Paul Groussac's Void: The French Writer and the Argentine Tradition [1]

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Abstract: The French-Argentine Paul Groussac embodied a wide range of writerly functions and cultural-political positions within the Argentine cultural field between the 1880s and the 1920s: writer, playwright, chronicler, traveler, literary, art, and music critic, historian, educator, editor, and director of the National Library during 44 years. This essay considers his place in the history of Argentine literature looking at two of the many ways in which he inscribed himself in it. The first takes up the production and reproduction of the ontological privilege of French identity as a form of legitimization for his public—and often polemic—interventions, through which he sought to establish scholarly-disciplinary practices, protocols, and conventions that would articulate an entire critical field around his own authority. The second proposes to think his alternatively weak and strong inscriptions in the literary tradition through his own narrative production: his fiction and dramaturgy, travelogues, and biographical sketches. In other words, this essay situates Groussac in an Argentine literary tradition (conceived as an organic and institutionally sanctioned textual corpus) he believed to have founded and established, a self-representation that led Borges to say that Groussac saw himself as "a missionary of Voltaire among the mulattage."

Keywords: universality, particularity, tradition, modernity, literary history, travel literature

CLC: I783 **Document Code:** A **Article ID:** 2096-4374(2021)02-0039-17

Doi: 10.53397/hunnu.jflc.202102005

1. What is the Argentine Tradition?

The exercise of considering the de-centered and re-centered place of Paul Groussac (1848-1929) in the Argentine literary tradition must overcome an initial obstacle: Groussac's own resistance throughout his life to considering the sum of writings and cultural experiences that had taken place in the national territory at the end of the 19th century as constituting a literary tradition. Towards the end of his intellectual life, in 1924, as a reaffirmation of those convictions upon which he had built his public discourse, he wrote a preface for the volume *Literary Criticism* (*Crítica literaria*), in which he collected lectures and essays that he had written in the early 1880s. In this introduction—the last relevant text that he would publish and which can, therefore, be read as a critical testament—Groussac settles accounts with the past and present of Argentine literature; or, rather, with the critical institution that should have been able to constitute a tradition of readings that supported the aspirations of modernity in the literary domain

of the early 20th century. In this final text, Groussac denounces the incompetence of Argentine literary criticism while, at the same time, bitterly acknowledging the failure of the intervention by which he, as a public intellectual, had attempted to found a modern discipline: "I cannot, given the presence of certain revealing symptoms in the current Argentine literary 'constitution,' fail to admit to myself the limited efficacy of my long sermon" (Preface vii). The target of his attack is Ricardo Rojas, who had begun publishing his eight-volume *History of Argentine Literature* (*Historia de la literatura argentina*) in 1917:

> After resignedly hearing the two or three fragments of cumbersome prose of a certain tome publicly applauded by those who had barely opened it, I now consider myself authorized not to continue any further, contenting myself, for now, with the summaries or indexes of that bounteous history of what never organically existed. I refer particularly to the first and most indigestible part of the mass (which occupies three of the four volumes): the mumblings of natives or half-breeds, deformed imitations of peninsular chronicles and poems, silly ideas about ethnography and folk-lore, etc., which have as much to do with literature as our straw "ranchos" have to do with architecture. Such are the rudimentary products presented to us as secular testimonies of a supposed "literature" independent from the Spanish—when any attempt at spiritual emancipation would hardly end up germinating later, along with politics and under its heat and influence.[2] (viii)

In the midst of an almost unanimous celebration of Rojas's nationalist literary project, Groussac recognizes the failure and marginality of his own intellectual project. The preface to his notable volume *Literary Criticism*, then, is a text of assessment and closure, not simply because Groussac is by now old and will not go on to publish another significant book, but because the cultural hegemony of Rojas's historical narrative confirms that the enterprise of non-nationalist cultural modernization which Groussac had spearheaded (and of which this volume of critical essays was the last bitter taste) had been left behind.

Groussac's critique of Rojas is significant in that it accounts for the problematic core around which Groussac's prolific discursive interventions in the intellectual field can be articulated: the problem of tradition; or rather, the structural problem created by what he saw as the impossibility in Argentina of any form of literary agency backed by a strong (that is, French) sense of an institutionalized cultural tradition. For Groussac, in Argentina writers work in the void created by the absence of such a strong sense of tradition as the symbolic structure of cultural belonging. Indeed, throughout the historical arc from 1880 to the turn of the century, or even to Uriburu's coup in 1930, the retrospective construction of national cultural tradition constitutes one of the central battlegrounds of the world inhabited by nationalist, *criollista*, and cosmopolitan intellectuals, and by Groussac, for whom the Argentine literature of the future had no antecedents in the past. It is interesting to scan the contents of *Literary Criticism*: essays on Quixote, Dante, French romanticism, Shakespeare, and the German naturalist traveler Haenke. In addition to his study of the greatest hits of the European literary tradition, Groussac dedicates two essays to Argentine writers, Mariano Moreno and Esteban Echeverría, reading in both cases their essayistic and political texts. The essay on Moreno consists of a critical reading of Norberto Piñero's critical edition of this Primera Junta member's political and juridical writings. Groussac violently criticizes Piñero's work and questions his historiographic framework, criteria for selection, and lack of a sufficient critical apparatus. The essay on Echeverría consists of a detailed reading of the Socialist Dogma, in which Groussac attempts to explain Echeverría's essay in terms of its site of enunciation and its influences (Rosas, Manzini, Saint-Simon, Lamennais, juvenilismo), and which could be considered a work of

intellectual history where literature's aesthetic or narrative specificity makes no appearance.

In other words: in his book *Literary Criticism*, in which he aims to solidify his legacy as the heir of Taine and Saint Beuve in the Pampas, he does not include a single essay on Argentine literature, no reading which could be considered an aesthetic antecedent for the literature he prescribed for the younger generation, who had the possibility of producing texts "under the heat and influence" of political modernization. In any case, in 1924, near the end of Groussac's life, Rojas's work forces him to look back and reevaluate his nearly fifty-year "long sermon," and in so doing, recognize that he had failed to establish the conditions of possibility for the institutionalization of Argentine literature. To situate Groussac in the tradition (conceived as an organic and institutionally sanctioned textual corpus) entails understanding that, for him, this tradition begins precisely with his own foundational intervention. This is what Borges understood all too well when he wrote that Groussac saw himself as "a missionary of Voltaire among the mulattage." What Borges understood was precisely that the French intellectual perceived his work in heroic, grandiloquent and foundational terms, particularly because he thought he had to do so in a territory organized around pre-cultural, pre-totemic forces (233).

But to think Groussac in his tradition assumes a second difficulty, which has to do with the fact that Groussac occupied (deliberately and programmatically) a plurality of diverse spaces in the intellectual field. The figure of Groussac can be interpellated from at least four different discursive fields. The writer, playwright, chronicler, and traveler are claimed by the history of literary production. The literary critic and polemicist are claimed by the history of the formation of a specialized knowledge and practice of literature that Groussac himself claimed. As for the obsessive historian who tried to formalize the protocols of the historiographic discipline, and the ideologue of the growth and expansion of the National Library from 1885 until his death in 1929, as well as the civil servant in the provincial and national governments, friend and companion to circles of senators, governors and presidents—these are the purview of a history of cultural and political elites. However, it would be an exaggeration to think of this multiplicity of approximations towards the figure of Groussac and his texts in terms of a dispute, because he is not given equal attention by each of these different forms of cultural history. If Groussac occupies his place as an object of study for historiography (Romero, Halperín Donghi, Gallo) and for the cultural criticism of the elites (Viñas, Jitrik), his place is less established in the field of literary studies. And in dealing with fields whose disciplinary autonomy is relative and, at times, diffuse, and since Groussac and his texts form a transdisciplinary object, his position is never entirely stable in the humanistic disciplines. Thus, it is difficult to distinguish the place of the author of minor novels like *Forbidden Fruit* (*Fruto vedado*) and genre stories like "The Investigation" ("La pesquisa"), from the one assigned to the intellectual whose authority came to have the weight, in historical and aesthetic materials, of an institution. To put it more plainly, the historical importance of Groussac needs to be approached from a broad understanding of literary tradition.

This essay will attempt, therefore, to consider Groussac's place in the history of Argentine literature through two iterations of his inscription in it. The first takes up the production and reproduction of ontological privilege of French identity as a form of legitimization for his public—and often polemic—interventions, through which he sought to establish discursive and investigative practices and conventions that would articulate the field around his own authority. The second proposes to think his inscription, alternatively weak and strong, in the literary tradition through his own narrative production: his fiction and dramaturgy, travelogues and biographical sketches.

2. The Ontological Privilege of French Origins

The intellectual figure of Groussac and his place in the Argentine tradition are marked by his experience of displacement from French culture and his perception of his own exceptionality. For Groussac, his French identity was much more than the result of his original nationality. On the contrary, it was a social relation, a deliberate construction that was particularly significant in the Argentina of the second half of the 19th century, materially produced in the entire corpus of his writing, but also in the practices and symbolic relations of the public sphere. In this sense, in order to think Groussac's place in tradition and the strategies he employed to inscribe himself in it via his own exceptionality—his ability to be at the same time inside and outside of Argentine culture—it is essential to take into account his immigrant experience, and the discursive production of his foreignness within a framework of self-references and others' perceptions. His French identity forms the foundation of an ontological privilege that renders comprehensible how someone born in Toulouse, France, in 1848 and who arrived at the port of Buenos Aires in 1966 without any intellectual accreditation, could become one of the principal authorities on Argentine culture.[3]

Groussac's intellectual trajectory is unique in Argentine cultural history. After arriving in Argentina at age 18, without financial or symbolic capital (no contacts, knowledge of the language, or professional experience), he worked in the fields as a farmhand, and then as a French tutor to the children of well-to-do families. Then in 1870, Groussac got a position teaching mathematics in the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires. There he began to establish ties with members of the cultural and political elite (he became a close friend of José Manuel Estrada and Pedro Goyena) until 1871, when he wrote an essay in French about the Spanish Romantic poet José de Espronceda. Goyena read it and asked Groussac to translate it for publication in *Revista Argentina*. Groussac's biographers, as well as Groussac himself (who recounts this anecdote in *Those Who Passed* [*Los que pasaban*]) shroud the episode in a mantel of ambiguity regarding how Groussac's Spanish could be, five years after he began studying it in Argentina, such that he could carry out this translation on his own, and it is likely that Goyena collaborated with him on it (*Los que pasaban* 20). The essay so impressed Nicolás Avellaneda, Minister of Public Instruction in Sarmiento's government, that he offered Groussac two posts in the Colegio Nacional de Tucumán, his native province. Groussac spent the next 12 years in Tucumán, until the end of 1882, working as a teacher, journalist, educational director of the province and then as the national school inspector.

The fact that Groussac's entrance into public life was through the education system is not insignificant for someone who understood his presence in America in terms of the mission civilisatrice discourse that legitimized the French colonial enterprise during the latter half of the 19th century. Groussac thought of himself as a subject of this mission in an Argentina without a tradition upon which a modern culture could be built; an Argentina which, without the guidance of a tutor like himself, would have no chance of entering into the world of modern civilization. His task, therefore, was twofold: on the one hand, to lift the veil covering the past and present, shielding from sight the void upon which the future must be constructed; and on the other, to teach the local intellectuals the disciplinary conventions that would allow for a rigorous and productive interrogation of the historical past, and the cultural production from the present, namely, how to lay the foundation for a modern tradition.

Groussac articulated these lessons in the form of polemic interventions in the cultural sphere, always put forward from the asymmetrical nature of the pedagogical relation which he assumed,

addressing his interlocutors with a marked didacticism. In 1885, when he was named director of the National Library—a post which he occupied until his death in 1929—Groussac acquired the sounding board that his mission required, allowing him to shape the cultural sphere around his figure (primarily, though not exclusively, in relation to history and letters) according to modern parameters that required autonomous intellectual practices and disciplinary spaces.

But Groussac did not construct his authority in the intellectual world only according to relations governed by the logic of pedagogy. To this modality, he added a deliberate employment of the ontological privilege which the Argentine cultural sphere projected onto his French origins. In the 25 years between his appointment as the face of the National Library and the Centennial, when xenophobia was one of the principal binding discourses of the Argentine elite, Groussac was rarely dismissed on the basis of his foreignness; on the contrary, his lectures on national literature and history were received as revealed truths, precisely on the basis of the recognition of a French identity which neither his years in Argentina nor one of the most refined writings of the local literary scene could modify.

A representative of European civilization in a country in evident development and desirous of legitimacy, Groussac was the incarnation of that spirit of modernity which, since the '37 generation, intellectuals had identified with the universality of French culture. Groussac knew how to exploit the metonymic chain by which his name came to signify authority, and the intellectual world did not fail to recognize in him the historical content of cultural modernization which, necessarily, descended from France: "he was the application among ourselves of the methods of *modern* criticism, as it is practiced by Sainte Beuve or by Nissard," wrote Avellaneda of Groussac (qtd. in Bruno 27; italics are mine).[4]

It is in this sense that Groussac's case is unique in Argentine cultural history, though not for having been the only intellectual who imagined and represented himself as fully occupying the institutional space of modern knowledge (Sarmiento and Mitre, for example, thought of themselves in similar terms). But Groussac was the only one of these beacon-figures of the intellectual field to effectively locate himself in that space as a foreigner.[5] Groussac is the most notable case of alloglossia—the decision on the part of a writer to work within a language other than his own—in Argentine history. "Our Conrad is Groussac," wrote Ricardo Piglia, positioning the director of the National Library as the counterweight to Gombrowicz: two Europeans exiled in Argentina, one switched languages and the other did not. They both established decentered sites of enunciation for Argentine literature (13-15). Groussac and Gombrowicz inscribed themselves in the Argentine tradition according to distinct forms of exile as the constitutive experience of modernity. But while Piglia Gombrowicz opened the horizon of a literature founded on an act of estrangement, the Argentine literature organized around Groussac's critical gesture and literary production was constituted through the reterritorialization of the authority of French identity over modern culture.[6]

3. Tradition and the Logic of Antagonism

Starting in 1871, when he began working as a journalist and Director of Teaching in the province of Tucumán, Groussac adopted the polemic as a form of intervention in public debate. These consisted not only of pronouncements concerning the national agenda, political and education reforms, candidacies, or how the nation's history should be written; for Groussac, an intervention's efficacy depended on an antagonistic relationship with the totality of the field, personified in those who defended an idea contrary to his own. Once appointed as director of the National Library in

1885, he had unrestricted access to journals of high visibility and circulation (the first of which were *Sud-América*, which he edited from 1884 to 1898, and *Anales de La biblioteca*, between 1900 and 1915), where he could engage in a polemic discourse which, in his case, presupposed his opponent's disqualification from the 'French,' masterful, exceptional differential position he had constructed for himself.

Groussac engaged in more than a dozen substantial intellectual duels. Some of the most relevant to the polemic formation of intellectual traditions involved Miguel Cané, Norberto Piñero, Bartolomé Mitre, Domingo F. Sarmiento, and Rubén Darío. In Cané's case, Groussac harshly criticized his book *En Route* (*En viaje*, 1884) in the pages of *El diario* for his ignorance of the discursive strategies of travel literature (too many descriptions, the selection of relevant episodes to narrate) and even *ad hominem* attacks on the bourgeois traveler. Groussac would go on to write, fifteen years later, one of the most important travel accounts of 19th century Argentine literature, *Del Plata al Niágara*, and it is in this sense that his normative judgments on generic conventions in relation to Cané's book became particularly illuminating. Regarding the historiographic method, in 1896 and 1898, Groussac published in *La biblioteca* two devastating critiques of the arguments, methodology, and style of the lawyer Norberto Piñero who, in 1896, had published a critical edition of the work of Moreno, preceded by a lengthy essay in which, according to Groussac, he demonstrated his ignorance of the work of the modern critical historian. In the context of this polemic, Groussac formulated one of the clearest and most programmatic calls for the autonomization of the intellectual disciplines:

> Why does this notion, which seems so simple and elemental, not penetrate the Spanish-speaking countries: that history, philosophy, and even poor old literature represent intellectual pursuits at least as demanding, if not as lucrative, as those of the lawyer or the doctor, and whose domain it is not licit to enter as you would public land or a field without an owner? (*La biblioteca* II: 124)

In relation to the documentary work of historians, he engaged in a heated yet cautious exchange as well. And regarding the historiographic method, he crossed spears with the leading Argentine historian of his generation, general Bartolomé Mitre, over the documents and maps of the British invasions. Mitre had criticized Groussac's biographical notes on Santiago de Liniers that he began publishing in 1897 in *La biblioteca*, in which Groussac pointed out errors that Mitre had made in his *Historia de Belgrano* (1857).

However, it is his relationship with Sarmiento that represents the most interesting material for analyzing the extremes to which Groussac could take his polemic intervention. Apart from his significant encounter with Darío (perhaps the most important debate about the status and configuration of Argentine and Latin American literature at the end of the century), the controversial symbolic relation that Groussac established with Sarmiento's discursive legacy assumed a level of complexity and specificity that transcended the determinant contingency of the rest of his debates.

As has already been suggested, Groussac's "long [civilizing] sermon" in Argentina can be considered in relation with Sarmiento and the omnipotent mode in which he self-represented. Indeed, taking as a reference the three essays he wrote about the author of *Facundo* (in addition to various allusions in other texts), one can relate the form in which he related to Sarmiento—a recognition of his genius and originality alongside a fierce criticism and demystification—with the concept of "the anxiety of influence."[7] Both thought of themselves as historical subjects of cultural (and, in Sarmiento's case, political) modernization, both considered themselves to be exceptional—*eccentric*

centers—in the Argentine intellectual milieu, and both maintained a polemic relation with their environment. But the Frenchman's ascent to the pinnacle of the intellectual field coincided with the San Juanian's decline, and so Groussac's polemic dialogue was not with Sarmiento, but rather with his canonized figure, with his shadow and his ghost.

For Groussac, Sarmiento encapsulated the modern, rational and objective potency of an original modernity to which intellectuals should aspire, as well as the lack of rigor in knowledge production and aesthetic discourse typical of an underdeveloped intellectual world: "a mixture of reason and absurdism," "vulgar and infantile;" "he stumbled over criticism and philosophy with the laughing intrepidity of ignorance, when he wasn't throwing in his two cents about the most abstruse scientific theories, which he knew only reflexively" (*Primera* 46) In "Sarmiento in Montevideo," the posture of the young Groussac (not yet 37 years old), is that of a radical iconoclast who ridicules an aging Sarmiento whom he had never met in person. His first encounter with him is in a restaurant, where he recognizes him from afar by his "gleeful ugliness, a caricaturist's easy success." He then gets close enough to observe "the spectacle of Sarmiento the glutton, watching him dispatch, at the age of 72, with a castaway's appetite many a youth would envy, cold slices of suckling pig, wielding his knife like El Cid's Tizona. Caught thus, mid nutritive act, one's appearance is decidedly vulgar" (*Segunda* 27). Later, he will buy Sarmiento's Travels in a bookstore, and although he enjoys the first Latin American chapters, he advises Sarmiento to avoid writing about Europe, a culture he does not understand and cannot express.

Nevertheless, without abandoning the demolition of Sarmiento's monumental position in Argentine history, he recognizes in Sarmiento the originality that he demands from the continent's writers and artists, and which years later he would demand from Darío and the modernistas. Sarmiento is "the most genuine and delectable writer of South America" (*Primera* 48), "an exemplar, a rare mix of elevation and vulgarity—not simply superior, but extraordinary" (46), "but out of the naïve splashings of the autodidact, an unexpected and ingenious truth rose suddenly to the surface" (*Segunda* 24). The insistence with which Groussac returned to the figure of Sarmiento between 1883 and 1900 makes one think that, despite his criticisms and ambiguous recognition of his genius, he saw in him the reflection—distorted, but a reflection nonetheless—of his own original exceptionality in the cultural sphere: "the only example of his kind in the nation's history, and to say it all at once, the most intensely original personality in Latin America" (*Primera* 55).

These encounters suggest that, for Groussac, tradition is constructed in hand-to-hand combat with those whom he perceived as disagreeing with his understanding of the historical function of formulating and institutionalizing traditions. According to Paula Bruno, the polemic was one of the principal strategies that Groussac used to position himself in the intellectual field. Bruno's idea is to analyze the motivations and effects of Groussac's propensity for antagonism in strictly individual terms, while at the same time entering into the domain of psychological speculations about the intentions and deliberation of the polemic, not as pathology, but as pure ambition and will to prominence. From a perspective attentive to the material formation of the intellectual field, however, it could be said that beyond his motivations, the polemics which he initiated, particularly in his position as the National Library director, structured and shaped the literary and historiographic spaces of the intellectual field at the turn of the century, based on orderings, hierarchies, and a vision of tradition which Groussac himself personified. In Groussac, then, the objectivity of the critical method that tended toward the professionalization of intellectual labor perfectly coincided with his own subjectivity.

4. Originality and Imitation, Universalism and Particularism

In early November, 1896, Groussac wrote a highly critical review in *La biblioteca* of Darío's *Los raros*, which had just been published in Buenos Aires where the Nicaraguan poet had been living since 1893 as a journalist for *La Nación* and a diplomatic representative of Colombia. Immediately after, on November 27, Darío responded to Groussac's criticisms in "Los colores del estandarte," to which Groussac responded in turn with a review of Darío's *Prosas profanas*, which had also recently been released. The disagreement centered around the possibility or impossibility of constructing an original literary tradition in Argentina and Latin America and, relatedly, how artists and intellectuals should relate with modern models from Europe and North America. Groussac began from a recognition of the asymmetrical relation of peripheral cultures to European culture and, based on this hierarchical order, affirmed that imitation is, regrettably, the only path by which the peripheries could construct a modern cultural identity:

> I am effortlessly resigned to grow old far from the center of all civilization, in these new lands that are condemned for now to reflect it with more or less fidelity. It is therefore necessary to begin from the hypothesis that, in the north as well as in the south, during an as of yet undefined period, whatever is attempted in the domain of art is and will be imitation. Apart from that, there is very little originality in the world: genius is the crystallization of a spirit as mysterious and rare as pure carbon…genius is originality's force, all hybridity is the negation of genius…and right now, current American civilization, by European inoculation and grafting, is a true hybridization. *Et voilá pourqoi votre fille est muette*. (*La biblioteca* III: 158)

And so if, for Groussac, the marginal cultures lacked genius (the manifestation of an ontological, essential originality), at least they were capable of expressing their singularity through the imitation of civilized, modern cultural forms. The director of *La biblioteca* advises Darío and *modernismo* to recognize the necessity of imitation as a constitutive act for young and belated cultures like that of Latin America that "have not lived through the ten previous evolutions that French culture has" (II: 480). He does not criticize Darío for the mimetic impulse that would determine his Frenchification, but rather the models he chooses to copy within French culture. The meaning of tradition in this debate is universal: it is not yet a matter of recognizing in the Latin American past a precedent of modernity to which one should aspire, but of identifying universal rhetorical archives and models from which the Latin American writer could draw in order to construct his own local tradition. For Groussac, the transition from imitation to originality is historical ("Colonized America should not aspire *for now* to intellectual originality"); the time will soon arrive for an originality through which Latin American literature will be the expression of the particularity of Latin American culture, "like that of Whitman, the living and potent expression of a virgin world. American art will be original, or it will not be. Does Mr. Darío think that his literature will reach this virtue by being the servile echo of Parisian rhapsodies, and taking as its emblem the naïve question of Copée: *Qui pournais-je imiter pour être original?*" (*La biblioteca* II: 480). Groussac's admonition of Darío and *modernismo* functions across two temporalities: the problem of how to construct a specifically Latin American original modern literature will arrive in the future, but "for now," when imitation is inevitable, we need appropriate parameters and orientations—like those that Groussac provides—for how to navigate the heterogeneity of contemporary European culture. In this sense, for Groussac, the juxtaposition

of characters of uneven aesthetic value that Darío presents in *Los raros* ("Leconte de Lisle, Ibsen, Poe and Verlaine himself, breathe the same air and rub shoulders with the Bloys, d'Esparbès, and the hysterical Rachilde") constructs a cultural tradition that is hybrid, messy, and disjointed (475). Darío throws the field into disarray, inverting its hierarchies. This is why Groussac ascribes to him the aesthetic procedures of the pseudo, the false, a paradigm which, cleverly disseminated, is condensed in the single most insulting word of the review: "raté" (Colombi, "En torno a *Los raros*" 79).

Groussac concludes his review asking Darío, sarcastically, if he believes in the possibility of originality in imitation. Darío discovers in Groussac's irony an opportunity to formulate what could almost be a modernist manifesto. Darío takes as his point of departure precisely the central premise of Groussac's reasoning: the reaffirmation of the modern ontological privilege of European (and particularly French) culture which makes it a model for Latin America to imitate. But if for Groussac this conviction results in a radical separation of culture conceived in universal terms from that which is represented as a pure and irreducible singularity (and he will take it upon himself to sanction any attempt to subvert or rearticulate this hierarchical relation between the universal and the particular), for Darío it is going to be the touchstone for positing the possibility of a specifically Latin American cultural modernity. Appropriating Copée's phrase as a modernist banner, Darío takes up the essentialist concept of "originality," which Groussac uses to reprimand him, in order to resignify it, defending it as a proactive, creative imitation:

> I owe my success—it would be ridiculous not to admit— to novelty: which novelty? The much-discussed mental Gallicism. When I read Groussac, I did not know that he was a Frenchman writing in Spanish, but he taught me to think in French: later, my young and joyful soul conquered the citizenry of Gaul . . . and behold how, thinking in French and writing in a Spanish whose authenticity the academics of la Española would praise, I have published the small book that would initiate the current American literary movement. . . . El *Azul* is a Parnassian book, and moreover, French. In it appear, for the first time in our language, the Parisian 'story,' French adjectivization, Gallic expression inserted in a Spanish paragraph . . . . *Qui pourrais-je imiter pour être original?* I say to myself. And to everyone. From each I learned what I liked, what fit my thirst for novelty and my delirium for individual manifestation. And the fact is, I ended up being original. (50-52)

Darío explains that to be at once modern and original, the Latin American writer cannot limit himself to expressing his own cultural particularity, because Darío shared, to a certain point, Groussac's idea when he defined the specificity (the originality) of America as the lack and negation of modern European civilization which they imagined identical to human nature. In order to be modern and original, Latin America should translate the universality of French culture into the terms of its own cultural particularity. The project was to be original in the construction of a cultural space saturated with universal quotations intoned in their own language and resignified for the local context: to particularize the universality of French culture and universal Latin American particularity. In other words, Darío explained that in order to be modern and original, Latin Americans must be French, as his book *Azul* is French. Darío does not think that *Azul* is *literally* a French book; *Azul* is French because it is modern, because it actualizes modern universality better than any other artifact of Latin American culture of its time (and it is in this sense that he could have written, even more provocatively, that "*Azul is the only French book in Hispano-American literature*"). But this alone is not enough. In order to be modern and original they had to be French, but also Latin Americans,

Latin Americans as Darío conceived his Latin Americanism: a *being in translation*; a subjectivity that is constructed in the act of translating the universal, while not recognizing its own cultural codes as foreign. And it is here that the principle difference between Groussac and Darío is located: the Nicaraguan was optimistic about the ability of the Latin American writer to innovate and particularize the universal tradition, whereas Groussac, more pessimistic, did not see that potential in the present. Thus the path to follow for modernization was, given the limitations of Latin American culture, that of an imitation orientated by the masters, like Groussac himself, who were capable of guiding the young Latin American intellectual through the dense and heterogeneous maze of European modernity.

5. Fiction, between Autobiographic Gesture and History

If his contemporaries, and the few intellectuals of the 20th century who rescued his figure after the 30s, identified Groussac as the paradigmatic critical reader, cultural functionary and polemicist, he never gave up his aspiration to be *also* recognized as a creator. Almost as though it were his aim to prove that no discursive genre was foreign to him, Groussac wrote, in his two languages, a book of poems (*Le cahier des sonnets*, 1892), two novels (*De la cruz a la fecha*, 1873, and *Forbidden Fruit. Argentine Customs*, 1884), a handful of stories ("El candado de oro," 1884, republished with some corrections as "The Investigation," 1887; and the volume *Relatos argentinos*, 1922, containing four stories and a play), a novela in French (*Amparo*, 1909), two plays ("La monja," 1886 and *La divisa punzó. Drama histórico en cuatro actos*, 1923), and stories that he published in newspapers and which he made sure were not later republished in books.

With the exception of "The Investigation," which is often included in anthologies of detective stories as one of the noteworthy antecedents of the genre in Argentina (along with mysteries like *La huella del crimen*, 1877, by Luis V. Varela and *La bolsa de huesos*, 1896, by Eduardo Holmberg), contemporary critics did not pay great attention to this wide range of creative texts. As for their reception in the 20th century, after Groussac's death, literary histories relegated his creative work to the marginal space of the lists of texts of the period that are enumerated and not read. Even in those cases in which critical readers felt a personal or intellectual affinity with Groussac, they tended to acknowledge him in a way that referred to the author's psychology much more so than to his potential aesthetic worth. Martín García Merou, for example, wrote one of the first reviews that was published about *Forbidden Fruit*, indicating precisely the identification of two of the novel's male characters with the experience of Groussac himself:

> Is it not perhaps an echo of his most hidden convictions—we asked ourselves while reading *Fruto vedado*?—this Capdebosq, who thundered and raged against Argentinian soil and, upon arriving in his beloved France, his idealized Bayonne, finds himself short of breath, accustomed as his lungs had become to freedom, and he curses from the depths of his soul "the greetings measured according to social rank, the titles of the nobility and the stiffness of the civil servants, from the Prefect to the usher?…" We believe it is, and we ought to thank him for this detail, so full of attentiveness, that stands out from the pages of his book. Beyond that, Groussac is fair in this part and does no more than return the hospitable reception he has received, like all men of his talent, who come to our land. (41)

Groussac began writing *Forbidden Fruit: Argentine Customs* (*Forbidden Fruit. Costumbres*

argentinas; the most interesting and readable of his non-essayistic texts), during his first trip to France in 1883. The novel was first published serially in 1884 in the liberal journal *Sud-América*, which Groussac had founded in order to support Roca's administration along with Delfín Gallo, Lucio V. López, Roque Sáenz Peña, and Carlos Pellegrini. *Forbidden Fruit* started appearing immediately following the end of his friend López's novel, *The Great Village* (*La gran aldea*), which had become so successful that the journal's editors decided to continue their publication of serialized novels with Groussac's text which, when it began to appear, was not yet finished.

The few critical readings of *Forbidden Fruit* concentrate on the displacement of Groussac's biographical experience onto the French protagonist of the novel, Marcel Renault, who travels to Argentina from Paris in 1869, where he earns a fortune buying and selling land. After losing nearly all of it in the economic crisis of 1875, and when he was about to return to France, one Dr. Nogales, minister in the government and presidential candidate, invites him to join the engineer corps that will bring the railroad to the sugaring province of San José, where Renault settles down and achieves a certain degree of prominence in local society. In an abrupt aesthetic turn, the novel moves from *Costumbrismo* to codes of sentimental representation in order to tell the story of the doomed love of Marcel and Andrea, who is being forced to marry her cousin Fermín. The novel ends in Paris, with the lovers' clandestine romance, the suicide of the spiteful husband, and the flight of Marcel to Africa, in a colonial-scientific expedition to Algeria, where he will be assassinated, in a decidedly Orientalist ending, by a band of Arab militant rebels: "the infamous hordes flocked like jackals to witness the agony of the column, which they found in battle formation... with a howl of triumph, the Touareg threw themselves on him: he could still see two writhing under the bullets of his revolver—and he fell backwards, pierced by twenty enemy sabers" (403-404).

The autobiographic references in the first part of *Forbidden Fruit* are abundantly clear (Nogales for Avellaneda, San José for San Miguel de Tucumán, among others), in this first part of the novel that can be read as an assessment of Groussac's first 18 years in Argentina. However, *Forbidden Fruit* does not exhaust itself in its autobiographical impulse. This novel is the text in which Groussac produces his most sophisticated and productive elaboration of the nucleus of his intellectual experience in Argentina: his foreignness, or rather, the negotiation of the double condition that requires a constant adjustment of distances and proximities, of an interior and exterior point of view in relation to the Argentine cultural tradition. If Groussac made himself out to be a figure of authority in the intellectual field, it was precisely for having resolved favorably the constitutive tension of the space he occupied, and this casts him as the opposite of Marcel Renault, whose death is the symbol of the romantic impossibility of inscribing oneself in one pole or the other. In this sense, *Forbidden Fruit* produced a much more sophisticated move than has been recognized by previous criticism: the use of referential information from his own biography to produce a fiction that legitimates the position to which Groussac aspires in 1884, through an inversion of his protagonist's tragi-sentimental fate.

The fact that the chapters of *Forbidden Fruit* were being published in *Sud-América* starting in August 1884, just days after the end of *The Great Village*'s publication, allows for a reading of the two texts in succession, particularly in regard to the way in which the use of *Costumbrismo* in the first part of the novel (the Argentinian half) elaborates the question of nostalgia that arises from the double-belonging of Groussac's characters. It is difficult to avoid reading the descriptive dimension of provincial life, indicated in the novel's subtitle, *Argentine Customs*, in direct relation with the *Costumbrismo* of *The Great Village*, whose generic inscription is similarly announced in its subtitle, *Customs of*

Buenos Aires (*Constumbres bonaerenses*). If the construction of space in both novels is shot through with the tension between the processes of social and economic modernization that affect traditional structures as much in the big city as in the most far-flung provinces, the protagonists and the narrators' tone are characterized by a nostalgia for the cultural forms and landscapes immediately preceding the moment of transformations which the characters find themselves caught up in. However, while in the case of *The Great Village* this nostalgia results in an organic inscription rooted in the cultural tradition which constitutes the site of enunciation of its author, in *Forbidden Fruit* the nostalgia which Renault experiences is double and, therefore, perhaps more complex than what can be read in López, as well as in other novels and memoirs that cast the gaze of the elites over the past and the present.[8] Renault shares with the novel's cast of characters a traditional nostalgia, originating in the mourning over the way in which land ownership is passing to the hands of new families, including many foreigners, while the traditional families lose influence in the fictional town of San José. In this sense, Groussac's novel gives voice to the class which Renault as much as Groussac himself have inserted themselves into, but which they only identify with in part, with many resistances and distinctions. But at the same time, Renault experiences a sort of nostalgia less familiar to Argentinian literature of this period, that of a stranger's melancholy: Renault (and in a different way, the other French character of *Forbidden Fruit*, Capdebosq) thinks of France from San José, yet "finds himself colder than ever, experiencing the nostalgic sorrow of the Argentinian land, like a lost homeland" when he finally travels to France (35).

Forbidden Fruit is a novel attentive to the conventions of the *costumbrista* and sentimental genres, but uses them as a starting point to produce a productive reflection about distance and cultural belonging. The rest of Groussac's creative work is much less interesting and can barely be considered a series of exercises in style. "The Investigation," for example, is an incursion into the detective genre of mysteries, which Groussac must have delved into after his fascinated reading of Poe.[9] Originally published as "The Golden Lock" ("El candado de oro"), the story narrates, from the point of view of the *porteño* commissioner Enrique M., the assassination of a woman and the robbery of a lock-shaped locket. Along with the victim's corpse, they also find the corpse of the presumed assassin. The case is closed without the police being able to find the lost locket, until a notice in the paper reopens the case, whose resolution is much less surprising or interesting than the generic inscription of the story has promised. "The Investigation" has the merit of being one of the precursors of the genre, but as is the case with the reading of the rest of his narrative work, it is difficult to see anything beyond a self-condescending experiment.

La divisa punzó is a different case. It is a dramatic work that Groussac wrote between 1921 and 1922 (it premiered in the Odeón Theater on July 6, 1923, and the book was published barely two months later) about the Maza rebellion against Rosas in 1839. Interwoven with the political plotline that includes the execution of Ramón Maza and various stagings of Rosista terror, his betrayals and authoritarian abuses, the play takes up the failed romance of Manuelita Rosas and Jaime Thompson. Here we have neither the problem of the split personality translated into the cultural sphere, nor a mere exercise in style, but rather a text that responds to the logic of the political public intervention, from the field of art and culture: much closer to his polemic essays and prefaces than to fictional narrative. In *La divisa punzó*, Groussac is not the intellectual with aesthetic aspirations, but the historian and social scientist with an instrumental conception of art as a practice capable of effectively communicating to a wide audience a scientific knowledge of the past. Thus, in the preface that he wrote after celebrating ninety performances of the work, Groussac writes that

> In calling this a "historical drama," I have attempted to define it, without overstepping, as I see it, its characteristics.... I am sure that I have adhered to history in this piece, more closely than any of the great masters of historical drama have done, from Shakespeare and Lope to Schiller and Hugo.... The universal consensus, on the other hand, is more and more willing to not consider in this genre the facts and features that are properly historical as anything more than accessory materials, intended to create either the truth and life of the characters, or the local color. And to this criterion I have conformed; and if I have been able to adapt my drama to the understandings and outcomes acquired in my previous studies on Rosa and his era, it is because I have believed—and still believe—that this solid, if invisible, documentary frame constitutes the best condition and guarantees exactitude for the artistic reconstruction of the past. (xviii)

But if this work can be explained in terms of the logic of public intervention that governs Groussac's essayistic and historiographic writing, what is the debate in which it intervenes, as a work that reinscribes and updates, in the tradition of Echeverría and Sarmiento, the figure of Rosas and the question of pre-rational forms of politics as the constitutive problem of Argentine culture? It could be ventured that, between 1921 and 1923, a drama about Rosa and the charismatic power he held over the masses (which De Angelis, the general Corvalán, Thompson, Mandeville, and Mr. Love explicitly reflect on in the play) means taking a position on Hipólito Yrigoyan's place in the political sphere and in the imaginary of the elites, towards the end of his first presidential term.

6. Travel and Difference

If, since the publication of Sarmiento's *Travels* in 1847, the travel account was one of the essayistic forms privileged by the Argentine and Latin American elite, Groussac, for whom the experience of displacement and cultural translation was impossible to disassociate from his own biography, was one of its privileged practitioners. Along with his polemics and the effect of the symbolic institutionalization of his public figure, his travel writing was one of Groussac's most effective inscriptions in the Argentine literary tradition, due above all to the differential value of his writing in comparison with his travel-writing peers. If his writing and public interventions can be thought of as the discursive space of articulation of his strategic use of the undecidability of his French or Argentine belonging, Groussac's travels within Argentina, to America, and to Europe form a constitutive decentering of his intellectual subjectivity. Groussac travels according to his difference with respect to his point of departure, but also to the places through which he moves.

If his travels to Europe, and in particular to Paris, entail a ritual tour through the signifiers of the modernity to which he aspires, Groussac is a radically different case from Sarmiento, Cané, Mansilla, Wilde, López, Ugarte, and the other Latin American intellectuals who embarked on this secular pilgrimage. Groussac constructs this transatlantic journey not as a trip, but as a return. No matter that his closeness with Paris, as the child of a provincial family, is imaginary—as imaginary as that of Cané or Mansilla; in the chronicles of his travels to Paris in 1883, he concerns himself with differentiating himself from the rest of the travelers of his generation. Groussac had gone as an envoy of the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Dardo Rocha, in order to study the education systems of Europe, but his goal was to try to install himself in the French intellectual sphere, for which he brought letters of recommendation. He visited the aging Víctor Hugo in his house, Renan in the College de France, and

Daudet and Edmond de Goncourt in the house of the former, reckoning that some Parisian publication would publish one of his reviews, chronicles or lectures. The demarcation of intellectual authority that he had performed in his Argentine polemics came back to preoccupy him in regard to who could narrate Paris and who could not. Already in "Sarmiento en Montevideo" he had admonished one of the founders of the ceremonial trip to the capital of modernity for not having understood what he was seeing, and not knowing how to recount it; and in the series of chronicles "Vistas parisienses" he constructed his gaze and privileged access to the "true Paris":

> Those visitors of Paris, who only ask for pleasure and corruption in exchange for their gold…know nothing of the true Paris that works, struggles, studies, lives honorably and valiantly both in obscurity and in glory: that completely ignore the active majority of the Parisian beehive, as though it were composed entirely of drones!…The Paris that works and suffers, on high or on low, that is the true Paris. Blind and senseless, the traveler wanders through the boulevard or the Forest in his ignorant foolishness and stumbles daily upon the courage, industry, honor, and sacrifice that flourish in Paris more than in any other city, without knowing or greeting them. (*Segunda* 74-75)

The interesting yet rarely noted aspect of this introduction to the chronicles of his visits to Renan, Victor Hugo, Daudet, and Goncourt is that Groussac's invective not only establishes his authority as the narrator of the true Paris that the other travelers are not conditioned to see, but also articulates a clear class resentment, which can be read as an attempt at differentiation within the Argentinian elite that aims to separate cultural distinction from socio-economic identity. Like his French identity in the Argentine cultural sphere, his travels, and in particular his travels to Paris, function in Groussac's discourse as the possibility of reaffirming (or at least discursively identifying) a place of authority that is strictly intellectual, autonomous from economic and political power. Groussac imagines and represents, once more, the legitimacy of the social space he occupies due to his exceptionality.

Groussac wrote more travel texts than any other writer of his generation, with the exception perhaps of Mansilla. In addition to *Del Plata al Niágara*, one of the most interesting and complex books of travels in Latin American literature, Groussac published chronicles of every one of his European voyages (the five chronicles of "Vistas parisienses," the articles on Spain and France in "Apuntes de viaje," "El Sarmiento de Rodin"), and within Argentina ("Hacia el Iguazú," "A la Terre de Feu," "De Punta Arenas a Mendoza"). But if almost all of these texts, replete with personal references, can be read as an oblique and fragmentary autobiography—*Those Who Passed* is the paradigmatic example of this generic slippage—a similar proposition could be made about the attention he lends to spatial displacements in essays whose principal concern is not travel. From *Santiago de Liniers* to *Mendoza y Garay* (but also "El congreso de Tucumán" and "Bouchard y Buchardo"); and from *Forbidden Fruit* and *Those Who Passed* to his critical essays about Daudet and Sarmiento in "Sarmiento en Montevideo": Groussac tends to find in travel, and in characters estranged and transplanted in foreign latitudes, productive cracks from which to think texts, historical events, and cultural configurations.

Thus, perhaps it can be affirmed that Groussac's inscription in a genealogy of travel literature is more clear, immediate, and less problematic than his relations with the Argentine cultural tradition, particularly if one keeps in mind the productive conceptualization of travel as a practice that produces meanings. Beatriz Colombi explains that from the title of his heterogeneous collection of historical and literary texts, lectures, travel accounts and self-referential essays called *Intellectual Journey* (*El*

viaje intelectual), a true summa groussacquiana of which he published two volumes, in 1904 and 1920, it becomes clear that "Groussac equated travel with reading, considering it a means to knowledge just as valid as study" ("El relato como epigrama" 72)

His travel accounts interweave the aesthetic and socio-cultural construction of the space through which he travels with reflections on genre and on his own subjectivity as a traveler and writer. Just as Groussac's critical essays indefatigably construct his own intellectual authority, his travel writing is interesting because it tends to linger in the ambiguous and contradictory zones of the traveler, whose gaze emerges from the tension between the sociological perspective ("the sociology of a region…[in] which the light form conceals a solid background"), and the subjective impression ("I have transcribed my immediate sensations"), and he admits to writing "without shying away from the real or apparent contradictions that are legitimate when they make up the various aspects of the real" (*Del Plata al Niágara* 52). But also the constant reflection about multiple taxonomies of travelers, and about the symbolic capital that is invested in travels for the sake of the production of identities and differences: "Among the varieties of traveler 'snobbism,' only one attitude is more tedious than that of the admirer under the influence of the *Guía Baedeker*: that of the humorist at all costs, who comes to deny the evidence because of an itch to stand out, and pursues easy originality at the expense of accuracy" (393).

Del Plata al Niágara is the only of Groussac's books to narrate a full journey through Latin America and the United States, whose final destination is the World's Columbian Exposition which was held in Chicago starting in May 1893. Groussac's travels, from March 1893 to January 1894, brought him to "those other American regions that have felt and will feel wounded by my frankness," because for Groussac, the Spanish America through which he had traversed in order to reach the U.S. was not, even in 1893, any more than a residual space of colonial remains of those whom Latin American culture and physiognomy had not managed to rid itself of (51). But the rejection of the Spanish legacy in America as a sign of the region's backwardness did not imply the embrace of the irrefutable modernity of the U.S. Quite the contrary. Groussac's itinerary in the U.S. was defined by two recurrent themes, the problematic nuclei of Groussac's negative diagnostic of North American culture as a modern tradition (as opposed to that of Europe) that Latin America should avoid. On the one hand, the monstruous gigantism of its geography and architecture which was the expression of a brutish and uncivilized nature: "the size, the number, the quantity, constitute the standard and the basis for the criteria of all primitive civilizations: it is not reached except after a long refinement toward sober elegance, discreet grace, and quality. Everything here is excessive, overelaborate, disproportionate" (382). On the other hand, the fact that democracy had catastrophic effects on the culture of nations: in Chicago, Groussac encounters "the most beautiful city of the United States," and even so he finds there the pathological symptoms of the national culture (378). "An equalizing democracy in the intellectual order produces uniform mediocrity.… The outcome has been the impossibility of producing a true man of genius.… A practical and absolute democracy like this one … is the tyranny of the majority" (368-369).

Groussac's disgust towards democratic culture (in the U.S., but also in Argentina) betrays his romantic vision for what he considered the ideal functioning of culture, organized around a subject of genius capable of expressing the spirit of his age. Groussac understood the democratic principle of formal equality in terms of mediocrity, invoking the possibility of the existence of an ontological privilege upon which he could represent his own exceptional, ingenious, intellectual figure. And he considered that the cult of "size, number, and quantity" in North American democracy indicated the materialism and constitutive spiritual lack in that society. Before and after 1898, the U.S. will provide the counter-model

for the spiritual and elitist modernity that Groussac supported for the Argentine nation.

7. Conclusion: The Paradoxes of Tradition

The aim of this essay has been to consider the unstable location of Paul Groussac in the tradition of Argentine literature; a tradition whose legitimacy he did not recognize, and which he attempted to reform in his own terms through his prescriptive critique and public interventions. The constant and deliberate construction of a French identity as a source of modern intellectual authority was a central operative in Groussac's own imaginary, and in that of the cultural sphere, which returned to him the same image of himself that he had projected into its social space. "The task of organizing our intellectual life has been given to a foreigner," wrote José Bianco in the special issue of the review Nosotros dedicated to the Frenchman on the occasion of his death in 1929 (81). Bianco's idea was repeated throughout the rest of the 20th century in order to define Groussac's presence in the tradition. He was not so much a subject of the tradition, but rather one who, from a position of radical exteriority, attempted to order it, organize it, and give it shape. But Groussac did not believe that the Argentine tradition could survive in his absence. Or in any case, he was convinced (which becomes explicit in his critique of Rojas in 1924) that when faced with his disappearance, the nationalist reading of the past would end up being consolidated as an organic tradition of Argentine literature, isolating itself from the modern universal floods pouring out of France. This is Groussac's first inscription, not in tradition but outside of it, in the Absolute space of totalization. On the other hand, by other means, there is his attempt to inscribe himself in the literary tradition, from within this tradition, as a writer. In this sense, his luck was uneven: non-existent as a novelist, short story writer, and dramaturge; definitive and decisive as a chronicler and essayist who renovated prose, breaking it out of its frame and producing a cultured yet informal style which, with "Kafka and his precursors," is recognized today as Borgesian. And finally, there is the place in tradition that he was granted by few yet significant rescuings in the 20th century: Borges himself in a handful of essays, among which "Arte de injuriar" stands out in particular, and Piglia who, in *Respiración artificial*, puts in the mouth of his alter ego, Renzi, the idea that Groussac survives in the parodic figure of Pierre Menard, because of the graceless episode in which Groussac assigned the authorship of the apocryphal Don Quixote to a certain Juan José Martí, which led to a violent and scathing disavowal from the Spanish specialist Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo. In this sense, Borges and Piglia reinscribed Groussac in tradition, or rather, renewed his inscription, although not in the terms that the Frenchman would have wanted: no longer as an unavoidable protagonist of cultural life, but as the representative character of the discursive field of the 80s generation, and of nineteenth-century Argentine culture's French desires.

(Translated from Spanish by Phoebe Carter)

Notes

1. This essay is a revised version of "Paul Groussac: El escritor francés y la tradición." *Historia Crítica de la Literatura Argentina*, edited by Noé Jitrik and Alejandra Laera, Emecé, 2010, pp. 355-381.
2. Based on this fragment from the preface/prologue of Critica literaria, Borges comments in his "Art of Verbal Abuse" ("El arte de injuriar," 1933, 1936), "Groussac, with that good ill-humor, fulfills the most eager ritual of satiric games. He pretends to be pained by the errors of the adversary ("after resignedly hearing"); allows one to glimpse the spectacle of abrupt scorn (first the word 'tome,' then 'mass'); uses terms of praise in order to assault ('that bountiful history,');

and then, at last, he reveals his hand. He does not commit sins of syntax, which is effective, but does commit sins in his arguments. Criticizing a book for its size, insinuating that no one wants to deal with that enormous brick, and finally professing indifference toward the idiocy of some gauchos or mulattoes appear to be the reactions a hoodlum, not of a man"of letters" (89).

3. In her significant and exhaustive intellectual biography of Groussac, Paula Bruno gives as the principal hypothesis of her work that the best way to understand the role that Groussac played at the end of the Argentine century is to think of him as an "articulator of the Argentine cultural space. ... This role, which he constructed and fomented for himself, furnished his practices with a particular dynamic" (18).
4. Sylvia Molloy describes Groussac as "the acerbic French critic turned self-appointed mentor of the Argentine intelligentsia" (69).
5. The conceptualization of certain "beacon-figures" ["figuras-*faro*"] around whom the intellectual field structured itself was developed by Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo in their reading of Bourdieu. See Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, *Literatura/Sociedad*, Hachette, 1983.
6. In this sense, Groussac would not be "our Conrad," a writer who traveled from a minor culture and language towards a hegemonic literary tradition. As has already been established, Groussac used time and again the cultural prestige of his French origins in order to discipline (in the sense of structuring around disciplinary conventions) the disorder that, according to him, defined the marginality and the secondariness of Argentine culture.
7. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, Oxforx UP, 1973. Bloom's idea is that a poetic tradition is constructed based on strong and weak inscriptions. Poets inscribe themselves with an original strength in the tradition after having overcome their aesthetic antecedents in an oedipal battle. Bloom's metaphor aims to illustrate a process in which a poet takes up the symbolic legacy that precedes him in order to transform it and turn it into material for new poetic configurations.
8. Regarding the nostalgic gaze in *La gran aldea*, one can think of a series that would be composed of *Juvenilia* (1884) by Miguel Cané, *Memorias de un viejo* (1888) by Vicente Quesada, *Retratos y recuerdos* (1894), *y Mis memorias* (1904) by Lucio V. Mansilla, and *Aguas abajo* (1914) by Eduardo Wilde, among others.
9. Baudelaire began translating Poe's stories in 1848, and in Argentina, La Nación published a translation of the story "Berenice" in 1879. By 1884, the classics of the genre—"Los crímenes de la calle Morgue," "El misterio de Marie Roget," and "La carta robada"—had already been published and were being read in Buenos Aires.

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