

The Simulation of Madness:

Buenos Aires, 1903

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Every individual in the human species is, in a certain way and to a certain extent, a simulator. – Jose Ingenieros¹

In 1903 the young criminal psychiatrist Jose Ingenieros published *The Simulation of Madness*, a work of criminal psychiatry based on the author's observations of inmates in a Buenos Aires penitentiary. The book was a catalogue of the variety of forms simulated madness could take, as well as a treatise of neo-Lamarckian sociology. Its basic premise was a simple one: that sane people sometimes simulated madness as part of the evolutionary "struggle for life." The task of criminological expertise was to distinguish such simulators from the truly mad. The book was an immediate sensation, winning the National Academy of Medicine prize and going through eight editions by 1918 as well as translations into several languages, including Italian and Russian. Soon after its publication, Ingenieros was appointed Director of the Observation Room of the Buenos Aires police prefect, where he remained until 1913.

Aside from its theoretical claims to extend evolutionary sociology into criminology, the book seems, at first glance, to be structured as a guide for medical-legal experts in determining the responsibility of defendants. Its chapters are devoted not only

¹ Jose Ingenieros, *La simulación en la lucha por la vida*, in *Obras Completas*, v. 1 (Buenos Aires, 1962), p. 72.

to cataloguing cases, but also to various physiological and psychological techniques for making a differential diagnosis between true madness and its simulation. But the sheer size and widespread popularity of the work are somewhat perplexing. Why would so many readers have been interested in this catalogue of the varieties of ways that madness was linked to simulation? The chapter headings provide little clue to its appeal. For example, “Over-simulation and dissimulation by the truly mad,” “Juridical conditions of simulation of madness by delinquents,” and “Differential characteristics between true madness and the simulation of madness.”²

In reading the cases themselves, one comes upon certain hints that this was not a straightforward text of positivist criminal psychiatry. In the first chapter, after citing a number of literary exemplars of simulated madness, including Ulysses and Hamlet, Ingenieros describes a series of cases that fall under the heading, “the simulation of madness, in general, as a technique in the struggle for life.” There is one case of a young woman who pretends to be hysteric in order to avoid forced induction to a convent, and another in which a worker who has gotten his pay in advance simulates mania in order to avoid fulfilling his contractual duties. These are followed by a description of the feigned sexual psychopathologies of a striving modernist poet. And then Ingenieros comes to a very curious case of “experimentally-induced” simulated delusion. He uses the case, “Observation Five,” as an example of the general category “madness through suggestion,” a rubric that includes collective delusions such as those of religious sects, as well as *folie-a-deux*, when a susceptible victim—whom Ingenieros calls the *succubus*—falls prey to the suggestions of a madman, the *incubus*. In these cases, the agent of simulation is not a willful and manipulative subject, but an external force—a transmitted idea.

Here Ingenieros notes that in addition to *folie-a-deux*, there can also be cases of madness through suggestion in which a sane incubus performs suggestion on a

² Jose Ingenieros, *La simulación de la locura: ante la criminología, la psiquiatría y la medicina legal* (Buenos Aires, 1918).

predisposed subject. He then turns to the case itself. It begins with the story of a bohemian youth from Montevideo who wished to meet the “literary personalities” of Buenos Aires and was introduced to the poet Ruben Dario and his coterie. “He claimed to be new in the city, and told Dario about his adolescent adventures, exaggerating them in a novelesque form,” reports Ingenieros. The young poet’s delicate qualities and literary fantasies indicated to the group of literati that they had before them a promising subject for an experiment:

Dario, taken by the nebulous fantasy of the youth and by his neuropathic appearance, invited us to meet him, thinking that it could be a “case” for psychopathological observation. We agreed to suggest to him some novelesque and false ideas related to his own person, in order to study his susceptibility to suggestion.³

The story is at first puzzling: what are these literary personalities doing collaborating with the author of a casebook in criminal psychiatry? It is not clear where psychiatric description ends and literary experiment begins. In the heady circles of the *porteño* intelligentsia, the spaces of salon and clinic had merged.⁴ Dario, the Nicaraguan poet who led the modernist movement in late nineteenth century Buenos Aires, was the author of a book called *Los Raros*, a tribute to a series of artistic heroes whose eccentricity bordered on the psychopathological. He was among a number of literary figures that gathered in the library of the Argentine National Institute of Hygiene, which was directed by Ingenieros’ mentor, the psychopathologist Jose Maria Ramos Mejia. The Institute was a place where poets, thinkers and social hygienists met regularly, forming

³ Jose Ingenieros, *La Simulación de la locura*, 31.

⁴ See Sylvia Molloy, “Diagnosticos del fin de siglo” in *Cultura y Tercer Mundo*, v. 2, ed. Beatriz Gonzalez Stephan (Caracas, 1996), which traces this same case, for an insightful discussion of this intersection. See also Horacio Gonzales, *Restos Pampeanos: ciencia, ensayo y política en la cultura Argentina del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, 1999).

what Ingenieros called “agapes.”⁵ He later recalled the atmosphere there: “In the last years the lunch of the Institute—colored with more socialite attendees—was converted into a required address for European intellectuals and conferees visiting the country.”⁶ Such traffic between expertise in psychopathology and modernist subjective exploration was not unique to the Argentine milieu, but the Institute was distinctive in its intermingling of personalities and forms: not only were poets inspired by case reports here, but case reports could also become works of literature.

Ingenieros’ description of Observation Five continued: in order to study the poet’s susceptibility to suggestion, the group invented a story based on the legend of *Les Chants de Maldorer*, a book “whose paternity was attributed to one Comte de Lautréamont, who—it was said—died in an insane asylum in Belgium.” Dario had included Lautréamont, who was born in Uruguay, among his “*raros*” along with Poe, Rimbaud and others, having discovered the infamous poet through the French critic Leon Bloy.⁷ In *Los Raros*, Dario wrote of Lautréamont: “He lived in misfortune and died mad, he wrote one book that would be unique, if the prose of Rimbaud did not exist: a diabolic and strange book, mocking and howling, cruel and painful, a book in which one sees at the same time the groans of pain and the sinister ringing of madness.”⁸ As a hero of the *rioplantense* avant-garde, Lautréamont was an attractive model for the “neuropathic” young poet from Montevideo. Dario implanted the delusional idea upon which the group had agreed, suggesting to the poet a fantasy of literary inheritance. As Ingenieros reports: “Ruben Dario pointed out to the psychopathic youth his physical resemblance to the

⁵ Its librarian was the poet Enrique Diaz Romero, director of the modernist review *El Mercurio de America*. Ingenieros wrote that this post allowed Romero to ignore the sanitary bibliography while passing afternoons reading poets like Paul Verlaine and Gabriel D’Annunzio.

⁶ Ingenieros, Jose. “La Personalidad Intellectual de Ramos Mejia,” in *La Universidad del Porvenir y Otros Escritos Sobre Filosofia, Educacion y Cultura*. (Buenos Aires, 1956 [1915]).

⁷ Lautréamont was born in Montevideo in 1846 as Isadore Ducasse, son of the French consul there. He moved to France at the age of fourteen, and died in Paris in 1870 after having published only the maniacal *Chants de Maldorer*. His mother committed suicide when he was just a year and a half old, one of many members of the family who would suffer this fate, as Argentine psychiatrist Enrique Pichon-Riviere would later discover. Pichon-Riviere, *Psicoanálisis del conde de Lautréamont* (Buenos Aires, 1992).

⁸ Ruben Dario, *Los Raros* (Buenos Aires, 1994), 225.

Comte de Lautréamont, of whom Bloy had published a portrait. He also noted his suspicion that, through some family mix up, the two of them must be brothers.” As we will see, the suggested delusion found a welcome host: it offered the young poet the opportunity to simulate a modernist legacy.

Simulation and the City

Belle époque Buenos Aires, to many of its inhabitants a European metropolis cast adrift on the far side of the South Atlantic, is an apt site for reflection on the role of simulation in the extension of a modern ethos. Cultural theorist Beatriz Sarlo has called the particular mixture of the European and the *rioplantense* of Buenos Aires a “peripheral modernity.”⁹ This term refers to a tension between modernization and traditionalism, the vanguard and the *criollo*: for Sarlo, residual defensive elements have historically been in conflict with programs of renovation. She analyzes this system of response and adaptation in terms of a more general “versatility and permeability” of *porteño* culture.¹⁰ Geographer Michael Johns detects a more defensive position among the city’s elites, arguing that they were an “urbane, Europeanized class living in a peripheral yet modern city that reached with one hand to its peers across the North Atlantic while fending off the uncivilized contagion at its back with the other.”¹¹

Johns suggests that the peripheral relation of the Argentine economy to global

⁹ Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires, 1988). Intellectual historian Nicola Miller adopts the notion of peripheral modernity to understand the relation that cosmopolitan intellectuals in Latin America have had with European modernity more generally. Miller writes: “Beatriz Sarlo’s term ‘peripheral modernity’ captures the uneven and dependent character of a historical process that is best thought of as one of modernity, rather than predominately of pre-modernity (as US modernization theorists and some Spanish American intellectuals used to suggest) or a ‘sort of post-modernism *avant la lettre*’, as some critics now hold.” Nicola Miller, *In the Shadow of the State: Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America* (London and New York, 1999), p. 3.

¹⁰ In the introduction to a volume on “Alternative Modernities,” Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar considers alternative modernities in terms of “creative adaptations” of modern forms. Gaonkar, “On Alternative Modernities,” *Public Culture* 11:1 (2000), p. 14. In his *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism* (Princeton, N.J., 1993), James Faubion engages in a sustained ethnographic reflection on the question of the ethos of modernity in the periphery of Europe.

¹¹ Michael Johns, “The Antinomies of Ruling Class Culture: The Buenos Aires Elite, 1880-1910,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 6:1 (1993), p. 13.

circuits of capital led to the emergence of a distinctive form of social identity based on a norm of simulation.¹² Elites profited from land-speculation and from the export of basic foodstuffs and then used the proceeds to build a European-style capital.¹³ However they remained dependent on Europe for capital, markets, and industrial commodities; they were consumers rather than producers of style, taste and ideas. As the 1887 census editor reported, “people dress and eat as they do in Paris or London, and follow the social movement of the latter with great enthusiasm and at whatever cost,” and “the latest innovation in London or Paris finds an immediate response in the heart of Buenos Aires.” Living rooms were furnished as perfect copies of Parisian homes, as a sign of culture and education.¹⁴ Some Argentine commentators were critical of the derivativeness of elite culture. As two cultural critics wrote in 1916, Argentina “creates nothing, invents nothing, but appropriates all new ideas... It is, indeed, formed after the likeness of its own soil, which produces without effort and lends itself admirably to every kind of culture.”¹⁵

Borges echoed this formulation some years later when he wrote, in a defense of the cosmopolitan sensibility against an emergent literary nationalism: “What is our Argentine tradition? I believe we can answer this question easily and that there is no problem here. I believe our tradition is all of Western culture, and I also believe we have a right to this tradition, greater than that which the inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have.”¹⁶ As Sarlo argues, the creative adaptation of modern forms, constrained by Argentina’s de-centered position in global scientific, economic and cultural

¹² He describes the relation of Buenos Aires elites to European culture in this period as an “imported modernity,” arguing that while the elites’ style of life imitated the upper classes of Paris and London, without capitalism or industrialization it was a cosmopolitanism infused with provincialism. Johns, “Antinomies.”

¹³ See James Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870 – 1910* (New York, 1974).

¹⁴ In this period of its development, Buenos Aires was modeled after Second Empire Paris, with Beaux Arts mansions and Haussmanian boulevards. One commentator wrote that on Avenida de Mayo, with its shops, crowds, cars, “one feels much nearer to Europe than anywhere else in South America,” and another that “Buenos Aires stands for the last word in modernism.” Johns, “Antinomies.”

¹⁵ Cit. in Johns, “Antinomies,” p. 83-4.

¹⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Argentine Writer and Tradition,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York, 1964).

systems, has characterized its distinctive form of cosmopolitanism. The trajectory of simulated madness indicates how ideas and techniques from elsewhere took new form and meaning given the contingencies of the milieu.

The Social Organism

The identification of simulated madness took place within the broader field of social hygiene, which merged psychopathology, criminology and public health as part of the liberal government's program of modernizing social reform. A series of epidemics of smallpox, yellow fever and cholera in the latter part of the nineteenth century led to the establishment of the National Department of Hygiene in 1880.¹⁷ The hygienists' aims were classically biopolitical: to foster the health of the collectivity through the invention of new regulatory practices. Thus their proposals for child care and maternal education were designed for "improving the reproductive strength of the immigrant and native populations."¹⁸ They linked the treatment of contagious disease to more general urban reform. Strategies of intervention included the registration and regulation of vice, isolation of the diseased, and the construction of an urban infrastructure. Special institutions for the insane (*manicomios*) and for those with venereal disease (*sifilicomios*) were built to protect the rest of the population from contamination. Hygienists became involved in problems of criminal justice insofar as venereal diseases were linked to unregulated prostitution. They shared the anti-clerical, materialist ethos of positivism, insisting on treating such issues in scientific rather than moralistic terms.¹⁹

As an extension of hygiene, the emerging field of psychopathology soon found opportunities outside of the asylum.²⁰ One was in treating the "epidemic" of hysteria that gripped the upper classes, especially women, of late nineteenth century Buenos

¹⁷ Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln, Neb., 1991).

¹⁸ Guy, *Sex and Danger*, p. 78. Michel Foucault defined biopolitics as "the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race..." Foucault, "The Birth of Biopolitics," in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault*, vol. I, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1997), p. 73.

¹⁹ For hygienists, human beings were fundamentally shaped by the conditions in which they lived: for example, in 1884 Guillermo Rawson insisted that better air, lighting and water in tenements would have a profound impact on the health, morality and intelligence of the inhabitants. Guy, *Sex and Danger*, p. 303.

²⁰ That Jose Ramos Mejia—an alienist—was named head of the Department of Hygiene indicates the close ties among public health, criminology and psychopathology.

Aires.²¹ The need to delineate criminality from insanity in the legal arena provided another site for the application of this form of expertise. The problem of simulated madness first emerged here, in terms of the question of criminal responsibility: how to balance the security of the collectivity against the rights of the defendant. If it could be shown that a criminal was mad, he could not be held responsible and therefore could not be punished for the crime.²²

Jose Ingenieros is generally seen as a leading figure in the florescence of Argentine positivism and his work is associated with the formation of governmental expertise around social pathologies such as criminality, alcoholism and madness at the turn of the century.²³ In this context his thesis on simulation has been read by scholars of Argentine thought as exemplary of an emerging apparatus focused on disciplining marginal elements of the population—especially given elite anxiety about the consequences of immigration for national identity.²⁴ But I want to suggest that his work on simulation should be read as a complex critique of, while at the same time a contribution to state-based discourses of social improvement and the management of deviance. Ingenieros, a child of Italian immigrants, argued that given the contingencies of the social milieu, simulation was an adaptive mechanism.

Rather than pathologize simulation, Ingenieros used it to stage his own complex

²¹ Gabriela Nouzeilles, “An Imaginary Plague in Turn-of-the-Century Buenos Aires: Hysteria, Discipline, and Languages of the Body,” in *Disease in the History of Modern Latin America: From Malaria to AIDS*, ed. Diego Armus (Durham and London, 2003). For an analysis of the “epidemic” of hysteria in terms of the psychiatric construction of gender, see Julia E. Rodriguez, “The Argentine Hysteric: A Turn-of-the-Century Psychiatric Type,” in Mariano Plotkin, ed. *Argentina on the Couch: Psychiatry, State, and Society, 1880 to the present* (Albuquerque, 2003).

²² As Foucault writes of the ‘pathologification’ of crime in the early nineteenth century: “It was not through the ill-defined zone of day-to-day disorders that psychiatry was able to penetrate penal justice in full force. Rather, it was by tackling the great criminal event of the most violent and rarest sort.” Michel Foucault, “About the Concept of the ‘ Dangerous Individual’ in Nineteenth-century Legal Psychiatry,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, v. 3, ed. James Faubion (New York, 2000), p. 181.

²³ See, for example, Oscar Teran, *Jose Ingenieros: Pensar la nación* (Buenos Aires, 1986).

²⁴ Thus Sylvia Molloy writes: “Simulation, for Ingenieros, is born of a flaw, a maladjustment, a weakness.” Molloy, “The Politics of the Pose,” in *Hispanisms and Homosexualities*, ed. Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin (Durham, 1998). See also Jorge Salessi, *Médicos maleantes y maricas: higiene, criminología y homosexualidad en la construcción de la nación argentina (Buenos Aires, 1871-1914)* (Buenos Aires, 1995).

and ironic relation to authenticity. His Spencerian sociology was tempered by a Baudelairean modernism: he argued that survival in the competitive social world required one to engage in continual self-invention. This theoretical confluence had to do with his multiple but somehow complementary identities as criminal psychiatrist, socialist agitator and dandy.²⁵ His work represented an unwholesome mixture of discourses, and his writings appeared in journals ranging from the avant-garde *El Mercurio de America* to the eugenicist *Criminología Moderna*. Ingenieros also headed a group of self-avowed simulators and pranksters, known as “La Syringa.”²⁶

This work was unified by an overarching project to undermine the liberal vision of the autonomous rational agent in favor of social determinism. In a 1902 article concerning legal responsibility in the case of an “impulsive degenerate” accused of murder, Ingenieros and two co-authors set forth the premise of what would become his critique of bourgeois individualism. The authors began by pointing out the accused criminal’s stigmas of degeneration, his alcoholism and his tattoos. But with respect to the question of whether he was actually insane and therefore not responsible for the crime, they hesitated: “It is impossible to define exactly where sanity ends and madness begins.”²⁷ Rather than analyze the state of the patient’s will, they argued that the true task of expertise was social defense, that madness was located not in the individual subject but in the relation of the individual to his environment: “Socially, it is thought that an individual is insane when the differences in his psychic functioning make his conduct inadaptable to the environment in which he lives.”²⁸ Here the authors reconfigured the definition of insanity: it was to be defined not by the absence of reason but by the inability to adapt to the

²⁵ Molloy points out that Ingenieros was widely known as a simulator. His student Anibal Ponce wrote of Ingenieros’ dandyism: “His costume, striking in its aesthetic refinement, his incredible epigrams, his unending taste for paradox, had turned him, in the frivolous opinion of the literati, into a strange dabbler in science and in art; an odd mixture of Charcot and D’Annunzio with Lombroso and Nietzsche.” Molloy, “The Politics of the Pose.”

²⁶ Noé Jitrik, *El mundo del ochenta* (Buenos Aires, 1982) 81.

²⁷ J. M. Ramos Mejia, B. T. Solari, and J. Ingenieros, “Responsibilidad penal de los degenerados impulsivos,” *Archivos de Criminología, Medicina Legal y Psiquiatría I*, (1902), p. 18.

²⁸ Ramos Mejia, et. al., “Responsibilidad,” p. 21.

social environment. They concluded that the subject was an authentic madman who at the same time was purposely acting mad: foreshadowing Ingenieros' schema from *La simulación de la locura*, it was a case of "over-simulation." Such cases were rare, the authors admitted—until recently they had not even been written down: their newfound visibility was a result of the perfection of the examination record. For the sake of social defense, they recommended permanent and definitive reclusion.

The notion of social defense invoked here followed from the nineteenth century figure of the collectivity as an evolving social organism.²⁹ This widespread notion of the social organism helped define the expert's task of maintaining social hygiene as a work of defense against poisonous elements that could harm the collectivity. Like the French variant, Argentine social evolutionism was neo-Lamarckian rather than social Darwinist.³⁰ Intellectual ties to France led to the adoption in Argentina of what Nancy Leys Stepan calls a "soft" style of eugenics.³¹ This program, which emerged in tandem with social hygienism, included adaptationist notions of inheritance and no sharp boundaries between nature and nurture.³² Whereas Anglo-Saxon eugenics was characterized by a rigid biologism and by deductive programs such as forced sterilization campaigns, "Latin" versions tended to be more epistemologically flexible, and to be oriented in their interventions toward improving public health infrastructures. The outcome was a preventive eugenics: an attempt to cleanse the milieu of factors that could be damaging to

²⁹ Nancy Leys Stepan, *The "Hour" of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, 1991). Like their continental counterparts, Argentine positivists argued that the spirit and methods of science could be extended to all domains of intellectual and moral life. For the reception of positivism in Latin America more generally, see Charles Hale, "Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930," *Cambridge History of Latin America*, v. IV (Cambridge, 1986).

³⁰ See Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, 1996) for the analysis of how, in the French context, the question of the relation of the organism to its environment was the problem-space for the emergence of expertise in multiple domains of knowledge and planning.

³¹ Its proponents tended to be materialist and anti-Catholic. Thus hygienist Augusto Bunge attributed alcoholism to the capitalist organization of society, reading it as a culturally acquired trait that was then transmitted genetically. Stepan, *The "Hour" of Eugenics*, p. 17.

³² Eduardo A. Zimmermann, "Racial Ideas and Social Reform: Argentina, 1890-1916, in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72:1 (1992), p. 39. Ingenieros' colleague, the criminal psychiatrist Francisco De Veyga, propounded a notion of "acquired" rather than inherited degeneration—Lamarckian rather than Darwinian. Such a position helps explain how in the Argentine context degeneration theorists could also be progressive social reformers.

hereditary health.³³ From this vantage, both somatic and psychic pathologies had to be addressed through *social* transformation. The aim of neo-Lamarckian eugenics was not to stop the “unfit” from breeding but to stimulate the growth of a fit population through attention to the milieu in which reproduction occurred.³⁴

Ingenieros followed Herbert Spencer in seeing social evolution as a form of biological evolution.³⁵ Social norms established the rules of the struggle for life. The purpose of the criminal justice system was both to ensure social security and to protect those subjects who were incapable of adapting their conduct to the evolutionary struggle.³⁶ Definitions of what constituted crime were socially determined: “each group or class has its own morality,” wrote Ingenieros.³⁷ A scientific analysis would eventually triumph over concepts of crime that were based on a bourgeois morality of individual responsibility. This was the source of his disagreement with Cesare Lombroso and the majority of European criminologists, for whom inherited degeneracy was the best way to explain criminality. Ingenieros argued, in contrast, that crime was a result of the “limits the collectivity places on the individual in the struggle for life.”³⁸ Criminals were victims of both heredity and their milieu: once one gave up the bourgeois myth of free will (itself linked to a religious notion of the soul), it became clear that the battle against crime should be designed not to punish the criminal but to protect society.

³³ Stepan, *The “Hour” of Eugenics*, p. 22. In Argentina eugenics was initially associated with secular and modernist left-wing and anarchist groups. For instance in 1909, socialist Emilio Coni included birth control and sterilization as facets of progressive medical sanitation. Later groups founded after the war years, such as the Argentine Eugenics Society and the Argentine Association of Biotypology, appropriated eugenics for racist and nationalist causes.

³⁴ Stepan, *The “Hour” of Eugenics*, p. 73.

³⁵ Historian Hugo Vezzetti summarizes Ingenieros’ biological sociology: “Societies and their institutions evolve just like living species and develop collective functions adaptive to the conditions of life of their environment.” Vezzetti, *La Locura en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1985), p. 172.

³⁶ Jose Ingenieros, “Locura, Simulación y Criminalidad,” in *Archivos de Criminología, Medicina Legal y Psiquiatría* VII (1908), p. 3.

³⁷ Cit. in Guy, *Sex and Danger*, p. 92.

³⁸ Guy argues that the challenge of Argentine positivists such as Ingenieros to European criminal anthropology was rooted in their belief that social science could solve the problems caused by immigration and rapid urbanization. She suggests that this ethos derived from an earlier generation of statesmen-intellectuals, such as Sarmiento, for whom the development of a strong, healthy and “civilized” Argentine nation (in contrast to the “barbarism” of the Rosas dictatorship) would require immigration, education, and economic development. Guy, *Sex and Danger*.

Ingenieros' analysis of simulation was part of his socialist critique of liberal individualism. He argued that the problem of simulated madness was badly posed: the issue of punishment in general should not be a question of determining individual responsibility but a matter of social defense.³⁹ Simulation was an artifact of a misguided legal system rather than a pathology unto itself. The only solution to the problem of simulation was to reject the out-dated, unscientific notions of individual responsibility that led to it: if social defense rather than individual responsibility were made the basis of criminal law, defendants would no longer be motivated to feign insanity, and simulated madness would disappear as a phenomenon. When society finally advanced to a penal philosophy based on defense of the collectivity, it would no longer be important whether the defendant was simulating or not—it would only matter whether he was dangerous.

The Art of Diagnosis

In his epilogue to *The Simulation of Madness*, Ingenieros explained the origin of his project. He had begun the book as a medical school dissertation just after the celebrated Wanklin-Etchegaray case of 1897, in which a bankrupt socialite killed his creditor, then claimed to have acted under the influence of a religious delusion. The murder trial made the simulation of madness a widespread problem for thought among Buenos Aires doctors and jurists. The question of whether the defendant's religious delusions were authentic or simulated brought the leading psychiatrists of Buenos Aires into a vigorous dispute.⁴⁰ Ingenieros' dissertation advisor, Jose Maria Ramos Mejia, played a central part in the debate.

Ramos Mejia was a prominent member of the generation of positivist intellectuals that rose to power in the 1880s—and the inventor of the category of “simulating-delusion.” He was instrumental in bringing together criminology and psychiatry as part of

³⁹ Eduardo A. Zimmermann, “Racial Ideas and Social Reform.”

⁴⁰ Ingenieros, *La simulación de la locura*, p. 361.

the social hygiene apparatus. Over the course of an eclectic career, he was the founder of psychopathology in Argentina, a member of parliament, director of the first private sanitarium for mental disorders, head of the *Asistencia Publica*, and director of the National Department of Hygiene. He was also a popular historian and sociologist, one of the first to diagnose the problem of the “caudillo” in Latin American politics in his book on the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas.⁴¹ Given their expertise in psychopathology and criminality, Ramos Mejia and his students—including Ingenieros—were able to establish a stronghold in the city’s expanding hygiene and penal administration.

The Wanklin-Etchegaray trial provided an opportunity for psychopathology to make inroads into the legal arena. At stake was the question of whether to hold the defendant responsible for the crime. Expert testimony in the case was inconclusive: three psychiatrists argued for the defense and three for the prosecution, and this lingering ambiguity seemed to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the discipline of psychiatry.⁴² How was one to know whether a claim of madness was real or feigned?

Brought in as one of the experts, Ramos Mejia mustered his full expertise in what he called the “art of diagnosis.” The job was not easy, he wrote in his later report on the case.⁴³ His authority had apparently been impugned by some who thought he was out to find madness in anyone, that he was turning the whole world into an asylum. His case report was, in a sense, a defense of his ability to distinguish true from false madness. As he put it elsewhere, “a madman is only obvious to a trained eye.”⁴⁴ He began the report by outlining the facts of the case: on March 4, 1897 the accused, Etchegaray, hid outside a cafe in which he knew the deceased—Wanklin—to be, having read in the newspaper of a

⁴¹ Jose Maria Ramos Mejia, *Rosas y su tiempo* (Buenos Aires, 2001); this book followed the long-running theme among the Argentine oligarchy of the struggle between civilization and barbarism, first set out in Domingo Sarmiento’s classic liberal political tract, *Facundo*.

⁴² Hugo Vezzetti, *La locura en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1985).

⁴³ Ramos Mejia, “Informe medico-legal sobre el estado mental del procesado G.E.,” in *La Semana Medica* (Buenos Aires), August 4, 1898.

⁴⁴ Ramos Mejia, *Las neuroses de los hombres celebres en la historia argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1927), cit. in Vezzetti, *La Locura en la Argentina*, p. 80.

celebration in the victim's honor to take place there. After shooting Wanklin in the face several times, Etchegaray made a weak effort to escape but was soon captured by the police. In jail, the defendant claimed that he had been acting as an instrument of God's will and so was not responsible for his actions.

Ramos Mejia's first rule in making a diagnosis was that "people become deluded not in the way they wish to, but how they must."⁴⁵ true madness was not manipulable through the operations of individual agency. In his examination of the accused, Ramos Mejia began with the question of inheritance. Mental alienation did not develop by chance, suddenly, but had to germinate in prepared terrain, he explained. It was because of the modifications heredity impressed upon the psychic organism that mental equilibrium was broken. Moreover, the stronger this hereditary impregnation was, the easier it was for banal causes to provoke insanity. However, he cautioned, the religious tendencies in the family, their sudden deaths from hemorrhage, the mad aunt and the epileptic cousin did not necessarily establish the defendant's insanity. Such hereditary antecedents could not in themselves serve as proof of madness, but only as a potential indicator.

He then proceeded to the physical exam: there were none of the stigmata of degeneration, such as abnormal phrenological characteristics, that were usually present in true cases of insanity. Disease breaks down the spirit, he wrote, like taking apart a watch, allowing the faculties to be studied piece by piece: if there were a delirium, it would disrupt the operations of perception. Yet there were no apparent disturbances of cerebral function or of the association between idea and corresponding sign. Meanwhile the integrity of the defendant's memory, judged by his reproduction of images, was in a perfect state. His will was normal as well, and he was not following the behavior pattern of *perseguidos*—the paranoid. Whatever oddities one might observe in him were due to

⁴⁵ Ramos Mejia, "Informe."

natural excitation rather than a delusional idea.⁴⁶ Ramos Mejia concluded that the defendant was simulating his religious delirium—it was not a case of true madness. Rather, Etchegaray had murdered Wanklin with a mundane motive, the desire for revenge against a “usurious operation.”

The crime itself showed artifice, premeditation—it lacked the spontaneity of an act of madness. Ramos Mejia suggested instead that the defendant suffered from something more like hysteria: the defendant’s predisposition to a certain disequilibrium allowed him to tolerate the idea of the crime, and his conscience had failed to exercise its control function. The accused did not have an illness so much as a transitory reaction to an emotional state: intense experiences could cause such symptoms as memory-loss and anesthesia. He was a romantic spirit, lacking intelligence, exalted by reading indolent literature that excited the fantasies of slight, unstable temperaments.⁴⁷ Hysteria, rather than actual madness, could explain the changes that had been observed in the accused’s character.⁴⁸ It was the illness, then, rather than the accused, that feigned.

In general the protean quality of hysteria made its diagnosis difficult—one of its principle characteristics was the ambiguity and imprecision of its symptoms. Hysteria posed an epistemological challenge for psychopathology: was the real defined by that which was observable? And if not, how could one know what condition a patient actually had? While reading physiognomic signs was a method for psychiatrists to classify insanity in the age of positivism, hysteria did not mean what it said—it dissembled,

⁴⁶ The presence or absence of such an idea was a crucial question for distinguishing simulation from true madness: the question pointed to “monomania” as the defendant’s potential diagnosis—here, a religious delusion in an otherwise sound mind.

⁴⁷ Here Ramos Mejia invoked the well-known relation between literary fantasy and hysteria represented, for instance, by Madame Bovary.

⁴⁸ In this he was guided by Charcot’s understanding of hysteria: that it had a ‘tendency to mimic,’ that its impairments were “functional” (that is, not a result of anatomical lesions) but that they imitated organic disease; and that powerful emotions could play an important role in its production. Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago, 1968). For an overview of the expansive historiography of hysteria in Europe and the United States, see Mark Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations* (Princeton, N. J., 1994).

mimicked, simulated. Paralysis did not point toward an organic lesion; seizures did not indicate epilepsy; and in this case, delusions did not necessarily indicate madness.

But the problem was still more complicated. Ramos Mejia was describing a distinctive form of hysteria, one that even Charcot had not recognized: the illness hysteria was simulating here was not paralysis or epilepsy, but madness itself. In an earlier work, based on his lectures to the medical school and published in 1893, Ramos Mejia had claimed the discovery of this novel form of hysteria. One of these lectures provided the basis for his later diagnosis of Etchegaray. In it he described a class of patients who suffered from “*delirios simuladores*,” or “simulating-delusions.”⁴⁹ Hysteria, he wrote, is an illness “capable of producing surprise,” which “can simulate everything,” from respiratory disease to cerebral pathology. “If hysteria is capable of all this, why not of simulating delusion of persecutions, general paralysis with more or less vivacity, or any other partial delusion?” Of one case he concluded: “Could it also be affirmed peremptorally that this is a simulated hysterical delusion? For me there is no doubt. Because up to now Pathology does not know any other illness capable of producing these surprises than hysteria.”

In this lecture, Ramos Mejia argued that a trained expert could tell that these patients were not truly mad, despite symptoms such as delusions of persecution, because they did not have the degenerative signs indicative of true madness. “Madness, a process essentially degenerative and intimate, does not pass unpunishingly through the brain without leaving in some part of it the mark of its brilliant claw.”⁵⁰ With such patients, generally members of the educated classes, the delusional episode did not indicate the *being* of madness. In these cases the delusion was an expression of the encounter with a situation rather than a symptom of madness itself. Such simulating-delusions appeared at moments in which the patient was frustrated or faced with sudden and intense emotional

⁴⁹ Jose Maria Ramos Mejia, “De los delirios simuladores” in *Estudios Clinicos* (Buenos Aires, 1893).

⁵⁰ Ramos Mejia, *Estudios Clinicos*, p. 82.

agitation. Ramos Mejia gave the example of an honorable official who suffered hysterical delusions after he was forced to work for a corrupt government. Events in life seemed to cause such delusions to appear in those predisposed:

There are almost always in its beginnings actual persecutions or hostilities, emotions and moral disgust, violent and continuous, which shake up the nervous system and put it in propitious conditions for the easy development of delirium. Add to this a bit of hereditary predisposition in some and you have the key to the powerful influence that moral sources can have.

Such moral sources were “a true artificial preparation of the brain for the germination of delirium: removed from these sources, we see that in the majority of cases the state of delirium ceases.” Whereas paranoia—true madness—was known to be incurable, these patients’ delusions could be treated through travel—to Rio, for example, or to the Argentine countryside, where the simplicity of pastoral life eased the patient’s worldly cares. The possibility of successful treatment implied the means for a differential diagnosis between these patients’ delusions and paranoia as it had been described by French alienist Charles Lasegue. As Ramos Mejia wrote, “My convictions are so firm in this respect, that I think that Lasegue’s Disease is absolutely incurable, and that when it is cured radically...I think that there is motive to believe that it is nothing but a simulating-delusion, hysterical or not.”⁵¹ If the moral cure worked, then it must have been a case of simulating-delusions, since true madness was by definition incurable. Victims of simulating-delusions could thus be distinguished from the truly insane through a form of therapeutic trial.

The therapeutic trial involved a retrospective diagnosis: given that expertise was

⁵¹ Ramos Mejia, *Estudios Clinicos*, p. 79.

not presented with its objects in clear form, what the patient had might be surmised given his or her susceptibility to a targeted intervention. To approach an illness that was not immediately graspable, one first had to conjure it—as Charcot had done by hypnotizing his patients at the Salpêtrière.⁵² Knowledge of the illness and its appropriate intervention emerged in tandem. If observation alone could not detect hysteria, experimental techniques might bring it into view.⁵³

Ramos Mejia was not the first to use a therapeutic trial to delineate specific varieties of psychopathology. In his 1877 discussion of “communicated delusion,” the French alienist Legrand du Saulle had advocated the use of such a trial to distinguish between what he called full and partial insanity. In his recommendations on treatment, we again see the key distinction to be made—between those with true, incurable madness and those who only seemed to be mad, and who were therefore amenable to cure:

In all cases of true communicated delusion, and while the two patients are in treatment, the doctor can observe that one dominates the other, that the one is not more than an echo of the other, the first is intelligent and the second is less able. One is the actively persecuted, the other the passively persecuted. Isolate them, treat them, ensure that they do not see one another and the first will make daily progress toward incurability and the second will march resolutely toward cure.⁵⁴

⁵² In their *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer argued that a successful treatment through hypnosis could be used as a therapeutic trial to retrospectively determine the diagnosis of hysteria. As they reported of a patient, a girl who suffered for years from attacks of general convulsions which were thought to be epileptic seizures: “She was hypnotized with a view to a differential diagnosis, and promptly had one of her attacks. She was asked what she was seeing and replied ‘The dog! The dog’s coming!’; and in fact it turned out that she had had the first of her attacks after being chased by a savage dog. *The success of the treatment confirmed the choice of the diagnosis.*” Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James and Alix Strachey (London, 1991), p. 65, emphasis added. Charcot had also used hypnotic suggestion as a therapeutic trial to confirm a diagnosis of hysteria.

⁵³ Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory topics in the philosophy of natural science* (Cambridge, 1983). For an analysis of the problems involved in moving from an experimental realism in the case of electrons to the case of psychosis—in which seeing and doing are related in quite different ways—see John Rajchman, “Foucault’s Art of Seeing,” in *October* 44 (1988).

⁵⁴ Henri Legrand du Saulle, *Délire des persecutions* (Paris, 1871), cit. in Jules Falret and Charles Lasegue, “La Folie a Deux” (1877) in Jules Falret, *Les Maladies Mentales et Nerveuses* (Paris, 1890).

The phenomenon of communicated delusion—*folie-a-deux*—raised the question of just what was being transmitted, and how. In other words, what was the vector of contagion? In his 1893 *Clinical Studies*, Ramos Mejia described a case of communicated delusion involving a woman who was accused of murder and her siblings who had apparently helped her with the crime. While only the murderer herself was truly mad and was therefore not culpable, according to Ramos Mejia, neither could the rest of the family be held responsible for their complicity. They were suffering from *locura simultanea*—a “simultaneous madness.” Because of her greater intelligence the woman had influenced, via a kind of contagion, the mental state of her siblings. Brains predisposed to disequilibrium could experience such delusional influence.⁵⁵ Following the work of the French alienists Jules Falret and Charles Lasegue on *folie-a-deux*, Ramos Mejia theorized that communicated madness should be thought of as a form of suggestion—the transference of a delusional idea from a dominant but insane agent to a normal but passive receiver: “Here is a line of demarcation between the active organ and the passive one,” he wrote, “one is mad and the other is not. Suggestion, *folie-a-deux* is due to an automatism, it is unconscious.”⁵⁶

The Pursued

The notion that madness might be communicable was related to a broader fascination with the dangers of insanity: was it contagious? Inherited? Linked to artistic brilliance or to social degeneration? In the Rio de la Plata, the theme lent psychiatric expertise broader currency: among the cultured literati the contours of madness and its

⁵⁵ This form of delusion also served Ramos Mejia in the construction of a theory of collective madness, propounded later in his popular sociological analysis of the Rosas dictatorship: “In virtue of the influence of certain general and diffuse causes, moral above all, I think it is possible to produce collective simulating-delusions of persecution and of grandeur, religious or mystical, such as occurred in Buenos Aires during Rosas’ tyranny.” Ramos Mejia, *Rosas y su tiempo* (Buenos Aires, 1907). [Check]

⁵⁶ Ramos Mejia, *Estudios Clinicos*, 1893.

routes of transmission became something of a preoccupation. Indeed, positivist psychiatry and literary modernism entered into fruitful collaboration. Modernism operated as psychiatry's double, reflecting—though an operation of reversal—on the boundaries that behavioral expertise established. If psychiatry sought to know madness in order to manage it, the literary avant-garde approached it in order to release it.⁵⁷

For instance in his essay “Aspects of modernism (literature of the degenerates),” influenced by his reading of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, the Uruguayan writer Horacio Quiroga wrote that identifying with the mad was a kind of art form.⁵⁸ Whereas for social hygienists degeneration was something to try to forestall, for young writers like Quiroga it was almost a mantle of modernist identity. In addition to Poe and Baudrillard, Quiroga had been reading Ingenieros' works on simulation, hypnotism and suggestion, as well as the writings of Charcot and Ramos Mejia.⁵⁹

Quiroga's short story “*Los Perseguidos*” thematizes the intrigue of madness as a source of untranslatable experience. Its two main characters play a cat-and-mouse game over which one is truly mad and which is simulating.⁶⁰ In the story, set in 1903—the same year that *The Simulation of Madness* was published—one can see the abstract types from the diagnostic guides of Legrand du Saulle and Ramos Mejia come to life.

The story begins in the midst of a violent storm. The narrator Horacio and his friend Lugones—“two sane men”—are in the midst of a conversation about the latter's visit a few days before to an insane asylum—not an unusual destination for young poets,

⁵⁷ As literary critic Carlos Real de Azua writes, *rioplantense* modernism was characterized by a tendency toward “curiosity and attraction for limit situations, sensorial, psychic and ethical in the name of the desirable depth and originality of the experience, the decadent vein, the taste of the degraded, morbid or crepuscular, the drunkenness of the soul and of the body.” Real de Azua, “Modernismo e Ideologías” in *Punto de vista IX*: 28 (1988).

⁵⁸ Noé Jitrik, *Horacio Quiroga: Una obra de experiencia y riesgo* (Buenos Aires, 1959). For the European context of widespread literary fascination with the problem of degeneration, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European disorder, c. 1848-c.1918* (Cambridge), 1989.

⁵⁹ Noé Jitrik, “Prologo,” in Angel Rama, ed. *Obras ineditas y desconocidas* (Montevideo, 1967).

⁶⁰ The title can be translated either as “The Pursued” or as “The Paranoid.” Horacio Quiroga, *The Decapitated Chicken and Other Stories*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (Austin, 1993). Remaining references from this edition are cited by page number in the text.

as Ingenieros noted in his reflections on the period.⁶¹ The doorbell rings and a third man, Diaz Velez, enters. Diaz Velez tells Horacio a perplexing story about a youth who contracted typhoid fever and then became convinced that he was “pursued”—that the streets were “peopled with enemies.” This state of being pursued is characterized by a sense that one is being manipulated in sinister ways, that one is subject to the schemes of invisible others who penetrate the mind and overcome the will. According to Diaz Velez, despite suffering from this condition, the youth remained highly intelligent and described his own case so lucidly that it was difficult for those around him to know if the condition was real or a farce. And although he seemed to have recovered his sanity, he would periodically regress to his earlier state.

Horacio later queries Lugones about the strange tale, and learns that the story was actually autobiographical: it was Diaz Velez himself who had feigned normality when in fact he was “pursued.” Horacio is both irritated at having been taken in by the story and fascinated with the question of what it might mean that Diaz Velez, who seemed so lucid, could in fact be mad. Has he now recovered? Is it even possible to recover from being pursued? As Ramos Mejia insisted in his lectures, true paranoia was inherently incurable and degenerative: “the almost absolute incurability constitutes the distinctive trait of organic, degenerative, truly alienated *delirio de las persecuciones*.”⁶²

As the story unfolds, Horacio becomes consumed with this very question: what distinguishes the mad from the sane? Can a mad person feign sanity? He seeks evidence from Diaz Velez of the impermeability of the boundary between sanity and madness. Thinking over their initial interaction, Horacio remembers that Diaz Velez had a strange way of looking at him—not as fellow human beings exchange looks, delving into one

⁶¹ Ingenieros, “La Personalidad Intellectual de Ramos Mejia,” in J.M. Ramos Mejia, *La neurosis de hombres celebres* (Buenos Aires, 1915). Given the names of the characters in the story, it is worth noting that modernist poet Leopoldo Lugones was both a friend of Ingenieros’ and a mentor of Quiroga’s. Quiroga first came to Buenos Aires in 1898 to meet Lugones. They later went on a mission to the jungles of northeast Argentina to document Jesuit ruins there. Quiroga eventually moved to this region and set his most well-known stories there.

⁶² Ramos Mejia, *Estudios Clinicos*, 70.

another's souls, but with cold observation, "as one would unblinkingly observe the equivocal attitude of some feline" [25]. Horacio projects a malicious attitude into this objectifying gaze. He thinks he was being mocked, and resolves both to assuage his curiosity about this lucid form of madness and to get his revenge by following Diaz Velez, who will now indeed be pursued.

The strange compulsion leading Horacio along this route gives the reader the sense that perhaps the feeling of being pursued is contagious. Seeking Diaz Velez in the streets of Buenos Aires, Horacio reflects that his own logic is becoming inhuman, "worthy only of a dog or a madman" [26]. While supposedly it is Diaz Velez who is truly mad, Horacio's imagination betrays his own encroaching paranoia. More than once Horacio imagines that Diaz Velez wants to manipulate him, to enter into his mind, to play malicious games with him. "The good madman had thought I had guessed his secret and was insinuating myself into his consciousness."

The story brings the reader directly into the vertiginous space of contagious madness. Horacio imputes motives to bystanders, and becomes possessed with the idea of touching Diaz Velez. "I felt myself in perfect equilibrium. All my nerves were tingling and resilient. Four or five times a minute I put my hand to my watch, forgetting that it was broken" [27]. When he finally encounters Diaz Velez, his obsession cascades into hyperactive detail and a subjective merging with the other: "I forgot that it was *he* I was seeing: Diaz Velez's arms, Diaz Velez's legs, Diaz Velez's hatband." His ideas begin to "shift and crash into each other dizzily" [28].

When Diaz Velez finally turns around and sees Horacio, they greet one another pleasantly and go to a café. There Horacio's perceptions again betray him: the walls are glistening with wetness, his thoughts whirl madly: "The flies of excitement were constantly buzzing through my brain. Although I felt serious, a convulsive smile kept rising to my lips" [30-1]. Outside forces invade his consciousness, and though he tries to

adopt a normal expression, “this overwhelming tic kept breaking through...each idea represented an uncontrollable impulse to create ridiculous and especially unexpected situations” [31]. He imagines that all of his thoughts and actions have been planned by Diaz Velez: “Diaz Velez, a damned and pursued madman, knew perfectly well that he was responsible for my recent behavior” [31].

The condition of being pursued seems to pass back and forth between the two men. After a few moments, the narrator’s precarious sanity returns, while a look of madness again appears behind Diaz Velez’ placid surface. Soon it is Diaz Velez who is overcome by an impulse to ask which one of them is truly mad and which is feigning, and whether the one can lead to the other: “We understand each other very well; you know that I—an *intelligent* and truly pursued person—am capable of feigning a miraculous normality; and I know that you—in the larval stage of persecution—are capable of simulating a perfect fear” [33]. Simulation is taking place on both sides: Diaz Velez feigns sanity, while the narrator simulates madness. Yet it is not so clear that each state is settled—the one may veer unpredictably into the other. Or one may call a state into existence merely by seeking it out, as Diaz Velez suggests, in what could serve as a commentary on the way that expertise brings its objects into being: “I may or may not be pursued,” but “in your desire to study me, you will make me truly pursued” [33].

His own behavior had been just an act, reflects Horacio, whereas now Diaz Velez can no longer feign sanity: “He smiled as he asked his subtle question, but the madman, the real madman, had escaped and was peering at me from behind his eyes” [34]. The intelligent Diaz Velez is a failed actor, desperately trying to cover up the animal-like madman inside, but Horacio has glimpsed the truth: “The madman, the damned madman! I could still see his look in the café. I’d seen it clearly. I’d seen the brutish and suspicious madman behind the actor who was arguing with me!” [35]. In the end, Horacio swears off these “psychological games,” while Diaz Velez is dragged off, naked and delusional, to an

asylum.

“The Pursued” points toward the fundamental opacity of others’ subjectivity. And it suggests that humanness, as opposed to the animality of madness, depends on the possibility of an “exchange of souls.” Diaz Velez’ madness becomes recognizable when an inhuman element buried deeply within—which bars mutual recognition—is suddenly glimpsed from the outside. The story’s force relies on its premise of a certain disturbing condition: not pure madness, which is a mere curiosity—but lucid madness, which may implicate the observer. This is a category of the mad who seem to be sane, whose fascination lies in their capacity to feign normalcy. Such lucid madness is potentially contagious, an exchangeable substance, something one can flirt with. But to do so is a dangerous game, as Lugones warns Horacio: “The pursued always begin by adoring their future victims” [26]. The narrator’s “psychological game” is an experiment with the subjective boundaries of sanity. But the risk in this game of feigning being other is that one may, in simulating, in fact become the other.⁶³ Nonetheless, Diaz Velez’ lucid madness remains distinguishable from Horacio’s simulated madness by the ineluctable presence of an other within—the beast that lurks behind Diaz Velez’ intelligent eyes.

There were literary as well as scientific inspirations for Quiroga’s interest in lucid madness and in the ambiguities of being “pursued”: the contagiousness of delusional ideas was not only a problem of psychopathology. One can almost read the story as an allegory of Quiroga’s relationship to Poe, with whom he was fascinated, and whose style and tone he tried to emulate. As Quiroga later recalled: “Poe was at that time the only author that I read. This cursed madman had come to dominate me completely; I didn’t have on my table a single book that wasn’t his. All of my head was full of Poe.”⁶⁴ In his epigraph to an 1899 story, Quiroga cited a line from Baudelaire’s *Life and Work of Poe*

⁶³ In this sense, as Baudrillard notes, “to simulate is not simply to feign,” because the simulation of illness can produce actual symptoms: “simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary.’” Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations,” in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, 1988), p. 169.

⁶⁴ Jitrik, “Prologo.”

that evokes the contagious madness of “The Pursued” and, as we will see, the delusional idea of monomania:

The hallucination welling first with doubt, but then convincing and rational as a book; – the absurd taking over the intellect and governing it with a frightful logic; – hysteria usurping the will; contradiction lying between nerves and intellect; and man deranged to the point of expressing grief with a grin.⁶⁵

Automatism and the *idée fixe*

The presence of a single pathological preoccupation in an otherwise sound mind was the defining characteristic of monomania, the first form of “partial madness,” a category introduced by French alienist Etienne Esquirol in 1810.⁶⁶ In monomaniacs the understanding was diseased in just one respect—the *idée fixe*—but otherwise remained healthy. And this partiality was what made it so fascinating: as Esquirol wrote, “Partial delirium is a phenomenon so remarkable, that the more we observe it, the more we are astonished, that a man who feels, reasons and acts, like the rest of the world, should feel, reason and act no more like other men, upon a single point?”⁶⁷ One could be a religious, erotic or homicidal monomaniac. In the case of paranoia the *idée fixe* of persecution took over everything else in an otherwise normal mind. Given its propensity to hide itself in the guise of normality, monomania enabled French alienism to generate demand for its knowledge. As Jan Goldstein notes, “The essence of monomania was that it was not a total but a partial insanity and hence elusive, readily concealable, and to be discerned,

⁶⁵ Quiroga, “Para Noche de Insomnio” (1899). This translation is from Charles Baudelaire, “Edgar Poe: His Life and Works,” in Raymond Foye, ed. *The Unknown Poe* (San Francisco, 1980), p. 90.

⁶⁶ Lasague’s paranoia, which Ramos Mejia had been looking for in Etchegaray, was one kind of monomania.

⁶⁷ E. Esquirol, *Mental maladies: a treatise on insanity*, trans. E.K. Hunt (Birmingham, Ala., 1987), p. 321.

needful of the trained eye.”⁶⁸ Monomania could absolve the criminal of responsibility for his crime, but it was difficult to detect. French alienists used monomania to extend their expertise into the workings of the state: given the possibility that a defendant had committed a crime while in the grip of an *idée fixe*, medical experts were needed in order to determine criminal responsibility.

As a subversive, outside element that lodged itself within the subject and from there transformed it, the *idée fixe* was a reminder of the limits of autonomous agency, of the lurking remnants of the uncontrollable within the self. It implied a form of possession that undermined volition. Charcot explained hysteria as the entrance of an *idée fixe* into the mind as the result of a forgotten shock or trauma. Within the subject, the *idée* took on a life of its own, operating as an “automatism” through what Charcot called a process of “unconscious or subconscious cerebration.”⁶⁹ The *idée*, having installed itself in the brain, dominated the subject through a process of “autosuggestion” that led to the hysteric’s symptoms: “once installed in the brain [*l’idée*] takes sole possession and acquires sufficient domination to realize itself objectively in the form of paralysis,” wrote Charcot.⁷⁰ In Pierre Janet’s understanding of the etiology of hysteria, this subconscious *idée fixe* became the “pathogenic secret,” a traumatic memory that the patient stored in his or her mind without being aware of it.⁷¹ And for the early exponents of the talking cure, the automatism that characterized the *idée fixe*—its self-generated pathogenic

⁶⁸ Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987). As it became less crucial to the establishment of a psychiatric presence in the juridico-legal arena, and as its fluidity began to undermine the discipline’s credibility, monomania was gradually abandoned by psychiatrists. Thus in 1854 Falret wrote “On the non-existence of monomania,” arguing that such patients, if they were examined carefully, did not have only one delusional idea. In the same year he introduced the category of “circular madness,” which would later become manic-depression.

⁶⁹ cit. in Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, “How to predict the past: from trauma to repression,” *History of Psychiatry* XI (2000), p. 26.

⁷⁰ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Remembering Anna O.: A Century of Mystification* (New York, 1996).

⁷¹ Ruth Leys, “Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory.” *Critical Inquiry* 20:4 (1994).

activity—would provide a model for the unconscious itself.⁷² As Freud and Breuer wrote, “the memory of the trauma—acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work.”⁷³ In the history of psychoanalysis, the *idée fixe* was assimilated into the unconscious through the route of hysteria. But it took a different course in the South Atlantic, where it became part of the new complex of simulated madness.

What was the relationship between Ingenieros’ “simulation of madness” and Ramos Mejia’s “simulating-delusions”—that is, between criminals who feigned insanity as a means to evade punishment and a type of hysteria that chose madness as the organic illness it would mimic? At first glance the two conditions would appear to differ in terms of the locus of simulative agency—in one it is the conscious subject who actively simulates, while in the other it is hysteria that disguises itself. But for Ingenieros the first type could lead to the second: once the intention to simulate was put into action, it could begin to work on its own and become involuntary, in a movement from the willed to the automatic. “In such cases,” he wrote, “the voluntary repetition of determined mental processes ends up by making them involuntary and automatic, as occurs in all psychological functions.” The automatism of the *idée fixe* was the engine of this movement from willed to involuntary simulation, as we can see in Ingenieros’ work on hysteria and suggestion.

Like Ramos Mejia, Ingenieros was concerned to clarify the difference between true, degenerative madness and hysteria. In his book *Hysteria y Sugestion*, Ingenieros introduced a topology of the psyche that enabled him classify these disturbances in terms of their respective locus. Based on the work of the French alienist Charles Grasset, he

⁷² In this sense, the *idée fixe* can be seen as a precursor to the Freudian unconscious. As Henri Ellenberger has shown, the unconscious has a long history that predates Freud’s discovery. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry* (New York, 1970).

⁷³ Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, p. 56-7.

made a distinction between higher and lower, conscious and unconscious functions. The lower psyche operated through an automatism—tendencies left to themselves—whereas the higher psyche was the site of activities resulting from the intervention of the conscious center. This distinction explained the etiological difference between true madness and hysteria: patients who suffered from disturbances of the higher functions—those related to conscious mental phenomena—were truly insane, whereas those who had only disturbances of the lower—automatic, unconscious—functions were hysteric.

Ingenieros explained the phenomenon of suggestibility—the susceptibility to hypnotic influence—as “an automatism emancipated from its conscious center, which obeyed the conscious center of the hypnotizer.”⁷⁴ This explained why hypnotic suggestion was an effective treatment for hysteria: suggestion involved an order given by the hypnotizer directly to the “automatism” of the hypnotized—from the higher psyche of one to the lower psyche of another. The hysteric patient could be successfully treated through the doctor’s control over this unconscious automatism, via hypnotic suggestion. When used as the instrument of hypnotic suggestion, the transmitted *idée* shifted from symptom to possible treatment.

The experiment performed on the young poet in Operation Five concerned precisely these operations of the transmitted idea in a suggestible mind. In it, the group of writers and hygienists used the technique of suggestion—implanting an idea into a predisposed subject—but in this case the transmitted idea was a delusional one. They sought to *produce* simulated madness through suggestion rather than to treat it. After describing how the group implanted the delusion of grandeur—his kinship with Lautréamont—into the mind of the young poet, Ingenieros followed the progress of the

⁷⁴ Grasset, cited in Ingenieros, *Histeria y Sugestion* (Buenos Aires, 1919), p. 315. Hysterics were characterized by their suggestibility—their tendency to enter hypnotic states. In fact Freud and Breuer argued that hysteria could be recognized by the presence of hypnotic states: “We should like to balance the familiar thesis that hypnosis is an artificial hysteria by another—the basis and sine qua non of hysteria is the existence of hypnoid states.” Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, p. 63.

suggested idea:

Flattered by the prospect of a fraternity he considered most honorable, and insistently suggested through our discreet insinuations, the youth admitted the possibility of the fact, then believed it probable, later real, and finally, showed off as if it were a title his condition as natural brother of the imaginary Comte de Lautréamont.

The delusional idea became automatic, possessing its victim. Like the pathogenic secret at the heart of Janet's hysteria, the implanted idea systematized itself and took on a will of its own, to the point where it generated new memories and even a new self. As Ingenieros wrote, "in these processes of the functional systematization of the brain the activity grows and intensifies progressively like an avalanche."⁷⁵ The delusional idea came to re-author the young poet, who began to invent stories from his childhood that could explain his new status as half-brother of Lautréamont. Ingenieros continued:

This delusional idea began to systematize itself in his brain; his obsession grew to the point of causing him to invent the following completely delirious explanation. He remembered having seen, in his early childhood, that his mother was receiving overly intimate visits from a very rich French man—extremely similar to his so-called brother and to he himself; this man must have been, without a doubt, the French consul who was supposed to be the father of both of them. His mother's relations with this man preceded his birth; this fact had been precisely the reason why his father and mother lived separately. He must be, then, the natural son of the French consul and brother of the Comte de Lautréamont on his father's side.

⁷⁵ Ingenieros, *La simulación de la locura*, p. 20.

The plot suggested by the group thus systematized itself as a narrative and became a “Title”—the brother of the mythic Comte de Lautréamont. To acquire this form of literary birthright and entrance into the fraternity of writers, the poet relinquished his own paternal legitimacy. But when he actually began to believe in his new identity, Ingenieros revealed its real author, Dario: in the end, the group decided to “de-suggest” the young poet with “the therapeutic wisdom of ridicule,” through which he was cured of his delusion. Ingenieros analogized the poet’s fully-developed delusion to a novel, one whose authorship required “a certain moral anomaly” on the latter’s part—since it involved his own mother’s adulterous affair with the French consul. But who was the author of this morally anomalous plot? While Dario was the incubus who first suggested the idea, the young poet—the succubus—nurtured it to the point where it re-wrote his own life story, giving him a new father.

At stake in this experimentally-induced delusion was the question of origin—not only the poet’s paternity, but also where ideas came from and how they insinuated themselves into others. The implanted delusion played with the double meaning of inheritance, as both literary and biological—provoking reflection on how the spark of creativity, or genius, passed. The modernist milieu was infused with anxiety around issues of authorship and originality.⁷⁶ On the one hand, the avant-garde celebrated the invention of new forms; but at the same time, it was preoccupied with a *mode* whose epicenter was across the ocean. The paradoxical imperative to be both novel and conform to fashion in order to achieve modernist legitimacy structured the tension through which the delusional idea implanted by Dario and Ingenieros operated. Ingenieros resolved this tension by embracing simulation as a legitimate tactic in the struggle for life—but that did

⁷⁶ For instance, the somewhat unstable Uruguayan poet Julio Herrera y Reissig famously accused Leopoldo Lugones of plagiarism, leading to a trial in which their mutual friend Horacio Quiroga testified on behalf of Lugones. Quiroga describes the incident in “El Caso Lugones – Herrera y Reissig,” in Horacio Quiroga, *Todos los cuentos*, ed. crítica Napoleón Baccino Ponce de León, Jorge Lafforgue, coordinadores (Madrid, 1996), p. 1201.

not stop him from mocking those whose simulating efforts he deemed unsuccessful.

What sort of performance was Ingenieros engaged in—first in his enactment of the experimental delusion, and then by including it in his ostensibly scientific treatise on simulation? The experiment can be read in part as a commentary on the artistic cult of originality—here it was the implanted idea that authored the writer. Meanwhile the anecdote portrayed the social practices through which membership in a literary avant-garde premised on originality was determined. But Ingenieros did not condemn this as hypocrisy; rather, he used it to play his own game, shifting between scientific realism and literary experiment.

Ingenieros' inclusion of this practical joke as part of his catalogue of disorders of simulation shows the book to be something more than an expert classification system—it was also a contribution to Ingenieros' membership in an experimental community that was fascinated with the boundaries of sanity.⁷⁷ The young poet's initiation into this community came at the—temporary—cost of his sanity. We can partly understand the presence of this and other such jokes in Ingenieros' book if we take into account that derision and mockery were mechanisms for enforcing social conformity among the *porteño* elite.⁷⁸ At the same time, the prank is a sort of confession as well—of Ingenieros' own propensity for simulation in the quest for success. It is perhaps more important, we learn from this book, how one seems than how one is, in the struggle for life. As the leader of a band of modernist pranksters, Ingenieros served as a transit point between diagnostic expertise in modern pathologies and the modernist exploration of pathology as a site of creativity. With respect to the state-based project for containing deviance, Ingenieros' posture was an ambivalent one: although he was a leading member of the criminal-

⁷⁷ As Jorge Salessi argues, if simulation was a technique for inclusion, the *titeo* was designed for exclusion. He speculates that Ingenieros, as a child of Italian immigrants, was especially hostile toward simulators, given his own insecure attempts to integrate. Salessi, *Medicos maleantes y maricas: Higiene, criminología y homosexualidad en la construcción de la nación Argentina. (Buenos Aires: 1871 - 1914)* (Buenos Aires, 1995), p. 130.

⁷⁸Part of the elite culture, writes Johns, was a “nearly psychotic fear of ridicule.” Johns, “Antinomies,” p. 89.

psychiatric apparatus, by inserting literary experiments into his diagnostic tomes, he suggested that this was merely a ‘pose’ covering his authentic identity as *literato*.

In his next book, *Simulation in the Struggle for Life*, Ingenieros turned his technique of detecting simulation into a more general investigative rubric, using his inquiry into simulated madness to found a theory of the operations of simulation in the social world. His innovation was to explain simulation as a simultaneously social and biological phenomenon. While mimesis was a defense mechanism in animals, in men, as simulation, it became conscious and voluntary.⁷⁹ The tendency to simulate was inherent to all humans, and had both collective and individual forms. It should be seen not as pathological but as a strategy for survival. Given the existence of the social struggle for life, simulation was a fraudulent but necessary way to succeed:

The environment imposes fraudulence: to live, for common mortals, is to submit oneself to this imposition, to adapt oneself to it... Whoever doubts this, imagine for a moment that the astute speculator did not simulate financial honesty; that the political functionary did not simulate defending the interests of the people; that the mediocre *literato* did not simulate the qualities of those that triumph; that the merchant did not simulate being interested in his clients; that the parasite did not simulate being useful to his host.⁸⁰

Ingenieros both invoked the category of simulation and parodied it in his work. In arguing that knowledge of how to make a differential diagnosis between real and simulated madness was necessary only because of an out-moded philosophy of punishment based on individual responsibility, Ingenieros undermined the very expertise he had been

⁷⁹ Julio César Ríos, “Entre el mimetismo y la imitación: naturalismo y vida social,” unpublished ms. (1994).

⁸⁰ Ingenieros, *La simulación en la lucha por la vida*, p. 185, cit. in Silvia Molloy, “La Política de la Pose.”

enacting in the treatise.⁸¹ His theory of simulation, while called into being as part of the task of determining responsibility, became in the end, a critique of its very possibility, and therefore of liberal political rationality more generally. One can therefore read his case histories as a sociological commentary on the process of becoming modern—or as modernist texts.

⁸¹ This ambiguous relation to his own work moves Ingenieros toward irony in Paul de Man's sense—that is, toward a performed awareness of the inauthenticity of his posture as expert. De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1985).

