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Morals, Civilization and Behavior in Europe and Argentina in the Eyes of a Creole Traveler

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Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Argentina, along with rest of the young nations of Latin America, underwent profound transformations. These transformations included the creation of a central state with administrative, political, and military infrastructure (Oszlak 1997), the incorporation of its primary production into the capitalist world economy, and the imposition of a bourgeois social order. These processes were neither homogenous nor peaceful, and debates about them highlighted both material and symbolic dimensions. In other words, the path the nation would take in its economy, politics, and social and moral order was a central matter in public discussion.

The topic of *behavior* was a primary preoccupation for the elites, as they were worried about the need to create a working force from the dregs of the Creole popular classes and the newly arrived European immigrants. The elites were also worried about the need to discipline—to civilize (Elias 1978)—regional elites in the hopes of forming a dominant national class (Losada 2009), an endeavor in which political and economic alliances, as well as cultural identity, would be crucial for success. In that context, the need to discriminate bourgeois refinement and manners from popular habits and customs became explicit in the written historical sources produced by these lettered men (Terán 2012, Salessi 1995) and acquired particular meaning, which differed from what was established in Europe during the nineteenth century.

These cultural productions were one of the main ways in which the privileged sectors distanced themselves from the men and women that they would increasingly portray as immoral. This symbolic gap between decent and immoral individuals was embodied not only in the contents of discourse (for example, the explanation of social violence and barbarism as a consequence of the lack of morals of these individuals) (Sedran 2015), but also in the growing division between which genres *spoke* about one social class or the other (Sedran 2014). In this way, the discourses that referred to the habits of the lower classes, such as laborers, poor women, vagabonds, beggars, delinquents, drunkards and gamblers increasingly belonged to the scientific and legal fields, such as sociology, criminology and police and municipal codes (Huertas García-Alejo 1991, Armus 2007, Ruggiero 2004).

In the province of Santa Fe,[1] Gabriel Carrasco's work illustrates the interactions between the different kinds of discourses used by the elites regarding the topic of social order. The best-known work of this journalist and statistician—as he liked to describe himself—can be labeled as technical (statistics, censuses, codes and regulations); nevertheless, he also addressed the broad issue of social order in his literary writings. Thus, it is through one of his least-known pieces (Roldán y Vera 2016) that we analyze the elusive issue (Burke 2004) of *behavior* (which forms of social interaction were seen as legitimate and which should be excluded from society), which was a strongly disputed aspect of the construction of order in turn-of-the-century Argentina.

We consider Carrasco's book a historical source rather than focusing mainly on its formal literary characteristics: it illustrates how regional elite members saw the horizon of civilization—and themselves in the new civilized society—in the *interior region* of Argentina. However, following Peter Burke and the perspective of cultural history, we necessarily shift our inquiries from a reflection on *what* objects and sources we study to a reflection on *how* we study them (Burke 2004). Therefore, the strategies and resources an author uses are conceived as discursive practices (Foucault 1979) and as the discursive dimension of the social relations of power.

From the Atlantic to the Pacific and an Argentinean in Europe. Letters of a Traveler was written at a crucial time in the state-building process, and Carrasco wrote it

[1] The province of Santa Fe is located in the Litoral region, the center of the economic boom that the country experienced during this period. At the start of the 1900s, Argentina came to be known as the *barn of the world* due to its production of grain and meat, which were exported to capitalist nations. This exportation triggered economic growth and accelerated social conflict and mobility and the need to discipline the men who would make up the work force.

with the explicit goal of influencing Santa Fe society regarding a variety of topics. As an emissary of the provincial government (as well as a scientist and, in his own words, a tourist), he compares Europe to Argentina and evaluates their morals, progress, civilization and other such topics. Among other topics, he describes different types of behavior and classifies them mainly as either civilized or uncivilized. In this sense, *Letters of a Traveler* shares the general view that local elites developed about social order, in which morality played a central role in the formation of a civilized and economically thriving nation, making "necessary not only knowing *where* to be, but also knowing *how* to be" (Gayol 2000, 11) crucial for them.

Nonetheless, this book, which was a product of public funding and was produced to promote the provincial state of Santa Fe in Europe, can also be appreciated as a token of individual aspirations, because, as discussed below, Carrasco continuously depicts himself as an example of scientific knowledge and as a judge of distinction and decorum (Carrasco 1890, 9). If we consider the author's emphasis on how the journey shaped his writing, Carrasco's book can be defined as a travelogue. In fact, he constantly makes the act of writing subordinate to the act of travelling in itself: readers should not forget that his claims were the result of experience. If we also think about his main thematic concerns, the book can also be considered a "Creole's chronicle on Europe" (Pratt 2003, 33 and 213). These texts, first written in the independence period, had as their main goal the creation of an identity for the local elites in the context of young societies with increasing social mobility. They were the literary corollary of elites who mirrored the ways of their European counterparts and, internally, defined their identity in opposition to the habits of the popular local classes.

In light of the above, we approach the book from the perspective of cultural history, which examines the symbolic dimension of social relationships and emphasizes the search for the creation, production, and interpretation of meaning. We explore the types of behavior portrayed; the value Carrasco recognizes in each of them; what social actors are involved in them; and what leads the author to judge them positively or negatively. The answers to these questions are part of the idea of social order present in *Letters of a Traveler,* which is symbolically founded on the tension between "the civic pedagogy of the associationist bonds" (González Bernaldo 2001, 37) and the decadent component of popular behavior.

Why analyze Letters of a Traveler*?*

The cultural production of individuals such as Carrasco was mainly interpreted in national historiography as a consequence of their roles as men of state[2] and the thoughts, images, impressions and representations regarding them, seen as mere consequences of their ideas in the political sphere (Bruno 2009). From the perspective of cultural history, there are two main concerns regarding this paradigm. First, it can be argued that the complexity in the writing of these men impedes the establishment of a one-way path between their official discourses and their other texts (Terán 2012). Specifically, the practices of defining which discourses would be known, praised, remembered and taught were hardly innocent. Second, for nineteenth-century elites, cultural production was itself a highly esteemed form of social interaction that not only created sense but also framed belonging and identity for those who participated in this distinguished practice.

Gabriel Carrasco was born in 1854 to a well-off family. His father, who had arrived in Rosario from Buenos Aires in 1853, was a city councilor, a teacher, and co-founder of the newspapers *Commerce* and *Capital*.[3] Additionally, Gabriel worked as a printer and a book craftsman, which strengthened his relationship with the world of written journalism, to the point of being labeled "one of the youngest public writers in the province of Santa Fe" (De Marco 1996, 21). He conducted statistical studies and wrote police codes, and commercial guidebooks and Rosario city's annals were jointly written by him and his father. He also worked as a journalist at local and national papers and taught physics at Rosario's National College. As a lawyer, he occupied relevant positions in public office, including the Secretary of Police Headquarters, the Minister of Public Instruction and Finance, a school inspector and a member of the Federal Council of Education. Thus, Carrasco was both a statesman and an intellectual, and it is this

[2] There was a group of scientists and men of state whose chronicles were similar to foreign chronicles and through which the national state came to know its own territory and society. In these chronicles, the identification of social otherness as a means of building national and civilized identity can be noted. A well-known example of these chroniclers is Estanislao Zeballos, who, among the many issues he addressed, substantially contributed to legitimizing the so-called conquest of the desert (successive military campaigns of the central national state in indigenous-controlled territories in Patagonia and Chaco). These expeditions resulted in the massacre of thousands, and many more were made to do forced labor and were relegated to serfdom. Zeballos argued that this conquest was necessary for progress and characterized the indigenous peoples as violent and foreign savages (Estanislao Zeballos, *La conquista de quince mil leguas*. Buenos Aires: Librería Hachette, 1958).

[3] The Capital was established in Rosario in 1867, and Eudoro Carrasco, Gabriel's father, was its cofounder together with Ovidio Lagos. The Capital is considered Argentina's first modern newspaper.

sort of combined identity that Carrasco explicitly claims for himself in the narrative of his European journey.

Letters of a Traveler presents some of the central characteristics of travel journals. In this genre, "there is an oscillation between a subject of experience, who faces 'reality' and a reading subject, who faces a scenery which is presupposed or already known" (De Oto and Rodríguez 2004, 25), as comparison and observations are carried out at the cultural level, which is shaped by the views of the traveler and the weight of tradition. That said, the journey itself is an example of how the collective imaginary of the society of origin comes into play when a traveler interprets the places he or she visits.[4]

In *Letters of a Traveler*, this imaginary of civilization is reaffirmed. This imaginary takes the discursive form of the comparison of certain main topics, which are described according to their moral implications and validated by the scientific discourse. The book can also be considered a chronicle of a journey, as part of a mixed genre that allows to "rethink issues such as values, traditions (. . .) progress, modernity and the hegemony of discourse of a group of power or social class" (Rotker 2005, 17). The letters pivot between the three main features of the travelogue genre: factual narrative, preeminence of descriptive over narrative components and dominance of an objective goal over subjective perception through testimony (Carrizo Rueda 1997, Albuquerque García 2006).

Travelogues became a popular genre among Latin American elites in the nineteenth century (Albuquerque García 2011). They were a part of the dominant cultural attitudes (Said 1990), built through "a selection of moments and scenes, an articulation of events, a device that leads to a specific sense" (Colombi 2011, 291). Considering the interaction between social relations and discursive practices, we examine the particular construction of sense (Colombi 2011, 288), which this text positions between the experience of the journey, the narrative of the journey and the perception of certain social behaviors that captured the author's attention. There are two structuring elements of the narrative that strike the reader. First, there is the journey itself (the narrative of the *act of traveling,* built on explicit interjections in the text, which interrupt certain passages and repeatedly draw the reader's attention to the physical act of travelling, as we will see). Additionally, there is the use of comparison, founded on the tension between the scientific quest for knowledge and Carrasco's warning that "this book is about impressions

[4] Nevertheless, this phenomenon is not unidirectional because it applies to the voyages made by Europeans to America or Africa, which also generated instability in the common assumptions of the imaginary of the society of origin. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007).

and nothing else must be searched for in it" (Carrasco 1890, 11). That tension does not represent a contradiction: it expresses that the truth that is put into words is one derived from human experience and achieved by means of Carrasco's immediate notetaking: "as it has been inspired to me, at the places and times in which it has been carried out" (Carrasco 1890, 10).

These two strategies, scattered through the text, encourage future analysis on how to conceptualize individuals such as Carrasco (such as men of state, intellectuals, writers and scientists) because a particular relation is expressed in their texts: a relation between experience, distance and perception that exceeds the positivist definition of truth and that, as it has been demonstrated, is one of the features of a Latin American conception of modernity (Miller 2008).

In light of the points considered above, we regard certain situations depicted and highlighted in the text as components of the *contact zone* built by Carrasco during his journey. This concept is appropriate for the analysis of his views on behavior, social order and morals because, although the concept conceives cultural encounters as asymmetric, it does not understand their meaning as pre-established, but rather as a result of the interaction itself. The concept allows us to 'bring to the fore the interaction and improvisation elements of the encounters" (Fernández y Navarro 2008, 37), as one of the main characteristics of Carrasco's view of Europe is supported by the notion that Carrasco is not simply a passive subordinate of his European peers but rather holds a certain type of authority before them.

Written Journey, Travelled Text

Carrasco was appointed by the provincial government to represent Santa Fe at the Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1889. He started his journey by visiting the cities of Mar del Plata and Mendoza in Argentina and Santiago y Valparaíso in Chile. He then returned to Santa Fe, where he then headed to Buenos Aires to embark for Europe. Carrasco himself gives us the reason for this first part of the trip when he asks himself, "How could we introduce ourselves to strange nations without even knowing the most notable [features] of ours?" (Carrasco 1890, 22). He states that getting to know Chile is necessary to fulfill the "longing to acquire knowledge in order to strengthen my judgement about the general conditions of civilization in this part of America" (Carrasco 1890, 22).

As stated, this sentiment suggests that Carrasco's book may have integrated a group of nineteenth-century discourses that Mary Louise Pratt

defines as the Creole chronicles of Europe.[5] There are two reasons that support this possibility: the "discursive authority" and the "legitimate position of the discourse" (Pratt 2007, 345), elaborated in *Letters of a Traveler* share the features pointed out by Pratt. First, the book presents the *core topics* that Pratt identifies for the genre: the idea that American natural features are to be admired and conquered, the proposition of an "archeologized" perspective of America (Pratt 2007, 248), European autonomy and white superiority. In addition, the 'two complementary forms of bourgeois authority'—scientific travelling and emotional literature (Pratt 2007, 26)—organize this discourse, as we shall see.

These themes also relate to a curious fact: the desire to know one's own nation before 'introducing' it to other countries was not present when he travelled to Paraguay a few years earlier. Although a travel journal narrating this previous trip was published, Carrasco did not include his impressions of Paraguay in *Letters of a Traveler* as he did with Chile. The only point at which this neighboring country is mentioned is part of the cited "archeologized America." In fact, when commenting on Paraguay's stand at the Universal Exposition in Paris, he describes its production as one of only ethnographic value. Thus, this country is included in his discourse as part of the past (Carrasco 1890, 252):[6]

> Paraguay exposes mainly its yerbas and tobaccos, exquisite ñandutí embroidery, and a splendid collection of different types of wood (. . .) It

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[5] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento not only was a conspicuous intellectual of the liberal *Generation of '37*, the core of the political opposition to Juan Manuel de Rosas in the first half of the century, but also continued to be a key political player in the National Organization years. Two of his books became canonic texts for nationalist liberal history: The *Facundo or Civilización y Barbarie* (1845), which depicts the life of caudillo Facundo Quiroga and acknowledges the feud between the unitary and federal parties, characterizing the latter as barbaric and violent; and his autobiographic *Recuerdos de Provincia* (1850), where he comments on the customs of colonial and traditional society. See Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo. Civilización I Barbarie en las Pampas Argentinas* (Paris: Librería Hachette, 1874); *Recuerdos de Provincia* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta de Julio Belin, 1850). For an interpretation on the impact of Sarmiento's writing on national history see Oscar Terán, *Historia de las ideas en Argentina. Diez lecciones iniciales, 1810 -1890* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2012).

[6] In an Argentinean elite's view of Paraguay, one cannot help but think of the War of the Triple Alliance, which opposed Paraguay joining the forces of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, with the intervention of British interests. This tragic military episode left Paraguay without one-third of its male population (adults and children) and brought its thriving economic development to an early end. It also changed the way in which other Latin American Europeanized elites saw Paraguay. In this context, Pratt's observation on the elite discourse becomes even more relevant: "The archeological perspective (...) obliterates the conquered inhabitants of the contact zone as historical agents who have living continuities with pre-European pasts and historically based aspirations and claims on the present. Those whom colonizers see as "remnants of indigenous hordes" are unlikely to see themselves as such, however. What colonizers kill off as archeology often lives among the colonized as self-knowledge and historical consciousness, two principal ingredients of anti-colonial resistance movements." See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007).

> shows also, an important collection of inking substances and many weapons and tools used by the indigenous people. Regarding this topic, I consider it really important within the boundaries of an ethnographic museum, however not only useless but also counterproductive at an industrial exhibition. It would only contribute to creating a negative appreciation of the country. What it should be known for are not the savage's weapons but traces of progress that civilization has already left within this rich country (Carrasco 1890, 247).

This portrayal of Paraguay is in line with comparisons throughout the book that emphasize America's great natural vastness in contrast to Europe's civilizing greatness with vivid images such as "lost, downtown London, as just another grain of wheat inside a silo of Rosario's granaries" (Carrasco 1890, 403).

The uniqueness of Carrasco's discursive position is partly built on his scientific authority, which he himself establishes by classifying contemporary places and societies (Europe and America) as well as distinguishing the past and the future in them (barbarism and civilization), as is made clear in the description of the Paraguay stand. In this way, the construction of his own authority in the context of a general admiration of the society he explores can be thought of as an example of "the creation of autonomous cultures [for the local elites] maintaining European values and white supremacy" (Pratt 2007, 213).

These cultures are not only built with an eye on Europe, but also in relation to the "European and not European masses they pretended to rule" (Pratt 2007, 214). In fact, the point of making these comparisons was to highlight (to his readers in Santa Fe) the characteristics of an ideal society: which European material and cultural features Latin America should embrace to achieve progress and to be civilized, positioning cultural features (including certain forms of behavior, customs and social interaction) as a precondition for material features.

If our aim is to identify Carrasco's representations and opinions on social order, behavior, and morals, we must follow their discursive hints/footprints in the book, which are sometimes subtle; whereas certain assertions are hidden others are visible in plain sight. Carrasco makes explicit the fugacity of the experience and of himself as the traveler who lives it. The text has approximately twenty-five entries in which the author interrupts a narrative or description—voiceover—to reflect on three primary issues. First, he reflects on how writing is always subordinate to the experience of travelling:

> The eyes are not enough to follow the movement, nor is the mind enough for reflections, when landscape has changed and therefore the idea has been forced to change with it [referring to his train journey from Spain to France]. (Carrasco 1890, 224)

> I used the moments in which my mule stopped to rest to take notes [as he crossed the Andes]. (Carrasco 1890, 86)
> "Using my imagination, I go back a few days . . ." (Carrasco 1890, 190)

Second, he constructs his identity as a traveler, which alternates among a cautious representative of the provincial state, a scientist that makes methodical observations and a tourist who visits the most famous places:

> I did not want to suddenly arrive in Paris: I thought it was necessary to prepare myself by visiting other less important cities first, in order to gradually adjust my impressions. (Carrasco 1890, 250)

> Everything catches my attention (. . .) and as a result of that, I experience some kind of bewilderment. But no: we shall proceed according to method, we shall travel studying, and to study, we shall first rationally distribute time and the objects of our observation. (Carrasco 1890, 193)

> I did it, I took a bath in the river, and its furious current almost dragged me down, but when I came out of it, I could praise it as one of my most grateful memories: I had dived in the waters of the historical Rhine River. (Carrasco 1890, 332)

Further along, a notable strategy that he employs is alternately writing in the styles of the travelogue and epistolary genres. Technically, the book contains only four letters *per se* written to an addressee and containing the formal characteristics of the genre (Gurkin Altman 1982): one was addressed to Governor Cafferata, and three were addressed to the director of the newspaper *The Messenger*, to whom he would also send the accounts of *Letters of a Traveler* that were meant for publishing. Beyond recognizing the popularity among readers of this type of weekly chronicle, we are interested in the effect of the decision to combine these two genres in one book on the reading of the text. Since the letters (the accounts of his journey) were written *to be published and read* and the letters (epistles) he addressed to these two men were basically recounts of the content of the accounts, it is interesting to ask ourselves why Carrasco included both types of letters in the book.

Although the question remains unanswered (for example, until the book can be compared to other private correspondence and pieces of his authorship), we can hypothesize that this discursive strategy creates an intimate atmosphere between the author and the potential reader that colors the whole text. Strikingly, this effect is produced even though most of the component pieces of the text were originally written to be published, that is, they were meant to be a *public* text to be read in a newspaper. The result is that a text authored by someone in

Europe as a spokesman and representative of the state is to be perceived primarily as an individual and private recount of a journey.

Finally, between the fugacity of experience and the reflection on the journey, we also find descriptions that do not always respect the dominating cultural order and hierarchy. What at first glance could be interpreted as a kind of spontaneous criticism takes on new meaning when viewed as a passage that was carefully written with great attention to detail. In a text with such a *thought-out spontaneity,* criticism does not appear to the reader in the form of assertions, but as fleeting gestures and guttural and visceral impressions, which are immediately reformulated in order to respect the characteristics of the text, but which continue to twinkle.

An example is his description of illegal gambling in Mar del Plata,[7] in which we find the first entries about places and ways of sociability, as he describes the behavior of those who attend the casino. To Carrasco, gambling is a plague present in all social classes a "social cancer" before which his "outraged soul cannot remain calm." It is a practice that produces "whore odors" and is deployed amid hustle and bustle, with people gathered around a "fatal table" (Carrasco 1890, 20-22). However, even though he depicts gambling as immoral for anybody who practices it, the descriptive weight of this passage lies in the difference between gambling establishments for the rich and poor, between one degree of immorality and another. He describes gambling among rich people as follows: "¡Everything is a fuss! On the one hand, women dancing. On the other hand, their husbands, who definitely cannot find happiness in their wives' chaste arms, look for it more desperately in the fates of the game" (Carrasco 1890, 23). Although he condemns what he sees, his enunciation is, to a certain degree, moderate. His language is not extreme or violent: he concentrates on dancing and disorder, but even here, he hints at a justification of the act of gambling due to the unhappy state of these men who almost fall into the "fates of the game" in their search for a small amount of happiness. Furthermore, gambling is immoral, but the gamblers' wives are chaste.

On the other hand, when commenting on gambling among poor people, he states that "the scene is similar, but somehow more disgusting. There, vice even smells." He is explicitly disgusted and describes his physical perception of the smell; he speaks not of "a fuss" but of *vice*. The moral implications of gambling clearly shift according to the social status of the gambler, and the

[7] Mar del Plata is a tourist city located in the southwestern area of the province of Buenos Aires. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has been a summer destination for elites.

contrast is enhanced through repeated description. To a great extent, this account of gambling among poor people corresponds to the particular "contact zone"[8] that delimits the travelling experience for Carrasco. The figure of the South American emissary, as one of scientific and moral authority, is constructed progressively throughout the text, and in the text, Carrasco's accounts about the social circles he frequented play a main part (he attends diplomatic events and stays at prestigious hotels on the recommendation of powerful local men, among other examples).

Within a more formal sphere of social interaction, he delivers a public speech at the Geographical Society of Paris, which he describes thoroughly (Carrasco 1890, 342). The description of the speech contains some hints regarding the identity Carrasco built for himself. In the introduction, he highlights the majesty of the "temple" of science and the progress of the human spirit where he was invited to speak and praises the decorous manners and passionate speeches from the society's members. However, immediately afterward, he regards himself as the authoritative voice within such a select group by resorting to his own scientific conclusions on the immigration phenomenon: "Immigration has the same causes in a sociological order as courses of water or the atmosphere have in natural order: a difference of pressure arises which establishes compensations that tend to re-establish equilibrium (. . . .) [It is] equally beneficial for the country that produces it as for the one that receives it" (Carrasco 1890, 379). According to Carrasco, he, a Latin American, whose words were crowned with a round of applause and who legitimized his authority as a scientist, could be one of those European men of science if judged on his merits. In other words, according to his narrative, this Creole is not drifting out but *belongs* to this group, and that belonging is discursively sustained by his inclusion in the places where the European cultural elites socialized.

The theme of immigration also highlights his final and grand participation as a scientist—as well as a moral authority—when he attributes to his very own efforts the decision of the committee in charge of the Paris Universal Exposition to vote "against the will of the colonial powers" that "like France in Tonkin and Algeria and Italy in Masada, aspire to colonize by means of military expeditions and in favor of the free immigration model" (Carrasco 1890, 381). Regarding this

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[8] Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" and highlights that the concept is used to ask the question of "how are metropolitan modes of representation received and appropriated on the periphery." See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 4-6.

crucial subject, the author hints at criticism in the same decorous ways as described previously, using very diplomatic forms but maintaining the severity. Carrasco is clear about one crucial point in his position: immigration is a race between nations, and in it, Argentina should not have a passive attitude, quietly obeying the most powerful nations' policies on the matter:

> I confess it would have been somewhat presumptuous of me to present these conclusions (...) in the presence of the delegates of the world's nations, some of which are interested in snatching immigration from us when right here, in France, there are many who think immigration is an illness to be avoided and when Minister Constans has passed will direct Frances's prefects to prevent emigration to the Republic of Argentina. (Carrasco 1890, 380)

Another example of this is how he corrects the 'construction engineer' responsible for the globe exhibited due to 'several mistakes and omissions' he found in it concerning Argentinean geography. Action takes place, primarily in places and situations of 'civil pedagogy,' circles of respectable bourgeois sociability, where appropriate and civilized behavior was *taught and learned*:

> I am thinking of attending the ball that our distinguished minister, Doctor Paz, is hosting at the embassy, which will be splendid. (...) These types of parties, being so far away from home, in which the great events of our national history are commemorated, carry such strong feelings, which cannot be felt unless you find yourself so far away from home. (Carrasco 1890, 392)

Here, the topic of nationality meets the topic of the elite's moral superiority. One's true identity is found in these distinguished places for two reasons. The first is the explicit distance that separated the places from Argentinean soil, where the ghost of the political war was still present and divided the will of respectable men. The other reason emerges as a result of a recursive strategy of Carrasco's narrative, which is the spatial organization of moral difference. In contrast to the description of these selected places and situations (that are always enclosed spaces and buildings), Carrasco depicts, as we will see in the next section, the customs and behaviors that Argentina should avoid, such as mendicity, the practice of tipping, drunkenness and scandal, which occur in the streets, sidewalks and surroundings of restaurants, hotels, academies, and embassies. This spatial separation (the inside areas of meaningful and respectable places versus the residual spaces where classes meet) is also constitutive of the particular contact zone Carrasco builds on his journey.

There is yet another type of strategy used in certain passages that creates a particular effect in the reading of the book. The purpose of the writing is, of course, Carrasco's intention to contribute to the nation's progress, and the moral

dimension of this progress is regarded as a precondition of its material dimensions. That said, in several instances, we see the following kind of reflection:

> Every time I admire the architectural and artistic beauty of this great city, I cannot help thinking about our own, and I wish we could imitate it. What a paving job! (Carrasco 1890, 255)
>
> How insignificant are we, the Argentinean, compared to the great English nation! Whereas here there is such a great devotion to the memory of their national heroes expressed by statues and museums, (. . .) in Buenos Aires, we do not even have a painting collection of our great men. (Carrasco 1890, 400)

In these two passages, the last features mentioned (pavement and a painting collection) become *the* condition to be met to achieve the universal value previously championed (patriotism and the memory of national heroes) in a sort of synecdoche. In this way, the discursive effect is one that is included in (or reduced to) the *part*, the essence of what is to be achieved, that is, civilization and progress. The features and discursive strategies considered in this segment highlight that Carrasco's book is one of action: it was designed to create an impact on the Argentinean public opinion and to influence policy making.

In Carrasco's account of the behavior he sees in the inner and interstitial spaces of the contact zone, the moral component of progress acquires its full dimension and the spaces are organized discursively, as the other themes treated through the book, combining systematic comparison with intuitive or *spontaneous* description.

Bonds to be Promoted, Customs to be Censored

What is remarkable about such a diverse summary of sensations, experiences, and interpretations is the consistency with which Carrasco describes the same phenomena at each place he visited and that, occasionally, he made explicit this methodical form of observation. For example, while at Barcelona, he states the following: "From comparing this city to the ones in our Latin America, maybe some improvement ideas, always so necessary, could arise" (Carrasco 1890, 199). He visited Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany; he also visited major cities such as Barcelona, Vienna, Prague and London, and he resided in Paris for three months due to the activities connected to the exhibition. Among the descriptions of all those places, certain elements are compared methodically: the authorities, the railway, and the port (where there is one); nature, the population, the architecture, urbanism and hygiene; and science, culture, monuments and history, and customs.

These descriptions take the form of organized and interconnected notes, which always include a parallel with Argentina. He compares the level of progress and backwardness of different places and generally includes a moral reflection. Most of these notes are similar to the topics of the Creole chronicle genre Pratt proposed:

> I would like to tell you [the European] that I have slept in a hut covered by snow (. . .) so far away from anything that not even the great European eagles would find a stone to land on (. . . .) Only after examining those shanties and going through those mountain ranges have I realized the courage and heroism required from those poor devils who take the mail from one country to another. Such underpaid workers! (Carrasco 1890, 84).

Later, he returns to one of the most recurrent topics in the book. To prove the social and economic benefits of European migration, he compares the cases of Argentina and Chile to "the well-intended doctor when he discovers a disease" (Carrasco 1890, 109). In his view of Argentina's western neighbor, the main problem for progress is clear: "The middle class practically does not exist (. . . .) Those that we would call the lettered, honorable and patriotic landlords (. . .) do not give the poor the opportunity to possess a piece of land" (Carrasco 1890, 108). This way, this lack of access to the land and poverty "prevent the development of those highly needed immigration flows" (Carrasco 1890, 109).

This positive view of immigration was unquestioned in Argentina precisely up to the years in which Carrasco published his *Letters*. In the 1890s, an incipient working force began to occupy public space with demands for better working conditions but also for housing, hygiene, and political participation in the country's major cities (Suriano 2001; González Leandri 2013). In the province of Santa Fe, the home of the most successful agricultural colonies, political crisis and armed uprisings concerning taxes on grain and foreigner political rights were shifting the dominant classes' opinions on immigrants (Gallo 1984, Scarzanella 2003). A new political force, the Radical Party, questioned the legitimacy of the political system as a whole and had ample support among the new middle classes and European immigrants or *settlers* (Alonso 2000). This support, as well as the rise of the renowned *social question,* played an important part in the increase in the negative images of immigrants among the elites and the association of immigration with crime and low life (Micheletti 2007); such imagery of immigration was a new phenomenon in the region, as up to that point, settlers had embodied the opposite: hard work, strong morals, and respectability. Despite this shift, Carrasco stayed faithful to the aim of increasing the flow of European workers to the province because "regarding population, as in many other issues,

what matters is quality" (Carrasco 1886, 234). Nonetheless, Carrasco was a firm believer in capitalist progress and civilization and a rigorous observer, because if Argentina's major concern was the *desert*, that is, the absence of men to work its fertile lands, Europe faced the consequences of industrialization and overpopulation:

> The truth is that we are in Belgium, the most densely populated nation in the European continent and the one with the greatest industrial intensity on Earth. Here, the inhabitants do not have any place to move, to develop, and least of all to grow—when here, we are choked by the desert that knocks at the gates of our cities. (Carrasco 1890, 318)

Discursively, what Carrasco calls Argentina's debt with progress often takes the form of metaphors that involve time. During his trips by train, he grieves over the comparison of Europe's crops, "anticipated visions of the future" (Carrasco 1890, 296), to the lack of crops in Argentina.[9] Throughout the book, there is a strong moral view of progress that is evident when he refers to those customs that should be encouraged and those that must be suppressed. In his narration, he places these customs at the heart of civilized society:

> In the city of Barcelona, there are certain practices and customs that are not consistent with the advancement of civilized society. For example, beggary is a plague tolerated by the authorities since they do not do anything to deal with it (. . .) the perseverance with which they beg for anything, getting into pedestrians' way, sometimes making them stop, is as annoying as disgusting; not to mention the fact that they do this as they exhibit horrible ulcers and mutilations (. . .) this way of life has spread so much that even healthy children, with no reason at all, stop pedestrians in order to ask them for money, without even giving them a pretext for it. (. . .) Despite having the possibility to resort to the existing asylum for beggars, they would rather wander down the streets, which results more profitable for them. (Carrasco 1890, 206).

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[9] There are other examples of Carrasco's *crusade* for immigration. In his *Santa Fe's Geographical and Statistical Description,* which promotes European immigration, the main goal of the study is achieved by presenting Santa Fe as the best option for Europeans settlers. First, he establishes that the province presents unbeatable natural conditions for crops. Then, he enumerates the progressive government policies to foster economic growth. Finally, he highlights the civilized nature of customs within the colonies: "The foreigner is thus rich, praised, welcomed, and he does not think about going back home but to go for holidays."

Here as well, progress is only unattainable by the weak willed: "In Santa Fe, rare is a man not having any cows, the ones who do not have them owe this to their bad behaviour and vices, such as drinking and gambling, which make them unable to save up and to work." Lastly, the most enticing invitation is the blending of values and customs, which the author regards as a feature of the potential immigrants: "Europeans easily adopt Argentinean customs, which by the way, are very similar to theirs. [In Santa Fe] the Spanish language is fluently spoken within wealthy families, without any type of accent, such as the annoying ones that can be heard when listening to people from [the provinces of] Córdoba, Tucumán or Corrientes." See Gabriel Carrasco, *Descripción geográfica y estadística de la provincia de Santa-Fé* (Buenos Aires: Stiller & Laass, 1886), 252, 103, 253.

Here, in line with dominant narratives of the time, beggary is conceived as a way of life, as a choice. However, it is also the primary form of relations between poor people and the respectable man. In addition, this so-called annoying and disgusting custom makes a victim of the respectable man, who is exposed to "ulcers and mutilations" (Carrasco 1890, 205). At the same time, it respects no (social or spatial) boundaries and is motivated by reprehensible moral objectives, such as the "pourboire." The tip is "the God of the inferior classes of Paris and the woodworm of the traveler. Our Argentinean civilization, eager to imitate, is already introducing it" (Carrasco 1890, 285).

As stated, these abusive customs take place in spaces that are delimited only in residual spaces. Interaction between the poor and the rich happens within the boundaries of the places that the former occupy and the latter access only in their roles as employees. Sidewalks at theatres and elite hotels and cafés are the targets chosen by opportunists who victimize the unwary, so the description of these social practices is tarnished with an overall sentiment of disgust and contempt.

On the other hand, when describing fashion, a central form of social interaction and symbolic positioning, both the tone and subject of the description change:

> Being in Paris and not talking about fashion? Impossible! Well, green fabrics of all shades are the ones that are fully in vogue at the moment (. . . .) Every time I look at an elegant Parisian lady, wearing green, our Creole saying comes to mind: [shame was green, and] it was eaten by the donkey! But fashion is what it is, and there is nothing else to do about it. (Carrasco 1890, 277)

Some Final Considerations

This succinct tour of Gabriel Carrasco's *Letters of a Traveler* has allowed us to highlight the types of behavior that drew the author's attention and how he analyzed them with the intention to revise how cultural discourses of the regional elites were part of the legitimatization of social order in turn-of-the-century Argentina. Carrasco's self-created discursive authority and his embracing of European superiority are in fact inseparable and not contradictory. In this way, he presents himself as the most adequate translator for the future that Argentina should aspire to reach and gives his view as a scientist, a tourist and a government emissary.

Concerning the issue of behavior, the spirit of the book matches the conceptions that historians have stated on bourgeois sociability in late nineteenth-century Argentina: civilized behavior, embodied in detailed forms of interaction

that take place in respectable places, which is closer to the definition of formal sociability (although not limited to associationism) is opposed to immoral popular habits. Moreover, although European superiority is present throughout the book as a general conception of the modern world, Carrasco builds a sense of belonging that positions him not only as a member of the culture of European elites but also as one of the best of them, embodied by his participation in lettered, diplomatic and scientific circles.

This sense of belonging sets aside the subordinate place of the Creole, for Carrasco plays a central role in the crucial moments that define these respectable spaces of sociability; furthermore, he does so as an authority figure, grounded largely on him being a man of science. For example, he narrates how the Geographic Society of Paris stood up to applaud his speech. Additionally, he debates with them on a couple of issues and convinces the delegates of the Paris Exhibition to support him in his announcement about 'free' immigration.

The description of different types of behavior is incorporated into the cadence of discourse, which lies in the methodical comparison of certain elements in every place he visits. This strategy, which creates an abyss between the past and future, between backwardness and civilization, includes the comparison between the presence and absence of the material elements key to civilization (railways, wide streets, libraries, among others). However, key elements in his description are also the types of bonds created between people themselves: civilized and distinguished, such as in scientific associations, diplomatic balls, theatres and tourism; and fallen behind, morally reprehensible and disgusting, such as in gambling (of the poor), beggary and tipping.

In such descriptions, which might seem rigid, some bourgeois customs emerge: gambling (for the rich) or vanity about fashion trends. Although he does not approve of them, he does not condemn them as he does with the poor, but rather makes humorous reflections about them that can even seem to be a sort of justification.

Finally, there is an interesting dual-purpose present in this *oeuvre*. The belonging and the identity that Carrasco propose could not exist, a priori, between a Creole and a European. Throughout the book, the main opposition is described via social stratification, which is embodied in a moral abyss between the respectable and the poor, which is also perceivable through the discursive strategies he uses for each group. When describing the customs of the popular classes, he employs solemn speech, which transmits disgust and rejection and condemns every custom he describes.

Seen in this way, *Letters of a Traveler* constitutes an example of the cultural practices that composed what were becoming the dominant narratives regarding order in Argentina by the end of the nineteenth century. Here, we find the main issues of the social agenda of the period. We find these topics organized and directed to the audience in such a way to convince them of the ways in which they should think about a reality composed of such vertiginous changes. Carrasco writes for a heterogeneous group, formed eminently of the lettered and dominant sectors of the Argentinean elite who, in this context of change, massive immigration, progress, and social mobility, were urged not only to recognize themselves but also to know the basis and manner in which to do so.

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