

David Viñas's Theory of Grotesco and the Glocal Scene of Habitus Production

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The Argentine critic and author David Viñas begins his study of *grotesco criollo* and the genre's most representative playwright, Armando Discépolo, with the following sentence: "The grotesco appears as the interiorization of *sainete*."¹ Here, Viñas relates two popular theatrical forms that filled the River Plate stages of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The popularity of these genres roughly follows the destiny of the country's immigrants as well as historical and political changes brought by Argentina's incorporation into the global markets. The building of the railroads and the export production of meats and cereals contributed to the modernization and growth of Buenos Aires as a port city. The *sainete criollo*, though derived from the Spanish *sainete* and *zarzuela*, evolved before the turn of the twentieth century into a popular and native expression in a city where the culture of new immigrants and criollos (Creoles) clashed. The *Sainete criollo* marked the full commercialization (and later, nationalization) of theatre in the region with melodramas that were often accompanied by tango music. They staged the frictional and comic encounter between criollos and new working-class immigrants in the *patio* or shared space of the *conventillo* [multifamily dwelling]. The function of translating the comic and picturesque of the Spanish *sainete* into a local genre fell on the early authors of *sainete criollo* like Nemesio Trejo, author of (*los políticos* [*The Politicians*] (1897), who transposed the comic situations of the peninsular genre onto the local settings of Buenos Aires suburbs, while populating it with local immigrant types. Meanwhile, authors like Carlos Mauricio Pacheco (*Los disfrazados* [*The Masked Men*], 1906) gave the genre a tragicomic inflection absent in the Spanish version by bringing precision to situations and stereotypes that corresponded to the actual struggles and conflicts of Buenos Aires. In later *sainetes*, we already see a movement towards the individualization of the characters and the representation of internal conflict. Alberto Vacarezza, on his part, contributes to the nationalization but also commercialization of the genre with the use of the *lunfardo* slang.

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Grotesco criollo grew out of the sainete criollo at a time when second generation immigrants had begun to assert their national identity and a growing middle class was helping to move the country to a more populist and nationalistic politics. Armando Discépolo writes the first so named “grotesco” in 1923 with the play *Mateo*. In part inspired by the Italian *grottesco* of Luigi Chiarelli and Luigi Pirandello, Discépolo’s grotescos, like *Stefano* (1928) and *Relojero* (1934), balance the stereotypical conventions of sainete with an emphasis on tragicomic elements and a dramatic line that ends in an unmasking of reality. Discépolo transformed the sainete’s treatment of the immigrant type by focusing on a single maladaptive protagonist and his introspective and failed attempt to gain a sense of assimilation and success. This psychological interiorization was matched in grotesco by the new interior setting of the private dwelling, and by an acting style that put in evidence the contradiction between subjectivity and objective reality. Other authors, like De Filippis Novoa (*He visto a Dios*, 1930), followed the line initiated by the “Discepolean” grotesco.²

Viñas adds an important qualification regarding the relationship between sainete and grotesco when affirming that “the grotesco is the superior form of the content of the inferior form that sainete, in this case, represents.” This valorization of grotesco has been shared by later Argentine critics like Osvaldo Pellettieri, who recognize in grotesco a genuine national tradition, and by foreign critics, like Claudia Kaiser Lenoir, who try to internationalize the value of the genre by contextualizing it within wider avant-garde traditions represented by Brechtian political theatre.³ These critics favor an eclectic approach mixing genre theories oriented towards Europe and references to expressionism, Italian grottesco, semiology, and Brechtian dialectics. In contrast, Viñas’s study has the distinction of focusing exclusively on the cultural, social, and political developments of Argentina and, more specifically, of the city of Buenos Aires. Viñas’s study has also contributed to a reassessment of the genre as a local form whose innovations have affected the local avant-garde(s) until today. But rather than revisit Viñas’s role within what Jean Graham-Jones describes as a “long-standing discussion regarding the ‘origins’ of Argentina’s theatrical grotesque,” I will analyze how his study of grotesco from the context of sainete shows these practices as corresponding to moments of consent or revolt vis-à-vis the new urban experience.⁴

Viñas, who is well known in Argentina as a Marxist intellectual influenced by existentialism, is interested in the relationship between ideology and cultural practice; local theatrical genres concern him because they expressed the (political) consensus that allowed for a historical experience of city and nation in the early twentieth century.⁵ He thus shows sainete to be a genre that located the city at a periphery of modernity mapped with the help of the immigrant experience, itself represented in the newly commercialized stages. More importantly, Viñas makes a significant theoretical contribution to the understanding of theatre as cultural and

social practice in the context of a global modernity.

Viñas maps the modernity of the genre by pointing to the transformation of space in the grotesco criollo from contradictions with roots in a transcontinental historical narrative. It concerns the destiny of the immigrant who has been interpellated by the local oligarchy (i.e., called to the new land in order to participate in a project of “making America” [hacer la América]) through the possession of land. The grotesco play reminds the audience of this narrative with the figure of the father and protagonist who has dragged his family to the new country in search of a better life. It shows how the “American dream” ends up in a frustrated insertion into a middle class of small merchants, trying to survive in a capitalist urban environment. In this way, the grotesco plot puts the immigrant subject within a narrative of failure suffered by the elder and from which the sons rebel. Within his own household, the protagonist acts as a proprietor, signifying his “lack of participation in the land as concrete prolongation of his body.”⁶ The oppressive rule of the father over his household is, therefore, a compensatory act that compresses space in order to deal with the contradictions of his own embodiment of the American dream. Indeed, in very literal, physical, and material ways, the compensatory act seems to be at the root of his self-imprisonment in a space that renders him theatrical; in a very “real” way, he is condemned to being theatrical.

The figure of rehearsal in *El organito* [*The Little Organ*] (1922), a proto-grotesco by Armando Discépolo, illustrates the doubling of theatricality in a movement from an “outside” to the “inside”. Saverio, the organ player, is a father who has dragged his family with him to beg in the streets. The tragicomic picturesque of peddlers shown publicly as “the merchandise that will bring profit” is transformed when the business fails. Saverio decides to “fire” his own family and rehearse the unreliable Felipe for a more promising act.⁷ The rehearsal is this time a self-conscious repetition of the previous theatrical condition of amputated beggars showing themselves for a penny. By choosing to deal with contradiction *inside*, the rehearsal marks the point of internalization that Viñas defines in relation to the passage from sainete to grotesco. The protagonist thus comes to occupy what Lefebvre identifies as the “interstice” of representational space, “between the Ego-seeking-to-constitute-itself and its body.”⁸

In what follows, I will introduce the sainete genre and then focus on Viñas’s use of the notion of interiorization (of sainete) in order to illuminate how he maps the practice of the grotesco within both local and global contexts.

From the turn of the twentieth century, the suburbs of Buenos Aires, where the new population of immigrants was concentrated, became emblematic of the urban environment. This was a time when massive immigration changed the demographic balance of the country, which used to be predominantly Creole, to become more European. The new urban environment became a place where a national identity still in formation was consolidated. One may speak of the city’s monumentality

(and, more specifically, of its suburbs) in Henri Lefebvre's sense of describing how its architectural environment conditioned a set of collective affective responses that were tantamount to consensus. This relationship between collectivity and environment has a particular history on the sainete stage, where disparate immigrant types met in the single setting of the tenement building patio or conventillo.

The sainete criollo was popularized as a humorous musical play mixing melodramatic elements with the "tragic ridicule of every day, deformed by caricature."⁹ The saines made a spectacle of the various nationalities and dialects seen and heard in the city, while representing a spectrum of urban character types. A world of vendors, clerks, opportunists, drunkards, petty criminals, and lovers was the comic background for a conflict of passion, jealousy, and revenge resolved with poetic and legal justice.¹⁰ In this context, the social reorganization and the significance of the urban experience that immigration, the new markets, and the capitalization of the city brought are reflected in the sainete, in its quasi-public settings, immigrant characters, and comic melodramatic plots. The sainete becomes then, for Viñas, the main site of observation of the process of interiorization (towards the grotesco) whose tracing reveals the growing contradictions of the sainete genre as the frictions between identities of immigration, nation, and modernity intensify.

Viñas's repeated use of metaphors like interiorization, condensation, and coagulation reflects not a dialectical method (as could be suggested by his implication of grotesco's qualitative jump) but a genealogical tracing that follows an implosive, entropic movement towards the point and place where the local and global natures of the genres in question coincide. His theory is itself a journey of interiorization that cuts across various levels of cultural production in order to reach the uneasy consensus that forms the locality of its forms. Viñas thus works against the notion of the culture as a coexistence of "universals" (more on this later) in conflict or negotiation. Instead, interiorization leads from the sainete to the grotesco, and this last grows from within the sainete in such a way that Viñas can affirm that "spinning around themselves, the characters in Armando Discépolo's plays embody the grotesco as the *illness* of the sainete, their peculiar 'interiorization' dramatizes the sole possibility of surviving unlivable situations."¹¹ In *Stéfano*, a play considered today a "classic" grotesco, the protagonist is an immigrant musician with high artistic ambitions of becoming a composer. He comes to a realization of his absolute failure as he struggles to maintain his family while working in a local band. The more he confronts his mediocre destiny, the more he feels the burden of the family. The household becomes the interior and internal site where social bonds and the immigrant's dreams come into conflict, leading to a break in familial feelings. Stefano's self-ostracizing allows him to survive by repositioning his struggle in self-referencing terms. In the words of Stéfano, the reality of his own struggle for a future "has passed, it has concluded, and [it has] not begun."¹² The sense of inertia expressed by the character reflects how the grotesco slows the

sainete's impulse towards representation until it finally stops, coagulating so that the "scene" of representation and its materials become visible. Therefore, according to Viñas, the grotesco itself, as crafted by Discépolo, is a deconstructive practice that operates towards the history of the period, going from the 1910s to the early 1930s, and reveals both an immigrant narrative and an inter-generational contradiction.

I will continue my own theoretical re-articulation of Viñas's study by examining how notions of space are relevant to the way he reveals the grotesco's appropriation and rejection of the theatrical form that gave it shape. For instance, the contrast made between the public setting in the sainete plays and the private one in grotesco enables him to document not a change of practice but the process involved in this change; in this case, the process of interiorization that transforms a public space into a private one. In the sainete, the setting is the overcrowded tenement patio, a space shared by a melting pot of Italian, Spaniard, and other poor European immigrants. In the grotesco we re-encounter the Italian immigrant (who outnumbered all other nationalities in the sainete); but this time he "turns his back" on the dialogic space of the patios and retires into the monological privacy of the household. This results in a contraction of the "essential scenography" of the patio and a "compression" that transforms the spatial coordinates from those of the city and its objectified inhabitants to the vertical measure of a "fall" into a dangerous moral inertia. Thus Stéfano's humanity disintegrates on the stage as we see him die, clumsily tripping on the furniture while imitating a goat, as if he were a sacrificial animal.

In the sainete we see a space where the "gesture of capital is consummation" while grotesco at the other, interiorized, end creates a "careful hoarding."¹³ The process of this transformation from the scenographic social space of the patio to that of the confined household reveals the production of the modern space of an accented individualism, sustained by the pressures of a social Darwinian ideology, that was being used by liberals and nationalists to both legitimize the experience of the city and delegitimize the urban immigrant. The spatial reference is gradually reduced as focus shifts from the epic spaces of the street and factory towards the domesticity of the artisan and the household. This movement corresponds to an increased susceptibility (provoked by the economic failure of middle-class immigrants) to the Darwinian "polemic between the weak and the strong: between the 'unhappy' and the adapted 'conscience,' between the one who 'lives apart' and the one who installs himself as yet another fact 'among the rituals of consent'." Spatial compression corresponds to the new perception of the modern space of individualism, a space that appears to be necessarily fractured and unstable, enacting a constant back-and-forth between the assumption of one's weakness and one's "strong" project of recuperation and adaptability.¹⁴ What is especially provocative and worth elucidating here is Viñas's understanding of a historical individualism (revealed in the grotesco genre) as arising from the "fall" of failure.

I'd like to follow here Lefebvre's axiom that "social space is a social product"

in order to insert Viñas's ideas about the theatrical spaces of sainete and grotesco "into the context of what is generally known as 'history,' which will consequently itself emerge in a new light."¹⁵ For Lefebvre, a reconsideration of space is motivated by a need to compensate for the illusions of "transparency" and "realism" that inform our apprehension of history. Lefebvre's warning against a view of space as a transparent site, where mental activity and invention are finally materialized, can easily be applied to the theatre and its "transparent" deployment of motivation, conflict, and action by "live" performers on a "tangible" stage. Likewise, the illusion of "realism," mentioned by Lefebvre, will refer, in the theatrical context, to my view of the performance as form, shaped by the unity of plot, the materiality of the stage's site, the fleshy bodies seen as moving organisms, and the relative density of theatrical elements like stage, scenery, and props as well as words, lights, and music. Alternately, what makes theatre such a productive site for an exploration of (social) space is its accentuated dependence on these illusions and, by the same token, its potential for challenging them. A relation of dependence and challenge is precisely what makes the simultaneous practice of sainete and grotesco in the 1920s such a fascinating locus, one that could be called metatheatrical. For Viñas, the grotesco is a text and performance that grows out of and in counterpoint to the practice of sainete, sometimes, as he notes it himself, in the same theatre, with the same actors and the same spectators. However, such a relationship must be described as a process and should also consider, as Lefebvre reminds us, that "for it to occur, it is necessary (and this necessity is precisely what has to be explained) for the society's practical capabilities and sovereign powers to have at its disposal special places."¹⁶ The theatre space, in other words, must be viewed as a place built and put "aside" by the representatives of social/cultural power. Theatre, in this context, allows for a production of space that supports institutions of power as well as society's main mode of production.

Viñas connects the "production" of grotesco to the historical context of the 1920s, which mark

the apex of the patios of Vacarezza [an author of sainetes] as frame of reference to the grotesco of Armando Discepolo. But within these same chronological points of reference one can read, at the general political level, the period that goes from Versailles to the crash of 1929. What at the national level implies the prolongation . . . of the closing of importations . . . that results in the intensification of the national industry spanning from chocolate candies to the national theatre.¹⁷

The theatre space, marked in Viñas's quote as part of a space of production or re-production of the national, redefines the nation's boundaries vis-à-vis the global

context. From the point of view of the lower and middle classes who consumed national products and attended in masses the popular and commercialized theatres of Buenos Aires, the sainete reflected the consolidation of a public space where a new Argentine identity formed around an optimistic model of social mobility within the city. This public space demanded a gradual institutionalization of popular expressions marked by the passage from the carnival circus to the specifically theatrical.¹⁸ The process of transculturation, by which native forms were being asserted, had to give way in the end to commercial pressures and the ensuing “nativization” of European conventions like the fourth wall.¹⁹ Thus, the sainete asserted Buenos Aires’s peripheral modernity at the same time that it followed global trends. In this new theatrical space, the playwright became responsible for translating his observations of a new urban life into theatrical language.

The figure of the immigrant and the iconic conventillo setting represent two sites of conflict and negotiation regarding Argentine national identity—the city versus the rural and the immigrant versus the native criollo. The historical need for or imperative of consensus explains the carnivalesque form and specific theatricality of sainete and, later, of grotesco. Carlos Mauricio Pacheco’s sainete, *Los disfrazados*, for example, puts in relief the tension between the city’s criollo and immigrant identities against the background of a carnival. The opposition between the idealized disguises of rural gaucho and European count in turn naturalizes a space already populated by lower class criollo and immigrant stereotypes.²⁰ A brief historical overview of the role of immigration in Argentine politics will contextualize the need for a negotiation of identity.

Argentina’s nineteenth-century political leaders promoted European immigration as a strategy of modernization intended to give the country a racial identity congruent with economically and culturally advanced countries of the north.²¹ Consequently, a huge wave of immigrants arrived in the 1860s and became a political and ideological force in the national imaginary.²² The enormous influx of (predominantly Italian) foreigners, mainly to Buenos Aires, proved the success of government policies. In contrast, the lower class component of these masses of immigrants disappointed the cultural ambitions of the elite. This provoked a kind of ideological reversal initiated by the rural elite in order to protect their gains from immigrant labor. Mico Seigel notes that

as the spread of capitalism transformed gauchos into wage laborers, the figure of the gaucho began to be romanticized in memory and its extinction nostalgically mourned. Nostalgic praise and contempt fit hand-in-hand as a modernizing elite attempted to mold the gaucho-as-icon into an ideological weapon.²³

The figure of the gaucho became, from the elite's perspective, an ideological means to negotiate a new Argentine national identity in the face of drastic cultural and political changes brought about by industrialization, capitalist competition, and immigration.²⁴ As historian Donald Castro explains, the oligarchy, who felt displaced by a "foreign" urban culture, fostered a nationalist ideology, and "Argentinism" founded itself on the rescue of "Creole" values.²⁵ In this context, a notion of Argentine spiritual purity, as symbolized by an idealized image of the gaucho cowboy of the pampas plains, was made to contrast with the impurity of urban immigrants' concern for material survival.²⁶ The popular theatrical entertainments of the time reflect how this ideology played in the space of the city where native "Creoles" and the immigrant majority competed for recognition.

The phenomenal clash between the demographic reality of immigration and the ideology of "Argentineness," as mediated by the iconic figure of the rural gaucho, resulted in the carnivalization and theatricalization of the urban type.²⁷ In the sainete, the theatricality of immigrant types, emphasized by caricature and the contrast of dialects, mediated the ongoing negotiation of a new Argentine identity. On the stage, this negotiation demanded a self-conscious assertion of the characters' inhabiting of a theatricalized space. Therefore, a genre that staged characters who produced the tragicomic by ridiculing each other and indulging in the pathetic became a means for an appropriation of the urban space when this last became institutionalized.

The theatre historian Luís Ordaz offers a telling description of how the relationship between character and environment was perceived as the sainete became more institutionalized. Ordaz writes that

the city and its suburbs [become] an immense stage on which each and every person performed, in his everyday life, his role in the sainete manner. There was a time when, in a similar way, our theatre became a permanent tenement building patio, like the settings in the sainete, as if our authors were aware only of that environment within the changing and complex reality of the country.²⁸

There was a moment where the sainete setting coincided with the monumentality of the city and its suburbs in the eyes of the immigrants. This meant that the immigrants would recognize themselves in the sainete characters, even while they tended to be caricatures. If the immigrant willingly seems to play "his role in the sainete manner," it is because sainete represented an urban entertainment practice that responded to a consensual need of the population to insert itself in a commercial modernity, promoting the "materialism" of the new capitalist mode. As expressed by Viñas, "the market, understood as a space of the concrete, had grown wider with the incorporation of new sectors of society whose desire was anchored in the need

to feel *recognized*: of seeing their experiences reflected on the stage.”²⁹

There was a relationship between the world of the sainete and the real experiences of immigrants in the city. Donald Castro notes, for instance, that while Creoles, blacks, mestizos, and immigrants (the latter also known as “gringos”) are stereotyped, they are “described in a context of conflict” that mirrors society’s “values in the changing class structure of Buenos Aires between 1880 and 1930.”³⁰ Therefore, the democratic spirit of sainete resides in the way the stereotypes can be equally included in the tragicomic vignettes of urban life—it allows the immigrants, in other words, to feel included in a public space where daily struggle is visible to all and accepted as part of the urban experience. In this context, the tenement patio of the conventillo, in the sainetes, reproduces Buenos Aires’s monumentality in the sense of a correspondence between the ideological needs of the inhabitants and the architectural environment. The conventillo’s monumentality, in turn, consists of its ability to frame as picturesque a multiplicity of urban types and, at the same time, characterize the melting pot as realistic.

Ordáz describes the second moment of sainete, wherein the genre becomes a convention that does not correspond to a changing reality, nor, one may add, with the changing “monumental” effects of the city environment. This occurs when the tenement-patio setting, instead of being a democratic site where all urban types are recognized, becomes merely a background for the negotiation of a new Argentine identity. In this second moment, the abstraction of the city space becomes apparent. It requires an introspective movement, by which characters attempt to separate their self-knowledge from the specular knowledge of them by others (their “being seen”). This means that they have to acknowledge the mask created by the author of sainete. In early sainetes, like Carlos Mauricio Pacheco’s *Los disfrazados* [*The Masked Men*] (1906), for example, the character of Andrés, a criollo who refuses to wear a disguise during the carnival because he wears one in life, is invested in his “being seen” and therefore accepts his own theatricality. The character’s self-consciousness allows him to appropriate the theatricality of the carnival, where criollos and immigrants mingle, for himself: his own “Argentineness” is taken as a mask, by which he can now playfully both conceal his drinking habit (and therefore his own inadequacy as a representation of Argentineness) and suggest his Argentineness (Andrés brags of having participated in a few national revolutions).³¹ Later sainetes develop a different logic in their theatricality. In Alejandro Berrutti’s play, *Tres personajes a la pesca de un autor* [*Three Characters Fishing for an Author*] (1927), for example, the sainete is marked metatheatrically in the first act with an actual rehearsal of a play where an actor takes on the character of Pascual, a jealous Italian type who is victim of a comic intrigue. In the second act, the “real” Pascual appears, whose looks and temperament match the first actor’s interpretation, to protest that the play has dishonored him. Pascual accuses the sainete authors of a lack of originality, since they copy “a Galician store owner, a

guard from the province, a Catalan cabdriver; [and] bring them together to argue in a pub [in order to] end up with a sainete.”³² Here the irony of the second moment of sainete comes from the theatricality of the space where foreigners are brought together. It is the “foreignness” of the characters that appears to justify the creation of a “stage” from which Pascual would like to be removed. In *Three Characters*, the play-within-the-play’s staginess is outdone by the real Pascual who explains that his exaggerated, jealous temper is itself a façade for his own unfaithfulness. Pascual helps the author rewrite the play to match reality and thus inserts his own anxiety and self-defensiveness about the illusions of theatre on the sainete stage.

The appropriation of this space is therefore more ambiguous because of the level of assimilation or integration felt by actual immigrants in the late 1920s. In other words, immigrants had less need to confirm their inclusion in the city. Therefore, there had to be a new consensus that kept audiences coming to the sainete performances. Here Viñas’s perspective comes to the rescue for he sees the grotesco as the representation of a collective conscience or consensus that the practice of sainete keeps repressed. I suggest that this representation needs interiorization because it is the perception of a socially produced imprisonment.

The process of interiorization can then be understood as akin to Foucault’s internalization of discipline and punishment. Viñas describes it as a change of emphasis from the “components of the social and the group to the individuals.” He recognizes this process in the grotesco’s “transit from History to the Spirit, from the contract to solitude, from the colloquy to disintegration, from agreement to self-defensiveness”³³—that is, from the certainties afforded by reality and history, to the uncertainty provoked by the threats of illusion (a threat felt by Pascual in the sainete *Tres personajes*, for instance).

At the same time, the existence of theatres as monuments, habitats, and sacred and public spaces suggests a texture in abstract space that invites appropriation. Lefebvre suggests that such appropriation entails gestures of both affirmation and negation:

Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors. . . . This pre-existence of space conditions the subject’s presence, action and discourse [which,] at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it. . . . Thus the texture of space affords opportunities not only to social acts . . . but also to a spatial practice, . . . a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice.³⁴

Thus, interiorization may mean a form of self-examination that reveals both affirmation and negation of space. In grotesco, the characters test the

correspondence of their gestures with reality, while the unconscious fear of living an illusion provokes a “controlled regression, . . . accented as privacy, resolved as marginalization, and celebrated as exceptionality.”³⁵ This process of individuation could be called a process of *mise-en-scène*, whereas the disintegration of sociality is assumed by the guilt of the individual who, by seeking to find “his place,” ends up putting himself in place. Lefebvre’s notion of a pre-existence of social space that conditions a spatial practice thus allows me to place Viñas’s psychological description of the grotesco aesthetic in the context of a practice of affirmation and negation of space—both of which are needed for the reproduction of the social space embodied by its members. I recognize the *mise-en-scène* (or I should say “*mettre-en-scène*” to indicate the action of placing and emplacement) as a spatial practice in grotesco. Still Viñas remains useful to a spatial-production analysis in that he directs us to the kind of “acts” that embody the *mise-en-scène*.

According to Viñas, the grotesco body loosens the conventional frames that sustained the sainete stereotypes whereas “the three classical moments of exposition, complication, and resolution are transformed in others, more internalized, like aspiration, project, and failure.”³⁶ The narrative line is replaced here by the constant of a desire that falls prey to the very environment that produced it. In the repetition, on the stages of Buenos Aires, of this failed edification of a promising urban reality, Viñas sees the traits of ritual more than representation. In order to understand how the grotesco came into being, one needs therefore to identify the impulse or need that the ritual satisfies. In other words, the qualification of ritual is not enough to describe a spatial practice—I must instead look for the kind of space that is affirmed or negated through the ritual exchange. In emphasizing *mise-en-scène*, I go beyond Viñas’s critical valorization and socio-political contextualization of the genre, and try to enter the perspective of practice and cultural production. Therefore I ask: what does Buenos Aires’s popular theatrical practice gain by putting the grotesco body on the stage? How are the local and global (or glocal) nature of the grotesco affirmed on its “stage” or “scene”?

Before answering these questions, I will show how the second moment of sainete corresponds to the development of a new vernacular in the 1920s, which provoked the perception of the sainete stage as a prison. Viñas sees the new consensus of sainete reflected in the street dialect called *lunfardo*. This homogenizing vernacular reveals the production of the city as a national space. In other words, *lunfardo* is used to assert the nationalization of sainete. *Lunfardo* was the slang of the new generation of the 1920s with roots in the hybrid voices heard in the streets of Buenos Aires. Within the sainete, *lunfardo*’s assimilation contrasted with the alienating theatricality of *cocoliche*, which by that time designated a dramatic metalanguage that mocked the carnivalesque representation of the older Italian immigrant attempting to sound and look Argentine.³⁷ The history of *lunfardo* allows us to trace the production of a different space that coincided with the consolidation of a new national identity.

Viñas, commenting on the active participation of sainetero Alberto Vacarezza in the creation of the lunfardo, notes that this urban populist language was “spoken” by the liberal, populist president Yrigoyen, elected in 1916.³⁸ Yrigoyen was invested in the melting pot spectacle offered by urban immigrants—he refused to view Buenos Aires’s modernity as a clash of competing pressures and favored an organicist perspective.³⁹ In this context, his populism used the new slang of Buenos Aires, born out of diversity, in order to establish the coincidence between the city’s space and national democracy. Yrigoyen needed a space through which he could exploit the ideology of national identity, promulgated by the elites, in his own favor. In this respect, lunfardo could now be nationalized by means of its production of a homogenized “democratic” space. By the time Yrigoyen came to power, sainete participated, with its insistence on public settings, in the institutionalization of democracy as a “national” experience. Meanwhile, the reproduction of lunfardo in the sainete setting acquired its populist perception as a democratic language. This is the second moment of sainete, when language, dominated by lunfardo, took over caricature in the metonymic relationship between character and space. The persistence of the caricature in representation, though, created a tension in the sense that the national space, already being institutionalized by democracy, failed to be properly appropriated by stereotypical characters and melodramatic plots—hence the perception of the theatre as “a permanent conventillo” (as noted by Ordaz).

However, it was precisely this perception of the sainete setting as artificial and theatrical that promoted an experience of this space as a kind of prison—what Foucault calls a “parapenal” space.⁴⁰ The theatricalized space made evident the need of the audience to confirm the authenticity of its own assimilation. This need became all the more urgent when the reality of daily struggle created an ideological tension between a sense of assimilated Argentineness and social failure. Middle class theatre practitioners justified their appropriation of the sainete stage by representing a need to escape this “prison.” The grotesco genre is the result of this production of a new space motivated by the perception of late sainete as parapenal.

The genre of the grotesco criollo, developing at a populist moment in Argentine political life, represents an appropriation of the parapenal space of a nationalized sainete.⁴¹ Viñas describes this change as the transposition of the public and vernacular sainete into the private and textual grotesco. Furthermore, Viñas indicates how lunfardo is itself transformed in the internalized space of the grotesco. In his own words, “the passage, from the lunfardo of the sainete, to the lunfardo of the grotesco, implies . . . the transit from the entertaining mimesis of the picturesque to the expression of a social contradiction.” The movement is from a space that requires outward expression of social hierarchies or levels to one that demands a degree of individual submission to “the materiality of language.” Language becomes, for the grotesco protagonist who must embody it, evidence of contradiction and the expression of ideological crisis. The embodiment of language,

in other words, becomes an opportunity to confront, on the stage, the limits of the character's own discourse in making sense of his failure. The language itself coagulates, ceases to represent—"the lunfardo shapes itself as a kind of baroque." Better yet, the grotesco—to the extent that it bends and painfully distorts with ornamentation—can be interpreted as being "on the baroque side of sainete:" as a plaint, an aggression, a transgression of the 'balance' of the official norm."⁴² The embodiment of contradiction is at the source of grotesco's metatheatrical quality or what I will define as the visible production of a "scenic space." Viñas suggests the glocal nature of this space (i.e., its particular materiality) by looking at the return of a repressed narrative of immigration. In *Stéfano*, most notably, we can map the journey of immigration according to generational differences, from the elder's vision of a European paradise to Stefano's projection of artistic fulfillment as an oceanic adventure and the child's dream of the American continent and Argentine nation as Noah's ark. This map defines an abstract field of action that splits the space of representation between inside and outside. Such a split is evident in Discépolo's *Mateo*, where the horse cabdriver, Miguel, seems to find his material alter ego in the moribund and blind Mateo, the horse of the play's title, whom he uses to compete for fares with the automobiles that have invaded the city.⁴³ The horse's blindness as well as his tired and hurt body represents Miguel's recoiling into a subjective and bodily space produced by a repeated need for recuperation "inside" and reincorporation "outside." The implications of the split are wide and significant, because it challenges the geography of the local and global in relation to modernity and its projects of development and progress. Instead, we encounter an abstract space whose formation is intercontinental and whose new boundaries are expressed in the glocal position of the individual who remains split by outside geographies. In order to regain geographical unity, the individual in grotesco must produce a new scenic space that engages the two theatres of the inside and outside.

The split space of grotesco responds to a utopian impulse that aims at the coincidence between these two theatres or realities.⁴⁴ If all attempts at reincorporation fail, and the protagonist is yanked back into the carceral inside, it is because there is a lack of agreement between inside and outside theatres.⁴⁵ In other words, the protagonist insists that he does see the "world" while the "world" appears to respond as if it doesn't see the "seeing." This is a theatre that awaits a moment of agreement between individual actions and a sort of collective, social "success" or meaning. Within this scenic space we perceive a longing for and belief in what Pierre Bourdieu terms "a logic in action," that is,

the practical sense of a habitus inhabited by the world it inhabits, pre-occupied by the world in which it actively intervenes, in an immediate relationship of involvement, tension and attention, which constructs the world and gives it meaning. . . . He feels at

home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus, a virtue made of necessity which implies a form of love of necessity, amor fati.⁴⁶

Bourdieu conceives the notion of habitus in relation to the meanings of a disposition to repeat certain actions and of an exterior appearance of the body that conditions behavior. Habitus has for Bourdieu a practical, analytical function of avoiding the separation between the internal and external in the analysis of cultural production. It does so by bringing focus on the social and strategic nature of the body's deportment and projection.⁴⁷ The grotesco suggests that the sense of habitus has a historical origin in modernity—in the abstraction produced by geographical splits and internalization. In other words, while Bourdieu uses habitus to describe modern practices, this analysis uses it to describe a symptom of Argentina's modernity.

I believe that the grotesco uses its "intimate" relation to parapenality in order to claim a sense of habitus—a familiarity with the world that connects individual action to the future and Argentine society as a whole. To endure failure and persist in one's delusions is a way to claim one's right to a sense of habitus. The claim of habitus therefore embodies the gestures of affirmation and negation of an abstract space and gives them unity and meaning. The new meaning arises when the character assumes the contradiction within his own body. One of the best actors of the grotesco criollo, Luis Arata, for example, incorporated his own mastery of the sainete caricature, transforming spectacularity into practicality—the mechanicity of the caricature and the intentionality of the protagonist were not in tension but produced a sense of necessity in the character's engagement with the world.⁴⁸ Viñas indicates that the body of the grotesco emerges through the naturalization of the acting, a novel "correspondence between the content and its expression."⁴⁹ Liliana López tells us that Arata worked to suppress the reception of his appearance on stage as a comic star (in the sainete medium) with an effort at "losing his personality."⁵⁰

More specifically, while the characters (e.g., in Discépolo's 1916 proto-grotesco *El movimiento continuo*) attempt to safeguard the empirical manifestation of money by speaking about it and mockingly speculating about that possibility (Viñas notes the mention of a project of inventing a profit-making machine), in the early grotesco *Mustafá* (1921) "it is greediness itself that explodes, . . . acting on its own by its mere presence, even in its silences and uncommunicativeness." The mythification of money historically precedes the grotesco body, yet it runs parallel to the process of internalization. Viñas traces the emergence of the myth in a "circuit of meanings" that reveals the transgression of the norm, this last expressed by the "empirical" notion that "money must be acquired through work." He proceeds:

The [immigrant's] recourse to the immediacy of stealing, which

replaces the day by day tenacity of work . . . becomes poetic when it dematerializes; and when it has no need of the anecdote, the arbitrary becomes dramatically believable. It is transformed into the myth of money.

The myth is now safeguarded in the body of the failed protagonist where “his ailment does not spill over, but is carried within” as a result of internalization. Viñas connects the “internal” acting to a new form of spectatorship, and I want to emphasize here how he relates this to the productive function of the grotesco theatre. He explains that the actor/character’s “control” of his pain facilitates the spectator’s identification through a kind of osmosis of bodies—the character’s “incoherence corresponds with my [the spectator’s] loss of balance . . . his halting of productivity, his ‘fall’ in[to] animalism, incorporates me as ‘pure body’ and as inertia.” This means that the theatrical performance and spectatorship constitute practices where the potential formation of a habitus is transmitted individually from body to body—it projects the pure body as site of habitus. A utopian, that is, irreversible initiation is wished for in this practice, which contrasts with the collective utopia of the immigrant left. In this respect Viñas notes that “the last time that [Discépolo shows] striking workers with unionist discourses is in 1919 in *El Vertigo* . . . after which the collective presence of the proletariat will dissolve itself . . . as will, consequently, the spatiality of the factory.”⁵¹ The national consensus reflected in this theatre is therefore moving away from the modern utopia of the left, towards the individualist utopia supported by habitus and/or the internalization of the myth of money.

Viñas helps us understand how the narrative of immigration functions as a return of a repressed history, serves as a site of negotiated meaning between the foreign and the national, and presents an identity aware of its location at a peripheral modernity. In relation to a negotiation of national identity, the immigrant becomes, in the grotesco criollo, the material source of Argentine identity in the shape of a pure body; and the incarnation of a Promised Land as the potential of habitus. The immigrant is bound to this land; he inhabits it, and it clothes him with an identity clearly located at a peripheral modernity.⁵² The glocal nature of his modernity is constituted by the grotesco body that accepts the halt of circulation of money towards his (lower middle) class by internalizing the myth of money. A sort of exchange is represented by his gain of a habitus. But the grotesco body also disintegrates space; while it transmits potential habitus to other bodies, it also threatens us with its own inertia. Furthermore, while the grotesco father legitimizes habitus as an individual right, his failure threatens the formation of a collective identity.

In the grotesco, the “national” collective is reified through a narrative element, that is, the generational conflict between the failing father and his sons. This conflict constitutes the ritual aspect of grotesco—its claim to a habitus also

promises the new generation an eventual exit from its own theatricalized space. The father's burden is generally his own family whom he is unable to support. Still, he chooses to trap his family in his own prison in a selfish attempt to complete his own delusional narrative of success. The condition of failure, combined with the generational split, authenticates the struggle as one emanating from Argentine belonging, but one that only the new generation will be able to realize fully. The grotesco character, in other words, expresses a desire for habitus that needs the outside, history, society, and the future in order to project itself; in fact, he needs to escape his own internal "theatre." The audience, as well as the new generation, needs to witness the father's self-destruction to affirm its belief in achieving a sense of habitus. The ritual finally accords a level of practicality and authenticity to the perceived actions of the protagonist. The sacrifice of the father, in this sense, also redeems the outside as a utopian space—a space that exhibits a greater degree of agreement with the habitus of the new generation. In fact, the grotesco protagonist ends up in a U-topia, a non-place or void, as a way to gesture towards utopia, as a place of fullness. Thus, the grotesco immigrant embodies Argentine modernity in a movement of no return. U-topia is the sacrificial stage that redeems the new generation with a sense of its modern Argentine identity.

The gained sense of habitus combined with a utopian projection to an undetermined future creates a transitional space where a sense of empowerment and the possibility of persistent failure coexist. This is possible because it is now the collective space of the national that carries the burden of failure and not the individual, as was the case for the grotesco father. This means that the national is reaffirmed as a democratic space where a fair degree of faith in the negotiations of power at the political level is reflected in each individual's sense of habitus.

In this re-articulation of Viñas's analysis of the grotesco criollo genre, I have attempted to foreground his insertion of a global production of space, in the form of the capitalist city, within the local production of an individualistic space. The theatrical practice of grotesco, mediated by various institutions, including the commercialized theatres of the early nineteenth hundreds, is revealed as a glocal practice of national negotiation. By connecting the process of interiorization formulated by Viñas with Bourdieu's notion of habitus, I call attention to the glocal nature of grotesco performance and spectatorship. This habitus is revealed as a transitional practice whereby individuals and/or nations localize the global capitalist circulation of money and production. From a contemporary "globalized" and "postmodern" perspective, the modern subject always was or is a transitional "project" destined to find its own limits. In this context, Viñas's relation of the corporeality of grotesco to a more "realistic" and psychological acting points to theatre's inside perspective on performance and spectatorship—that is, grotesco's "natural" acting is not a trend or movement but a result of a historical process that the practice makes visible in this case.

This re-articulation of Viñas from the perspective of a production of space intervenes in the philosophical debate about the foundation of the disciplines of theatre studies and performance studies. Martin Puchner, for instance, frames this debate in relation to Burke's exploration of dramatism or reliance on personification which, Puchner argues, "constitutes a limit of theatrical philosophy." Hence "the necessity of thinking the limits of dramatism, which we can take as a point of departure for thinking the limits of performance."⁵³ The implosive movement enacted by a grotesco character already points to the limit of that performance, and the necessity of ritual appears as an attempt to deal with that limit. Viñas's valorization of grotesco can be seen as anticipating a poststructuralist, but also materialist, critique of the subject, based on a valorization of the social context. By showing us Discépolo's conception of the plays' settings as enclosed and functionally self-contained spaces, Viñas invites consideration of the inside stage of drama and the social space outside the theatre. The grotesco setting appears to put pressure precisely at the limits of this "double scene" and force the appearance of the outer social space. The grotesco plays may thus reveal, in the words of Puchner, that "the scene outside is nothing like the scene inside; instead it is the necessary 'context' or 'counterpart' that makes it possible for the scene inside to appear as scene."⁵⁴ In relation to the glocal nature of the production of habitus in the grotesco, we may say that there is nothing essentially glocal about habitus, yet it is a global "myth of money," emphasized by the perspective of consumerism rather than the collectivity of work, that puts the individual in the local scene of habitus production.

Notes

1. David Viñas, *Grotesco, inmigración y fracaso: Armando Discépolo* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1969) 11. All quotes from Viñas are taken from this book. All translations from the Spanish are by Milton Loayza.

2. For an overview of the development of sainete and grotesco, see Luis Ordaz (1989) "Frustraciones y fracasos del período inmigratorio en los 'grotescos criollos' de Armando Discépolo," Teatro del Pueblo/ SOMI. 12 December 2008. <<http://www.teatrodelpueblo.org.ar/dramaturgia/ordaz002.htm>>.

3. See Osvaldo Pellettieri, introducción. *Alberto Novión: La transición al grotesco criollo*, ed. by Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2002); and Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir, *El Grotesco criollo: estilo teatral de una época* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1977).

4. Jean Graham-Jones, "Aesthetics, Politics, and *Vanguardias* in Twentieth-Century Argentinean Theater." *Not the Other Avant-garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*, ed. James M. Harding and John Rouse (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006) 169.

5. David Viñas, born in 1929, was co-founder in 1953 of *Contorno*, a now iconic journal of the period that combined revolutionary politics and literary criticism. His plays, essays, and fiction have received national and international awards and deal with national and Latin American historical, political, and literary themes. Examples of his works include a series of essay collections titled *Literatura Argentina y realidad política* (1971-1995), the play *Lysandro* (1972), and the novel *Hombres de a caballo* (1967).

6. 86.

7. Armando Discépolo, *El organito, Obras Escogidas t. 2*, ed. David Viñas (Buenos Aires: Editorial J. Alvarez, 1969).

8. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991) 203.
9. Edmundo Guibourg, introducción. *Trejo Pacheco, Novión, Vacarezza*, ed. Edmundo Guibourg (Buenos Aires: A-Z Editora, 1987) 8.
10. Susana Marco et al. define two kinds of sainete criollo: the “lyrical” and “playful moralizing” [divertimiento y moraleja]. The first is sentimentalist and didactic in relation to the values it imposes on the spectator. In the second, the humor, produced by the dialogue and the mixing of dialects, predominates within an arbitrary plot with tragic resolution. See *Teoría del género chico criollo* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1974).
11. Viñas 13.
12. Armando Discépolo, *Stéfano*, in Lui Ordáz, *Breve historia del teatro argentino*, vol. v. Ed. Luis Ordáz (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1962-5) 53.
13. 13-15.
14. See David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, its History and its Impact* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 40-7, 68-9.
15. Lefebvre 27.
16. Viñas 19-20, 34.
17. 22.
18. Silvia Pellarolo notes in her study of the genre that the sainete and its emblematic setting of conventillos celebrated a process of cultural hybridization between natives and immigrants in the working-class suburbs of Buenos Aires. Pellarolo emphasizes the democratic spirit of this process, which she evidences in the carnivalesque logic of its cultural mode, inheriting the local popular traditions of the circus and the tango. Yet, Ordaz’s and Viñas’s evaluations suggest that the carnivalesque served also to assert the monumentality of a new urban landscape, which included a more commercialized theatre. See Silvia Pellarolo, *Sainete criollo/democracia/representación. El caso de Nemesio Trejo* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1997) 50-71.
19. For an account of the replacement of native circus for theatre in Buenos Aires, see Guido Podestá, “La reescritura de *Juan Moreira*: La política del decorum en el teatro argentino,” *Latin American Theatre Review* 25.1 (Fall 1991): 7-19.
20. See Carlos Mauricio Pacheco, *Los disfrazados Teatro Rioplatense (1886-1930)*, ed. Jorge Lafforgue (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1977) 155-77.
21. Juan Alberdi, for example, thought that “English liberty, French culture, North American and European values” were needed foundations for the development of the Republic. See Juan Alberdi, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984) 67.
22. A first wave of immigration between 1860 and 1880 brought about 160,000 people. Between 1880 and 1910, 300,000 more came. About half of the immigrant population settled in Buenos Aires. See José Luis Romero, *Breve historia de la Argentina*, augmented edition (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultural Económica, 1977) 105.
23. Micol Seigel, “Cocoliche’s Romp: Fun with Nationalism at Argentina’s Carnival,” *The Drama Review* 44.2 (2000): 59. See also Richard Slata, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983) 179.
24. This strategic consensus between liberals and nationalists is partly explained by the fact that both political currents, as Patrice McSherry notes, are “deeply invested in the creation of a national identity”; economic liberalism needs the disciplining of a working force under the banner of national character. The nationalists, on the other hand, “tend to espouse state-controlled development of strategic industries, protectionism, a corporatist, Catholic-organic view of society, and an anti-imperialist rhetoric in some cases.” See Patrice McSherry, *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina* (New York: St. Martin’s P, 1997) 34.
25. See Castro 30.
26. As put by Ana Cara-Walker, the elites were faced with the threat of growing demands by urban laborers “unwilling to be exploited like the gauchos.” See Ana Cara-Walker, “Cocoliche: The Art of Assimilation and Dissimulation among Italians and Argentines,” *Latin American Research Review* 22.3 (1987): 41. Also, the canonization of José Hernández’s poem about the gaucho hero Martín Fierro is witness to the appropriation of the gaucho as symbol of Argentine identity. Hernández’s publication of a sequel to his *Martín Fierro*, called *The Return of Martín Fierro*, reveals the changing views about the gaucho, now seen in need of paternalistic moralizing by Hernández himself. On the difference between the dignified protest of *Martín Fierro* and the moralizing of *The Return of Martín Fierro*, see Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 282-91.
27. Seigel points out that cocoliche carnival performances, in their representation of “a bumbling

hick dazzled by his new surroundings, reproduced precisely [Argentina's] country-to-city migration narrative." See "Cocoliche's Romp" 63. For an analysis of the notion of cocoliche and its development as a carnivalesque enactment of "Argentineness," see also Ana Cara-Walker's article. Cara-Walker explains that "a makeshift mixture of gaucho and immigrant characteristics, Cocoliche the dramatic persona and his hilarious italo-Argentine speech were the creation of native criollos. . . . But the Cocoliche character also offered natives and newly arrived "tanos" (Italians) a way to negotiate their differences through ritual and symbolic confrontations onstage, in carnival activities, in print, and ultimately in everyday life." Cara-Walker 37.

28. Luis Ordaz, *Breve historia del teatro argentino*, vol. iv 17.

29. Viñas 23.

30. See Donald S. Castro, "The Sainete Porteño, 1890-1935: The Image of Jews in the Argentine Popular Theater," *Studies in Latin American and Popular Culture* 21 (2002): 33-4.

31. See Carlos Mauricio Pacheco, *Los Disfrazados*, Teatro rioplatense, ed. Jorge Lafforgue (Caracas: Biblioteca de Ayacucho, 1986) 156-77.

32. See Alejandro Berrutti, *Tres personajes a la pesca de un autor*, *Antología del género chico criollo*, ed. Susana Marco et al. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1978) 195-215, 211.

33. Viñas 15.

34. Lefebvre 57.

35. Viñas 15.

36. 17.

37. See note 20.

38. Yrigoyen took advantage of the 1912 electoral reform, itself the initiative of an elitist oligarchy. The institutionalization of political participation through voting was a strategic move by the elites to legitimize political parties as a balancing force against class struggles organized mainly by anarchists. See David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* rev. ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987) 186-7.

39. See Hipolito Yrigoyen, *Pueblo y gobierno vol. 1: La reparación fundamental*, ed. Roberto Etchepareborda, (Buenos Aires: Raigal, 1955) 126.

40. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 294.

41. This analysis corresponds to a non-essentialist perspective on cultural forms, as expressed by Stuart Hall: "The meaning of the cultural symbol is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practices with which it articulates and is made to resonate. What matters is not the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations." See "Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 235.

42. Viñas 62, 64.

43. See Armando Discépolo, *Mateo. Tres grotescos: Mateo, Stéfano y Relojero* (Buenos Aires: Losange, 1958).

44. I am borrowing Fredric Jameson's notion of "utopian impulse" which he understands as a unconscious political desire for a collective future, often expressed in various forms of cultural production. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U P, 1981).

45. Miguel, in the play *Mateo*, for example, finally ends up in prison after his first attempt at robbery.

46. Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford U P, 2000) 142-3.

47. See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity P, 1993) 29-73; and Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, Habitus, Practices," *The Logic of Practice* (Palo Alto: Stanford U P, 1992) 52-65.

48. Arata fused the techniques of the Italian actor, the circus actor, and naturalism. See Liliana Lopez, "Arata," *De Totó a Sandrini: del cómico italiano al "actor nacional" argentino*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Cuadernos del GETEA, 2001) 150.

49. Viñas 38.

50. Liliana Lopez 150.

51. 38-40.

52. Most notably in *Stéfano*, by Armando Discépolo, the three generations rehearse their incarnation of the Promised Land through their dreams.

53. Martin Puchner, "Kenneth Burke: Theatre, Philosophy, and the Limits of Performance," *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theatre, Performance, and Philosophy*, ed. David Krasner and

David C. Saltz (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006) 51.

54. Burke himself locates a conceptual space for thinking the limits in the notion of “scene,” which Puchner identifies as “a double term, one that marks the outer limit (the ‘nondramatist’) but that is at the same time part of dramatism. The result of this double limit . . . is the collapse of dramatism.” See Puchner 52.