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Robert S. Wells

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, rsweyes@gmail.com

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Abstract / Resumen

In his essay, "On Nietzsche's Side," Maurice Blanchot says of Nietzsche, "Transcendence obsesses him, as that which he must endlessly surmount to be free." The same can be said of Roberto Arlt – himself a reader and a student of Nietzsche – and his own obsession with order. These obsessions with transcendence and order take on peculiar and contradictory modes of expression in both thinkers, as they often contort what might otherwise be common notions. Under the influence of Nietzsche, Arlt's delirious yet methodically contradictory thought thus deforms and even does violence unto that which it treats and unto itself. Consequently, when critiquing Arlt's novels, *Los siete locos* and *Los lanzallamas*, it is impossible to ascertain which side Arlt, Arlt's most Nietzschean character, the Astrólogo, and Arlt's most Nietzschean literary invention, *la sociedad secreta*, are on when it comes to notions of order and disorder. This impossibility makes it all the more necessary that critical readings of Arlt and Nietzsche be resistant, that is, creative, in turn and in kind. What results is a polifacetic assemblage of variable and shifting sides which offer an Arltian prismatic of Nietzsche's thought that is as opaque as it is transparent, as colorful as it is dark.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Arlt, Nietzsche, Argentina, modernity, will to power, Astrólogo, sociedad secreta

Orders and Disorders, Wills to Powers –

Arlt and Nietzsche, the Astrólogo and the sociedad secreta

In his essay, “On Nietzsche’s Side,” Maurice Blanchot says of Nietzsche, “Transcendence obsesses him, as that which he must endlessly surmount to be free” (296). The same can be said of the Argentine writer, Roberto Arlt – himself a reader and a student of Nietzsche – and his own obsession with order.^[1] These obsessions with transcendence and order take on peculiar and contradictory modes of expression in Nietzsche and in Arlt, as both contort what might otherwise be common notions.

One witnesses these contortions in fictional and philosophical form in Arlt’s novels, Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas.^[2] As Eduardo Masotta explains in his book, Sexo y Traición en Roberto Arlt, “Estas contorsiones reenvían a las contorsiones de una conciencia apresada en las contradicciones de la sociedad efectiva. [...] Esa conciencia histérica, angustiada y de comediante que se levanta en las novelas de Arlt es una verdadera conciencia delirante” (80). Paraded and parodied as it may be, delirium, as opposed to absolute clarity of thought, being, and creative power, is therefore what is produced and the contorted, spasmodic stuff that makes up the place of production.

If Arlt’s novels are delirious, it is because so, too, is the world. Arlt’s own literary, philosophical, and, let us say, real conscience suffers and profits from this delirium. While not determined according to the same diagnoses that surrounded Nietzsche’s documented, if also somewhat dubious, bouts of delirium, Arlt’s deliriant ways can clearly still be read in his works. What results is a literary and philosophical flair for the dramatic that is at once acute and awkward, paranoid and convincing. It is also one that harbors the capacity to do violence unto that which it treats and unto itself. Due to this delirium and its fiercely contradictory dramatics, it is often quite

difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain just which side Arlt is on when it comes to order and disorder.

Thus operate the symptomatic cases that confront us here. Allowing ourselves to hazard a hermeneutic symptomology of this, perhaps, all too human condition harkens us to the words of another one of Nietzsche's students, Gilles Deleuze, who says, "As Nietzsche said, artists and philosophers are civilization's doctors" ("On" 143). In the cases of Arlt and Nietzsche, in diagnosing the orders and disorders of our common and contorted human conditions, in diagnosing our, perhaps, all too modern world, they act as both doctor and patient, cause and cure.

Before examining the orders and disorders of the modern as depicted in Arlt's novels, Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas, I will first present this world and its affinities with Nietzsche's thought in more comprehensive terms. The comparisons that follow are not meant to reduce one thinker to the other, but rather are meant to complicate the very relationship between Arlt and Nietzsche, along with any potential reading of either individual when treated independently.

Arlt and Nietzsche

Arlt's works bespeak a sort of brute cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, the world within these works is often centered upon Buenos Aires and its afueras. The delirious nature of this milieu is incontestable. In Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930, Beatriz Sarlo notes that, "La ciudad se vive a una velocidad sin precedentes y estos desplazamientos rápidos no arrojan consecuencias solamente funcionales. La experiencia de la velocidad y la experiencia de la luz modulan un nuevo elenco de imágenes y percepciones" (16). Coupled with a population explosion set off due to a massive wave of immigration – the city's population expanded from 1,576,000 inhabitants in 1914 to 2,415,000 by 1936 (Una modernidad 18) – these new velocities, images, and

perceptions created a site of delirium that was undoubtedly as raving as it was euphoric, as alluring to some as it was alarming to others, full of everything and nothing at once. Hence, within this modern metropolis, in spite and because of this metamorphosis, “la modernización no fue la misma para todos” (Jarkowski 94).

Modern Buenos Aires serves as one of Arlt’s most enduring and ambivalent obsessions. The city drew him in, even as he found himself to be estranged from it. Apart from tracking this ambivalence in Arlt’s novels, it also comes through as a compulsive topic of discussion in his Aguafuertes porteñas, a popular series of journalistic essays that often focus on the burgeoning metropolis, its rapid changes, and its colorful characters. In Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 30s, Arlt’s imagination literally runs wild, as shown in the following Aguafuerte, “Casas sin terminar”:

¡Qué sensación de misterio y de catástrofe inesperada dan esas construcciones no terminadas [...]! Esas son de las “casas” donde la imaginación infantil localiza los conciliábulos de ladrones, las reuniones de asesinos; esas son las “casas” donde, al oscurecer, se ven entrar o salir sombras subrepticias que de ser descubiertas llenarían luego de escándalo al barrio. (78)

Arlt here takes the common notion of the house or home as a place of shelter and safety and, within the given context of a modernizing Buenos Aires, violently contorts this notion into its opposite. In so doing, he speaks to the multifaceted nature of any notion. What is more, this particular Aguafuerte also speaks to Arlt’s imaginative, “infantile” obsession with the grandeur of conspiracy, crime, and criminal activity: a theme expanded upon to mythical and metaphysical proportions in Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas. Arlt is not alone in his inspired estimation of crime, however. For Nietzsche himself affirms in The Will to Power that, “we consider nothing to be great unless it includes a great crime” (74).

Accordingly, if Buenos Aires and its inhabitants pretend to any kind of Arltian, or, for that matter, Nietzschean, greatness, they can only do so by constructing themselves at the tensed intersection of delirium and delinquency, with both symptomatic signifiers imbued with the competing forces of ecstasy and misery. To return to Nietzsche, “The essential point is: the greatest

perhaps also possess great virtues, but in that case also their opposites. I believe that it is precisely through the presence of opposites and the feelings they occasion that the great man, the bow with the greatest tension, develops” (Will 507, emphasis in original). Arlt knows this very tension very well. He lives and writes according to and within it. So clear and totalizing is this tension that it necessarily includes its confusions and contradictions.

The tension between these opposites creates a potential site of production, one constructed and deconstructed in a non-dialectical fashion.^[3] At the same time, however, this productive site is also a site of destruction and diminishment, enervation and emptiness. Nietzsche, like Arlt, affirms these very tensions, the forward and backward, side-to-side movements that they create. He speaks to the simultaneous existence of opposing intensities here:

“Overall insight. – Actually, every major growth is accompanied by a tremendous crumbling and passing away: suffering, the symptoms of decline belong in the times of tremendous advances; every fruitful and powerful movement of humanity has also created at the same time a nihilistic movement. [...] This I have comprehended” (Will 69, emphasis in original).

If we extend this site of delirious tension, we can – without being, at the same time, too reductive – call it modernity. In accordance with this line of thought, Beatriz Sarlo tells us, with respect to Arlt, “Esta percepción de la modernidad como espacio de alta tensión, de desorden paroxístico [...] atrae a quien está dispuesto a negociar con la mezcla, lejos de todo ideal de pureza” (Una modernidad 48). We might also say, furthermore, that this very perception sees the greatness of modernity itself as that of a “great crime.” For tensions, madness, and crimes – the reigning orders of disorder – attract Arlt. They produce him and, again, at the same time, become what he produces.

Arlt begins one of his most intense modern productions, Los lanzallamas, with an oft-cited introduction that he calls “Palabras del autor.” This introduction operates as a curious, if also perhaps spurious, attempt on Arlt’s part to justify both himself and his style. Distancing himself from many of his modern contemporaries who obsessed over the possibility of an autonomous beauty thought to be inherent to their aesthetic creations, Arlt plainly states that such beauty is no

longer possible, given the current social conditions. “Me atrae ardientemente la belleza,” he says, “¡Cuántas veces he deseado trabajar una novela que, como las de Flaubert, se compusiera de panorámicos lienzos . . . ! Mas hoy, entre los ruidos de un edificio social que se desmorona inevitablemente, no es posible pensar en bordados” (Los lanzallamas 11). Such models of sublimation would serve to de-clench the afore-mentioned tensions that so distinguish Arlt’s work – even if, as he himself notes, these very features allow his critics to say that he “escrib[e] mal” and “persiste aferrado a un realismo de pésimo gusto” (11-12). What distinguishes Arlt’s work is thus that which at once disgusts others about his work. That being the case, it cannot be said that Arlt dismisses beauty altogether. Rather, he treats it in a different way.

Still in the introduction, Arlt proceeds to maintain that the type of literature he is not able to write is also indicative of a certain social class of which he is not a member. Unlike someone else with more time and money to spend on cultivating their craft, Arlt is forced to work with what he has at his immediate disposal, despite that fact that he might yearn for something more immediately and tastefully beautiful. Silvio Astier, the young protagonist of Arlt’s first novel, El juguete rabioso, thus appeals to Arlt’s own symptomatic make-do sensibilities when he says, “Es síntoma de una inteligencia universal poder regalarse con distintas bellezas” (81, emphasis added). Given his modest means, Arlt creates his own unique approach, appropriating ideas from myriad sources and combining them with his own. Hence, when Derrida – yet another student of Nietzsche – says that, “Nietzsche must have been familiar with all genres,” we can no doubt say the same about Arlt as well (Spurs 39). In this regard, Arlt’s are the aesthetic works not of adornment, but rather of bricolage, as he works with all that he is able to find (Pauls 254). It is a constant search for materials that may be put to work: a crude if captivating heterogeneity which for some critics impoverishes and enervates and for others enriches and enlivens the work itself. Arlt himself, as always, would seem to fall on both sides of this rather symptomatic, and casuistic, divide.

Ultimately, what Arlt is able to create holds itself together by the fabrics of so many disparate discourses – with the tensions between them being so strong – that the creation that results becomes, in effect, ultra-resistant. As such, Arlt’s works resist straightforward description and categorization, just as they resist facile interpretation and understanding. Deleuze, in typically Nietzschean fashion, affirms that, “Creating isn’t communicating but resisting” (“On Philosophy” 143).^[4] Arlt’s potential for resistance represents his greatest, most inventive, and perhaps also most Nietzschean quality as a creator: a resistance that bursts that forth as a critical language which rarely articulates a concrete ideological, aesthetic, or political privilege. Graciela Montaldo notes how the explosion of language found in Arlt is characteristic of the very modern times in which he wrote, though only he seemed to be able to really put a voice to it: “Hubo en este momento una notoria proliferación de la palabra y de la escritura, una expansión de discursos tan heterogénea que es imposible dar cuenta de su totalidad a menos que uno sea Roberto Arlt, a cuyos textos pareciera afluir esa multiplicidad” (25). Indeed, it is the “stream” of a consciousness with an exceptional capacity to multiply its power of resistance. A tidal wave of curiosity and thought that wanted to wipe out and yet also absorb all that lay in its path. Nietzsche, of course, once tried to do the same. His works benefit from a similar aptitude for writing and thinking according to heterogeneous and competing discourses, though they nevertheless maintain a very much personal and recognizable style: a style that becomes all the more personal and recognizable as it becomes more fluid and multiple, that is, resistant. Together, then, Nietzsche and Arlt partake of a singularly multiple, and therefore all the more resistant, method – one which, when put to work, fabricates creations of a corresponding quality.

A delirious aesthetics of creative resistance does not make for easy reading, however. The many ideas that thread through the resultant work do not always match up, so to speak, nor are they necessarily meant to. An idea may be put forth in one place, yet vehemently rejected elsewhere, with

the same character – and, of course, the same author – thereby speaking to the idea’s veracity as well as its fallacy. In this way, if it is true that Arlt’s mixed up and modern, philosophical and literary productions disorder and do violence to the ordered purity required by many other “modern” theories, his worldview is not without its own rules, nor is it ruled by no one. Whence the orders and disorders of modern society are and are not mutually exclusive. And Arlt resists taking one side or the other with regard to these seemingly distinct and opposed possibilities.

The more contradictory these tensions are, then, the more productive they may prove to be; not in their resolution or synthesis, but rather as their constitutive elements push against both their putative opposites and themselves. A process such as this does not create clarity. Masotta therefore asserts that, “La obra de Arlt, entonces, es [...] de una época donde lo que se sabe de la vida se mezcla con la vida, donde el conocimiento no se separa de la existencia, donde la confusión y el equívoco comienzan a tener un valor de verdad” (29). Moreover, what Blanchot says here regarding Nietzsche applies once more to Arlt as well: “it is not enough to see this confusion to clarify it: infinite confusion is part of his [Nietzsche’s] existence” (299). It is so because, “There is no reconciliation of opposites: oppositions, contradictions do not get to rest in some higher synthesis, but hold themselves together by an increasing tension, by a choice that is at once an exclusive choice and a choice of contradiction” (290). To repeat, this is not the dialectic. It is instead a heuristic. Consequently, as Nietzsche, Arlt, and Arlt’s most Nietzschean character, the Astrólogo, all come to understand, the most methodological way to come to terms with life’s infinite impulses is via this same vitally, if also violently, tensive process. Nietzsche submits that, however confused, “the most valuable insights are methods” (*Twilight* 135, emphasis in original). Returning to Blanchot on Nietzsche, and now echoing Masotta on Arlt: “This impulse is an impulse of existence as well as of thought. Life and knowledge are one” (290). In other words, this impulse is a method.

Still, Arlt's works make plain that impulsive, methodical, and violent resistance, along with disorder and the disruption of order, do not always bring about a kind of revolutionary success. In extremes, in an overdose, both order and disorder can lead to insanity, hallucination, murder, and suicide. Liberty can be a menace and totalitarianism can stand hand in hand with self-determination. Arlt nevertheless critiques, that is, affirms it all. This is to say he and his works are essentially iconoclastic, though still guided by a delirious, if, for that matter, all the more forceful and affirmative drive toward wills to powers that are at once primitive and despotic, advanced and liberating, beautiful and brutal. And while all that Arlt and his characters say might not always be clear, what is said and done, if lacking in precise signification, overflows with maximal, indefinite force.^[5] This is the force – These are the forces of critique.

Nietzsche postulates that one may “define all efficient force unequivocally as: will to power” (Beyond 67, emphasis in original). Forces therefore function as intensities of power. Arlt's novels narrate nothing if not the in-tensed encounters of forces. In turn, these encounters reveal the struggle between order and disorder to be an enduring, that is, vital struggle for power.^[6] This ceaseless, competitive, and, in a word, critical striving operates as the basis of life itself. One of El juguete rabioso's characters explains this brute force of fact to young Astier as follows: “La struggle for life, che, unos regeneran y otros caen; así es la vida...” (117). Meanwhile, in Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas, Arlt shows this “struggle for life” (in English in the Spanish original) to be macro and micro in scope, surging on superficial and subterranean planes, channeling, organizing, deflecting, constraining, and liberating drives, desires, and wills to powers. In these works, Arlt elevates – though, depending on one's perspective, one could also say lowers, or confuses – the Darwinian “struggle for life” to and with the Nietzschean will to power.^[7] The basic impulse to survive becomes a noble and methodical way to rise above.

If we return to the “Palabras del autor,” to that which introduces Los lanzallamas, we see how, contrary to what has been argued up to this point, Arlt here makes a seemingly sincere and deliberate attempt to clarify just how it is that one might indeed rise above. This declaration, perhaps Arlt’s most well known, reads as follows:

El futuro es nuestro, por potencia de trabajo. Crearemos nuestra literatura, no conversando continuamente de literatura, sino escribiendo en orgullosamente soledad libros que encierran la violencia de un “cross” a la mandíbula. Sí, un libro tras otro, y “que los eunucos bufen.”
El porvenir es triunfalmente nuestro. (12)

Invoking a certain industrious and imperious “we” which works collectively, and then immediately contradicting it with the solitude required in order to complete this work, Arlt asserts that the nature of this work is literary. It is also violent. The “cross” is designed to hit the “eunuchs” on its receiving end square at the point from which they speak – the “jaw.” It would be a blow that would knock some sense both into and out of the ineffectual discourses of those whose words lack force and conviction. As a result, a more forceful will, expressed in book after book, is destined to triumph over an otherwise feeble future. The triumph of this communal and solitary will represents both a threat and a promise – and shows the “threat in the promise itself” (Rogues 82, emphasis in original).

Nietzsche does not make the claim that his works of philosophy will hit people in the mouth, potentially knocking them out, senseless. This does not mean that he promises peace or that his method will be any less threatening, or any less violent. Indeed, Nietzsche pretends to show through his own work “How To Philosophize With a Hammer.” This statement of purpose functions as the subtitle to Twilight of the Idols. In his forward to the book, Nietzsche explains what such a method means and the forces at work behind it. “This little book is a grand declaration of war,” one which promises to take head on the “eternal idols which are here touched with the hammer as with a tuning fork” (32, emphasis in original). As per these “eternal idols,” we are told that they preside over the world as those that are the “most believed in,” even though Nietzsche

decries that, in fact, there are “none more hollow” (32, emphasis in original). Accordingly, both thinkers intend to use their hit and smash methods to test the mettle of these methods and that to which they are opposed, shattering all that is impotent and empty along the way. If what they come up against meets these methods with a certain force of resistance, if it withstands the blows that literature and philosophy are able to bring to bear upon it, and even, perhaps, if it hits back, then Arlt and Nietzsche will nevertheless continue to hit and hammer away in the name of a future that is triumphantly beyond good and evil.

These same methods may also be used against themselves. This means that Arlt is not above hitting himself in the mouth, and that Nietzsche can also take a hammer to his own philosophy. Nietzsche thus presages what would come to be Arlt’s own philosophy when he states: “we have to become traitors, be unfaithful, again and again abandon our ideals” (Human 198-99, emphasis in original). It is an eternal return that is also a new beginning, because it is the violent affirmation of difference – the active inclusion of other forms, which necessarily hits and hammers away at itself and others in order to then become something else. It is not a matter of being faithful, but of being forceful.

In sum, and in so many ways similar to Nietzsche, Arlt offers his readers a uniquely delirious, a violently contradictory, and a critical view of modern society. “Arlt, en realidad, va en otro sentido,” as Alan Pauls asserts (250). Masotta advances an analogous interpretation: “Arlt no quería más que introducirnos en los senderos de una contra-sociedad,” with this “contra-sociedad,” with, as we shall see, this “counter-society” specifically being called the sociedad secreta (51). The questions that will be raised here, however, are whether or not these readings of Arlt are completely true – whether or not Arlt “goes off in another direction,” whether or not Arlt’s secret society demonstrates that, in effect, the society that is the society is not the society.^[8] For, despite the fact that Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas show Arlt writing so as to maintain theories and practices of

order and disorder in an active state of tension, this tension's manifestation does not show order – and, in some cases, a prophetically totalitarian, terroristic, homicidal order – to be entirely out of the question. This is not to say that the readings offered by Pauls and Masotta are incorrect, but rather that they are necessarily inadequate.^[9] That being so, they too call for a critical resistance.

Blanchot tells us that, “Every assertion of Nietzsche or about Nietzsche must be balanced with its opposite assertion” (297). Furthermore, “The fundamental characteristic of Nietzsche's truth is that it can only be misunderstood, can only be the object of a misunderstanding” (299). The same can, and, in fact, must, be said of Arlt. To be sure, Arlt's own “truth” regarding order and disorder reigns ambiguous. And if, in Blanchot's words, Arlt writes, thinks, and lives, “On Nietzsche's Side,” this side operates more as a polifacetic assemblage of variable and shifting sides, which, when amassed together, present a certain prismatic of Nietzsche's thought that is as opaque as it is transparent, as colorful as it is dark.

However “misunderstood” it may be, then, in what remains of this critical essay we will explore the delirious and ambiguous nature of Arlt's tensed truths regarding order and disorder, particularly with respect to the character of the Astrólogo and his proposed sociedad secreta. What will not be “misunderstood” is that, for Arlt, power is what really matters – and that the forces and relations of power, whether they be those of order, disorder, or both, make up matter itself. For, as Nietzsche proclaims, “life is will to power” (Beyond 194, emphasis in original).

The Astrólogo and the sociedad secreta

Arlt's characters often display a deeply existential dissatisfaction with the world. As a result, they look for alternative and creative ways to express some sense of agency. This might mean establishing a secret society, robbing a school library, inventing a copper rose, acting out bourgeois

fantasies, redelineating the modes and reappropriating the goods of capitalist circulation, betraying a friend, or committing suicide. A charismatic and crafty character known as the Astrólogo believes he has found the way that is not the way: he calls it la sociedad secreta. Appearing in Los siete locos and Las lanzallamas, the Astrólogo is Arlt's greatest, most problematic, and most deliriously Nietzschean character.^[10] The Astrólogo's greatest, most problematic, and most deliriously Nietzschean concept is indeed the revolutionary new world order that he calls the sociedad secreta. The Astrólogo declares that his proposed secret society will inaugurate "el comienzo del reinado del superhombre," and goes on to describe how, "Muchos llevamos un superhombre adentro. El superhombre es la voluntad en su máximo rendimiento, sobreponiéndose a todas las normas morales y ejecutando los actos más terribles, como un género de alegría ingenua" (Siete 233). These are only two of the many instances in which the Astrólogo reproduces obvious Nietzscheanisms verbatim.

A man of the occult, the Astrólogo is nevertheless just as well versed in continental and political philosophy as he is in current "scientific" trends gleaned from cheap magazines. He sees no wisdom in privileging one approach over another. This type of knowledge is and is not taught in school, is and is not a knowledge of the streets and las afueras. It reappropriates hegemonic discourses and brings peripheral thought to the fore. Sarlo therefore argues that, "Una pregunta básica de estas novelas es, entonces, de qué modo se puede modificar, por el saber, las relaciones de poder" (Una modernidad 58). This kind of saber's ultimate endgame is not so much an education per se, but rather a coming into knowledge, which, due to its polifacetic approach, is able to modify both itself and whatever it comes into contact with, so as to then modify these relations and the potential powers primed within them.

The Astrólogo, the monstrous bastard-child of his author, is an intellectual, a dilettante, and a bricoleur. He mixes styles and substances at will. He utilizes his diverse array of knowledge to his own advantage: to maximize his power as an active force in the world. The Astrólogo is also a

philosopher, since Nietzsche defines philosophy as follows: “It [philosophy] always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to ‘creation of the world,’ to causa prima” (Beyond 39). What matters most to the Astrólogo is not so much what something means, but rather how it works, how much force something is able to create, flex, unleash. When he works with others so as to create a new world order, a new way to be – that is, la sociedad secreta – these functional, creative, and heterogeneous ways to knowledge demonstrate a potential to operate as collective critical forces that pass through persons in order to make of them collectively what they already are individually: a people. A people in question, a problematic ontology, simultaneously questioning, intensifying, and disorganizing its organization as it constitutes itself. “Nosotros no hemos sentado principio alguno todavía,” proclaims the Astrólogo, “y lo práctico será aceptar los principios más opuestos” (Siete 324).

These people and principles are meant to make up the sociedad secreta. However, what truly makes the secret society are the words so “tyrannically,” if at times eloquently, articulated by the Astrólogo. Indeed, discursive language’s potency as force, function, and means of persuasion can be seen in the numerous and extensive monologues put forth by the Astrólogo regarding the sociedad secreta. As if articulating the operations of some kind of hyper-active or schizophrenic speaking machine, the Astrólogo talks equally of terrestrial functions and the metaphysical, meaningless necessity of untruth’s truth. Whence the assorted operations of life, literature, and philosophy all interact as expressive, experimental parts of a singularly multiple and impersonal machine that produces something, breaks down, loses its initial function, and must then be refashioned anew.^[11] What Arlt and the Astrólogo piece together is, in effect, a “dislocation of the theory of knowledge, one that opens up onto entirely unexplored terrain” (Agamben 221). In this way, it is a machinic and machinating “theory of knowledge” that moves away from the aesthetic education of young men.

The Astrólogo expresses the methodical pulsion inherent to Arlt's work as a whole when he says, "Vea que lo que yo pretendo hacer es un bloque donde se consoliden todas las posibles esperanzas humanas. [...] [L]o esencial es que de nuestros actos recojamos vitalidad y energía" (Siete 31, 234). He expands upon these ideas further in Los lanzallamas: "Es la voluntad de vivir. Cada hombre lleva en sí una distinta cantidad de voluntad de vivir. Cuantas más fuerzas, más pasiones, más deseos, más furoros de plasmarse en todas las direcciones de inteligencia que se ofrecen a la sensibilidad humana" (73). Such an experimental, expansive, and Nietzschean will to live saps power of its tendency toward stasis and categorization. In Nietzsche's terms, the Astrólogo himself thus "lives and acts as a collective individual" (Human 50).

In terms of the Astrólogo's politics, he does not align himself with one political ideology alone. He presses instead for a self-critical politics of inventive, disordering change, whatever it may be called.^[12] As such, he declares, "Seremos bolcheviques, católicos, fascistas, ateos, militaristas en diversos grados de iniciación" (Siete 127). Reasoning that politics functions according to organization rather than ideas, the Astrólogo, at least at first glance, desires to distribute and organize "many politics" on overlapping lines of flight, from within and without politics as such, so as to then gather and disorganize them and, in turn, return to a model of political organization without precedent. This approach dovetails with what Deleuze and Parnet say in "Many Politics": "The question has always been organizational, not at all ideological; is an organization possible which is not modeled on the apparatus of the State, even to prefigure the State to come?" (145).

The question concerning the relationship between political organization and the State resonates here when considering the sociedad secreta. Affirmative, subversive, and disorderly as it may seem to be, the sociedad secreta is both identical and antithetical to the order of the State – especially if we consider the State itself to be a (secret) society. The cynical cénacle that makes up the secret society's core group in Arlt's two novels is a band of thieves, mad scientists, and profiteers. In

other words, they are what today, just as then, we call “politicians.” A common lust for power brings these rogues together, in secret.^[13] All the same, within the course of the novels the Astrólogo is not at all secretive regarding his desire that power be made his so that the world can be made his, too.

Within this so-called “super-modern” secret society, a return to pre-modern metaphysical lies is meant to bring about a new world order. Given that God is now dead and gone (thanks, in no small part, to Nietzsche), the Astrólogo hopes to fashion himself in God’s cryptic image and impose *his* world upon *the* world. Man’s creative self-affirmation, no matter how it articulates itself, would seem to be a necessary step in creation’s evolution. For, as Blanchot explains, via Nietzsche, “God is dead because we killed Him. This revolt is necessary for the affirmation of man. [...] The death of God allows man to know himself in his real limits, to leave his refuge and experience his unique possibilities, to become fully responsible for himself, that is, to become a creator” (288-89). The Astrólogo surely sees himself as a creator; he intends to create by any means necessary in order to overcome what he recognizes to be “his real limits” and thereby impose his will. “[E]s necesario crearse la fuerza, revolucionar las conciencias, exaltar la barbarie,” he says, for, “Ese agente de fuerza misteriosa enorme que suscitará todo eso será la sociedad [secreta]” (Siete 130). He goes on to stipulate how, with the secret society “Instauraremos los autos da fe, quemaremos vivos en las plazas a los que no crean en dios. [...] Es necesario, compréndame, es absolutamente necesario que una religión sombría y enorme vuelve a inflamar el corazón de la humanidad (130). Consequently, and by all means necessary, the Astrólogo aims to ensure that only a few unique creators – including, first and foremost, he himself – truly create, that is, fabricate this brave new world. His creation is the “tyrannical” affirmation of himself, his will, his way: the sociedad secreta.

One of the Astrólogo’s co-conspirators, the Buscador de oro, outlines the Astrólogo’s designs as follows: “Substituir una mentira insignificante por una mentira elocuente, enorme, trascendental” (Siete 148). Truth functions in this way as a force of fiction, “as that which has

become,” rather than as that which always has been according to its tried and tested relationship to an objective reality (Adorno 3). The *Buscador de oro* also affirms “la imprescindible necesidad de una aristocracia natural” in order to set this metaphysical conspiracy in motion, in order to assure the vital and violent success of the sociedad secreta (Siete 150). It necessarily follows that those who wield a special knowledge of truth and fiction stand superior over the docile folk below who accept their subservient roles in life as being/s subjected to the metaphysical dictates of those above. This method follows this Nietzsche: “To recognize untruth as a condition of life: that, to be sure, means to resist customary value-sentiments in a dangerous fashion; and a philosophy which ventures to do so places itself, by that act alone, beyond good and evil” (Beyond 36). Contorting this notion, the *Astrólogo* applies it to his own wolfish ends. Herein lies the self-styled danger, the potentially totalitarian truth of untruth.

This creative method of the *Astrólogo*’s resists moving forward according to modernity’s Godless imaginary. He opts instead to re-impose an old myth in an ostensibly new way. His sociedad secreta shows, in the words of another student of Nietzsche, Adorno, “how the old is after all still possible, which is to say as something new” (20). Yet, such logic also seems to subvert what Adorno says elsewhere with Max Horkheimer: “Only thought which does violence to itself is hard enough to shatter myth” (Dialectic 2). As we have said, the *Astrólogo*’s thought, characteristic of that of Arlt, often does “violence to itself.” It further represents a kind of “hard” thought in its ultra-resistant makeup, and in how it seeks to deliver knockout blows to whatever it determines to be weak thought. Nevertheless, in the name of the sociedad secreta, the *Astrólogo*’s “hard” and self-harming thought serves to violently restore rather than “shatter” myth. Myth is no doubt a power both known and unknown in origin – a sort of public secret, or private revelation. Its own ability to shape-shift with respect to seemingly common sense notions of the private and the public and truth and untruth provide it with a great power. Indeed, the mysteriously, mythically, and metaphysically

true power of what is untrue, the public power of a secret, is precisely what the Astrólogo – a mythmaker – so desires to disseminate in order to establish his secret society.

From this confused and clear, pre-modern and super-modern, limiting and unlimited perspective, Arlt appears to be both less and more and subversive than some of his critics would make him out to be. Or, rather, he subverts this subversion. Masotta, meanwhile, offers a more nuanced reading of subversion vis-à-vis the sociedad secreta: “este subversismo no puede despistarnos, y no debemos olvidar que los actos de terrorismo individual que realizan los personajes desdican los objetivos subversivos. Estos subversivos son anarquistas, pero al revés” (43). However much disorder it creates, however it may lay waste to everything in its path, the sociedad secreta does so in the name of a secret order – one which lies at the heart of any secret society. Such an order cannot function properly if all humans come to see the light that is society. It must therefore keep certain kinds of lesser humans in the dark in order to ensure its discursive, violent, and vital power over them.

And, yet, as always, as it is with Nietzsche, Arlt and his critical, contradictory concepts are exceedingly difficult to pin down one way or another, once and for all. For the sociedad secreta can at times come off as being so far-fetched as to be taken as farce, or parody – or insanity!^[14] To be sure, when prompted to respond to the inquiry, “Deseo saber si usted es un comediante, un cínico o un aventurero,” the Astrólogo responds, sincerely, “Las tres cosas expresan lo mismo” (Lanzallamas 79). Whether or not Arlt knows what to make of the Astrólogo’s ideas one cannot really say either. Is Arlt the Astrólogo, though? Or, if asked the other way around, is the Astrólogo Arlt? Yes and no. The same questions can be asked and the same answers given with respect to whether or not, for example, Nietzsche is Zarathustra, and vice versa.

How are we, then, to read these creations that pretend to fabricate the real? “Such is the problem,” as Blanchot assesses it when one reads and interprets Nietzsche – an assessment which,

again, applies to Arlt (289). This “problem” “call[s] into question not the individual merits of the commentator but the possibility of any commentary on a passionate thinker, written from the outside” (289). Be that as it may, we still read and write about Arlt and Nietzsche, all the same, with sufficient and insufficient reasoning on our side.

What the Astrólogo ultimately comes to understand, what he wants to affirm, preach – he is mistakenly taken to be a pastor at the end of Los lanzallamas – and keep secret, is that power is all, and that the less power there is to go around, the more there is to have. “El mundo debía ser de unos pocos,” reasons the Astrólogo, “Y estos pocos caminar con pasos de gigantes,” he reasons, “And those few should stride out like giants” (Siete 215). Whence the freedom of a select few trumps the collective equality of the whole. That being said, while Nietzsche would surely see the provisional use value in great lies, he would also argue in favor of the end of the great lies that organize and order man according to apocryphal metaphysical truths. In a way, then, the Astrólogo makes a monster out of Nietzsche. A student supreme, he betrays the Betrayer. Instead of going beyond good and evil, the Astrólogo supplants outdated codes with apparently new, but really re-fashioned old ones, preying on the herd-like impulses of the many, machinating the will to power’s most methodologically immediate means of imposition.

In this light, however, Nietzsche is made out to be more of a humanist than he is. Truth be told, “equality” may, in fact, be a great lie; as he explains in Twilight of the Idols, “‘Equality,’ a certain actual rendering similar of which the theory of ‘equal rights’ is only the expression, belongs essentially to decline: the chasm between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out – that which I call pathos of distance – characterizes every strong age” (102, emphasis in original). And yet, as Nietzsche himself – and who else could he (not) be? – contends elsewhere, “What is needed is not a forcible redistribution but a gradual transformation of mind: the sense of justice must grow greater in everyone, the instinct for violence weaker” (Human

166). These, then, are only two of Nietzsche's own sides. "The essential impulse of such a way of thinking," Blanchot observes, "is to contradict itself. It is a movement which is all the more important since, unusually methodical, it is not the play of a capricious or confused mind, and is linked to a passion for truth" (290). Nietzsche's "passion for truth" operates as a passion for mankind, which, as a matter of course, simultaneously functions as a passion contradicted with and perforce empowered by an equally passionate disgust.

A self-styled Übermensch, a superhuman character, the Astrólogo's mind and method, like that of all humans, can be "capricious" and "confused" – delirious and impulsive. He wants to "stand out," he wants to be the driving force behind and at the front of a "strong age." His belief in the necessary use of extreme violence to enact change would seem to betray, that is, affirm his Nietzschean ideals even further. As a result, the Astrólogo's critique of violence is simultaneously his affirmation of violence, a belief in the essential right to violence in order to establish and maintain the disordered order of his secret society. We see this vital need for violence again here, in the Astrólogo's unsparing words: "Y yo quiero la revolución. [...] La revolución que se compone de fusilamientos, violaciones de mujeres en las calles por las turbas enfurecidas, saqueos, hambre, terror. Una revolución con una silla eléctrica en cada esquina. El exterminio total, completo, absoluto" (Lanzallamas 95). Obviously, it is a proposal made not just in favor of a Nietzschean "creative destruction," but one that instead calls for "absolute extermination." In order to come to power, in order to will itself to power, the sociedad secreta – or perhaps any society, for that matter, however rogue it may or may not be – requires a "monopoly on violence" (Rogues 68). Generally attributed to the society of the State, Derrida tells us here that it is a "monopoly on" the ordered disorder created in the grand style of criminal violence, which the rogue in question aims to appropriate from the state and put to work for his own ends:

The voyou [rogue] can also be one of those "great criminals [grosse Verbrecher]" who, as Benjamin tells us in "Critique of Violence," fascinates because he defies the state, that is, the

institution that, in representing the law, secures and maintains for itself a monopoly on violence. (Rogues 68).

As said from the start, violent crime fascinates to no end all that are here treated, as it perhaps fascinates all that may seek greatness.

In these ways, in its would-be greatness, the sociedad secreta is, according to Piglia, a “negative utopia” (Crítica 23). Yet, we might also call the sociedad secreta an example of a negative modernity. Or, simply, modernity. Piglia, like Sarlo, argues that Arlt writes as a totally modern writer – as one whose written works are irreducibly modern. Piglia makes this claim in numerous places, including in a work of fiction, his own novel, Respiración Artificial, where he has one of his characters refer to Arlt as, “el único escritor verdaderamente moderno que produjo la literatura argentina del siglo XX” (133). That being said, that being true, the Astrólogo’s desires – be they Arlt’s as well or not – to return to what appear to be mythical pre-modern times once again call such readings into question. They also lead him to advance the following: “Vi que el callejón sin salida de la realidad social tenía una única salida... y era volver para atrás” (Siete 121). In the modern world a new day has dawned, and yet, according to the Astrólogo, the most viable means for seizing it appears to be cloaking it in the past. At the very least such contradictory ideas complicate and contort what it means to be modern – however peripheral, mythical, and criminal this modernity may be. Perhaps, then, Arlt’s writings are both modern and pre-modern, thereby demonstrating the “fallacy of these oppositions” (Bosteels 239), along with their own untimely nature.^[15]

Now, if we return to Horkeheim and Adorno, and, in so doing, re-evaluate what was said earlier, there is indeed a “myth” that Arlt’s violent and hard thought is able to shatter: it is the myth of modernity. Via the Astrólogo and the sociedad secreta, Arlt demonstrates how modernity does violence unto others and unto itself, how it regresses as it progresses, and how, in Adorno’s words, “The old has refuge only at the vanguard of the new” (Aesthetic 22). Such is the sociedad secreta. Privileging the “threat” of modernity over its “promise,” Arlt shows its greatness to be nothing less

than the perpetuation of a great crime, committed at the expense of so many and at the advantage of so few. The violence of this crime still reverberates throughout Latin America, and the rest of the world, today. Paul de Man says that “after Nietzsche [...] we can no longer hope ever to know ‘in peace’ [...]” (126). If the same can be said of Arlt – and it can – it is indeed because he is so terribly modern.

All the same, Arlt’s works are also exceedingly prophetic, written as if they were of and from the future.^[16] Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas forecast the extreme violence, the state-based terrorism, and the crimes against humanity effectuated in the name of a greater and more modern society that was to come in Argentina, particularly during the Década Infame, and, again, in the rest of the modern world. To this end, the Astrólogo sincerely (and not so secretly) admires the violent ways of a Mussolini or a Lenin, just as he prognosticates the actions of an Urriburu: these totalitarian proclivities are the means to and the ends of power, which in this instance means a tyrannical power over others. Modernity did not stop with the Década Infame, nor with the great totalitarian regimes of the 20th Century. Rather, it reached its apotheosis. And its nadir. This is not to say that modernity is itself altogether terrible. Among other things, it produced great writers, such as Roberto Arlt.

Unlike the real life autocrats admired, unlike what was historically to come, the characters in Arlt’s novels are all talk when it comes to the sociedad secreta. This does not mean that this talk is bereft of a certain force of influence. And perhaps this is Arlt’s ultimate aim, and perhaps it his own Nietzschean perhaps: to wit, to provoke with fiction. As Piglia advances: to explore the power of fiction upon reality and untruth upon truth (Crítica 24). But, really, who is to say? Needless to say, the Astrólogo always has something to say, and here he echoes despots past, present, and future: “¿Como podemos hacer la revolución sin fusilar a nadie? [...] Todo esto es una locura posible. [...] Éste es un país de bestias. Hay que fusilar. Es lo indispensable. Sólo sembrando el terror nos respetarán” (Siete 208, 216). These are the very “terroristic” tendencies alluded to by Masotta that

serve to undermine the “subversive” potential of the sociedad secreta. This is not anarchism, but rather fascism based terrorism. This is not beyond good and evil, but monstrous. And what good is what is subversive if it ends up not just limiting freedom but also annihilating the possible vessels of freedom that are human beings? What good is the Astrólogo if these are his aims? Who knows? Perhaps Arlt wants us to see the danger and the love, the good, the evil, and the beyond in the Astrólogo, in his promise, in his threats – and, thus, again, the “threat in the promise itself” (Rogues 82, emphasis in original).

Nevertheless, as it is with all of Arlt’s characters and concepts, the Astrólogo and his concepts are essentially mixed up, expressive of opposing principles and sensations. In the same conversation cited above, the Astrólogo also tenders forth the following:

“Quiero a la humanidad. Los quiero a todos como si todos estuvieran atados a mi corazón con un hilo fino. Y por ese hilo se llevan mi sangre, mi vida, y sin embargo, a pesar de todo, hay tanta vida en mí, que quisiera que fueran muchos más millones para quererlos más aún y regalarles mi vida. Sí, regalársela como un cigarrillo. Ahora me explico el Cristo.” (Siete 214)

The Astrólogo wants to love and kill, give away banal gifts to potential friends and “exterminate the brutes.” He is a nihilist, a humanitarian, a Christ-like figure, the anti-Christ, a demagogue, a prophet, a rogue, a creator, and a destroyer – which is to say that, if the Astrólogo is indeed Arlt’s greatest creation, it is precisely because he is by all means all too human.

At the end of Los lanzallamas, the Astrólogo explains his own creative motives, his secret desires for humanity and the secret society, as follows:

“Aunque todo en nosotros estuviera contra la sociedad secreta, debemos organizarla. Yo no insisto que debe ser en esta o aquella forma, pero a toda costa hay que infiltrarla en la humanidad. ¿Se dan cuenta de qué hipócrita es uno? Digo infiltrarla cuando debería decir: ‘Debemos hacer que resplandezca nuevamente una sociedad o una orden cuyo único y rabioso fin sea la busca de la felicidad.’” (203)

The Astrólogo thereby transmutes, or, transvalues his fiery monologues that advocate sweeping, violent, homicidal changes into a joyful infiltration – a shining, a spark. He knows that sparks start fires in the first place, and that a fire in the mind is not easily extinguished.

Ultimately, the Astrólogo, like Arlt, like Nietzsche, cannot be so easily categorized and read. It is impossible to settle on just one side or the other. Yet, the impossibility of producing a sound reading is all the more reason why creative readings of discordant thinkers such as Nietzsche and Arlt are absolutely necessary. One must fight fire with fire. Resistance needs resisting. The impossible necessarily conditions the possible. The impossible is the existing pre-condition of the possible. In other words, it is impossible to say everything there is to say about Nietzsche. It is impossible to say everything there is to say about Arlt. Each time a point is made, each time a reading is produced, it inevitably encounters a counterpoint, a counterreading. This countering is countered in turn – and delirium prevails. That being the case – our case – these countless encounters of counters are the critical forces and the violent powers of reading and writing, thinking and living, truth and fiction.

Notes

^[1] In the early 20th Century, Nietzsche was seemingly required reading for all Latin American intellectuals. As the son of European immigrants who spoke mostly German in the home, Nietzsche may have been required reading for the young Arlt as well (Saint Sauveur-Henn 23). Indeed, it is said that Arlt's mother once met Nietzsche and was obsessed with him for the rest of her life (Close 5).

^[2] Taken together with Arlt's first novel, El juguete rabioso (1925), these three novels form a trilogy of sorts, at least when critically treated. El juguete rabioso does not contain the same characters as the other two novels, however, and Los lanzallamas (1931) explicitly functions as the sequel to Los siete locos (1929). While this essay focuses on the two later novels, references will be made to Arlt's first novel as well.

^[3] In his monograph, Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze explicates the non-dialectical nature of Nietzsche's thought as follows: "In Nietzsche the essential relation of one force to another is never conceived of as a negative element in the essence. [...] The negative is a product of existence itself: the aggression necessarily linked to an active existence, the aggression of an affirmation. [...] For the speculative element of negation, opposition, or contradiction Nietzsche substitutes the practical element of difference, the object of affirmation and enjoyment" (8-9, emphasis in original). In Nietzsche, and likewise in Arlt, this can mean "aggressively affirming" and taking joy in such "negative" forces as exploitation, misanthropy, violence, and betrayal.

^[4] Deleuze discusses elsewhere the way he incorporates other philosophers into his own writings by saying, “I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous” (“Letter” 6). Without doubt, Arlt does this very thing to Nietzsche. Apropos of Nietzsche, Deleuze also says, “you just can’t deal with him in the same sort of way. He gets up to all sorts of things behind your back” (“Letter” 6, emphasis in original). Blanchot himself speaks of “the courageous, inflexible ‘Even so...,’ to the bravery that pushes away all guarantees” that characterizes Nietzsche (295). And Jacques Derrida speaks of the Nietzschean “perhaps” as a “promise: “The promise promises in that fundamental mode of ‘perhaps,’ and even the ‘dangerous perhaps’ which will open, as Beyond Good and Evil prophesies, the speech of philosophers to come” (Politics 29-30). Arlt, too, is one of these “monstrous” “philosophers to come,” a philosopher of the “‘perhaps,’” the “‘dangerous perhaps,’” and the “‘Even so...’”

^[5] As Bernal Herrera points out, it perhaps matters less what Arlt’s works mean and more how they operate as critical texts: “A un debilitamiento de la función sentido del lenguaje suele corresponder un incremento de la función fuerza, incremento que la retórica en general, y muy particularmente la retórica política, siempre afanada por potenciar su capacidad persuasiva, luchan por maximar” (203). Alan Pauls, meanwhile, makes a similar argument and connects this notion of language’s potential forcefulness directly to Nietzsche: “Con Nietzsche, a quien no ignoraba, Arlt parece gritar: si quieren saber qué quiero decir, encuentren la fuerza que le da un sentido” (261).

^[6] Accordingly, Francine Masiello states, “Arlt anuncia que todo acto se encuentra enclavado en relaciones de poder, como discursos que compiten, organizando las elecciones del hombre o negando su potencial libertad” (210).

^[7] In his “Critique of Violence,” Walter Benjamin critiques – without affirming – this Darwinian model, “which,” as he argues, “in a thoroughly dogmatic manner, regards violence as the only original means, besides natural selection, appropriate to all the vital ends of nature” (278). This critique could perhaps be read as a critique of Nietzsche.

^[8] I am here reappropriating a famous Taoist adage. I do so because Nietzsche does the same in Thus Spoke Zarathustra: “‘This – is now my way: where is yours? Thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For the way – does not exist!” (213, emphasis in original).

^[9] The same can be said of Glen S. Close’s nevertheless valuable study, La imprenta enterrada: Baroja, Arlt y el imaginario anarquista, which presents Arlt and his works as representing anarchist theories and practices. Like Pauls and Masotta, Close is not wrong in his assessment. However, by reducing Arlt to an anarchist Close potentially ignores everything else that he is. To his credit, Close’s analysis is more nuanced. His definition of novelistic anarchism – “the radical affirmation of individual sovereignty as a response to a pronounced social alienation” – allows for this (24).

^[10] Although the ostensible protagonist of Los siete locos and Los lanzallamas is a character named Remo Augusto Erdosain, the Astrólogo has his own story as well. Piglia therefore argues that there really exist two novels within these two novels: “está la novela de Erdosain y está la novela del Astrólogo. [...] La novela del Astrólogo, que para mí es la obra maestra de Arlt, trabaja sobre los mundos posibles: sobre la posibilidad que tiene la ficción de transmutar la realidad. Los siete locos

cuenta el proyecto del Astrólogo de construir una ficción que actúe y produzca efectos en la realidad. ¿Cuál es el poder de la ficción? El texto se pregunta esto todo el tiempo” (Crítica 24).

^[11] Pauls speaks to this machine-like forcefulness, arguing that Arlt’s works ultimately work as “a literary machine”: “Lo que está en juego es, en verdad, toda una concepción de la literatura. [...] La literatura como máquina no es una cuestión de sentidos, sino de funcionamientos” (252).

^[12] With respect to the political nature of Arlt’s oeuvre, Piglia asserts: “Si se piensa en Roberto Arlt, se ve que Arlt es la verdadera literatura política. Un tipo que nunca hablaba de Yrigoyen, que nunca hablaba de lo que estaba pensando. Y en su tiempo había, claro, muchos otros que estaban escribiendo novelas simultáneamente con él, que hablaban de las huelgas y de los conflictos y de los contenidos inmediatos; pero fue Arlt que captó el núcleo secreto de la política argentina, y escribió una novela que se lee hoy y parece que se escribió ayer. Eso es la literatura política. Eso es la ficción política. Capta el núcleo de una sociedad.” (Crítica 114-15).

^[13] In Rogues. Two Essays on Reason, Derrida speaks to a kind of political organization that he calls an etat voyou or a voyoucracy, that is, a rogue state or a rogueocracy. In no uncertain terms, Derrida’s analysis regarding voyou and voyoucracy accords with our present analysis of Arlt, the Astrólogo, and the sociedad secreta: “Voyoucracy is [...] an illegal and outlaw power that brings together into a voyoucratic regime, and thus into an organized and more or less clandestine form, into a virtual state, all those who represent a principle of disorder—a principle not of anarchic chaos but of structured disorder, so to speak, of plotting and conspiracy of premeditated offensiveness of offenses against public order. Indeed, of terrorism, it will be said [...]. It is the principle of disorder as a sort of substitute order (a bit like a secret society [...]) (66, emphasis added).

^[14] Herrera points out that this confusion and conflation of truth, farce, and insanity marks Arlt’s entire literary output: “preguntarse por las ‘auténticas’ intenciones y creencias del Astrólogo no sólo es un problema insoluble sino [...] falso. [...] Por lo demás, abundan en Arlt ejemplos de esta imposibilidad de distinguir la comedia de lo serio, la farsa de la verdad” (164). Paul de Man characterizes Nietzsche’s means of critique in a similar way: “This critique is not conducted in the tone and by means of the arguments usually associated with classical critical philosophy. It is often carried out by means of such pragmatic and demagogical value-oppositions as weakness and strength, disease and health, herd and the ‘happy few,’ terms so arbitrarily valorized that it becomes difficult to take them seriously” (119).

^[15] Bruno Bosteels does not say this about Arlt directly, but rather says it with regards to his reading of Piglia’s novella about Arlt, Nombre falso, in which Piglia writes a story titled “Luba” that he attributes to Arlt, which, in fact, Arlt never actually wrote, but which, within the story, becomes misattributed to someone else entirely (2003). Another critic, Ellen McCracken, notes that, here, Piglia, in an Arltian act, has actually stolen “Luba” from another writer himself. McCracken calls this practice “metaplagiarism,” and it “calls into question the concept of literary private property” (1072). Bosteels’ article also explores the concept of private property (literary and otherwise) vis-à-vis Piglia vis-à-vis Arlt.

^[6] Hence, Idelber Avelar claims, albeit in an article about Piglia, that “Arlt anticipa la postmodernidad al señalar la faz dictatorial de la utopía moderna del orden, epitomizada en el discurso del Astrólogo” (421, emphasis added).

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