londres, tended to emphasize what was important to them” (Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires 126).

14. It is suggested by police records that both as pimps and as prostitutes “Jews” were often a majority in Buenos Aires. However, as José C. Moya points out, information on religion was not kept, and so what is used to identify these Jews is their “Jewish-sounding” names, with the possibility for error this implies (Moya 43n18). Nonetheless, of 164 pimps in a police file of 1893–94, Moya suggests that no less than 74% and as much as 92% were Jewish (21). Guy, on the other hand, suggests that there were many mediating factors in this “commonsense” contemporary view of Jews as the primary traffickers of women: information on pimps of other backgrounds was “less well reported than on Jewish traffickers” and, quoting Bristow, “We knew most about the Jewish sources of supply because Jewish philanthropy was at the forefront of the efforts against the traffic” (Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires 11). Vincent goes one better, insisting that Jews never achieved a monopoly on white slave trade, but that “they were singled out for their participation by anti-Semitic authorities [. . .] in South America, police officials blamed ‘the degenerate Jew for shaming the human race’ by setting up brothels, even though most of the brothels in the region were controlled by French traffickers” (Bodies and Souls 31). It’s unclear on what basis Vincent determines that the majority of brothels were run by French traffickers.

15. It is important to historicize the attitudes expressed toward Jews by Sarmiento, e.g., as about America’s relationship with Europe in negotiating power and cultural identity. This permits us to see that Sarmiento may have been fundamentally concerned with his own mythic continuities: a continuous cultural history and the literature that will reify it. Thus, in 1886 Sarmiento articulated his distaste for Jews in terms of their lack of continuity—and his prioritization of national-historical continuity in terms of its opposites, the Jews:

[El pueblo judío, esparcido por toda la tierra ejerciendo la usura y acumulando millones, rechazando la patria en que nace y muere por un ideal que baña escasamente el Jordán, y a la que no piensan volver jamás. Este sueño, que se perpetúa hace veinte o treinta siglos, pues viene desde el origen de la raza, continua hasta hoy perturbando la economía de las sociedades en que viven, pero de que no forman parte; y ahora mismo, en la bárbara Rusia, como en la ilustrada Prusia, se levanta un grito de repulsión contra este pueblo que se cree escogido y carece del sentimiento humano, el amor al prójimo, el apego a la tierra, el culto del heroísmo, de la virtud, de los grandes hechos donde quiera que se producen.

[The Jewish people, scattered over the earth practicing usury and accumulating millions, rejecting the land of their birth and dying for an ideal that the Jordan barely keeps watered and without any intention of returning. This dream, that has been perpetuated for twenty or thirty centuries, since it comes from the origin of the race, continues up until today perturbing the economy of the societies in which they live, but of which they are not a part; and right now, in barbaric Russia, as in enlightened Prussia, a cry of repulsion is raised against that people that believes itself chosen and lacks human feeling, love for one’s neighbor, the attachment to the land, the cult of heroism, of virtue, of great deeds wherever they may be produced.] (Sarmiento 177–78; my translation)

16. Doris Sommer’s pioneering book, Foundational Fictions, was groundbreaking in the study of literature as it related to the myths of nation-state formation. My study is indebted to her notion of alliances among characters as representatives of different demographics
and inherently suspect in the dissemination of such myths. The fantasy of Jewish–Argentine collaboration, in my study, should not therefore be read as a fantasy of infinite ethnic heterogeneity or inclusiveness but, on the contrary, a concession to a specific version of Jewish-Argentineity that does not presuppose—and in fact serves to tacitly discourage—the inclusion of other ethnic groups. Even the racialized term “blanca” should be seen to form half of a binary: Jews both are and are not white, and can become white in given contexts and in others “revert,” nor should the lush literary depiction of Ashkenazic “whiteness” of the modern historical novel be confused with the views at the time, when Jews of distinct provenance (Mizrahim, Sephardim and Ashkenazim) were linked up racially with Muslim, Christian and Jewish Arabs in the negative view of Argentine elites (See Gilman *Difference and Pathology* 16–35; Klich, “Árabes, judíos y árabes judíos en la Argentina de la primera mitad del novecientos” 38th para.).

17. See Williams.


19. See Glickman, “Una tal Raquel.” All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

20. See n1 for an explanation of the term “polaca.”

21. See n1.

22. In my discussion of these texts, Yiddish words and phrases are generally spelled as they appear in the novels in question. While there are some conventional differences between how transliteration is done in a Spanish-language vs. an English-language context, (e.g., *Yiddish* vs. *ídishe or ídish*), even within the conventional practices of transliteration in a Spanish-language context there remain many variations, and no one standard. Apart from these differences of orthography, however, the integration of Yiddish words and expressions into a Spanish-language text to illustrate the speech patterns of Yiddish-speaking members of previous generations is a technique all of the texts share. In the context of the postulation of a transhistorical Argentine-Jewish identity, it is worth noting that at times this has the effect of making a generation that struggled to learn Spanish sound more like the generation after it. However, this is not always the case, as with Drukaroff’s Dina, who speaks a Spanish with grammatical tics characteristic of Yiddish speakers. Anthropologist Susana Skura’s studies of the uses of Yiddish in various genres of Spanish-language cultural production are fundamental. Skura has tracked the linguistic socialization of Yiddish speakers in Argentina as well as its representations both in early-twentieth-century Yiddish-language and in more recent Spanish-language works. See Skura, “Imágenes del ídish en Buenos Aires a comienzos del siglo XX” and “La shikse.”

23. The Zwi Migdal changed its name from the Varsovia [Warsaw] in response to a complaint filed by a Polish envoy in Argentina in 1927 because of the association of Poland with Jewish White Slavery. Zvi Migdal had been the name of one of the original founders of the organization (See Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires* 120–25). Zvi and Zwi were virtually interchangeable spellings in the context of Jewish immigration: the ‘w’ was used in transliterating from Polish, but both “Zwi” and “Zvi” were used interchangeably in Spanish-language Argentine publications, along with the phonetically spelled “Sui.”

24. The Lacanian idea of the fundamental fantasy can be seen as anchoring the view by which not only is the “Jewish subject” held accountable to a very literal view of neurosis, but the community as a whole—including the author/narrator—is seen as engaged in the neurotic quest to “find” their hidden “Jewish truth.” These novels are filled with foreshadowing and *objets petits a*. 
Because Schalom intuits that limiting “the truth” to legal and historical records will be inadequate (if nothing else because these supposedly objective sources are overdetermined by anti-Semitism), the story tacitly supports what Bristow calls the “rationalist fallacy” about racism: the sense that anti-Semitism can be mitigated by improving Jewish behavior and denouncing misbehavior still more vigorously from within the community (Bristow 5). In the epilogue of Schalom’s novel, an extract from Mundo Israelita from the time blames the Jewish community leadership for anti-Semitic reactions (324–25).

25. It should be stressed that, in Spanish, nationalities are not normally capitalized: thus, a reference to either a Polish woman or a Jewish-Argentine prostitute would use the lower-case polaca.

26. Alsomaray. All citations refer to this edition. All translations are mine.

27. Coats of “the Jewish-Polish usage” is a compressed shorthand meant to evoke the types of somber coats worn today by some ultra-Orthodox branches, but understood roughly as “Orthodox, back in the days when most Jews were Orthodox”—certainly it’s not referring to any contemporary Jewish-Polish usage; and a more popular metonymy in Argentina at the time was to call all Eastern European Jews “rusos [Russians].” Further, in the context of a modern stage direction it has a curious effect, since for the average reader there is no distinctive visual difference between an historical “Jewish-Polish coat” or a “Lithuanian” or “Ukrainian” coat. Rather, it reifies shared cultural knowledge—the metonomy of “Poland” and Jewish white slavery, polaca and prostitute—by transmitting it metonymically as though it were a something visible.

28. Lucas Berruezo points out similarities between Arlt and “el Loco Godofredo,” including the failed marriage of both as well as other clear references to the fact that “el Loco” is clearly supposed to be Arlt “en clave [in code]” (Berruezo 8th para). Berruezo reads El infierno prometido as telling the genesis of los siete locos: Dina, he believes, is the character called Lucién.

29. Remo Erdosain, the protagonist of Los siete locos (1929) and Los lanzallamas (1931), was notoriously troubled about both romantic intimacy and sexual performance with women. As we saw in Chapter 2 from the perspective of the prostitute Hipólita, Erdosain craves boundless, disinterested pity from women. All the women with whom he is involved, however—his ex-wife (Elsa), the woman he murders (La Bizca), as well as the in-between character of Luciana (who aspires to be his wife)—share a desire for love and sexual intimacy which makes him feel inadequate. When Luciana undresses in front of Erdosain, his reaction is horror:

La blancura lechosa de sus amplias caderas colma el cuarto de una grandeza titánica. Erdosain mira sus redondos senos, de pezones rodeados de un halo violeta, y un mechón rubio de cabellos, que escapa de su sexo, entre las rígidas piernas apretadas, y piensa:
—Sólo un gigante podría fecundarla.

[The milky whiteness of her ample hips fills the room with a titanic hugeness. Erdosain looks at her round breasts, of nipples circled by a violet halo, and a blond tress of hairs escaping from her sex, between her pressed-together, rigid legs, and he thinks: “Only a giant could inseminate her.”] (Arlt, Los lanzallamas 494–95)

Earlier, he had compared himself unfavorably to “El Capitán”—his ex-wife’s new lover—calling himself “pathetic” [desgraciado] and “in spite of my age, like a boy [a pesar de mi edad, como un muchacho]” and fantasizing that this is what his soon to be ex-wife and her lover will be thinking of him as they make love (Arlt, Los siete locos 60).
30. See Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Reclaiming a Nation*. All citations refer to this edition.
31. See Trochon, *Las rutas de Eros*. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
32. See Feierstein. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine. See also Gol- 
dar, *La "mala vida."*
33. Borges. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
34. See Ludmer, “Las justicias de Emma.” All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
35. Although Alsogaray’s trial of the Zvi Migdal was spectacular, the legal outcome was 
the recriminalization of the exercise of prostitution rather than that of bordello operations, 
resulting in arrests of 2,910 women under the new category of “scandalous behavior,” vs. 23 
men (Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires* 130). All but three of 106 defendants being held 
in 1931 were set free within a matter of days, and all were eventually released (Guy, *Sex and 
Danger in Buenos Aires* 129). Yet Feierstein summarizes Raquel Liberman’s testimony as “pre-
cipitating the end of the organization” (285), and the context of the impending coup d’état 
of September 1930 “debe haber posibilitado el reclamo de ‘moralidad y orden’ que permitió 
actuar al comisario Julio Alsogaray [must have made possible the call for ‘morality and order’ 
that allowed the commissioner Julio Alsogaray to act]” (286–87).
36. See Lesser and Rein. All citations refer to this edition.
37. In many cases, it may be the exigencies of scholarly rigor—such as, for example, Judith 
Laikin Elkin’s work on anti-Semitism as it arises in institutional forms that are not properly 
state forms, and the relatively complex history of the state in any nation that has passed 
through the stages of colonial development—which seem to give credence to the notion that 
the state itself is not anti-Semitic. See Elkin, “The Colonial Legacy of Anti-Semitism” and 
“Anti-Semitism in Argentina.”
38. In fact, the Israeli state maintained not only diplomatic relations with the military 
dictatorship, but even as Argentine Jews appealed for exile, Israel continued selling arms to 
the Junta. Should this lead us to believe that the sale of arms to the Junta was also in the best 
interest of Jews who were imprisoned? See Beit-Hallahmi 102ff.
39. Other witnesses said torturers questioned Jewish detainees “in special interrogations, 
trying to obtain information about supposed Jewish ‘campaigns,’ such as ‘Plan Andinia’ (an 
invention of Walter Beveraggi Allende, who imagined the existence of a Jewish plan to occupy 
the Argentinean Patagonia).” The report continues:

But they not only referred to “imaginary plans,” but also, during the interroga-
tions, it was gathered [sic] information regarding the movements of the Jewish 
communities, characteristics of their buildings, personnel who worked at them, 
timetables, ideological trends of each institution. The victims say that the tortur-
ers proved to have a surprisingly precise knowledge of some of these issues, and 
some of them even spoke Hebrew or Yiddish. Sergio Starlik, for example, says, 
“during the torture session they not only interrogated them in relation to their 
political ideas, but also in relation to the Jewish community in Argentina. With 
the information obtained, they made out files where they included names and 
addresses of citizens of that origin, plans of synagogues, sports clubs, etc.” It is 
also stated that they were quite precise regarding the movements of some Jewish 
organizations. (Braylan, Feierstein, et al. 15–16)
40. In my discussion of the intersectional character of oppression, I am indebted to Kim-
berlé Crenshaw’s foundational work on intersectionality, particularly her pioneering essay 
“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of
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Color. It should be noted that intersectionality does seem to be taken into account in certain scholarly projects working with issues of cultural patrimony in Argentina intending to “recover the memory” of the dictatorship—almost as if the concrete complexity of archival work brings a more nuanced view of identity as inherently multifaceted and contradictory. See, e.g., Oberti and Skura.

41. Rotker’s seminal study of the hidden story of Argentine white women kidnapped by Indians, Cautivas, resonates in interesting ways with both the history and the historical fictions of white slavery and these echoes merit further study. Rotker relates the negation of the very basis of identity, as it relates a master narrative of Argentine identity, to Lacan’s notion of foreclosure (Rotker, Cautivas 40, 67n11); it is curious to think of how the converse functions in the Liberman story: there is an attempt to reclaim that which has been foreclosed and reintegrate it into the symbolic order, yet this is impossible, and it results in a change not to the symbolic order, but to the facts of the history.

42. Adorno, Negative Dialectics. All citations refer to this edition.

Chapter 4

1. For example, the Argentine writer Tomás Eloy Martínez’s El cantor de tango (2004) features a U.S. graduate student in New York shortly after September 11, 2001, who travels to Buenos Aires and becomes immersed in a labyrinthine search for information about a tango singer which leads him into the prostitution underworld of the 1920s. On the other hand, U.S. novelist Nathan Englander’s The Ministry of Special Cases (2007), focuses on a protagonist who is the son of a Zwi Migdal prostitute, given the name “Kaddish” (the Jewish prayer for the dead), who is entrusted by the Jewish community in Buenos Aires with effacing the names of Jews from gravestones on the “bad side” of the cemetery, lest they suffer greater persecution under the dictatorship.

2. Cozarinsky. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.

3. I have taken the liberty of translating “story” in the singular in the second part of the translation in order to maintain the colloquial tone of the speaker yet convey the meaning clearly (there will always be somebody who has lived it).

4. Piglia, Respiración artificial. All citations refer to this edition. All translations are mine.

5. Cozarinsky’s narrative present is resolutely 2000s, and thus would presumably disqualify it from Menton’s definition of the New Historical Fiction (see Menton, Latin America’s New Historical Novel). However, Menton went on to make an exception for Piglia’s Respiración artificial (1980), despite the fact that the majority of it was situated in the late 1970s. Menton wrote that the reason for the exception to the rule was Piglia’s refusal to recreate the flavor of the past. See Menton, Caminata por la narrativa latinoamericana 779.

6. Gareth Williams, Alberto Moreiras and others have proposed “critical regionalism” as a rubric under which the limits of narratives “not necessarily dominated by the false consciousness of metropolitan discourses of difference and identity” can be explored. El rufián moldávovo could be analyzed as such an “interrupted and interrupting narrative rendered possible because of denarrativization and exhaustion [that] strives neither to lament nor reconstitute the contours of its lost objects” (Williams 154), yet the novel does not particularly “think and affirm the possibility of negativity within that process of denarrativization”; as we shall see, it rather affirms an affective relationship to an impossible history composed of proliferating, self-contradictory fictions. See also Moreiras, The Exhaustion of Difference 53.

7. The prevalence of journalist-investigator characters in both the contemporary historical fiction of white slavery and Cozarinsky make both superficially similar in structure to
mystery novels, since they share with that genre the external perspective that "makes a mystery a mystery" (Goulet 28). It would seem that the particular function this formal exteriority of perspective serves in historical fiction is at least double: on the one hand, it echoes the relation of the reader to historical material, the distance inherent in the generation gap, thus identifying the narrator with the reader (as it does in the crime novel, creating the reader-detective); on the other hand, it affords the narrator the illusion of objectivity. In Cozarinsky, by contrast, the formal exteriority of perspective doesn’t equate to a sense of objectivity, because the empirical evidence always contradicts itself.

8. While Raquel is a “historical” character and Zsusza “fictional,” Raquel is at every turn exceptional, while Zsusza is statistically average. We should remember here that the historical Raquel Liberman died shortly after obtaining her visa to return to Poland, whereas this fact is, at most, a grave epilogue to the unstoppable heroism of her fictional avatars. The fevered Zsusza, “de cara hundida y despintada [with her sunken and un-made-up face],” advances without knowing what she seeks (Cozarinsky 66) and the people she passes avert their gaze.

9. The very notion of an “honor crime”—committing a prohibited act in order to revenge another prohibited act—therefore testifies to what Gilles Deleuze called the necessarily double nature of betrayal (Deleuze, Dialogues II 42); according to Jewish law, any transgression of the Torah in a spirit of defiance of God can amount to chillul hashem [profanation of the name]. Furthermore, anything done that exposes disobedience of Torah in front of non-Jews is chillul hashem (Herring). To commit a betrayal also betrays the purpose of the betrayal; to be a true traitor requires also betraying oneself.

10. This also affronts the popular historical-fiction notion of the Old World as an unlimited preserve of misery in which religious traditionalism is the only spot of brightness in Jewish life. Pervasive imagery of the benightedness of Old World life also tends to be copresent with a view of women as monolithically subservient and ignorant—an idea out of step with contemporary histories of the period. In fact, Iris Parush argues that women were far more involved in the spread of Jewish Enlightenment ideas—were much more voracious readers of secular literature, and more commonly breadwinners—in Eastern Europe than has previously been thought. See Parush.

11. Any analogy between Zionism and anti-Semitism is provocative; yet the basis for the analogy rests on the same boundlessness with which Israel exists in metonymic relation to Jews. What Slavoj Žižek, for example, calls “anti-anti-Semitism” ironizes the identification of Jews and the State of Israel by comparing how the deliberate conflation of statehood, nationality, ethnicity and religion within Zionism maps cognitively and ideologically onto anti-Semitism. Žižek takes it a step further by asserting that “today it is the Muslims, not the Jews, who are perceived as a threat and an obstacle to globalization.” See The Parallax View, 253–57.

12. Nuriel. All citations refer to this edition.
13. Pavis. All citations refer to this edition.
15. Cela. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
16. La colmena.
17. In film critic Santos Zunzunegui’s words, the effect of this change is to convert the episode “en un mero ‘número’ interpretativo a cargo de Paco Rabal [into a mere interpretive number by Paco Rabal]” (Zunzunegui 116). We could interpret the shift from the collective perspective of the omniscient narrator to the individual actor as emblematic of a shift in how the collective burden of responsibility for the past is represented. See Zunzunegui. All citations refer to this edition; all translations are mine.
18. Jean-François Lyotard wrote, “I would like to call a differend [différend] the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim. [. . . ] A case of differend between two parties takes place when the regulation of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom” (The Differend 9).
19. See Brown, Wounded Attachments.
20. Critic Idelber Avelar read Ricardo Piglia’s La ciudad ausente (1992) as capturing a paradox by which it is the private language of the characters that establishes the potential to narrate “the memory of the polis” through apocryphal stories (The Untimely Present 135). Similarly, El rufián moldavo not only engages intertextually with what it explicitly references but can also be read in dialogue with the genre of what we could more broadly consider as either metaliterary criticism or metacritical literature: texts that build their worlds out of literary references that in turn make the text communicate larger ideas about literature. See Avelar.