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"El Doctor Bunge, observador acertado y precavido generalizador, estudioso, inteligente, carece de imaginación y de gusto; no es artista" (Olivera 304–05). The opinion of literary critic Ricardo Olivera is at once deferential to the intellectual capacity of his contemporary, Carlos O. Bunge, and pedantic in its dismissal of his literary ability. Bunge may possess those qualities important for an "observador" but not those of an "artista." He may be an acceptable social scientist, but he lacks the creative mind of a literary genius. What is more damning still, according to Olivera, Bunge lacks good taste, that contested domain of the cultural elite at the turn of the century for whom class belonging was a performance, a *pose*, of "buen gusto."[1] Olivera continues: "Es el suyo estilo pretencioso . . . *retorcido*, sin sobriedad y sin belleza" (305; my emphasis). If Bunge's intellectual acumen—or his belonging to the Porteño elite—cannot be challenged, his literary style, in contrast, is more than simply deficient, but "twisted," unrestrained, *queer*.

I begin with this example to point out that Bunge's first major work of fiction, *La novela de la sangre*, published in Madrid by Daniel Jorro in 1903, was met with skepticism, if not outright hostility in his native Argentina. This is important because Bunge would go on to drastically change the novel before it was published in Buenos Aires the following year by Biblioteca de La Nación, adding a new final chapter in which he completely alters the dénouement. This is a rare textual example of an attempt to "straighten out" a text whose queerness mobilizes turn-of-the-century literary criticism to limit erotic ambiguity.

Similar though perhaps more spectacular scenes dot the landscape of *fin de siglo* criticism in Latin America. Sylvia Molloy eloquently illuminates how José Martí censures Oscar Wilde for his supposed aesthetic incongruity and excessive visibility, and how Rubén Darío pathologizes the same figure post mortem ("Too Wilde"). Likewise, Oscar Montero has written about José Enrique Rodó's policing of erotic excess in Spanish American *modernismo*. In all of these cases, turn-of-the-century literary criticism reveals a cultural anxiety regarding the expression of homoerotic desire and transgressive gender performance. Particularly acute for the *modernistas*, the issue of stylistic innovation—writing turned

[1] This line of thinking follows Sylvia Molloy's "The Politics of Posing."

sumptuous, rarified, opulent—in a society that resisted such cosmopolitanism, strangeness (*lo raro*) would indelibly link an aesthetic question to a moral one (Montaldo, *Sensibilidad* 109). As Molloy suggests, such a conjunction of the stylistic and the moral positions the critic in the role of *arbiter elegantarium*, charged with the responsibility of defining the limits of bourgeois respectability even when faced with the contradictory discourses surrounding European decadence, at once the sign of cultural regression and innovation ("Too Wilde" 190). This was equally true for naturalist writers such as Bunge, whose socially conscientious if racially fatalist novels were meant to provide moral and spiritual guidance to readers.

What changed in Bunge's novel and what the implications of those changes might be for Argentine culture at the turn of the century are the central questions that guide the present article. In order to respond to these questions, I read the differences between the first (1903) and the second (1904) editions of *La novela de la sangre* as an effect of contemporary literary criticism that reveals the critics' anxiety—we might say panic—regarding the type of desire that is modeled in the text. First, I argue that Bunge is criticized for not providing a viable model for citizenship, understood as a heteronormative ethno-cultural model of national futurity. In this, Bunge's work resonates with Lee Edelman's call in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* for queer subjects to embrace their indecipherable position within the symbolic order; to inhabit their death-drive tinged abject status as a way of deconstructing the political. Bunge's first edition operates on this ambiguous plane of the non-national and the refusal of a symbolic future. Secondly, I argue that the changes to Bunge's novel respond to a supposed failure of both message and style that evidence the disciplinary effects of literary criticism and outline the contours of the textual closet. This archive allows us to read the author's response to accusations of failing to contribute to the ongoing project of modernization, the shaping of future citizens, and the nationalization of Argentine literature and culture.

On Bunge's Writing

As a whole, Bunge's writing has been associated with late-century *hombres de ciencia* such as Miguel Cané, Jose María Ramos Mejía, and José Ingenieros (Terán 10). He has consistently been read as part of a corpus of texts that sought to explain the cultural malaise of the turn of the century by appealing to ethno-nationalist discourses buoyed by eugenic thought, demophobia, and economic liberalism (Hale 161–73, Shumway 143–59). Little attention has been paid to Bunge's naturalist fiction, however, and even when it is taken up, it is usually to emphasize its autobiographical content, or else to confirm Bunge's transparent racism.[2] It is not my intention to reverse this trend or to situate Bunge's fiction

[2] The two-volume history of the Bunge family by Cárdenas and Payá is the most complete resource for biographical information. I do not completely subscribe to their readings of Bunge's literary work, or to what I see as a persistent homophobic undercurrent in their rendering of Bunge's personal life. Salessi takes exception to this as well in *Médicos maleantes y maricas*, which I discuss below.

within the broader field of naturalist literature in Argentina. Rather, I aim to elucidate a specific moment in his career in which the ambivalence present in his work speaks to the role of queerness in defining national literature.

It is worth noting in this regard that when Bunge burst onto the Argentine intellectual scene in 1903 he published not only what would be his most widely read work, *Nuestra América*, later subtitled, *ensayo de psicología social*, but also a book-length treatise entitled *Principios de psicología individual y social*, as well as two full-length novels, *La novela de la sangre* and *Xarcas Silenciario*.[3] Like his essays, both 1903 novels seek to explore the historical impact of race on the Argentine national character and the ways in which the ethnic traits that Bunge observes in the present are produced by a historical legacy of racial miscegenation, geographical determinism, and shared psychological responses to traumatic historical events.

Reminiscing about this prolific year (1903) in his literary memoirs, Manuel Gálvez would write:

> Su fecundidad, su talento, la originalidad de su espíritu y la novedad de sus ideas, inquietaban en el mundo de la alta sociedad y en el de las letras. Agréguese con todo esto, un singular tipo de hombre del Norte, una distinción aristocrática, cierto dandismo en el vestir y un temperamento rebelde y agresivo, y se comprenderá que, durante algunos años, Carlos Octavio Bunge fuese "un caso." (283)

Gálvez describes Bunge's *physical presence*, in addition to his ideas, as "disquieting" among the Porteño elite. He is disruptive not only for his application of innovative methodologies—for example, he is the first to employ the term social psychology in Argentina—, but also for his "singular" performance in society. Gálvez recalls the residual effects of Bunge's "temperament" more than the content of his academic production; he seems to have been more struck by his "dandified" fashion sense and "aggressive" personality than by his writing on the intellectual climate of the turn of the century. Gálvez even labels Bunge a "case," a mystifying presence among the Porteño elite to be contemplated, studied, and perhaps diagnosed.

As Jorge Salessi has argued, the insinuation present in Gálvez's memoir, as well as in historical accounts of Bunge's life, is that of a man tormented by an inner strife, ciphered as a repressed homosexual desire, that served to inspire his copious and often frenetic scholarly production, and which prompted his oscillation between patriotic celebrations of *argentinidad* and a disheartened ambivalence regarding the national project. Echoing this sentiment, Osvaldo Bazán concludes "la luz intelectual de principios de siglo XX, el niño mimado que tenía a su disposición los teatros, las revistas y el Estado para difundir su pensamiento, el más bello de los pensadores de la elite, no salió jamás de un armario que él mismo ayudó a construir" (158). Leaning on accounts of Bunge's life by

[3] Bunge was well known for writing and publishing quickly, though it is unlikely that he wrote all four texts in the same year. Portions of his essays at least were published previously or based on earlier work.

historians Cárdenas and Payá, and making explicit Salessi's more speculative suggestion, Bazán codifies the depiction of Bunge as a closeted homosexual at the turn of the century. This depiction relies, importantly, on him having at his disposal public outlets such as the literary magazine *Ideas*.

But this access was not as straightforward as Bazán makes it out to be. We see a constant insinuation of Bunge as a closeted homosexual, but as of yet no archival evidence of how this closet actually came to be. This article fills that void by reading how the author responded to pressure to adhere to normative models of gender performance and sexual desire in *La novela de la sangre*. Thus, it attends to both the circulation and reception of this novel as well as the tension it generated among the Argentine elite. This particular text sheds new light on the role of literary criticism in disciplining queer desire at the turn of the century and reveals the strategies of mitigation and even resistance that Bunge employs in response.

La novela de la sangre

Tellingly, the novel begins with a wedding: Blanca Orellanos and Regis Válcena are married in a modest ceremony on a fragrant spring evening in 1835. That year, however, also marks the beginning of the *Reign of Terror* of Juan Manuel de Rosas, an era of political repression carried out by the notorious and ever-present *Mazorca*, Rosas's strong-arm police force. The wedding guests are eager to discuss the night's events, as they fear that the Orellanos-Válcena nuptials may have caused an unintended backlash.

"Se han casado de noche, tarde, en privado, y *a la francesa*. . . . Los amigos de Manuelita Rosas nos van a criticar. Lo merecemos," notes Gabriel Villalta, Regis's first cousin (21).[4] In addition to having neglected to invite the daughter of the *Restaurador de las Leyes* to the wedding, a highly symbolic omission given the authoritarian political climate, the manner in which the ceremony was conducted, its *style*, "a la francesa," is described as potentially offensive. On the one hand, the protagonists have denied Rosas the right to share *intimacy* with the Válcena and Orellanos families, and in this sense they preempt his supposed right to approve the unions that take place under his domain. The marriage reveals the dictator's exclusion from the process of social interaction of which the marriage rite is a public expression. They "deserve" to be criticized not necessarily for having disregarded Catholic religious tradition, but for violating the *habitus* of their class.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that the entire plot of Bunge's novel is based on this breech of social protocol, for the same night of the wedding Regis is called upon by Rosas's aid-de-camp, Manuel Corvalán, who must bring him immediately to the headquarters of the Federation "para confiarle una comisión honrosa" (33). The mission is anything but honorable as Regis is

[4] Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the novel are taken from the 1903 edition.

dispatched to meet with the caudillo of Santa Fe, Estanislao López, who immediately imprisons him for no apparent reason other than as retribution for the family's perceived irreverence.

Once Rosas has successfully divided the newlyweds, the novel also separates into two main plotlines. The first follows Regis on his journey to see López, his imprisonment there, and his attempt to escape. The second details the frustrations of the Válcena and Orellanos families in their quest for information about Regis, Blanca's increasing anxiety, and the violence of the *Mazorca*. The former takes the protagonist into Argentina's interior, farther from civilization, and deeper into his own mind. The latter shows the use and abuse of the social system of interrelated family ties. The romantic tension is provided by the erotic triangle formed between Regis, the idealized *criollo* male, and Pantuci, a provincial Italian who attempts to win over Blanca (the idealized White female, as her name indicates) once Regis is out of the picture.

Bunge's text resonates with José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851–52), Argentina's foundational novel, in that both texts are structured as sentimental romances set during the fractious years of the Rosas dictatorship. However, while the protagonists of Mármol's *Amalia* serve allegorical functions that point toward the possibility of a conciliatory national politics, as Doris Sommer has shown, in Bunge's novel the nationally significant protagonists are employed to demonstrate the negative psychological effects of the terroristic Rosas regime. Bunge's text is structured as a mid-century allegorical romance, though its aim is aligned with the turn-of-the-century "somatic fictions" described by Gabriela Nouzeilles. It is a historical text that brings the collective trauma of the Rosas dictatorship to bear on the romantic relationships of the period and thus on the types of romance that were possible at that time. Before moving to a discussion of the novel's failed national romance, however, I want to briefly sketch the circumstances around the publication and subsequent revision of Bunge's novel in order to provide a context for reading the dramatic shift between the 1903 and 1904 editions.

Between Olivera and Gálvez: Bunge in *Ideas*

For David Viñas, the turn of the century represents a period of transition, not only in terms of culture, demographics, and urban development, but also with respect to the role of the writer in national life. In fact, Ricardo Olivera is one of those signaled by Viñas as exemplary of this shift from the dilettantism of late-century writers to the professionalization of the early twentieth century (100). Indeed, one of the first steps Olivera took on this path from aficionado to professional was to found the literary magazine *Ideas* in 1903 with the man who would go on to champion the cause of the writer-as-professional, Manuel Gálvez.

As Verónica Delgado has documented, *Ideas* was one of the first publications to actively engage with an emerging market of middle-class readers, as well as to focus specifically on the role of literature and literary criticism in shaping new national subjects in the early twentieth century. Delgado explains:

> *Ideas* exhibió su interés por aspectos ligados a un mercado de bienes culturales posible como lo eran la edición, la traducción, la selección y distribución de las obras, y el éxito, que recubierto de propósitos más elevados, como renovar el pensamiento y el arte o llevar adelante la educación literaria e intelectual de un público amplio, podía presentarse ahora como un objetivo a conquistar. (271)

It is this selectiveness that turns *Ideas* into a source of cultural policy in the early twentieth century. The publication's goal was to (in)form new readers by presenting them with works that served to construct a new cultural identity, a new *argentinidad*. Its editors chose predominantly nationalist texts, literary works and criticism that emphasized the need to renew the spiritual core of the nation, seen as corrupted by materialist tendencies and beset by immigrants.[5] The goal of the magazine was to vindicate nationalist literature and actively reshape the collective consciousness as produced through the matrix of literary and cultural interventions that were made possible by the publication. As with other periodicals at the turn of the century, *Ideas* saw its role not simply as a guide in aesthetic and moral areas of national significance, but as a producer of the new "alma argentina" (Delgado 189). I am following Viñas and Delgado in positioning *Ideas* as a site where literary production was evaluated as an intervention in national culture. Yet neither scholar asks what the implications of this position might be for a text such as Bunge's novel that fails to adhere to the cultural nationalist vision of *Ideas*. This is the site of the closet: where the upper class enforces heteronormativity, buoyed by an alliance between biopolitics and literary criticism. The rewrite of *La novela de la sangre* evidences this connection between the desire for an expanded reading public and the insistence on a mode of representation that privileges ethnic cohesion through idealized heteroromance. Literary criticism thus becomes the matrix through which the social and the biological reinforce each other.

Olivera's review of Bunge's novel was published in the March–April 1904 edition of *Ideas*, though the text is dated December 1903. Gálvez had also published a review in January of 1904, the only time in the history of the publication that two critics—its co-founders no less—reviewed the same text.[6] It is plausible, I think, to date the Olivera review as prior to that of Gálvez, even though it was actually published two months later (the Gálvez review is not separately dated). Even though Olivera had stepped down from the direction of the publication by January 1904, he continued to publish in *Ideas* for some time and would have had direct and extensive contact with Gálvez, who remained as sole director until 1905, when the magazine closed. Thus, it is certainly possible that Gálvez preempted Olivera's unfavorable review with one of his own in an effort to maintain a lasting relationship with one of the rising stars of the Argentine intellectual community, and the man who would become—and I find this coincidence highly suggestive—Gálvez's brother-in-law in 1910. Finally, in May 1904, Bunge's

[5] For more information, see Marysa Navarro Gerassi's *Los nacionalistas* and Carlos Payá and Eduardo Cárdenas, *El primer nacionalismo argentino en Manuel Gálvez y Ricardo Rojas*.

[6] For a detailed analysis of *Ideas* and useful appendix detailing the bulk of its publication, see Delgado's *El nacimiento de la literatura argentina en las revistas literarias (1896–1913)*.

revised ending was published in *Ideas* as a stand-alone chapter in advance of the 1904 Argentine edition of *La novela de la sangre*. In short, the Olivera review is dated December 1903; the Gálvez review was published in January 1904; the Olivera review came out in the March-April 1904 edition and was immediately followed by Bunge's new ending in May 1904. In my discussion of these reviews I aim to flesh out my argument for a reading of the space of *Ideas* as a closet. There are two central themes that become salient in this regard: historical verisimilitude in a fictional text and the author's use of psychopathologic discourse to generate interest in the audience.

On History

As we saw previously, Olivera does not view Bunge as an artist. This would have been particularly unflattering given the overarching proposal of *Ideas* to inaugurate a new wave of nationally significant literature. What is more, as Graciela Montaldo demonstrates, *mal gusto* was associated with the amorphous and feminized masses, with the cheap goods they consumed, and the developing culture of the public spectacle (''Hombres'' 130). This is the opposite of the ''intellectual'' that Bunge hoped to be.

In particular, Olivera takes issue with what he describes as Bunge's lack of historical verisimilitude:

> La Novela de la Sangre transcurre bajo Rozas. Tiempos climatéricos de luchas enconadas, las pasiones en paroxismo y la diaria peripecia deben atraer al artista: la preferencia de Bunge se explica. Pero es el suyo empeño atrevido. La Historia debe ser auxiliar indispensable de la novela histórica. Y la historia del gobierno de Rozas, demasiado cercano para encontrar imparcialidad, no está escrita. (300–01)

The question of genre is important in that the possibility of appreciating Bunge's contributions to the Argentine intellectual field rests on his (in)ability to follow the precepts of what Olivera calls ''the historical novel.'' Bunge is criticized for failing to achieve ''impartiality.'' Indeed, Olivera implies that *no one* could write an impartial history of the Rosas regime, which ended *only* half a century prior. But historical verisimilitude was not a hallmark of the literary works written about or because of Rosas. It would be hard to imagine Echeverría, Sarmiento, or Mármol taking historical objectivity as the point of departure for their narrations of the Rosas regime. On the contrary, as Lelia Area notes, ''la novela histórica —como matriz genérica— ocupó un lugar preferencial en ellos [Sarmiento and Mármol] debido a que habilitó la interrogación resentida y rencorosa del pasado inmediato'' (238). It is precisely the ''resentment and rancor'' in narrating the abuse of the Rosas regime—its violence and terrorism—that characterizes mid-century fiction. And in this sense, it is political immediacy rather than historical verisimilitude that characterizes earlier accounts of this era. Olivera, in contrast, is more aligned with a strand of conservative historical revisionism, in which the Rosas regime came to stand for nationalist authority in

the face of rising cosmopolitanism, for an autochthonous, paternalist ruler opposed to the liberal elite (Rock 13). The use of the original spelling of the dictator's last name, "Rozas," in Olivera's review, suggests not historical verisimilitude, but the propagandistic revisionism of the early decades of the twentieth century.

In contrast with Olivera, Gálvez does not see the novel as intending to reproduce a historical period: "Sin pretensión de pintar la totalidad de una época, ha trazado Bunge diversos cuadros, característicos y exclusivamente propios de ese tiempo, de un colorido intenso" (80). The intensity with which Bunge narrates stands out, while his intent is compared to that of a *costumbrista* novelist. Still, Gálvez notes, "tratándose de una época no vivida, ha recurrido [Bunge] al elemento psicopatológico, para dar una base de robustez al libro" (83). Acknowledging that Bunge's narrative structure depends on the interest generated by the "elemento psicopatológico," Gálvez sees *La novela de la sangre* as akin to the naturalist fictions of the Generation of 1880, which follow the protagonist through a process of diagnosis and treatment, positioning his or her particular pathology as part of a eugenic master narrative moving ever forward toward a hereditary ideal. That is, Bunge deliberately sets his novel during the Rosas dictatorship, returning to a scene of national trauma and influenced by psychosocial theories of collective behavior, in order to describe the origins of a collectively felt psychological chain reaction culminating in the cultural malaise of the *fin de siglo*. Olivera picks up on this—"la novela se inaugura con un capítulo de psicología mórbida" (304)—, though he is too focused on the historical content of the novel to entertain the possibility of a narrative function for this psychological element. The novel's traumatic beginning is the final point of convergence between Gálvez, Olivera, and Bunge, to which we now turn.

Osculum Interruptum

If Olivera takes issue with the style of Bunge's historical rendering of the Rosas period, he is particularly dismayed by the narrative element the author uses to set up the novel's romantic tension: the kiss. Or more precisely, the kiss interrupted on the night of the wedding between Blanca and Regis. Paraphrasing Bonnie Honig, the effect of this interruption is to redirect a chain of events (3). What is more, the interruption of the kiss alters both the narrative direction of the novel and its affective expectations. This moment is key to understanding the queerness of Bunge's text and its relationship with the broader circulation of nationalist literature.

This is the "capítulo de psicología mórbida," referenced by Olivera, who, after describing the scene, exclaims: "La confesión ocupa doce páginas, ¡en plena noche de bodas!" (304). The urgency of the moment (having carried out the wedding in secrecy) and the particular erotic charge of this first kiss underlie Olivera's critique. The relationship between Bunge's novel and *Amalia* is made explicit here as well: "Amalia en idéntica situación escucha temblando el sonar del reloj, y antójasele fatídico. El histerismo de Válcena parece tener origen en esta superstición de mujer sensitiva, metamorfoseada en caso clínico" (304).

Olivera first identifies the function of the kiss interrupted as central to the psychological treatment of the main characters and continues to note that the trope of the hysterical woman is transformed in Bunge's text, transposed to the male protagonist, Regis Válcena. Olivera acknowledges this psychological element, but refrains from further comment beyond his skeptical tone. There is something to this silence, this refusal to entertain the possibility of a psychologically deficient male protagonist, which is in keeping with Olivera's overall sentiment of disapproval.

This may be because when Regis Válcena is likened to a "mujer sensitiva," the critic also opens up the possibility of reading the protagonist through a queer lens. Following Juliet Mitchell's revision of psychoanalytic renderings of hysteria, we see two strands of thought: one, tracing Rivière and Lacan, which focuses on the hysteric's unstable position in Oedipal socialization, oscillating between normative and incestuous desires, and another, proposed by Charcot, focusing on memory and trauma (6–9). In the first case, there is an emptiness, a longing, often enacted theatrically; in the second, it is an unprocessed traumatic experience that, when triggered, reopens a psychic wound that is then constantly reenacted. Both are evident in Bunge's portrayal of Regis Válcena, whose psychological trauma is linked to Rosas's return from the pacification wars of the southern frontier in 1828, heralded by a cacophony of church bells. The trauma is revived on the night of the wedding by the ringing of a wall clock given to the newlyweds (that is, the clock is their first wedding gift) which precipitates Regis's self-diagnosis: "Las campanas de todas las iglesias saludaban al caudillo. . . . Su repiqueteo, su sonoro, su continuo, su infernal repiqueteo, *sonaba en mis nervios de enfermo y de ciudadano. . . . Porque los argentinos estábamos ya enfermos, como ahora, de una dolencia rara, mitad extenuación, mitad terror*" (12; my emphasis). It is this trauma that makes the groom unable to kiss his bride. What is more, the symbolic rendering of this event connects the kiss interrupted to the inability of the protagonists to consummate their marriage. The *osculum interruptum* stands in for the *ratum tantum*. In this regard, Bunge's main character suffers from a psychological affliction linked not only to the inability to fulfill the normative gender/sex role, but also to the debilitating of his being.

It is no coincidence that Rosas is the figure that sets off the hysteric episode, since Bunge's novel hinges on him not being invited to the Válcena-Orellanos wedding. This positions the dictator as a threat to kinship bonds, and the novel as a whole as an extended family drama. Rosas, as a historical figure, made possible, or perhaps demanded, what Area calls "un canon político-familiar leído como literatura de la nación" (18). For this corpus of texts (that includes *Facundo* and *Amalia*, but also, arguably, *La novela de la sangre*), "Rosas se instaló en el imaginario nacional desde la perspectiva de un *pater familiae*" (19). A national father-figure demanding to be included not only in the social enactment of marriage rites, but also, crucially, serving as an Oedipal pole against which national literature of the mid and late nineteenth century defined itself. Seen in this way, the trauma that is recalled on the night of the wedding can also be read as instigating the failure of the protagonist to recognize the Law of the Father. In other words, Bunge generates tension through a male protagonist who refuses (for twelve pages!) the symbolic gesture that would consolidate the

positions of male and female within the normative logic of the novel. To position Regis, the male protagonist and emblem of normative/national masculinity, as a hysteric is to hearken the chaos of the *fin de siglo* regarding immigration, culture, language, etc. This chaos is read through a diagnostic lens that implies not only gender instability but also sexual excess.

But if it is Rosas who interrupts the first kiss—and in doing so sets off the chain of dramatic (and traumatic) events that sustain the novel—, it is Regis who, when presented with the opportunity, at the end of the text, willfully refuses to kiss Blanca. This disavowal of his role as the idealized male is the ultimate consequence of his hysterical condition, the manifestation of his queerness. This is the hysteria brought on by Rosas, which culminates in the dissolution of the subject at the end of the novel, when Blanca exclaims:

> —Un beso, Regis, y la despedida para siempre, siempre. . . . ¡Nada más que un beso!
>
> Regis la rechazó con las manos, en un ademán inconsciente, y tan intenso, tan intenso, que más trágico parecía hierático . . .
>
> Volvióse a oír, en la creciente noche, el grillo que lanzaba su triste, su fría, su diabólica disonancia. . . .
>
> Hizo Regis un esfuerzo sobrehumano para levantarse y huir, sintiendo que, como un joven roble que se arranca violentamente del fecundo limo en que ha nacido y crecido, dejaba allá las raíces de su vida. . . . Y huyó, *por evitar aquel beso supremo*, huyó. . . . (466–67; my emphasis).

In the 1903 edition of Bunge's novel the kiss remains forever interrupted. And even though Rosas is the force behind the initial separation of Regis and Blanca, he is not ultimately what keeps them apart. That responsibility falls to Regis, who ''flees'' his former bride in the precise moment in which their reunion (and thus their future) could be salvaged. Regis is compared to an oak that has left behind its roots, heavy-handedly connecting him to the denial of genealogical succession. He does not simply fail to live up to his potential in the ongoing cycle of procreation, but dramatically rejects his place in the future Argentine nation. He flees ''por evitar aquel beso supremo,'' not simply unable, but *unwilling* to kiss Blanca. Regis flees precisely in order to avoid the kiss upon which the entire novel hinges, the kiss whose promise of a future will remain forever truncated.

A kiss is simultaneously the culmination of a process of seduction and the promise of a romantic future. ''Más que la mirada, más que el apretón de manos, más que la caricia, más que el abrazo, tiene el beso una secreta inquietud deliciosa, capaz de poner en tensión todo el organismo y de estremecerlo ansiosamente,'' wrote José Ingenieros, Bunge's contemporary, in an early twentieth-century survey of the juridical implications of kissing (116). That the nascent scientific community of which Bunge and Ingenieros were certainly at the forefront, would consider ''the kiss'' not only in its romantic dimensions but also its psychological and legal ones is notable. That the kiss signifies not simply as a romantic gesture or instance of social protocol, but as a physiological and neurological phenomenon, even more so. Ingenieros continues:

> estas prácticas [of kissing] entran en el terreno de la patología mental y deben considerarse como formas de masoquismo; implican ya cierta anormalidad de la imaginación o de los sentidos, y puede, entre otros daños generales, causar intensos estados neurasténicos o la misma alienación mental. (117)

Though Ingenieros is referring specifically to the ''beso *more colombino* [sic],'' the prolonged kiss that lasts ''horas enteras'' (116), there remains a connection between the fulfillment of the consensual kiss and the possibility of neurasthenia and mental illness that I am interested in developing further.[7] This enactment of desire, defined specifically as a form of masochism, brings us back to classic definitions of sexual deviance.

As Amber Musser notes, the first case of masochism to be documented and analyzed as a sexual disorder appears in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1890. In this case, Musser continues, ''Masochism, according to Krafft-Ebing, was about submission. He considered it a feminization of man's sexual *rôle*, a perversion that was characterized by passivity and subjection'' (4). In this early theory, masochism is associated with the abdication of the masculine position within normative social and sexual practice—with the feminization of the male subject. Ingenieros, for his part, seems to propose a slightly more open-ended reading of masochism, applicable to both men and women, and describable in the plural, ''formas de masoquismo.'' His description of the kiss, however, positions him between Krafft-Ebing and Freud, who, as Musser notes, shifts from hereditary explanations of sexual pathologies toward developmental ones, ''away from the paradigm of perversion toward that of neurosis'' (6). I would like to highlight two issues here: first, Ingenieros construes the enactment of desire through the kiss as bound up with larger theories of sexual deviance, namely inversion and neurasthenia, and second, that this deviance is described as an abnormal fantasy (''imaginación'') or a corruption of the senses. The prolonged kiss for Ingenieros is not an inherent sexual pathology, though it does exist in the ''terreno de la patología mental,'' but rather a practice that over-stimulates the senses, eventually leading to their failure and exhaustion.

In Bunge's first edition of *La novela de la sangre* we see the reverse of this pathological narrative: it is the interruption of the kiss, its withholding, its absence, that eventually leads to the psychic trauma of both Regis and Blanca. Regis's gesture of denying the kiss is described, as we have seen, as responding to a national (read Oedipal) trauma. If in Ingenieros the uncontrolled kiss can be seen as the agent of neurasthenia, in Bunge, it is the threat of the kiss, its possibility and symbolic resonance, which serves to punctuate the mental instability of the protagonist, and eventually leads to his subjective dissolution.

The kiss becomes the moment when desire is given its first materiality but always as part of a past and future. The kiss, in this sense, is a gesture toward eroticism that is denied in Bunge's novel. What happens when the kiss is too terrifying to go through with? This is what Bunge takes up through his portrayal

[7] The image is suggestive: *Columbus*, from the Latin, a pigeon; the kiss of the pigeons, euphemistically describing what today we might call the French kiss.

of the pathologized protagonist: the kiss as a traumatic experience. And it is this trauma that—through Regis, linked both to Rosas as a *pater familiae* and to the willful refusal to kiss Blanca—marks *La novela de la sangre* as a queer text.

Rewriting National Futures

What changed? The May 1904 edition of *Ideas*, in which Bunge would publish the revised ending of his novel, introduces the text with the following editorial note:

> Visitamos últimamente al doctor Bunge, con el objeto de pedirle una colaboración para nuestra revista. . . . —Por acaso, vimos sobre su mesa revuelta un grueso manojo de originales, titulado "Novela de la Sangre, segunda edición". Preguntamos entonces al joven y laborioso autor argentino si había reformado mucho ese libro, y nos respondió que así era, en efecto, por haber sido harto deficiente la primer [*sic*] edición, publicada en Barcelona. En vista de ello, rogámosle nos facilitara algún capítulo inédito, á lo que accedió, dándonos el octavo y final del tercer libro y de la novela, en el cual le altera á ésta, completamente el desenlace, *adaptándolo quizá mejor al gusto del medio.* (14–15; my emphasis)[8]

While it may be true that the directors of *Ideas* came across the recently finished second edition of *La novela de la sangre* "por acaso," I think it is more likely that they actively sought out Bunge in order to allow him the chance to redeem himself in the eyes of the public. Olivera and Gálvez specifically reference the new dénouement as a positive outcome of their visit to Bunge's office. This change responds to the "taste" of the reading public that they were actively seeking to shape, bringing us back to the intention of the magazine to develop a readership at the turn of the century by promoting texts that would uphold its nationalist aesthetic and cultural program. This is a pedagogical (and disciplinary) project led by the elite in which the emerging middle class would be provided with models not only of literary merit, but also behavior, desire, and national belonging. The first edition of Bunge's novel is yet again labeled in poor *taste*. However, we are assured, the new ending will sit better with the sensibilities of the majority.

Both endings hinge on Regis's inability to bear the reality of his failed marriage to Blanca. Likewise, for both editions, the dénouement is set up by the racially charged romantic triangle formed between Regis and Pantuci, who later lies his way into Blanca's favor, telling her first that Regis has died, and subsequently replacing him at her side when they emigrate to Montevideo. Pantuci is

[8] While Olivera and Gálvez write that *La novela de la sangre* was first published in Barcelona, the volume of Bunge's *Obras Completas* entitled *Juicios sobre su personalidad y su obra* includes an annex confirming Madrid (with Daniel Jorro) as the original location. Bunge did, however, publish *Xarcas Silenciario* in Barcelona with Henrich y Cía in 1903.

portrayed as a typically deceptive, racially degenerate Italian immigrant, ''bajo y flaco, de enfermizo aspecto y cutis terroso'' (106). Despite his racial inferiority, he is persistent and patient, and eventually manages to marry Blanca, who soon becomes pregnant.

In both the first and second editions, after ten years, Regis returns from his imprisonment to find the home occupied by Blanca and Pantuci, where a young child, ''el nene,'' who is never named, greets him. Blanca arrives shortly thereafter, and just when she is about to explain herself to Regis, with a heaping dose of melodrama, Pantuci appears in the doorway. As if awakened from a dream, Blanca declares that her real husband (in both a legal and affective sense) has returned. In both cases, Regis confronts his rival, threatening to kill Pantuci, aiming a pistol at his chest, before Blanca, who is visibly shaken, convinces him to holster his weapon.

The editions begin to diverge, however, around the treatment of ''el nene.'' In the first case, after hearing a few choice words from Regis, Pantuci leaves the house, and Blanca, ''radicalmente trastornada'' wants to leave as well (467). Both editions also include the following insinuation of her doubts regarding the child: ''Tal vez sea mejor que acabe también este niño de mala raza'' (1903, 318; 1904, 418). The implication is clear: this boy, carrying within him Pantuci's contaminated blood, might disappear from her life so that she and Regis could start anew. The boy's *mestizaje* is damning, a clear reference to the eugenic theories espoused by Bunge.

In the first edition, as we have already seen, Regis rejects Blanca and flees ''por evitar aquel beso supremo.'' Blanca is described in the novel's last paragraph: ''Y la joven, resuelta á morir, se perdió para siempre, con su hijo de la mano, entre las sombras de una noche sin aurora'' (468). Mentally altered, hysterical, she takes her son with her to disappear into the ether, an everlasting darkness contrasting the purity, the whiteness with which she has been characterized throughout. Here, the hysterical wife is charged with eliminating herself and the unwanted child. This ending hinges on a misogynist view of women's role in Porteño society. Blanca is condemned, it seems, for having been tricked by Pantuci and coerced by her own mother into marrying him, and thus failing in her duty as an abnegating and chaste wife. The message is about the spread of a neurosis that hinders the ability of both men and women to successfully perform hegemonic gender roles. It positions state terrorism as an environmental cause of the crisis of the upper class.

In the second edition, however, Blanca and Regis, accompanied by ''el nene,'' walk down to a nearby beach. As Regis is trying to console Blanca, ten years after their first kiss as a married couple was interrupted by Rosas's vengeful order, in the moment they are reunited, described by the narrator as ''el momento más intensamente feliz'' of Blanca's life, another tragedy strikes (1904, 326). The young child is nowhere to be found. After searching the area, Regis comes to a small sinkhole, and there, at the bottom of the darkness, is the boy. ''Más muerto que mi agüelo'' is how a local fisherman describes him, in a strangely poetic pronouncement also infused with the rhetoric of kinship (1904, 329). The death of the child, symbolically returned to the womb, compels the narrator to ask: ''Y si la Providencia lo había querido así, ¿no sería eso mejor para el futuro

hogar? . . .'' (1904, 330). With this rhetorical question we see the insistence of the narrative of a nationally significant kinship pattern even through the death of the young boy. The Regis-Blanca union is an idealized future one, and in this sense the temporality of hegemonic kinship, its ever-forward (reproductive) motion, is restored when the child, a remnant of the past and of an undesirable racial combination, is eliminated in the second edition.

This is an after-the-fact abortion. The tragedy of the child's death is lessened, the narrator claims, because without him Blanca will not be reminded of her terrible experience or the blood running through her son's veins. The death of the child and the return of the true husband sever any ties that might have linked Pantuci, the impostor, the unfit Italian, to Blanca. Finally, Pantuci claims, ''yo, como nada tengo que hacer aquí, desapareceré también'' (1904, 333). And as if to prove this once and for all, ''envolvió [Pantuci] el ya amortajado cuerpecito en su propio poncho, como para preservarlo del frío, y salió con él de la sala'' (1904, 333). Pantuci not only disappears from their lives, but he takes with him the last vestige of his biological presence. The cadaver, product of an ill-fated and loveless union, whose blood is that of the type of racial mixture that will only lead to degeneracy, is eliminated.[9] Thus, in the second edition Bunge uses the Italian immigrant as an ethnic scapegoat; the blood of his mixed-race child is removed from the national stock. To riff on José Esteban Muñoz, ''the future is only the stuff of some kids'' (95).[10] Not ''el nene,'' who is rendered national detritus on the one hand for his degenerate blood, and on the other, for having no proper place in society, or at least, having no language to describe it, stuck in the pre-Oedipal phase. Meanwhile, Blanca and Regis are positioned to fulfill their promise of nation building by starting anew, finally able to close the gap between them and follow through the stages of reproductive futurity that had been interrupted by the dictator. In this, we see that it is through the death of the mixed-race child that the heteronormative order is restored.

The queerness of the first ending is found in its refusal of the logic of reproductive futurity. In this ending, Regis rejects the kiss, interrupted by Rosas at the beginning of the novel, which would have restored the protagonists to their rightful place in the national imaginary of the reading public sought by *Ideas*. The young man flees his wife in an unconscious reaction that brings into focus the complete reversal of his desire. The ''infected citizen,'' whose neurosis was caused by the interruption of his wedding night by the dictator, is no longer able to love his wife. The distance between Regis and Blanca, produced by the *osculum interruptum*, is never closed. In Edelman's terms, Regis prefers abjection to the possibility of occupying the role of the idealized male citizen. It is here that we see the inadequacy of the first edition for the reading public of *Ideas*: there is no future for the couple that is emblematic of the very type of union upon which

[9] José María Ramos Mejía's *Las multitudes argentinas* brings European debates on eugenic thought and a stridently pessimistic view of racial mixing, particularly regarding Italians, to the fore in Argentina.

[10] Muñoz's critique of Edelman reminds us of the need to consider race when discussing queer temporality. The figure of ''el nene'' speaks to this intersection, reinforcing—in a different context and era to be sure—that whiteness is a precondition of turn-of-the-century Argentine futurity.

the desired cultural and ethnic identity of the turn-of-the-century elite was based. On the one hand, the nationalization of literature and expansion of the reading public depends on representations of heteronormative romance that give shape to an explicitly nationalist future. On the other, racial whitening, *blanqueamiento*, becomes a necessary condition for a modern *argentinidad*. Bunge fails to provide a model of either of these cultural imperatives, and it is here, finally, that we see how the revision of his novel evidences the collusion between literary criticism, cultural nationalism, and the notion of racial purity.

Summing up, Bunge's second edition proposes a model for citizenship based on the cohesive ethnic composition of future generations, potential children who represent the future of the idealized national family. The family unit, insofar as it is understood to be the sociocultural guardian of the nation, is placed in the service of conserving desirable hereditary and cultural qualities and eliminating those deemed anathema to the modernizing project of the upper class. The rewrite turns the ambivalent separation of the protagonists into a celebration of their idealized union. If in the first edition Bunge disavows futurity, in the second he restores the possibility of a future racially acceptable child.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to return to style. At least for Olivera, Bunge's is a *twisted* style that leaves the reader with a sour taste, a lingering sense of displeasure, that the romantic promise of the nation is not kept, but rather disrupted by the protagonist's vigorous denial of his hereditary mandate. For this reason Olivera's review attempts to flag Bunge's novel as not adhering to "el gusto del medio." If in the 1903 edition Bunge had intended to discipline Blanca for failing to wait for Regis, in 1904 it is the author who is corrected in turn, for failing to provide a plausible model of reproductive futurity. Olivera and Gálvez position themselves, in their role as literary critics, as more than arbiters of style—as guardians of Oedipal socialization for the upper class. Bunge's preface to the revised 1904 edition evidences as much: "he creído un deber enmendarla y mejorarla, limpiándola de muchos defectos" (3). He expresses not a sense of literary perfectionism, but of *duty* to the cultural project, "nuestra incipiente literatura nacional."

We see in the first edition that Bunge writes about heterosexual desire as if it were utterly terrifying. The desire to procreate, to form a nationally significant future (and fertile) union, is marred by the protagonists' infection with the neurosis that overran Argentine society under Rosas. Bunge offers a vision of kinship that is highly problematic, laden with psychological tension that actually makes procreative relationships *un*desirable.

The kiss, again, is key. In the 1904 edition, we read the following resolution to the long awaited reunion between Regis and Blanca:

> Después de contemplarla largo rato en el abandono del lecho, se inclinó sobre ella y le besó la frente. . . . Blanca abrió los ojos á aquel beso. Era el beso mágico del príncipe salvador anunciado por el hada

> madrina: el mágico beso que venía á despertar á la princesa encantada que dormía en su lecho desde un siglo. (441)

Despite my insistence on Bunge's conservative response to the novel's dissatisfying conclusion, I think we may be able to see in the revised ending a gesture toward queerness after all. Why would the problematic *osculum interruptum* be rewritten as a fairy tale? Even in this revised dénouement, the kiss is not a consensual romantic kiss, but transferred to the terrain of enchantment, Regis as Prince Charming; Blanca, Snow White. It is not the same type of kiss that was presented in the crucial scene at the beginning of the novel. Its *style* is different. This kiss seems more like an act of obligation than of sexual desire. Perhaps, then, we can read this kiss, even as it restores the ideal pair to their symbolic positions in a heteronormative and ethnically copacetic union, as a gesture toward queerness that speaks back to the criticism of Bunge's novel as "torcido." Perhaps, in the end, this is Bunge's way of allowing the audience to have its national literature, while through a stylistic sleight of hand shifting heteronormative desire to the realm of fantasy.

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